TRUTH AND TESTIMONY MAGAZINE (3 VOLUMES)

by Various

A three-volume periodical devoted to the proclamation of Christian truth and the faithful testimony of believers. The magazine addressed doctrinal and practical themes for the edification of the church.

34 Chapters

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Books Review

Quotations from Scripture are generally taken either from the King James translation or Mr. J.N. Darby's translation. Quotations taken from any other translation will be indicated in the course of the article, or in a footnote to the article. The Life of David (2) David's Army. 1 Chronicles 12:8-40 (Continued from page 225) A Young Recruit

Verse 28 of Chronicles 12 describes Zadok as "a young man mighty of valour". Young men usually have heroes of one kind or another. David was Zadok's hero and he was prepared to devote his young life to make David undisputed king of Israel. As he is mentioned immediately after the reference to the children of Levi, it is likely that he is the Zadok who became priest to David. See 1 Chronicles 29:22; 1 Chronicles 15:11; 1 Chronicles 16:39; 1 Chronicles 18:16; 1 Chronicles 24:3; 1 Chronicles 24:6; 1 Chronicles 24:31; 1 Chronicles 27:17. His youthful valour was useful to David in his fight to gain the throne of Israel. His mature priestly services were invaluable to David in later years. Zadok remained faithful to David when Adonijah, David's disloyal son, rebelled against his father (1 Kings 1:18). Zadok was honoured to anoint Solomon, God's choice, and David's choice, king over Israel when David abdicated (1 Kings 1:39). In 1 Samuel 2:34-35 God pronounced His judgment on the sons of Eli, the high priest, and promised to raise up to Himself a faithful priest who would walk before His anointed continually. This promise was fulfilled in Zadok. Zadok was a descendant of a great warrior priest named Phinehas (Numbers 25:6; Numbers 25:18). God gave to Phinehas a covenant of everlasting priesthood because of his faithfulness to God. It was fulfilled in Zadok and his seed. The seed of Zadok will have the charge of the priesthood in the millennial temple (Ezekiel 40:46; Ezekiel 43:19; Ezekiel 44:15; Ezekiel 48:11). It won't be David who will be on the throne of Israel then, but great David's greater Son. Phinehas and Zadok proved the statement that those who honour God will be honoured by Him (1 Samuel 2:30). Fighting seems to be a strange occupation for a priest. Listen to Psalms 149:6 "Let the high praises of God be in their mouth, and a two edged sword in their hand". Does this mean that if we never engage in conflict for Christ's glory we will never know what real praise means? There is plenty of room for valiant youths in the Christian conflict. Their faithful obedience to the Captain of their salvation will lead to promotion in the Captain's interest. Young men, keep close to spiritual men and follow their example. Joshua kept close to Moses. Elisha kept near to Elijah. Timothy had Paul as a spiritual father and served with him. Zadok served David in war and peace. "Remember your leaders" (Hebrews 13:7).

Benjaminites Come to David. 1 Chronicles 12:29

It was a great grief to Saul, the king of Israel, that Jonathan, his son, was an admirer and friend of David, his enemy. Equally galling to him was the secession of three thousand of his brethren of the tribe of Benjamin to David. Overcoming the ties and responsibilities of nature, they threw in their lot with the persecuted David. They might have decided to remain with Saul in the apparent safety and strength that belonged to the Lord's anointed. But the prophet Samuel had pronounced to Saul that his reign as king was under judgment from God. Another would take his place over Israel. David was eventually anointed and God had decreed his success (1 Samuel 15:28). The Benjaminites chose correctly. They were in line with God when they supported David rather than Saul. It wasn't easy for them to break away from tribal loyalties and natural ties. The attraction of David and the purpose of God enabled them to make their choice. Natures ties are very strong. They are perfectly legitimate before God in their proper place, but when they interfere in the things of God they are a hindrance and source of trouble and sorrow. Scripture provides many examples of natures claims opposing God's will. Abraham wanted Ishmael, the son of the bondwoman, to live before Him. God refused His request (Genesis 17:18-19). The behaviour of Eli's sons was an affront to God and he did not restrain them (1 Samuel 3:13). David was more concerned about the death of his son Absalom than the well-being of his own soldiers. He deserved the rebuke that Joab gave him (2 Samuel 19:1-6). A mother asked for places of importance in Christ's kingdom for her sons. Such a request meant, in principle, the exclusion of some other woman's sons from that place (Matthew 20:21). Barnabas separated from Paul because a dispute arose between them over a relative of Barnabas, John Mark (Acts 15:36-41). Let none underestimate the strength of nature and it's appeal when loved one's are involved in disputes. The claims of Christ upon His disciples take precedence over any national or natural claim (Luke 14:26). This doesn't mean that natural and secular relationships are to be ignored by a Christian. Rather the reverse. Scripture is plain as to the responsibilities of husbands, wives, fathers, children, employees and employers. But these relationships are to serve and support the Christian testimony, not hinder it. Jesus was obedient to His parents, but His prime obedience was in relation to His Father's business (Luke 2:49). "Lovest thou Me more than these" is a pertinent question when the claims of nature, or other claims, rival the claims of Christ (John 21:15).

Intelligent Soldiers

Every army is indebted to its intelligence corps. The knowledge of the size of the enemy army and it's ability to wage war is invaluable. Without such knowledge the outcome of a battle or campaign could be doubtful. The men of Issachar in David's army had understanding of the times. They knew what they had to do to make David the undisputed king of Israel. Saul's sun was setting while David's was in the ascendancy. Saul's army was crumbling. David's army was marshalling for victory. Their intelligence governed their motives and actions. We cannot place too high a value on correct understanding. There is no excuse for a Christian's ignorance in relation to the interests of Christ. Paul continually exhorted believers in Christ to be intelligent and not ignorant (Romans 1:13; Romans 11:25; 1 Corinthians 10:1; 1 Corinthians 12:1; 2 Corinthians 1:8; 1 Thessalonians 4:13). Paul prayed that the believers at Colosse might have "spiritual understanding" (Colossians 1:9). Obviously this kind of understanding is much more to be desired by a Christian than any other kind of understanding. Solomon was commended by God when he asked for an understanding heart to rule God's people, Israel (1 Kings 3:5-13). What would we ask for if God

promised to give it to us? Take time to answer. It isn't as easy as it may appear to be. The Scriptures are an immense source of spiritual understanding. If we want the intelligence that is found in the Scriptures of Truth we need first of all to read them. That seems to be obvious. Secondly, we need the Lord to show us what the Scriptures mean (Luke 24:27; Luke 24:45; 2 Timothy 2:7). Thirdly, prayer for help in understanding what we read is invaluable for spiritual progress. An important feature of understanding is found in Ephesians 5:17, "understanding what the will of the Lord is". Once we know that for our lives and obey it we are well on the way to upholding the interests of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Soldiers in Step. No Independency An army without coordinated discipline is destined for defeat. Correct formation in defence or attack is necessary for victory. When the battle is waging it is important to keep together and help one another. It isn't the time to "do things one's own way". See 2 Samuel 10:11-12. Many a well organised but small army has defeated a larger but ill-disciplined group of men. History abounds with examples. There were no waverers in Zebulun's contingent for David's army (verse 33). They kept rank and were not of a double heart. A double heart, like a double mind, will bring instability (James 1:8). There was readiness in Asher's regiments (verse 36). They were set in battle array (see J.N.D. trans.). The enemy could not come upon them unawares. "Be vigilant, watch", writes Peter (1 Peter 5:8). Your great enemy Satan is active to destroy you. The Reubenites, Gadites and some of the tribe of Manasseh presented a solid and disciplined front against the expected oncoming enemy. They kept rank in battle array. A formidable force was under David's command ready to fight for Him. What a difference there would be in the Christian testimony today if followers of the Lord Jesus Christ were presenting such a united front to the many enemies of the Christian faith. Independency, self will, unseemly squabbles, divisions in homes, local assemblies and divisions that have had world wide repercussions have combined to present the sad spectacle of an army with great resources but no discipline. How Satan has laughed! The shame of divided Christendom ought to cause us to weep. Regrettably it does not. We need the spirit of Nehemiah as we contemplate the shambles of Christendom (Nehemiah 1:4). However, the Bible speaks about fellow soldiers and wherever we can stand shoulder to shoulder with fellow lovers of Christ and His truth, in righteous combat with the enemies of truth, may we do so with all our might (Php 2:25, Philemon 1:2). God delights in order (Numbers 24:5-6, 1 Corinthians 14:33). Satan is the author of disorder. Obedience to the Word of God will always produce order that is according to God. Colossians 2:5 is a reference to military order "For though I be absent in the flesh, yet am I with you in the spirit, joying and beholding your order, and the steadfastness of your faith in Christ". So too is 1 Corinthians 15:23 "But every man in his own order (in his own rank J.N.D.); Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ's, at His coming". Humanly arranged order crumbles and creates greater disorder. May we heed Paul's exhortation in Ephesians 6:10-18. Be strong in the Lord and stand (verses 11 and 14).

Food for David's Army. 1 Chronicles 12:39-40

What a delightful end to the chapter! The army is with David. They are glad to be with him although it is in the wilderness. All other aspirations and pursuits are set aside as they gather together to him and are resolved to make him supreme in Israel. An abundance of food was prepared for the army. From far and near the provision came, from those who could not assist in the fighting but could supply food for the army. "An army marches on its stomach" is a well known expression.

David’s army had a wonderful variety of good nourishing food. As they ate what was provided for them there was great joy in the ranks. What an encouraging picture! David is the centre of his loyal and devoted army. It is alert and disciplined. It is equipped and intelligent. An air of expectant victory pervades the camp. In some measure these features can be realised among Christians. When the Lord Jesus Christ is the undisputed Centre of His beloved people there will be an ample supply of suitable spiritual food to sustain them in their conflict for His interests. Some may say that this is an excellent ideal but unattainable. Some can reply and say that it has been realised. In weakness, yes, but known and enjoyed. Food is an important feature in the New Testament. See 1 Peter 2:2, Hebrews 5:12-14 and 1 Timothy 4:6. Weak soldiers or underfed soldiers will not survive a long and arduous warfare. Finally, let us listen to Paul. "Stand firm in one spirit, with one soul, labouring together in the same conflict with the faith of the glad tidings" and "Strive earnestly in the good conflict of faith" (Php 1:27, 1 Timothy 6:12).

"Stand then in His great might, with all His strength endued; But take, to arm you in the fight, the Panoply of God: That having all things done, and all your conflicts passed, Ye may o’ercome, through Christ alone, and stand entire at last.

C. Wesley

F. Wallace (Further articles in this series are to follow, as the Lord provides) A Man of God in Our Day

INTRODUCTION In order to understand what a "man of God" is, we should study Paul’s epistles to Timothy, where we find this expression twice (1 Timothy 6:11 and 2 Timothy 3:17). The only other passage where we find the same term in the New Testament (although in the plural), is 2 Peter 1:21, which refers to Old Testament prophets and saints. We will limit ourselves in this short study to some characteristics of a "man of God," with the prayer and desire that all who read this article may profit from these lessons. In the first reference, Paul writes to Timothy:

"But thou, O man of God, flee these things, and pursue righteousness, piety, faith, love, endurance, meekness of spirit" (1 Timothy 6:11). A VERY PERSONAL APPEAL The way the apostle Paul addresses Timothy with the words "O man of God" (1 Timothy 6:11), suggests an urgent and a very personal appeal. Urgent, because of the need of the hour; and personal, because of the individual responsibility to meet this need. The Greek word for "man" above is without distinction of sex. It should be the character of men and women who are attached to the Lord Jesus and who love the great truth of the house of God (1 Timothy 3:15), which truth is presented and developed in this epistle in a very practical way.

CHRIST OUR MODEL Our Lord Jesus Christ was the true Man of God here on earth, as He still is in the glory. Despite all failure on the part of God’s people, our blessed Lord did everything for the pleasure of God: He came to do God’s will (Psalms 40:1-17, Hebrews 10:1-39) and He accomplished the work the Father had given Him to do (John 17:4). Through conflicts and opposition, being misunderstood, despised, rejected, mocked at, and blasphemed, our Lord always continued in faithfulness to be a perfect Witness for God’s rights on this earth (see also 1 Timothy 6:13). A TIME OF TESTIMONY AND SUFFERINGS This last passage speaks about our Lord Jesus, the anointed Man of God (Matthew 3:16 f and parallel passages; Acts 10:38), who testified the good confession in this world. He maintained God’s rights in His words, works and

walk, as a perfect Witness and Sufferer,* as the true Man of God, long before the day when these rights are going to be established and displayed in the world to come. The glorified Lord Jesus has given His Spirit (John 7:39) to those who believe, in order that they should be a testimony for God in the time of Christ's rejection and absence from this scene. Christians are to be vessels in which Christ is seen, and together they form a collective testimony of Christ, God's anointed Man (1 Corinthians 1:6), with which God identifies Himself (cp. 1 Corinthians 2:1). Even in a day of ruin (see Php 2:21, Php 3:18 f; 2 Timothy 1:15, 2 Timothy 4:3 f; Revelation 2:1-29 & Revelation 3:1-22), and I would suggest especially then, it is open to every Christian to be a man of God. God's heart will be delighted to have witnesses for Himself in this world under Satan's leadership, where all His rights are formally and/or practically rejected, and which world system already lies under God's judgment! The Lord Jesus was alone when rendering such a testimony, but we may be witnesses together with those who call upon the Name of the Lord out of a pure heart, and we have the help of His Spirit. Such a testimony implies suffering and persecution. As this was the case for the Lord, it is also the same for His witnesses (martyrs), like Stephen (Acts 7:1-60), Paul (2 Timothy 4:1-22), John (Revelation 1:1-20) and for Timothy himself, together with all those who live godly (piously) in Christ Jesus (2 Timothy 3:12). A "man of God" is prepared to pay this price.

{*The Greek word for "witness" is the word from which our English word "martyr" is derived, one who bears "witness" by his death.} TEN MORAL AND SPIRITUAL CHARACTERISTICS IN 1 Timothy 6:11-14

First of all I would like to draw your attention to four F's: Flee, Follow, Faith and Fight. The first is negative, the second positive, the third (linked with other features) gives what is necessary for the fourth.

(1) First, notice how much attention Paul gives to the problem of money (1 Timothy 6:7-10; 1 Timothy 6:17-19). In order to be a man of God, one surely has to flee from the "love of money" and all the things connected with that. This is a real test for most of us, who live in a society where so much is done because of the love of money. A Christian is also to flee from idolatry and fornication (1 Corinthians 10:14; 1 Corinthians 6:18) and from youthful lusts like pride, arrogance and lack of self-judgment. (2 Timothy 2:22). Sadly many believers are involved with things they should flee from, and fail to resist when they should.

(2) On the positive side, a man of God is attracted to a glorified Christ as He is now in heaven (see Php 3:8-12), in order to follow Him in this scene where He endured sufferings (Php 2:5-13). When we follow Him, we will also be able to follow diligently after the features which are necessary to be good witnesses and soldiers, and to "Fight the good fight of faith" (1 Timothy 6:12).

(3) One result of this will be practical righteousness, as we see in our theme verse (1 Timothy 6:11). A man of God maintains God's rights, respects what is due to God both as Creator and Redeemer. This moral righteousness ("doing right") is based on the position God has given us in Christ (Romans 5:1; Romans 8:1, Php 3:8 ff).

(4) Godliness or piety follows righteousness. This often repeated feature of godliness, means that a man of God walks in the fear of the Lord, before God, realizing His presence in the minor details of his life. This attitude brings God into every part of his life and testimony. At the same time it brings him into line with the anointed Man of God. This is the moral effect of God's revelation to

him (1 Timothy 3:16).

(5) Faith follows godliness. The man or woman of God sees things as God sees them, as the great faith chapter of the Bible, Hebrews 11:1-40, demonstrates. He is built up by God, puts his trust in God, and draws all his resources from Him.

(6) Love follows faith in this list, as it does in 1 Corinthians 13:1-13, "Faith, hope and love." Since he has received a new nature, the man of God can respond to God's nature, love, and be filled with God's love (in principle, Romans 5:5, but also practically, as is emphasized in our passage). This gives him at the same time the capacity to show this love as a testimony for God, either to believers, as well as unbelievers, in marriage and family life.

(7) The next feature, patience or endurance, is the capacity to "remain under," [1:e. continue on during] difficult and adverse circumstances, which is certainly a very difficult thing! How much easier it is to defend ourselves and maintain our alleged rights. But what about God's rights? Aren't they important? They are maintained, practically, by showing this attitude of patience and endurance.

(8) The Lord Jesus is the perfect example of "meekness of spirit," our next quality in this list. Here again we may learn from Him, who came as the true King to maintain God's rights and who was rejected in this pathway. See Matthew 11:29 ff; Matthew 10:24 f

(9) "Fight the good fight of faith," follows in the next verse. To be a witness for God is a constant battle for a man of God. This battle is not against sin in himself, nor against flesh and blood, but against Satan's attacks. Although false doctrine may be directly involved in this warfare, we should be aware that poor or wrong practice may indicate that there is something wrong as to principles. We ought not to separate practical Christian living from Christian doctrine. I would submit to you that here we have a link with the good confession (1 Timothy 6:12 f), by which the man of God puts forward the claims of the kingdom of God, even in this world which is the domain of another kingdom.

(10) The list concludes with this challenge, "lay hold of eternal life." This does not mean that Timothy did not receive eternal life the moment he believed; John 5:24 assures us that all believers have this. But Paul's desire for Timothy and for "the man of God" was that we should really enjoy the things which God has prepared for us in Christ Jesus, who is The Eternal Life, existing before the foundation of the world. In other words: a "man of God" is living for the things that belong to another world, to the new creation, where Christ is the Head and Centre. He lays hold on these things and is now practically enjoying them. This enables him to render a faithful testimony to and in this world.

ANOTHER PASSAGE The second passage where we find this challenging expression "the man of God," is 2 Timothy 3:10-17. Paul portrays a dark picture of the last days in vs. 1-9. Against this dark background, his own example shines very brightly and it would encourage Timothy to follow along the same path. In studying this Scripture portion, we will find several parallels with the first one, but also a marked progress of evil. Again, we could underline ten important points, but we will leave this to our readers. This passage might also encourage parents to saturate the minds of their (young) children with the Word of God. The inspiration and accuracy, the authority and divinity of the God-breathed holy Scriptures, is of vital importance in a day of ruin. Thus the Bible would have

its effect with regard to the presentation of the truth (objective knowledge), as well as in connection with its impact and personal conviction (subjective truth). Where necessary it will also bring correction and restoration (who is beyond failure?), resulting in a holy life of practical righteousness.

SOME GENERAL POINTS IN SUMMARY In conclusion we can say that a man of God is characterized by the following points (of course, this is not an exhaustive list). He uses God's resources, which are always available to faith. For this point in particular see 2 Timothy 1:1-18. He lives entirely for the pleasure of God, and represents God by being a living testimony of His will. He is a vessel filled with the Spirit and with Christ, who says as it were "God is all, I am nothing."

Another thing that characterizes the man of God, is that he is aware of the ruin of the public testimony of Christianity. Nevertheless, he doesn't become bitter or discouraged, but goes on to carry out God's own will in every area of his responsibility. In this way, he has a good understanding of God's thoughts, e.g. with regard to His eternal purpose, the Church according to His counsel, the total depravity of fallen man, God's sovereign grace, the condition of this world. In other words, he knows the pattern which God has shown on the mountain, our position in Christ Jesus. This knowledge is necessary in order to maintain God's thoughts here on earth. A man of God is also a balanced person, "cutting in a straight line the word of truth" (2 Timothy 2:15), not overestimating certain truths, while underestimating other parts of the truth, but maintaining the whole truth, not deviating to the left, or to the right. This is true Christian maturity, understanding the Scriptures in a correct and spiritual way, and not applying them in a legalistic, carnal or selfish manner (2 Timothy 3:15-17).

It was Paul's burden not only to present the mystery, but also to present every man perfect (mature, full-grown) in Christ Jesus (Colossians 1:27 f). How many problems occur among Christian people because of lack of balance or lack of maturity. However, a man of God helps other Christians to enjoy the things of God: what a challenge! Thus he is a witness of God, sent to set souls right with God, before God is going to use His power to set things right in this world.

FINAL REMARK

Although seen in relation to the house of God (which is a collective thought), every individual Christian is encouraged in these Epistles to Timothy to follow the path of discipleship as a true man or woman of God. The answer to the general failure of Christendom today is to be found in believers who are overcomers in the challenges of everyday living. Here Paul touches the line of John's ministry which has been given by God to help us practise the truth in a day of ruin. May God help us! The author of the following article has been a "full time" servant of the Lord for many years God's Servant: How is he recognized? THE SERVANT'S RESPONSIBILITY The call of God to service is absolutely and exclusively a matter between God and His servant. Moses (Exodus 3:10), Samuel (1 Samuel 3:19-20), Isaiah (Isaiah 6:8-9), Jeremiah (Jeremiah 1:5), Ezekiel (Ezekiel 2:3; Ezekiel 2:8), and John the Baptist (John 1:6) all bear clear witness to the same fact that Paul expresses concerning himself in Galatians 1:1, that he was "an apostle, (not of men, neither by man, but by Jesus Christ, and God the Father, who raised Him from the dead)". If one is to be a true servant of God, he must realize this above all else. It is God who gives him orders, God who provides him with the message he is responsible to give simply and plainly, adding nothing to it and taking nothing from it in any degree. For if one seeks to satisfy men, or to please men, then he

is not the servant of Christ (Galatians 1:10). Not only did Paul's gift proceed from God, but God alone had authority as to how and where he used that gift; he did not do this "by men," that is, by man's permission. In whatever sphere one desires to serve the Lord, let it be with this settled sense of obeying Him solely and singleheartedly, whether one's full time is so engaged or whether he has other employment by which to pay his expenses. Paul both worked for his own support (1 Thessalonians 2:9) and received help for his support even from an assembly poor in this world's goods, the Philippians (Php 4:10-18). On the other hand, he would receive nothing from the Corinthians who were in good circumstances (2 Corinthians 11:9-12), for there were those among them who would accuse him of making money from them if they did this. The servant receives his support as directly from the Lord, not from men. If men want to take the credit for this, then the servant ought not to accept it. If it is given in honest affection for the Lord, and as to Himself, then the servant is free to receive it as such, with thanksgiving. Let him show no spirit of grasping, nor think at any time of indicating to others what his material needs may be. He is God's servant, not theirs. Let him appeal only to God, and trust God utterly for every need. If God has sent him and he goes in obedience to God, then God will certainly take full care of him, whether it may be by means of his own working or by God's laying it upon the hearts of His people to give to his support. In either case let him accept it as from God and give God thanks.

If it becomes a serious exercise as before God that he should use his entire time in the Lord's service, whether in a foreign country or whether closer to home, again he is to depend entirely upon God in this matter, he is not to ask or to expect anything from man. If it is God who is leading him in this, God will certainly care for all his needs. But let him be totally certain of God's leading in a matter so serious as this. In Luke 9:57-58 a man who appeared very enthusiastic in his decision to follow the Lord was not at all encouraged by the Lord to do so, but told rather, "The Son of Man hath not where to lay His head." In Luke 14:25-33 the Lord Jesus insists that one should first count the cost before embarking on a path of discipleship. Is he prepared for the persecution, the stern trials of faith, the sorrows and difficulties that must ever attend a true path of service for God? This of course is no mere fleshly preparation involving the natural strength and vigour of the servant, but that of simple, real faith in the Son of God, faith that has learned to depend honestly on Him.

Also, one may be called by God and yet be mistaken as to the time of his going. Moses made this mistake and in doing so did not serve in the God-appointed way (Exodus 2:11; Exodus 2:15). This led to his humiliation until God sent him forty years later to do His work, at which time Moses was loath to go, rather than forward, as previously. But God delights also to see exercise as to the Lord's work shared by others who have such concern. Paul mentions in Galatians 2:1-10 his going to Jerusalem and communicating to the other apostles the gospel God had given him, with the result of wholehearted fellowship together in the respective work God had given to each. Such fellowship is seen also in Acts 13:23. Paul was called for a special work and others had no difficulty in discerning this. This is important. It is always wise to communicate with brethren close at hand, and of course specially the local assembly with which one is connected, as regards his exercise in some special service for the Lord. If they are not free to express fellowship in this case, then he ought to seriously consider this; for if they truly seek the mind of God, they should have some discernment as to the fact of his being called by God for that which he proposes. Not that they decide the matter. It is God who decides this, but God may use the reservations of an assembly as a means of further exercising the servant. Of course it is possible that an assembly

may be mistaken in either approving or disapproving of a servant's intentions. If in spite of an assembly's doubts, the servant embarks on the service he proposes, let it be in true humbleness of mind before God and with settled confidence in God alone. He must be prepared for the fact that his assembly will not be likely to contribute to his support and that this too may influence others in their thoughts of his service. But if God has sent him, God will sustain him. If not, then he must expect the shame of having to give up that which will then have proven to be the effort of self-confidence. If he proves diligent and faithful in his work, it is this that will gain the confidence of his assembly and of others in recognizing that God has sent him.

Finally, let every servant pay closest attention to his own personal character and conduct. He must expect this to be watched by both believers and unbelievers, but above all by God. For instance, "the servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all, apt to teach, patient" etc. (2 Timothy 2:24). 2 Corinthians 6:1-18 is a chapter that should be thoroughly impregnated into his mind and heart. THE SERVANT'S RECOGNITION BY OTHERS The viewpoint of the servant and that of the assembly must be kept fully distinct in this matter. While the servant is to be entirely God's servant, and not man's, yet the assembly is called upon to discern as to whether it can have fellowship with him in his work. We have observed that it is only right and considerate that the servant should communicate to his assembly the exercise he may have as to any field of service to which the Lord may call him. Then it becomes a concern of the assembly as to how fully it may be free to express fellowship in this work. They must above all look for the evidence that it is God who has called him. In this is involved the principle mentioned at the time of Timothy's first going forth with Paul, that he "was well reported of by the brethren" (Acts 16:2). There were those who knew him well. In giving such a report it is necessary that the brethren know:

1. That his moral character and conduct are consistently Christian and above reproach.

2. That he has a working knowledge of Scripture equal to the carrying on of the particular work he proposes.

3. That the Lord has evidently qualified him for the type of work he desires and that he has already manifested some diligence in such work. 4. That he shows convincing evidence that it is God who has called him. This involves a faith that does not look for support from men, nor ask for their commendation, but has a serious sense of dependence utterly upon God. The assembly is not in any way to assume the responsibility of sending him; this is God's prerogative. They may however wish to express their happy fellowship in his proposed work. Other assemblies may inquire as to him, and his home assembly should be prepared to give the information that will be helpful to them, expressing whatever measure of fellowship they are free to, before the Lord. If, as an assembly, they are not free to express such fellowship, then they must of course communicate information to this effect.

They may point out to the servant the reason for their doubts or reservations, for his consideration and exercise of soul, though they make no decision for him as to his work. Yet his consideration of them and of their exercises will certainly have some bearing on the question of their confidence in him. The assembly is at all times free to minister temporal support to the Lord's servants or to withhold support, as they are exercised by the Lord. They ought not to consider it a settled matter to minister a certain amount at stated intervals, but be always concerned before the Lord to minister as and when He directs. If the servant is called to walk by faith in dependence only upon

the Lord, the assembly, on the other hand, should exercise constant faith and dependence upon the Lord in all their ministering. They give as to the Lord, not to men, and the servant is to receive as from the Lord, not from men. The genuine exercise of the blessed principle of faith is both of great importance and that which makes for the greatest simplicity in all these matters. Problems and complications will be reduced to a minimum where faith is in true exercise, whether on the part of the servant or of the assembly. There will then be no need of men seeking means of putting any service under proper control as they see it. For God will be in control, as is the only Scriptural principle in every case.

L. M. Grant The Prayer Meeting Is the prayer meeting well attended? It has been remarked that the prayer meeting is the barometer of the local assembly. When the dews came back from exile, we read that they all came together, first to hear the law read aloud, and then to spend a fourth part of the day in confession of their sins and in prayer. (Nehemiah 9:23). In Acts 12:1-25, when Herod was seeking to destroy the infant church, having killed James and imprisoned Peter, we read that many were gathered together in the house of Mary, Mark’s mother, praying all night. When we think that each of us is entrusted with 168 hours every week, is it too much to employ just one of those hours in corporate prayer?

Surely we are put to shame by many Christians in other lands, where there is persecution and poverty, who walk many miles to be present at the prayer meeting. It requires an effort, certainly, but surely each one should try to be present whenever possible. In some places where the saints are scattered, and find it difficult to come together during the week, it may be simpler to have the prayer meeting after the Lord’s supper, perhaps after a short interval, or else before, or after, the evening meeting. We are not told in the Bible at what hour we must come together, but we are enjoined to pray as an assembly (1 Timothy 2:1-11). See also Acts 2:42; Acts 4:23-31.

We have no "form of service" laid down in the New Testament, but let us remember that we come together to pray. We may sing one or more hymns, and a suitable portion of Scripture may be read to prepare our hearts to be found in a prayerful and dependent attitude, but prayer is the principal object. The prayers do not have to be long. It is better if each brother prays briefly two or three times, so that others can intelligently add their "amen." There may be an opportunity before we pray to draw attention to special needs, or subjects of thanksgiving. Prayer is not all requests. We may include "giving of thanks." In what attitude do we pray? Kneeling seems to be Scriptural and was formerly universal but there is a danger, particularly in a large company, of the brother who prays not being heard. In some places a microphone with a long lead is passed to the brother as he begins, in which case all are able to say "amen." I have been to a prayer meeting where we were all so tightly packed in that we could not even stand. The attitude of heart is more important than our physical position.

We are instructed to pray, believing that our prayer will be answered (Matthew 21:22). James also commends the "prayer of faith" (James 5:15). We pray to a loving Father who delights to give us the best. "He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things? (Romans 8:32).

"Let us draw near ... not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together ... so much the more as ye see the day approaching" (Hebrews 10:22; Hebrews 10:25).

R. E.A.R. The Epistle to the Colossians The Glories of the Son (A Bible reading at the Kilkeel conference in May 1992) Colossians 1:13-22

We have here a very wonderful presentation of the Lord Jesus and perhaps the meetings thus far have been preparing us for the consideration of these verses. On the past day we were reminded of the activity of the Holy Spirit who delights to take of the things of Christ and show them to us, and we might add that we are set quite at liberty in the Divine presence for this meditation. In verse 14 we have redemption and the forgiveness of sins. By the forgiveness of sins, our sins and their guilt have been dealt with, and redemption sets us free so that now we are at liberty to be engaged with the One who is presented to us as the Son of the Father's love. That expression is what He is and what He always was in His position as Son in the Godhead. The Son in the bosom of the Father, the Son in the unchangeable love of the Father. This is essentially His place. Out of this spring the many other glories that are brought before us in this passage.

Yes. He is spoken of as the Son of the Father in the second epistle of John, and the expression Son of the Father's love brings in the atmosphere and fullness of John's writings, even though we are reading Paul in this particular passage. We now come to this expression "Image of the invisible God". Perhaps our thoughts go back to the earlier use of this word, in connection with Adam. Here we get exactly the same expression, but used in connection with the One who is the Son.

Adam began to be, didn't he? This verse begins with "Who is".

Yes. We do well to keep clearly before us the unique glories of the Lord Jesus. Adam was created in the image and after the likeness of God. Scripture doesn't use the word likeness in connection with the Lord Jesus because He is God. The statement carries with it the idea that if one is going to be image of the invisible God, if one is going to make God fully known, He must Himself be God.

Yes. In connection with this word image there seem to be the dual thoughts of representation and manifestation. In Genesis 1:1-31 Adam is described as made in the image and likeness of God. Similarly 1 Corinthians 11:7 speaks of man as God's image and glory. I notice that when the word is used in relation to the Lord Jesus here in Colossians the definite article is used. He is Image of THE God. Similarly, in 2 Corinthians 4:4, we read that the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the Image of THE God, should shine unto them. The article is used in connection with the Lord Jesus, as showing again His distinctive place in contrast with Adam.

Some of us may be used to thinking of an image as something that isn't quite the real thing. This is an idea that we must put out of our minds when we come to the term image in relation to the Lord Jesus. Everything that is said about Him as the Image is true because He is the real thing. He is God.

If Adam was the last to be placed in the first creation, the Lord Jesus is the first to take His place in the new creation. As coming out from among the dead, God now builds a new world around Him, and everything in this new world takes character from Christ.

I learned the message of this phrase perhaps, when I was thinking about the words of the hymn: "Thou wast the image in man's lowly guise of the invisible to mortal eyes". There are things about

God that we could never have known unless the Lord Jesus had become man. So do you think that He was not the Image of the invisible God before incarnation or has He always been Image of the invisible God?

I don't think the invisible God could really be seen in the way that He is presented here until the Lord came into manhood.

I was thinking of the theophanies. There you have the Son in visible form appearing as Image of the invisible God.

Certainly in the Old Testament there were those pre-incarnate manifestations of God. Usually He appeared as the Angel of the Lord, though sometimes, mainly in Genesis 18:1-33, as Jehovah.

He did appear before the incarnation, fleetingly and for specific purposes, but there were things not manifested in a sustained way until the Lord Jesus came into manhood. Adam was put in a position where he was to manifest and represent God because of what he was he didn't fill out that position. Here, now, is a Man who filled out in every way everything involved in the term Image of the invisible God. This seems to lead to the conclusion that this manifestation was given, this representation was effected, in manhood. And this expression applies to Him still, where He is, in the glory. He IS Image of the invisible God.

Whatever we say about this expression it is without any shadow of doubt that the next expression views Him as a Man here below. He is the Firstborn of all creation.

Yes. If the Creator steps into His own creation He must take the first place. Quite often we have heard addresses in which the expression Firstborn has been put alongside the expression Only Begotten. When we speak of Him as the Only Begotten we view Him as the unique One. It is an expression we find mainly in John's writings, though not exclusively so.* In the French Bible I believe it is translated "God's Son unique". We view Him in His unique glory as the Son. In contrast with that, when we get the expression Firstborn, it is always in relation to others. The term is used 7 times in the New Testament.**

{*The word is used in connection with Christ in John 1:14, 18; John 3:16, 18 and 1 John 4:9. It is used of others in Luke 7:12; Luke 8:42; Luke 9:38; and Hebrews 11:17.}

{**The word is used in connection with Christ in Matt. 1:25; Luke 2:7; Rom. 8:29; Col. 1:15, 18; Heb. 1:6 and Rev. 1:5. It is used of others in Heb. 11:28 and Heb. 12:23.}

It is not a question here of the time order, but the expression emphasises rather that He is first in dignity, first in rank. He is preeminent in every sphere. There are many in the Old Testament named as the firstborn who weren't actually the first born in time

It is one of the many gems to follow up in Scripture that in Genesis, the seed plot of the Bible, there are seven pairs of men where the first one born was not the firstborn one. First in time, but not in rank.

We know that creation is attributed to God in Genesis 1:1-31 verse 1, and the Hebrew word for God there is in the plural rather than the singular or dual form, indicating the involvement of the whole Godhead. However, if one Person of the Godhead is named in connection with creation it is

almost always the Son who is given the glory too of creatorial activity.

There are three things connected with Him, creation, redemption and judgment.

We have here statements in connection with the wide ramifications of His creatorial activity. We get ". . . by Him were all things created" at the beginning of verse 16 and "all things were created by Him, and for Him" at the end of the verse. The footnotes in the Darby translation show that there are actually three different prepositions used. The fact that all things were created by Him, that His was the instrumental power, and for Him, we can all easily understand, but the first "by" shows that His characteristic power is seen in the whole of creation. It connects with Romans 1:20 where we read that "the invisible things of Him (God) are perceived, being apprehended by the mind through the things that are made, both His eternal power and divinity...". As we look out on the wide creation we can see the hand of the Saviour.

Am I right when I say that the same preposition is used further down where we read that "by Him all things consist"? It's the same word as the one you have referred to in the beginning of verse 16. We could say "For in Him were all things created". I understand that the latter part of verse 17 could be rendered ". . . and in Him all things consist".

That's right, His power that brought them into being, keeps them together. As well as that, though distinct from it, He was the agent, the instrument, in bringing it all into being. John 1:1-51, Colossians 1:1-29 and Hebrews 1:1-14, all meet on this point, that He is the One who has created all things. In view of the teaching that is brought round from door to door today, it is worth noticing this clause "for Him" at the end of verse 16. They will admit that He was the instrument of creation, but they cannot say that all things were created for Him. They say He created all things for God, as His agent, but this verse shows that He created all things for Himself. The fourth chapter of Revelation underlines that too. "Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for Thou hast created all things, and for Thy pleasure they are and were created". (verse 11)

Both as to being brought into being and continuing in being, all things exist or have being in virtue of His being. That is not an easy concept for our finite minds to consider, yet it is what the Scripture says, "All things received being through Him, and without Him not one thing received being which has received being" (John 1:3). All things that had a beginning owe their beginning to Him. Verse 17 here in Colossians 1:1-29 is perhaps even more staggering. Putting it negatively, if it could be conceived for a moment that the Lord Jesus should cease to exist, all creation would cease to exist at that moment, because all things subsist, hang together, continue to be, in virtue of His being. As we read down a passage like this it becomes evident why the apostle is driving home these facts. Some of these things are possibly the things that the philosophers were trying to turn them aside to, things invisible, angelic powers and so on. But here he is telling us of One who is greater than all, the Creator and Sustainer of all.

I think we'll come to that again in Colossians 2:1-23, where we find Him as Head of all principality and power. Of course, they are unfallen ones, but even the evil ones were originally created by Him according to this chapter.

They weren't evil when He created them, of course. That's why verse 16 makes no reference to "things under the earth".

They all came from His hand good, but when sin came in it invaded even these principalities and authorities, as we know from Ephesians 6:1-24. The visible and invisible might be connected with thrones and lordships, which I take to be visible, and principalities and authorities, which I take to be invisible.

We read later on how He has triumphed over the evil ones. (Colossians 2:15).

I notice that the word for created is in a slightly different tense in verses 16 and 17. It says in verse 16 that "... by Him were all things created". That is a once for all action, but the second reference, at the end of the verse, signifies something accomplished in the past which continues to the present. I think this ties in beautifully with the fact that He sustains the creation He has brought into being.

"And He is before all". What a tremendous statement this is. John the Baptist said "He was before me" (John 1:15). We have the Lord's words in John 8:58. "Before Abraham was, I am". Here we go further back still, "He is before all". We can't go any further back than that, can we?

All the dignitaries mentioned in Scripture have their antecedent. If we think of David, He is the Root of David, and of Melchisedec, he was assimilated to the Son of God. The Scripture says of Adam that he is the figure of Him to come. (Revelation 22:16; Hebrews 7:3; Romans 5:14). As we read these things we have to keep continually in mind that it is the Son of the Father's love we are speaking about.

Well now, moving on, we come to this expression "And He is the Head of the body, the assembly". The assembly isn't referred to here to show its dignified position but to show the privilege of the body, the assembly, in being in touch with such a Head.

We know that He wasn't the Head of the body until He went on high. He couldn't be the Head of the body until the body came into existence, which it did on the day of Pentecost. This expression puts the emphasis upon His Person. In Ephesians 1:1-23 it says that God "gave Him to be Head over all things to the assembly, which is His body . . . " (Ephesians 1:22-23). Here, however, the statement is very emphatic "He is the Head of the body, the assembly . . .", and that seems to suggest not just His Manhood in glory, but who He is that is Head of the body. The simple solution is that in Ephesians 1:22 He is viewed as Man, whereas here the emphasis is upon His divine Personality. This little expression keeps coming up "He is".

Doesn't that magnify the Person? When we come lower down to talk about the cross for instance, it says "His cross", which again emphasises the greatness of the Person who is before us in the passage. The next clause ". . . who is the Beginning, the Firstborn from the dead; that in all things He might have the preeminence", contains the thought of His being preeminent and chief. The verse refers to His being pre-eminent in both the first creation, that we've been speaking about, and here, the new creation. And our thoughts are now directed to His Manhood. In connection with the first creation we have been thinking of His Godhead glory, but here, as Firstborn from among the dead, we think particularly of His Manhood. He came into manhood, went into death, and now that He is out of death He takes the first place, this dignified place, as a Man. It has always been God's thought that this new creation should be under a man. Here our eyes are turned to that Man. The term "Firstborn from among the dead" affirms most strongly what has been said about being first in rank rather than first in time. We do know from Scripture that, as well as the Lord

Jesus and those spoken of in Matthew 27:52-53, when "many bodies of the saints which slept, arose, and came out of the graves after His resurrection", there are eight persons in Scripture who were raised. That again, being eight, seems to indicate that God intended to make a new start. But there could be no new start, there could be nothing for God, unless one of sufficient rank should institute a new race, and here He is. And all of those of whom you speak, apart from the Lord Himself, have gone back into death again, but this One is a life giving spirit. Not only is He out of death personally, but He is able to bring into being a new generation who will life with Him. As to the word "Beginning", we do get in Revelation 3:14 that He is "the Beginning of the creation of God", which clearly is new creation.

Yes. It does come between the expressions "He is the Head of the body" and the "Firstborn from among the dead" so the context seems to require what you have said, that it is connected with the new creation sphere.

It ties in again with this word image. He stamps His own character upon everything in this new creation world.

You get in Scripture "Quartus a brother" (Romans 16:23), "Tertius" (Romans 16:22), "Secundus" (Acts 20:4), but no Primus. There is one who takes that position in the third epistle of John, and what a lot of trouble he caused, "Diotrephes, who loveth to have the pre-eminence". But the first place belongs to Christ.

Daniel had the third place and Joseph had the second place but Christ has the preeminence (Daniel 5:7; Daniel 5:16; Daniel 5:29; Genesis 41:39-43). Who is involved, and what is involved, in verse 19? When we look at it carefully we find that the better translation gives "For in Him all the Fulness was pleased to dwell". The word "Godhead" comes in the second chapter, verse 9, but not here. It refers to the Lord Jesus in Manhood and again we find another aspect of His glory, that in Him all the Fulness was pleased to dwell, and it was with a very definite operation in view. In this connection we often turn to certain passages, such as John 14:10, where the Lord said that "the words I speak unto you I speak not of Myself: but the Father that dwelleth in Me, He doeth the works", and Matthew 12:28 where He said "I cast out devils by the Spirit of God". It is clear that the Father and the Holy Spirit were pleased to dwell in Him, the Son. I notice that J.N.D. puts the word "Godhead" in to make it a little clearer, though the word isn't in the original. So really it is the Godhead working for It's own pleasure, and we find here the combined working of Father, Son and Holy Spirit in order to accomplish a very great work.

It is an edifying exercise to trace through the New Testament the more than sixty occasions where Father, Son and Holy Spirit are seen to be in absolute concert, at one, in all that they do. When did this Fulness dwelling in Him take place?

Surely the Fulness of the Godhead has always dwelt in Him. It did not begin to do so, either at the incarnation or at His baptism. This verse counteracted the ideas of the gnostics who were saying that there was some fulness, some power, apart from Him. Here Paul says in Him was all Fulness. The term "filled to overflowing" which seems to be involved, is suggestive of that fulness which leads to a work being done.

There was a work to be done and at the Lord's baptism we get for the first time the Trinity in manifestation, and this work was set in motion. 2 Corinthians 5:18 speaks of it, where there is

reference to the ministry of reconciliation. That is connected with the Lord in His pathway down here. The word of reconciliation referred to in 2 Corinthians 5:19 is what is continued by the apostles and those who follow them, but the ministry of reconciliation commenced from the time of the Lord's anointing.

It has been pointed out already that there are different works attributed to the Son. One of them is creation. Now we have another one here. He is the Reconciler. We might use the word Redeemer or some other word, but here in this passage He is the Reconciler, and just as we were considering how great the Person is who created all things, we are also made to see how great the Person is who is going to reconcile all things to the Fulness of the Godhead. And it seems that it is the pleasure of the Fulness, the Godhead, to do it. It doesn't say only that the Fulness dwelt in Him but that "in Him all the Fulness was pleased to dwell, and by Him to reconcile all things to Itself". It brings in the pleasure of the Godhead in doing this. The end in view will certainly be for the pleasure of the Godhead. Some might say that there isn't much evidence of this reconciliation but in fact there is. When we come down to verse 21 we see that those belonging to the Christian company are the first ones to be reconciled and verse 20 brings before us the basis on which all things will be reconciled. "Having made peace by the blood of His cross, by Him. .." There seems to be a certain parallel with Leviticus 16:1-34, and the day of atonement. The blood of the sin offering was carried in and put on and before the mercy seat, and then, in the same chapter, we have the wide ramifications of reconciliation clearly stated "And he shall make an atonement for the holy sanctuary, and he shall make an atonement for the tabernacle of the congregation, and for the altar; and he shall make an atonement for the priests, and for all the people of the congregation" (verse 33). The basis was laid through the blood being carried in and put upon the mercy seat. I think that is the point we have reached in this world's history. The work has been done, the blood is upon the mercy seat, but the full results of this work await the coming day for their manifestation. In the meantime there is a company on earth who are reconciled. The things are future, but the persons are now.

Well, only some of the persons, because we know that in the coming day there are going to be many families in the heavens and on earth. In the meantime there is one company who are already in the gain of reconciliation.

It is things first here, things on the earth and things in the heavens. This is connected with the day when the creation will cease to groan and enter into the liberty of the glory of God.

Why is the earth put first?

Well, happily, there is a company on earth who are already reconciled. We are part of that company, the Christian company. The wonder of it is that company is a predominantly Gentile company. "And you, that were sometime alienated, and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath He reconciled". You Gentiles. With regard to ourselves being reconciled, it doesn't say by the blood of His cross, it says "In the body of His flesh through death". That is the way reconciliation has been effected with regard to us. Reconciliation brings us out of the condition of enmity and distance that marks everyone by nature. In other words reconciliation hasn't got so much to do with what we have done, as with what we are. It follows that reconciliation is not a matter of forgiveness. There can be no forgiveness for a condition of enmity towards God. The only way that God could take it up was by death, and by the Lord's death we have been removed

from the place of enmity and brought into the place of nearness and acceptance before God. Putting it in other terms "Our old man has been crucified with Him" (Romans 6:6).

We have His blood shed to meet our guilt, and His body given to meet our state. The truth is that God forgives sins but not sin. He had to condemn sin and He condemned it in the death of His own Son.

What has interested me about this subject of reconciliation is that it occurs in the fifth chapter of Romans at the point where the epistle changes from the consideration of our guilt being dealt with, to what we are being dealt with. It is just at that juncture that he brings in the thought of reconciliation. It seems to be a lead into the second part of the epistle.

Strangely enough none of the ten references in the New Testament to the Lord Jesus as Man, using the word, come in Colossians. However, "In the body of His flesh through death" is one of the phrases which affirms that the Lord Jesus became man in order to effect this reconciliation.

Alienation would be connected with our position as being removed from God. But what were we doing there? We were enemies in our minds by wicked works. The early brethren used to speak about "changing our man", and that is what the middle chapters in Romans are about, changing from Adam to Christ. We measure now our position in nearness by turning our eyes to Christ. And this statement in verse 22 is true of every believer because it rests on the basis of the blood of His cross, His death.

Irreproachable, as Mr. Darby’s footnote shows, is "one against whom no charge can be brought". It is very attractive to see the Christian position, that we are holy and without blame and no charge can be brought against us.

It is a settled matter, before our responsibility is referred to. The Old in the New Explained Deuteronomy 6:13; Matthew 4:10 "Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve". The Father had declared the Lord Jesus to be His beloved Son (Matthew 3:17). In the two temptations already considered the devil sought to induce Him to exercise His own power and will, as Son, but He had shown that the Word of God alone was what governed Him. He would not act either for or from Himself, but was true to the subject place which He had taken.

Having failed by subtlety to breach His defences the enemy presses one final line of attack. As the prince (ruler) of this world the disposing of its kingdoms was in his hands* (John 12:31; John 14:30; John 16:11). They and their glory would be given to Him if He would but offer to the tempter that which is due to God alone (Acts 10:25-26; Revelation 19:10). How many in the place of rule had listened to the tempter’s voice, even such as had received their place directly from God (Genesis 1:26-28; Genesis 3:17; Daniel 2:36-38; Daniel 3:1-23). What then of the One "born King of the Jews" who was to be "Ruler in Israel" (Matthew 2:2; Micah 5:2)? He was a King of a different kind, of another moral order, and He would neither receive the kingdoms from the enemy’s hand or rule over a people that were subject to his rule (Acts 17:7; John 6:14-15). The path which led up to the throne led Him first to the cross, in order that the foundation of the Kingdom might be laid and those redeemed who were to have a place in it (Matthew 16:21-23; Daniel 9:24; Psalms 22:13; Psalms 22:27-29). As the Son of Man He will receive the Kingdom from God Himself, "the Ancient of days", and then the kingdoms of this world will become "the Kingdoms of our Lord, and of His Christ" (Daniel 7:13-14; Revelation 11:15).

{*We are told in 1 John 5:19 that "the whole world lies in the wicked one" (J.N.D. trans.). Because of the fall the enemy has power over mankind, and can appeal to the passions and lusts of the flesh in order to draw away souls after himself (Col. 1:13; Gen. 3:6; 1 John 2:15-17. Of course, he had nothing in our Lord who had a holy, not a fallen, nature). This does not contradict the fact that authority comes from God, from above, or that the powers that be are ordained of God (Rom. 13:17). Those in positions of authority are responsible to God for the proper exercise of the authority which they wield (John 19:11). Nebuchadnezzar illustrates the two sides very clearly, though in many ways he was an exceptional case for prophetic as well as other reasons. He received his position directly from God but then became an instrument of Satan in enforcing the worship of the idol which he had set up.}

Once again the tempter's proposal was met with words of Scripture taken from the book of Deuteronomy. The directions given in the chapters quoted from were to regulate the children of Israel in the Land they were about to enter (Deuteronomy 6:1; Deuteronomy 8:1; Deuteronomy 9:1). They are warned repeatedly against the idolatry of the nations they were to dispossess and of the evil practices flowing from that idolatry (Deuteronomy 6:14-15; Deuteronomy 7:4-6; Deuteronomy 7:16; Deuteronomy 7:24-26; Deuteronomy 8:19-20). They could have no self confidence in this matter since the worshipping of the golden calf that Aaron made had already shown the propensity of their own hearts (Deuteronomy 9:4-21; Exodus 32:1-35). Is it not striking that the very next chapter speaks of the ark of shittim wood and of the two tables of stone placed within it (Deuteronomy 10:15)? The ark speaks of Christ, who could say "Thy law is within My heart" (Psalms 40:8). He had set Jehovah continually before Him and would have no other gods as His God (Psalms 16:4; Psalms 16:8; Exodus 20:3; Deuteronomy 5:7). In calling upon the Lord to fall down and worship him Satan had unmasked himself (Isaiah 14:12-14). What a contrast he presents with the One before whom he stood (John 6:38)! The Word of God having been given in answer, the one who, though a creature, sought the place of God, is dismissed by the One who, being God, had become a Man.

R.F.W. From Our Archive "The Morning Star" The Heavenly Call (Continued from page 239; this paper completes this series)

We have spoken of Peter's confession of Jesus as the Christ, THE SON OF THE LIVING GOD, and noticed how it was the occasion of the Lord's first intimation of what the church was to be, and the divine basis of all subsequent revelation as to the church in its varied aspects. We have also traced rapidly the place that same confession had in Paul's preaching and in his epistles. But the epistle to the Hebrews demands some further examination.

It is this epistle which particularly unfolds the "heavenly calling" of the saints during the present economy of grace, and thus distinguishes them in more than one respect from all those who went before. Of these latter, Abraham was the great example: first as to the character of his faith, which is the same in principle for all believers of every dispensation (Romans 4:3); secondly, as to his call "to go out" to another land, and the maintenance of the pilgrim character even in the land to which he went. That has also a spiritual application to believers of the present day; but considered as history, it is just there that we learn the contrast between the Old Testament saints and the church of Christ. Abraham's call was earthly, that is, out of Ur of the Chaldees to Canaan, on reaching which he built his first altar (Genesis 11:31; Genesis 12:5; Genesis 12:7; Hebrews

11:8-9). Our calling is heavenly from the start, and is maintained in principle by a heavenly priesthood. It is well to note also that, in the description of the "mount Zion" and "heavenly Jerusalem," which is set before us for our encouragement, the "church of the firstborn" (saints), whose names "are written in heaven," is distinguished from the "spirits of just men made perfect," which evidently represent the Old Testament saints (Hebrews 12:22-24). In this epistle to the Hebrews, who were well acquainted with the letter of the Old Testament, the Spirit of God everywhere insists upon the Sonship of Christ; the SON is prominent from beginning to end, in all the aspects of His glory which are touched upon. Types abound, of course, but their object is to bring out in every case the marked contrast between the type and the antitype. If this simple fact be observed, the whole of the epistle becomes luminous for the believer's soul, and the most difficult problems are solved. We are exhorted to look off unto Jesus, the Author and Finisher of faith (Hebrews 12:2), and thus to "run with patience the race that is set before us."

God has spoken in these last days, in the person of the SON, now hidden from our sight, but visible to the eye of faith, and in Him He speaks now "from heaven" (Hebrews 1:2-3; Hebrews 2:9; Hebrews 12:25). All His work of atonement is accomplished, and He now exercises His priesthood in favour of His redeemed. This priesthood is heavenly in character, and is exercised from heaven, yea, the very highest heaven; for as the high priest of old had to pass from the altar in the court, through the holy place, into the holiest of all, so Jesus has passed through the heavens even to the right hand of the Majesty on high, and His glory is set "far above all heavens" (Psalms 8:1; Ephesians 4:10). Thence it is that He watches over His own and intercedes for them (Hebrews 4:14; Hebrews 7:26; Hebrews 8:1-2; Hebrews 9:24).

Besides this, as High Priest, consecrated "with an oath," which the sons of Aaron never were, He is pre-eminently the SON (Hebrews 4:14; Hebrews 5:5; Hebrews 5:8; Hebrews 7:3; Hebrews 7:28.) Those who despise Him are guilty of treading under foot the SON OF GOD (Hebrews 6:6; Hebrews 10:29).

God's purpose is to have "many sons" in glory. Christ had therefore to become the Captain of their salvation by means of His sufferings and death on their account; but having now taken His place "on the right hand of the Majesty on high," He intercedes for and succours all who, through His finished work, are made heirs of salvation. He receives the "children" from God's hand as a gift to Himself, and looks upon them as having a heavenly character in consequence, though they are still waiting till He comes to fetch them to be with Him where He is; but as belonging to that place in glory, He looks upon them as His companions, or "fellows." It is that character which He desires we should maintain (Hebrews 1:9; Hebrews 2:14; Hebrews 3:1; Hebrews 3:14). He has Himself gone through the whole course, and is now in heavenly glory, and from the height and power of that glory, He, as the great High Priest, ministers to all who are called to follow Him in the race which He has run (Hebrews 2:18; Hebrews 4:15-16; Hebrews 5:7; Hebrews 5:9; Hebrews 6:19-20; Hebrews 7:24-28; Hebrews 8:1; Hebrews 9:24; Hebrews 9:28; Hebrews 10:35-37, Hebrews 12:13). "Seeing then that we have a great High Priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession," and "run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus," waiting in patience until He come! The character and effect of Paul's preaching the "Son of God" (Acts 9:20) is well set forth in the Thessalonian believers, as shown in the first epistle to them, and which was probably the first portion of the New Testament committed to writing. They were "turned to God from idols, to serve the living and true God; and to wait for His

Son from heaven." This remarkable change was wrought, and maintained in them in spite of circumstances so adverse that the apostle himself feared that they might have possibly been turned aside by Satan’s continued efforts. Being himself hindered from going to them, he sent Timothy to establish and comfort them, and was greatly cheered by the tidings Timothy brought back to him of their faith and love (1 Thessalonians 3:1-8). That was the occasion of his writing the epistle, not only to confirm their hope in waiting for the Son of God, but also to impart to them a special revelation from God as to the manner of the Lord’s return.

Up to that time they had had no news of the way in which the Lord was about to redeem His promise of coming for His saints to receive them to Himself, as He indeed told His disciples before He left them (John 14:13). The early believers of the gospel, including Peter himself, had connected the Lord’s return with the setting up of His millennial kingdom (Acts 3:20-21). And consequently the death of some of the converts filled the others with unwonted sorrow, under the impression that the departed ones would necessarily be deprived of their part in the glory they had expected to share in.

Such was indeed a fitting opportunity for the fresh revelation confided to the apostle, for the comfort and consolation of the saints in all time. While confirming the hope of the Lord’s return at any moment, and inspiring the saints in their attitude of waiting with fresh spiritual vigour, it directed their thoughts more definitely than ever to the Lord’s Person, and to His portion in His saints for time and eternity. When He returns to this earth, He will bring His saints with Him. That had been already foretold (Zechariah 14:5; Jude 1:14). But how it was to be accomplished was not made known, until it became needful to answer questions which arose out of the difficulties and trials of the Macedonian converts. They had to be assured first of all that the Lord would take His suffering saints, both dead and living, out of this scene, before establishing His kingdom and glory here below; and secondly, that this certainty was to prevent their supposing that the final manifestation of evil and Satan’s power had already begun (1 Thessalonians 4:14; 2 Thessalonians 2:1-2). When the Lord left this earth from the mount of Olives, the cloud concealed Him from the gaze of His disciples (Acts 1:9). Similarly, the clouds will hide from the knowledge of this world the taking up of the saints at the Lord’s coming "in the air." As far as the world is concerned, their withdrawal from the earth will usher in the darkness of the "night" which precedes its final judgment (1 Thessalonians 5:17). The MORNING STAR is indeed the harbinger of the coming day; but it shines in the night with a heavenly glory of its own, which has very little effect on the earth. Those that recognise it, rejoice in it for its own sake. The Lord grant that we may, each and all, be 80 watching, and occupied with Himself that, as we hear in our inmost souls His assurance, "Surely I come quickly," our hearts may respond with the Spirit and the bride, "Even so, come, Lord Jesus!"

William Joseph Lowe (1838-1927)

Book Review Primitive Christianity by C. E. Stuart, 105 pp., hardback, £8.95 CHAPTER TWO, London SE18 3AF, reprinted 1992

Primitive Christianity — what do we mean? Is Christianity a religion that has gradually developed or evolved from simple, austere, barbaric, crude origins in days long ago to its present splendid maturity and sophistication? Many sociologists might teach this, but not so Clarence Esme Stuart, well-known among the "early brethren" and author of this little booklet originally published in 1868

as a series of articles in "A Voice to the Faithful." CHAPTER TWO has done well to reprint as part of its Classic Facsimile Series this refreshing little study on some of the practical essentials of Christianity as they are presented in connection with the early church in the New Testament.

Divided into eight parts and a conclusion, the booklet begins with a chapter on 1 Thessalonians 1:1-10 entitled "The Effect of the Word of God." The work at Thessalonica, Stuart says, "became a pattern or 'type' of what may be achieved by evangelization, and what those evangelized should exhibit." He goes on with simply written, succinct, practical chapters on "The Evangelist," "The Work of the Evangelist," "The Teacher," "Ministering to the Saints," "Remembering the Poor," "The Service of Women" and "The Public Ministry of Women" before reaching his "Conclusion." The chapters abound with practical examples of true Christianity in action, details beautifully drawn together without being wordy. Especially relevant to us today, "The Service of Women" is a lovely summary of some of the many precious contributions women rendered to Christ and in Christianity. It very fittingly precedes "The Public Ministry of Women," which then firmly but constructively makes plain the differences between the areas in which Christian women can serve God and the areas that He in His sovereign wisdom has reserved for Christian men.

Appended to "Primitive Christianity" proper in this booklet is a companion article on 2 Peter 3:1-18 entitled "The Sufficiency of the Written Word and the Use of It." Though written years before the pentecostal movement, charismatic movement, or today's so-called "third wave" of signs and wonders, this paper through its solid emphasis on what the Scripture says well counters their unhealthy influence and that of similar movements founded upon people's subjective experiences or the teachings of the founders of new religions. Stuart attacks no one, but underscores positively the completeness of the revelation God has now given us in His Word. He shows that for us as Christians this is in complete contrast to Israel's situation under law, as on pages 93 to 96 he says:

"The written Word of God, as they [Israel] received it, was liable at any time to be supplemented by fresh revelations communicated to a prophet ... Such a condition of things ... must have tended to keep them looking around to discover who in their midst might be next used to reveal still further His mind. The written Word was then manifestly an incomplete revelation of God's will, though, as far as it went, the people had to give heed to it, and obey it.... With us the case is different. With the departure of the Apostles from earth all additions to the Word of God ceased.... The proper position of the Church on earth is that of expectancy not of a fresh prophet to arise, but of the Lord Jesus to come at any moment into the air . . . it is plain such a hope could never be really embraced as imminent, if we might lawfully look for fresh messengers to be sent to reveal still more of His will." Being part of a facsimile series, "Primitive Christianity" retains the Roman numerals that were standard in Bible and other chapter references a century ago. While a minor nuisance or a potential handicap to a few readers today, these are a small price to pay for an otherwise clearly printed and excellent little book.

Eugene P. Vedder, Jr.

Vol 01 - Truth & Testimony Vol. 1 No. 2, 1991.

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Allanhurst Hymnal 1200 8.6.8.6.8.6.

Unless the Lord the house should build, The labourers work in vain. With richest furnishings though filled, No peace therein can reign. But let the Lord His blessing give, Then all in safety live.

Unless the Lord protection gives, The town may be o'erthrown, And everyone who therein lives No peace or rest has known. But those that trust it to His care May know His presence there.

Unless our life to Him we trust, No settled peace we'll know. To find true inward rest we must To Christ the Saviour go; For He alone can sins forgive, And we for Him may live.

Head Covering In the first issue of this magazine the editors included an extract from a letter of J. G. Bellett on the subject of head covering in the Assembly. As complementary to that extract we now include another which we hope our readers will find equally helpful. While obedience, and not understanding, is the first thing that God calls for from His children, where there is obedience understanding will surely follow.

One may then more intelligently, but not more gladly, bow in happy subjection to every direction given to us in God's Word. The subject of head covering is closely allied to that of headship. These subjects, in the context of 1 Corinthians 11:1-34, are considered in some detail in a booklet called Headship and Head Covering According to Scripture by Mr. R. K. Campbell, which the editors heartily recommend to any who would like further help on these matters. R.F.W.

"The woman's head was to be covered. The apostle shows by her hair that God had covered her, and her mind and will are put on the same ground. A woman ought to be covered at family prayers, or as one of Philip's daughters prophesying in her father's house. The principle applies to both praying and prophesying The man is the head of the woman, and she puts a covering on her physical head to show that there is authority over her. The apostle takes the state of the head of the body as a sign of the condition of the man or woman in respect of their moral head. The woman's head-the man — is her head really, and she must cover her own head in sign of her subjection; and so she says in effect, I have no head myself; the man is my head, and I am in subjection. The man could not do that, or there would be no visible head. A woman's gift ought to be confined to women, or to her own family". From Notes of a reading on 1 Corinthians with J.N D.

Abba Father Mark 14:36. Romans 8:15. Galatians 4:6. The phrase "Abba Father" occurs three times in the New Testament. Abba is Chaldee or Aramaic for "Father". In the original text it is transliterated into Greek but untranslated. The second word of the couplet that we are studying is the regular Greek word for Father and is translated into our modern language — along with the rest of the Greek text. This repetition of the words for Father in the two different ancient tongues has a purpose. One is sure that Abba is not merely a diminutive or affectionate form like the English word "Daddy". This is often asserted by preachers but seems to be an inadequate

explanation. The combination of the Jewish and Greek languages in the use of these two words seems a clear indication by the Spirit of God of the great truth that there is One Body.

God has predestinated us for Sonship (Ephesians 1:5).* We were once of the nations, in the flesh, apart from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel and without God in the world (Ephesians 2:11-12). Gentile and Jew may now together address God as Father. For Christ is our peace, Who has made both one, the middle wall of partition between Jew and Gentile having been broken down. He has reconciled both in one body to God through the cross. Paul continues to instruct the Ephesians that we have access through Him by one Spirit to the Father.

{*the King James translation gives "Spirit of adoption" in Romans 8:15, "adoption of sons " in Galatians 4:5 and "the adoption of children" in Ephesians 1:5. In Mr. Darby's translation "that we might receive sonship" is given in Galatians 4:5 and in some editions there are footnotes to Romans 8:15 and Ephesians 1:5. "Adoption is the same word as sonship in Galatians 4:5".}

It is an immense privilege for us to take up the same words that our Lord addressed to His Father. In Gethsemane's garden we see Him in an agony, submitting to God's will. He experienced in an anticipative way a foretaste of what He would endure at the cross. It was His delight to do God's will but another constraint upon His soul was the eternal deliverance of the elect. Was there not joy set before Him, would He not see of the fruit of the travail of His soul and be satisfied? Through suffering He would bring many sons unto glory. Though of Jewish and Gentile stock, by the work foreseen at Gethsemane, Christ would lead a united company which He is not ashamed to call brethren. To the Roman assembly comprising, as so many of the early assemblies, of both Jew and Gentile (though predominantly Gentiles; Romans 3:29) Paul writes: "For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of sonship, whereby we cry, Abba, Father".* The liberating gospel of glory bring once lost sinners into the place of sons. Would it not have been sufficient to be a pardoned criminal? No, not for God. His purpose was to elevate the fallen creature not just to the place of a servant but to that of a child — a son, a joint-heir with Christ. To the Galatian assemblies Paul again uses this beautiful couplet in Galatians 4:6. The Judaisers in that group of gatherings really offered nothing. They would place their disciples under bondage. They would rob the saint of the liberty to draw near to God in the same manner as Christ. The flesh would intrude and make the soul subject to the legal requirements of the Mosaic law — but this would never suit the free grace of God. They needed to stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ had made them free.

Whenever we use these precious words "Abba Father" they should remind us of our Saviour's agony in Gethsemane and the wonderful work accomplished at Golgotha which has brought to light the heart of God. He delights still to lead us into the Father's presence. If, in the marvellous grace of God, we are made children of God by faith in Christ Jesus, we are responsible to act as such, to walk in a worthy manner, to walk worthy of God Who has called us unto His kingdom and glory.

E.N.C. A type worthy of consideration Genesis 48:8-10.

Joseph is a wonderful type of Christ who brings His children into the Father's presence. It is the Father's delight to bless us. From Our Archive MINISTRY OF THE WORD AT THE ABERDEEN CONFERENCE Wednesday Evening, Speaker: Hamilton Smith. September 13th, 1922. THE

PATTERN OF THE HOUSE (Ezekiel 43:10-12 and Acts 2:1-47)

While we have been together reference has been made to that wonderful scripture, Ephesians 5:1-33, which tells us that "Christ also loved the church, and gave Himself for it; That He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, That He might present it to Himself a glorious church". From this scripture we rightly judge that to the heart of Christ the Church is the most precious thing on earth to-day.

Now I propose to speak on one aspect of the Church of God. We know, do we not? that the Church is presented in two great aspects in the New Testament. First, as the body of Christ; then, under another figure, as the House of God. When we speak of the Church as the body of Christ we think of all the Christians on earth formed into one body by the Holy Spirit and united to Christ as the Head in heaven; but when we speak of the Church as the House of God, we think of all believers united together by the Holy Spirit to form the dwelling place of God upon earth. In other words, if we think of the Church as the body of Christ, we think more especially of the Church in its heavenly aspect, because it is obvious that if we are united to the Head in heaven we belong to the place where the Head is. But when we speak of the Church as the House of God, we think of the church in its earthly aspect as the dwelling place of God on earth, and therefore as a witness of God to the world. It is this latter aspect of the Church that I want to refer to this evening, namely, the House of God. As the truth of the House of God may be new to some here, I will first refer to two scriptures which definitely show that God has His House on earth to-day. Let me read one verse: Ephesians 2:22, "In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit". Then read 1 Timothy 3:14-15, "These things write I unto thee, hoping to come unto thee shortly: But if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God . . . " Then the Apostle distinctly says that the House of God "is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth". I simply refer to these two scriptures to prove the great fact that God has His House upon earth to-day.

Now, brethren, I would just remind you of a historical fact which is somewhat remarkable. Most here will remember, how that in the last century, about 1825, God in His grace revived the great truth of the Church, and at that time the truth that was first apprehended was the Church in the aspect of the body of Christ. It is striking that it was not until some years later that the truth of the Church as the House of God was generally apprehended or taught. It was only in the year 1860 that Mr. Darby published his tract, "The House of God; the Body of Christ", and in 1867 his second tract, "The Church — The House and the Body", appeared. The importance of this lies in the fact that the Church as the House of God is the last great truth that has been revived by God. And mark you, dear friends, the truth that is last revived is the truth that we first let go in a day of departure, and hence I think we shall agree that this truth of the Church as the House of God is of the first importance, and therefore I venture to bring it before you in a simple and practical way.

Now before I go further, I will ask you to turn to Ezekiel 43:10-12, "Thou son of man, shew the house to the house of Israel, that they may be ashamed of their iniquities; and let them measure the pattern. And if they be ashamed of all that they have done, shew them the form of the house, and the fashion thereof, and the goings out thereof, and the comings in thereof, and all the forms thereof, and all the ordinances thereof, and all the forms thereof, and all the laws thereof: and write it in their sight, that they may keep the whole form thereof, and all the ordinances thereof, and do

them. This is the law of the house . . . ".

Now we all know that Ezekiel was the prophet of the captivity; he was speaking to the people of Israel when they were held in captivity because of their iniquities, and God gave Ezekiel a magnificent vision of the House of God, and He says, as it were, to Ezekiel, "You show the people this vision of the House so that they may see how far they have departed from My thought". There are two things the prophet was told to do; first he was to show them "the pattern of the House" then He goes on to say in substance a second thing; "If", and you will please mark that If — "if these people are ashamed of the way they have departed from the pattern, you may go on and show them the law of the House". There are then two things; there is (1) the pattern of the House, and (2) there is the law of the House.

I may point to a magnificent building, and you may admire its design and you may say to me, "Yes, I see the pattern, but tell me on what principle is the house governed?" Now, God has His House, and He has His principles for the administration of His House, and mark this, we cannot apply the law of God's House to a house that man has designed; you can only apply God's law to God's pattern; you cannot have a pattern of your own, and then try to work that pattern on God's principles. Hence, unless the people repented, the prophet had nothing more to tell them; but if they did repent, if they owned that they had departed from the pattern, he could tell them the law of the House.

Coming now to New Testament times we find that God has still His House upon earth. From the verses I read you, the one in Ephesians and the other in Timothy, it is very evident that God's House to-day is not formed of material stones; it is a House formed of living stones, of believers, and moreover God has given us the pattern of His House, as well as the law — the principle — on which His House is administered. Now in order to bring before you the immense importance of this great truth, let me briefly show you what a large place the House of God has in the New Testament. For instance, in the Acts we see the pattern exemplified in a practical way. In 1 Timothy we find the pattern of the House in a doctrinal way. Then in 1 and 2 Corinthians we have the law of the House, or, the divine principles for the administration of the House, such as association, fellowship, holiness, liberty, love, edification, and separation. Then again, in the Epistles to the seven Churches in Revelation 2:1-29; Revelation 3:1-22, we get the prophetic history of the Church as the House of God in the responsibility of men, with the result it has been ruined. Then coming back to 2 Timothy, we get instruction how to walk in a day of ruin, and finally, in Revelation 21:1-27, in the vision of that magnificent city, we have presented to us symbolically, the House of God in millennial display. From these scriptures you will see that a very large part of the New Testament is taken up with instructions as to the Assembly, the Church of God, viewed as the House of God. To be continued in next issue (D.V.). A Day of Small Things

We sometimes murmur, either with disappointment or resignation: "After all, it is a day of small things". It may be that we use this as an excuse to give up any form of service for the Lord, or even discourage others from attempting anything at all. Perhaps we forget that the text says: "For who hath despised the day of small things?" (Zechariah 4:10).

There have been many times when it must have seemed difficult to carry on in a life of faith. When there arose in Egypt a king who did not know Joseph, and who ordered that all the Hebrew boys should be killed at birth, it might have discouraged Moses' parents from having a third child. Yet it

was just this act of faith that is commended in Hebrews 11:23, where we are told that they "were not afraid of the king’s commandment". As we know, this child was the one chosen to deliver God’s people from the power of Egypt.

Later, in the time of the Judges, when "every man did that which was right in his own eyes", we find faithful Gideon, raised up to deliver the Israelites from the power of Midian. We can understand why he says to the angel: "If the Lord be with us, why then is all this befallen us? and where be all His miracles which our fathers told us of?" (Judges 6:13). How patiently the Lord dealt with him, and even gave him the signs that he asked for, to confirm his feeble faith. It was a day of small things, but God gave His people a wonderful victory through that young man of faith.

During the same difficult period there were parents who dared to name their little son Elimelech, "whose God is King". It was a day of ungodliness and unfaithfulness, and yet there were those that still looked for redemption in Israel, as we read of similar faithful ones at the time of the Lord’s birth. Such names as Elkanah, "who God provided", and Hannah, "grace", shows that there were still some, in the day of small things, who trusted in a great God. We see in the historical books how their faith was rewarded.

Much later, when it seemed that all was lost — the temple was destroyed, the ark, and all the precious things that meant so much to the faithful Jews, had been carried away to Babylon, and even the bulk of the nation was in exile — we read of faithful men like Daniel and his friends, who would not defile themselves with the food that had been offered to idols, and we read of Daniel himself that "he continued", he persevered until the 70 years of exile were expired, and the prophecies of Jeremiah were fulfilled. In a day of small things there was one on whom the Lord could rely, as we read in Ezekiel 14:14, where Daniel’s name is coupled with Noah and Job as one that could be counted upon to be faithful to the end. Of those that were privileged to return to the land of promise, we read of faithful men such as Ezra and Nehemiah, who were not afraid of the heathen adversaries, but trusted in the God of their fathers. We read in the book of Ezra of how they set the altar upon its bases, and they offered burnt offerings. They even kept the feast of tabernacles, although the foundation of the temple of the Lord was not yet laid. When at last the foundations were there, we read that the people shouted and praised the Lord, although the older ones, who remembered the magnificence of Solomon’s temple, could but shed tears at the weakness and insignificance of the new building. It was to these people that Zechariah and Haggai were sent, to encourage the workers, and to remind them of the faithful God who was still ready to bless them. Of Nehemiah we read again and again how he prayed and worked, notwithstanding the enemies, of whom we read that "it grieved them exceedingly that there was come a man to seek the welfare of the children of Israel" (Nehemiah 2:10). When these foes mocked them, Nehemiah replied: "The God of heaven, he will prosper us; therefore we, His servants, will arise and build"

(Nehemiah 2:20). Although the enemies tried all manner of ruses to stop the work, we read finally that the work was completed: "So the wall was finished" (Nehemiah 6:15). At the end of the book we read of the unfaithfulness of some of the priests, as well as the negligence of the people, who had not supported the Levites. The result of this double unfaithfulness was that Tobiah, the enemy, had taken possession of the very room in which the tithes ought to have been brought for the upkeep of the Levites. Nehemiah gave orders for the place to be vacated, and thoroughly

cleansed, so that the Levites, and so God Himself, could have their, and His, portion.

Much later, in the time of Malachi, we see a terrible state of affairs. The temple was there; the offerings were brought; the services went on, just as they had in the time of Isaiah, but there was no heart in it. The offerings that were brought were merely the lame and worthless animals that were no good anyway. God said to them: "offer it now unto thy governor: will he be pleased with thee?" (Malachi 1:8). Yet they dared to give to God "that which was torn, and the lame, and the sick" (Malachi 1:13). They could even ask of God: "Wherein have we despised Thy name?" (Malachi 1:6). Does this say anything to us today? We go, no doubt, week by week to the meetings. We sing our hymns, we read out of the Bible, we say our "Amen" at the end of each prayer — but is there any more heart in it than in the time of Malachi? "Bring no more vain oblations", although addressed to Judah in the days of Isaiah, could well be the message to many of us to-day. But God is faithful. He cannot deny Himself, and, just as He was mindful of His covenant with Israel, so He will never leave us nor forsake us. As He expresses it in Malachi's prophecy: "I am the Lord, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed" (Malachi 3:6). So, in the midst of all their unfaithfulness, He could say to His people: "Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in Mine house, and prove Me now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it" (Malachi 3:10).

It is interesting to see that the name "Jehovah of hosts" is used twenty four times in the book of Malachi. We first read this name of God in the first chapter of 1 Samuel, when Elkanah went to worship the Lord of hosts in Shiloh. Hannah, his wife, too, used the same name when praying for a son in verse 11 of that first chapter. When Israel was at its lowest ebb, and every man did that which was right in his own eyes, God made Himself known as the Lord of hosts, a contrast to their own weakness and insufficiency. This is seen in a particularly precious way in the well-known verses 16 and 17 of Malachi 3:1-18. In the midst of all the unfaithfulness the Lord saw those that feared Him, and spake often one to another. We are, perhaps, reminded of the two going home to Emmaus, when "Jesus Himself drew near, and went with them". What a delight to His heart to hear them speaking to each other about Him! So here in Malachi, "the Lord hearkened, and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before Him for them that feared the Lord, and that thought upon His name". Again, in the last chapter of Malachi, when the day of judgment has been announced, we find an allusion to "you that fear My name". For the remnant in the days before the birth of our Lord this must have been a particular comfort. The Sun of righteousness would arise with healing in His wings.

We know, of course, that this prophecy is only partially fulfilled in the first advent, but it is encouraging to see that there were those, like Zacharias and Elisabeth, Simeon and Anna, who saw the fulfilment of their hopes in that blessed Child, and shared their joy with "all them that looked for redemption in Jerusalem". May we, who have a still more blessed hope, be found among them that "live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ" (Titus 2:12-13).

R.E.A.R.

Extract from Commentary on the Old Testament by C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch, Volume 1.

"The king commanded the midwives to destroy the male children in the birth and to leave only the girls alive. If the child were a boy, they were to destroy it as it came out of the womb. The failure of his plan drove the king to acts of open violence. He issued commands to all his subjects to throw every Hebrew boy that was born into the river"

Book Review The Rock and the Sand by Geoffrey T. Bull.

189 pages, paperback, £5.95. Chapter Two, London, 1990.

"When all around my soul gives way He then is all my hope and stay. On Christ the solid Rock I stand;

All other ground is sinking sand "

Already on its cover rock and sand stand strikingly in contrast. The life of faith is its theme. In fact, this most recent book of Geoffrey Bull's bears the subtitle "Glimpses of the Life of Faith". Some readers may remember how in 1950, when the Chinese Communist armies overran Tibet, Bull, a young missionary serving his Lord there on the roof of the world, was arrested, imprisoned, and subjected to their process of thought-reform. In answer to the many prayers that ascended for him all over the world, the Lord caused the iron gates of his bondage to yield, bringing him safely out of China more than three years later. His mind was still sound and his faith in God unshaken. The Lord has subsequently used Bull in many countries for a rich ministry through testimony, teaching, and writing. The Rock and the Sand is a choice example. The author knows today's issues. His international flavour and lifetime of experiences certainly add tremendously to the interest of his book. And there's a depth and solidity here that stands in graphic contrast to both the superficiality and the flamboyance being promoted so much in Christendom all around us.

Furthermore, Bull does not simply know God's Word and its principles well; he evidences what amounts to a keen personal acquaintance even with some of its more obscure characters. As they take the stage, one after another, on the pages of his book, they are more than mere figures from biblical history: they are people of like passions to ourselves, triumphantly living the life of faith, examples for us to emulate. This book is rich and fresh in every way. It strengthens and stimulates. It is not written as a commentary, but rather is a challenge. Yet it is certainly doctrinally reliable and helpful. And as a bonus to the profitability of its contents, its author is a magnificent craftsman with words. His language is vivid and colourful. Comparatively few contemporary authors today still use the Authorized or King James translation of the Bible in their writing, and even fewer use it effectively. Geoffrey Bull is one of those very few.

I heartily recommend The Rock and the Sand to all Truth & Testimony readers of secondary school age and above. It is spiritually well worthwhile and a pleasure besides.

Eugene P. Vedder, Jr. Grace & Truth.

News from the Field

DJIBOUTI The republic of Djibouti is an arid enclave between Ethiopia and Somalia. Before 1977 it was the French colony of Afars and Issas. The majority of the one-third million population are Moslem. There is only a handful of native believers. About 4% profess Christianity, chiefly Roman Catholics, with less than 5% Coptic and Greek Orthodox. However, there is a considerable degree

of religious freedom quite lacking in other Mohammedan lands.

About eighteen months ago two hundred copies of "A Letter For You" Gospel booklet in English and Arabic were sent to Djibouti. It is believed that this is our first respondent to that little scattering. We have included Solomon’s letter as an example of many items of correspondence coming to Chapter Two’s office from needy fellow believers around the world. Much comes in from West African countries where English is used. Very few come from the Horn of Africa.

DJIBOUTI I am so happy for your consideration to send me a letter. I gladly answer as follows: My family originated in the northern part of Ethiopia we call Eritrea. I was born there and went to school in Wollo province. We felt the problems caused by the Military government. In 1986 I left Addis university and went round looking for work. I was unsuccessful because I was not a (communist) party member. I suffered a lot and was tired of trying to survive. I did not understand the meaning of life. Many people became refugees and searched diligently to sustain their existence. I became sad and blamed Almighty God.

You see we suffered repeatedly. Our family are Orthodox Christians. My mother prays but she finds it hard to believe that God rules in our lives.

Things changed and not in the easiest manner. I was wanted by the Military because I was not conforming to their ideology. I escaped to the neighbouring Djibouti. After some days of walking I arrived here safely. I determined to pray and follow the path of Jesus Christ. In order to do this I wrote my first letter to you for help.

I have an Amharic Bible and I read it, though life in Dgibouti is too hard and sometimes I do labouring work. But I have to hide from the authorities who reject us refugees.

I pray now about those past days when I blamed God and pray for help on the true path of life as a follower of Jesus Christ.

Now I have needs: I do not need money, I do not need luxury articles, I do not want to be a hypocrite. But I need true help and that assistance is going to come from the hands of the Lord you can send some literature and perhaps an English Bible, besides that I would welcome fellowship in correspondence.

Yours sincerely, a believer, Solomon Taeme Tekele. The Old in the New Explained Micah 5:2. Matthew 2:6.

"And thou Bethlehem, in the land of Juda, art not the least among the princes of Juda: for out of thee shall come a Governor, that shall rule my people Israel".

Hearing of one " . . . born King of the Jews . . . " we can understand why " . . . Herod the King . . . was troubled . . . " yet we read also " . . . and all Jerusalem with him". The city of the great King (Matthew 5:35) was estranged from Him. Though it seems impossible that they did not suspect his evil intent, the chief priests and scribes turn Herod to Micah 5:2 in answering his question as to where Christ should be born. Bethlehem’s size evidently did not distinguish it. It was "little among the thousands of Judah". (Micah 5:2 — Hebrew). That it was probably where David was born and brought up is passed over (Luke 2:11, 1 Samuel 16:1, 1 Samuel 20:6). Bethlehem’s greatest distinction lay not in being the birthplace of David, but that of Messiah. His rule will be according to

God — very much the contrast to that exercised by Herod and the leaders of the nation (Isaiah 40:9-11). Looking at Matthew 2:6 in its context in Micah 5:1-15 we discover that, in a day to come, the Assyrian (Micah 5:5) will, with others (Micah 4:11) be gathered against the "daughter of Zion" (Jerusalem — Micah 4:8). He lays siege because "they (the Jews) shall smite the judge of Israel with a rod upon the cheek" (Micah 5:1). Micah 5:2 tells us who the judge is — Messiah-Jehovah "whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting". In the government of God "Therefore will He give them up, until the time that she which travaileth hath brought forth; then the remnant of His brethren shall return unto the children of Israel" (Micah 5:3). When there is repentance the remnant get the blessing that belongs to the children of Israel. His provision is enjoyed (Micah 5:4), Messiah is Israel's peace (Micah 5:5) and they are given power from the Lord to deal with their foes (Micah 4:13, Micah 5:6). They are "as a dew from the Lord" bringing blessing to "many people" (Micah 5:7), while "among the Gentiles in the midst of many people, as a lion . . . " Jehovah will by them deal with His enemies as needs be (Micah 5:8-9)

R. F.W.

It may be of interest to some to know that Walter Scott lists most of the quotations from the Old Testament in the New in his Bible Handbook to the New Testament. He gives an English translation of each verse from the Hebrew and Septuagint as well as the verse in the New Testament from the King James version. Copies of the handbook are available from Chapter Two.

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Book Review

Quotations from Scripture are generally taken either from the King James translation or Mr. J. N. Darby's translation. Quotations taken from any other translation will be indicated in the course of the article, or in a footnote to the article.

Allanhurst Hymnal 139a Perfect activity of rest complete, Thine own will serve Thee through eternity, And, casting crowns of glory at Thy feet, They will bow down in silent ecstasy. Our eyes will contemplate Thy majesty, The beauty of the Bridegroom throned above, And there sound forth the untold mystery Of Thine immeasurable grace and love.

Thy saints, Lord Jesus, dwelling in Thy light, As Thy reflection evermore will shine;

Participating in that glory bright, Thy church will bear Thy radiance divine.

Thou wilt behold the object of Thy choice, Thy spotless bride for whom Thou, Lord, has died; And in the travail of Thy soul rejoice, Thy perfect love for ever satisfied.

(Translated from the French of H. Rossier.) With The Lord In The Boat

Luke 8:22-25 This incident is told three times in the New Testament, indicating its importance. It vividly presents a wonderful Person, both God and Man — the unknowable Son; for nobody comprehends the Son. We can know the Father if the Son reveals Him to us, but no one can know the mystery of the Son. Those who seek to explain to our finite understanding how Godhead and Manhood can be in one Person, only spoil the truth, and present a false Christ to us in some important particular.

Here we have a real Man, tired out by His unremitting service, who fell asleep (the word implies a deep sleep). Only in His Manhood could the Son of God suffer tiredness, hunger, thirst, physical pain and death. God the Son became a Man in order that He might endure all these things, yet His Person never changed. The One who was in the form of God and equal with God, was the same Person who became obedient to the death of the cross. (Php 2:6-8). The disciples were doing what He had told them to do. He had said, "Let us go over unto the other side". Why then did the storm arise to impede them? It is when we are in the pathway of God's will that Satan's forces are aroused against us. Satan is happy to leave us in calm waters when we are going our own way, but when we are in the line of God's interests we experience the force of the adversary. They cry out in fear, "Master, Master, we perish". What unnecessary fears and anxieties may strike the hearts of believers!

Then we see this wonderful Person arise from His sleep, and with all the power of the infinite Creator rebuke the winds and the waves so that there is an immediate calm. No mere man could do such a thing! This was the Person who had gathered the waters under the heaven unto one place (Genesis 1:9); who had made the sea stand up as a solid wall to give the Israelites passage.

Then He turns to His astonished disciples and says, "Where is your faith?" These disciples had had the faith to enter the boat with their Master, but it was not great enough to keep them at peace. Many receive Christ as their Saviour and Lord and have faith to commit their souls to Him for eternity; but their faith falters when something unexpected happens in their pathway here. Let us pray that the Lord may increase our faith so that we are prepared for the storms and never lose our confidence in Him.

We have a Great High Priest in Heaven who is both God and Man. Having been through all human adversity and sorest temptations — sin apart — He sympathizes with our infirmities and is eager to help us. With all the power of Deity, He will give grace to help in time of need. We may have to wait His time, but He is always with us in the boat and therefore we cannot sink.

If we are disobedient like Jonah, and the storm is produced by God not Satan, yet still His arm is outstretched to save us. If we confess our sins (Jonah 1:10), and repent (Jonah 2:7), He will bring us through to dry land (Jonah 2:10).

"The Lord is at hand. Be careful for nothing; but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus". (Php 4:6-7). W.R.D. The Old in the New Explained Hosea 11:1. Matthew 2:15.

"Out of Egypt have I called My Son". In the series of communications made through Hosea, there is repeated reference to the unfaithfulness of the ten tribes, referred to as Israel or Ephraim. King, princes, priests and people had all turned away from Jehovah (Hosea 7:3; Hosea 4:8-9). In the first seven verses of Hosea 11:1-12 attention is drawn to the love and care which He had bestowed upon them, yet the people were bent on backsliding from Him. The prophets were sent to call them to repentance but even "As they called them, so they went from them: they sacrificed unto Baalim, and burned incense to graven images" (Hosea 11:2). Warning is given to the tribes of Judah and Benjamin not to emulate this behaviour, though it is foreseen that they would do so and their fall is also foretold (Hosea 4:15; Hosea 5:5; Hosea 12:2). The people that had been called out of Egypt, the Nation which Jehovah had deigned to call "My son, even My firstborn" (Exodus 4:22) was being set aside. Already the ten tribes had "not My people" written upon them (Hosea 1:9). Into this breach steps One Who, like the Nation before Him, is called out of Egypt. The context here in Matthew 2:1-23 shows how this was fulfilled. While there is this similarity there is also an essential difference. Israel became Jehovah’s son by His calling the Nation to that place. Son is not what Christ became but what He is in His eternal Being John 5:17-18). We have seen previously that Matthew 1:23 shows Christ to be God. Matthew 2:6, in its context in Micah 5:2, shows Him to be Jehovah. Here it is added that He is "My Son". It is striking that, in drawing attention to the Deity of the Lord Jesus, Hebrews 1:1-14 also lays emphasis upon these three glories of Christ. (Hebrews 1:1-2; Hebrews 1:5; Hebrews 1:8; Hebrews 1:10). His Sonship is connected with His Deity. In other words He has been Son for as long as He has been God-from all eternity. As He was called out of Egypt with what delight must the Father have looked upon His

Son. Unlike the Nation, He would not fail, but glorify God where, and in everything in which, the Nation had dishonoured Him. R.F.W.

Jacob’s Last Words

Jacob’s last words to his sons in Genesis 49:1-33 are quite thrilling because of their far-reaching scope. On his deathbed the patriarch prophesied what would befall the twelve tribes descending from his sons. These prophetic views extend to what was then the distant future, right down to the time of the millennium, when Israel under the reign of Christ will be the centre of blessing for the whole earth. As Christians we also learn many practical lessons from this chapter, as these things were also written for our instruction (Romans 15:4).

1. THE ORDER OF JACOB’S SONS IN Genesis 49:1-33. As appears from the table below the order of Jacob’s sons in Genesis 49:1-33 only partially follows their order of birth.

Genesis 29:1-35; Genesis 30:1-43; Genesis 35:1-29 (birth) Genesis 49:1-33 (blessing) Reuben (Leah) Reuben Simeon (Leah) Simeon Levi (Leah) Levi Judah (Leah) Judah Dan (Bilhah) Zebulun Naphtali (Bilhah) Issachar Gad (Zilpah) Dan Asher (Zilpah) Gad Issachar (Leah) Asher Zebulun (Leah) Naphtali Joseph. (Rachel) Joseph Benjamin (Rachel) Benjamin In blessing his sons, Jacob first addresses the sons of Leah, putting Zebulun before Issachar. Then follow the sons of the maids, of whom Naphtali is the one mentioned last. Both sons of Zilpah, Leah’s maid, are given a place between the two sons of Bilhah, Rachel’s maid. Finally, we have Joseph and Benjamin — the two. sons of Rachel, the wife whom Jacob loved more than Leah and for whom he served his father-in-law Laban a further seven years. This order agrees with the rules of the birthright as they were set down by Moses later on (Deuteronomy 21:15-17). For the son of the loved wife could not be favoured at the expense of the first-born, who was the son of the unloved. The fact that Reuben did forfeit his birthright was entirely his own fault. He had gone up to his father’s bed and committed adultery with Bilhah, his father’s concubine and therefore he was deprived of his privileges (Genesis 35:22; Genesis 49:3-4; 1 Chronicles 5:1-2). The position linked with the birthright went to Judah, the fourth son of Leah (Simeon and Levi were passed over because of their violence against the inhabitants of Schechem: Genesis 34:1-31). The wealth linked with it, however — the first-born was entitled to a double portion of the inheritance — went to Joseph, the first son of Rachel, the loved one. Or rather it went to Ephraim and Manasseh, Joseph’s sons, whom Jacob had blessed previously and more or less adopted as his own sons (Genesis 48:1-22). Thus Ephraim and Manasseh obtained a place of their own among the tribes of Israel (Deuteronomy 33:17). So we see that both Judah and Joseph are given a prominent place in the blessings of Jacob, Judah receiving the position of a ruler, and Joseph the wealth laid up for the first-born.

It is also remarkable that, unlike Ishmael in the story of Abraham, the sons of the maids do not take here a separate or inferior place, but are blessed together with the other sons of Jacob. Of Ishmael God said that the son of the maid should by no means be an heir with the son of the free woman (Genesis 21:8-21). From this principle Paul draws the conclusion that there is a clear distinction between Jews and Christians, between those in slavery and those who are free (Galatians 4:21-31). However, in the blessings of Jacob the difference between Israel and the Church does not play a role. While Abraham is the "father" of both a heavenly and an earthly offspring, Jacob is more especially the progenitor of Israel after the flesh. Jacob’s twelve sons give

a complete picture of God’s earthly people. In accordance with God’s government they are blessed together, for in Scripture the number twelve is always connected with God’s rule over His people.

Now if the order of Jacob’s sons in Genesis 49:1-33 is determined neither by their birth nor by their mothers, what principle is used here? The answer is that prophetic and spiritual factors are taken into account as well, which render these blessings a splendid picture of the history of Israel until the last days.

2. A PROPHETIC HISTORY OF ISRAEL AND OF THE WORLD

I am convinced that this chapter gives a brief outline of man’s history as a whole, because this is really centred around Israel. In the first three sons we see how natural man failed right from the beginning. Reuben is guided by his lusts, while Simeon and Levi use means of violence. These two evils, inner corruption and outward violence, have been the two principal evils ever since the fall of man. Time and again, these things can be found in both the history of mankind and that of Israel. The sin of Adam and Eve was their lust, and they had to be driven out of God’s presence. The sin of Cain, his violence. The judgment of the flood was caused by the subsequent corruption and violence that filled the earth. Even after the flood there is no apparent improvement. Man wants to make a name for himself and starts worshipping idols; we also hear about Nimrod, a mighty hunter before the Lord. Then, with the calling of Abraham, God makes a new start in that He separates a nation from the other nations in order that it should serve Him and belong to Him alone. However, Israel’s history too, is one of sad failure, in the wilderness as well as in the Promised Land. Corruption and violence mark the last chapters of the book of Judges and the first chapters of 1 Samuel. But then God brings relief through King David, whose birth is mentioned even in the book of Ruth. This period in Israel’s history is reflected in Jacob’s prophecy concerning Judah, the royal tribe, where nothing but praise is heard (Judah=praise). It is a "Golden Age" for Israel, when the nations around them are subdued. The words of Jacob and Shiloh (= he who brings rest) probably refer in the first place to Solomon, the king of peace. But it is obvious that they reach far beyond him, as is shown by the words that the sceptre would not depart from Judah until the arrival of Shiloh, to whom the obedience of the peoples would be. This prophecy as to Shiloh is therefore a Messianic prophecy. Judah was to have a prominent roll until the coming of Christ, though later on this was limited to the kingdom of the two tribes and reduced to an even lesser degree after the return from the Babylonian captivity. While it is true that the nations have even now become obedient to Christ by the obedience of faith (Romans 16:26), yet we have to conclude that this prophecy extends further into the future. Our Lord was rejected and the universal peace and prosperity about which Jacob speaks was postponed until Christ’s second coming. Then He will reign as the Prince of Peace, and His dominion will be to the ends of the earth.

Then we see what happened after the prosperous times of David and Solomon, and also after the rejection of the Messiah: assimilation with and subjugation to the nations, ending in complete apostasy. This is shown in type in Zebulun, Issachar and Dan. Here again, the prophecy has a twofold import, a historical one and a future one. Israel came gradually under the influence of the surrounding nations, which resulted in its subjugation to these nations (e.g. Egypt, Assyria and Babylonia) and its serving their idols. Here we find Zebulun in connection with the sea of peoples

and nations (Isaiah 17:12-13; Revelation 17:15). Zebulun (= dwelling) was fully oriented towards the nations and to Sidon especially, from which the worship of Baal originated which was brought to Israel by King Ahab (1 Kings 16:31-33). Issachar (= wages) then submitted to forced labour and became a slave. In Dan (= judge) the power of the serpent (1:e. Satan) was fully embodied, so that Israel was brought down and rendered powerless. Scripture often connects the tribe of Dan with idolatry (Judges 18:1-31; 1 Kings 12:29-30). Israel left the one true God and finally rejected the Messiah when He came to them in the form of a bond-servant. This marks the end of the history of Israel, and of the first man in responsibility. It has become one great fiasco, and only the salvation of the Lord could bring relief (verse 18). This salvation was seen in the cross and resurrection of Christ.

Then there is also a future aspect in verse 18 regarding the salvation and restoration of Israel. Jacob's short prayer is the turning point of this chapter. After Christ's rejection, the above process of decay and apostasy repeated itself. Israel was dispersed among the nations, having become more and more dependent on them, and this has been their situation until today. Now we come to the future application of these verses. Dan is a type of the antichrist who will reign over ("judge") Israel with the support of the head of the revived Roman empire and of Satan himself (Revelation 13:1-18). Idolatry will then reach an all-time high, and the faithful remnant of Israel will wait anxiously for intervention of God's salvation. At that point God will bring about a change in the lot of His people. In answer to the prayer of verse 18 He will reveal His salvation. Dan marks the absolute low point, and from there on Israel's history takes a turn for the better. Gad, Asher and Naphtali show the results of God's salvation in the end time. Gad (= band) is still being endangered by hostile troops, but in the end he is victorious and drives the enemy out of the land (Micah 5:1-9). Asher (= happy) enjoys an abundance of food and shares it with others. Naphtali (= wrestling) rejoices in the freedom of the victor and sings the song of salvation.

Finally, Joseph and Benjamin give a twofold picture of the glory of Christ in the millennium. Joseph (= He will add) is a special type of the Messiah who was rejected by His brothers but exalted by God to sit at His right hand, thereby becoming the Saviour of the world. The Father looks down on Him in favour, and He receives the richest blessings. Benjamin (= son of the right hand) is more typical of the earthly aspect of Christ's reign. At His appearing and the dawn of the Kingdom, Christ will destroy all His enemies. He must reign until the last enemy — death — has been abolished at the end of the Kingdom (1 Corinthians 15:24-28), "in the evening" (Genesis 49:27), and the millennium will give place to the eternal state. To sum up, the first three sons of Jacob show us natural man's corruption. Reuben (= behold, a son) behaves as an unworthy son, and Simeon (= hearing) and Levi (= united) are allied in doing evil. Three sons are special types of Christ and show us how He intervenes: first Judah, and finally Joseph and Benjamin. The meanings of their names and of the others have been given already. The third group of three — Zebulun, Issachar and Dan — marks the downward line of Israel's decay and apostasy and also the apostasy in the end time. In the last group of three — Gad, Asher and Naphtali — we have an upward line again, and we learn how Israel will be restored and will see the salvation of the Lord. Genesis 49:1-33 is a prophetic history, of which several parts have already been fulfilled in the course of Israel's existence, while other parts are still awaiting their fulfilment in the end time.

(To be continued, if the Lord will.)

H. Bouter Jr. From Our Archive MINISTRY OF THE WORD AT THE ABERDEEN CONFERENCE Wednesday Evening, Speaker: Hamilton Smith. September 13th, 1922. THE PATTERN OF THE HOUSE (Ezekiel 43:10-12 and Acts 2:1-47) cont.

Having made these preliminary remarks, I will ask you to turn to Acts 2:1-47 in order to present a few definite facts that will bring before us the pattern of God's House in a practical way. As we look abroad to-day, we see Christendom broken up into innumerable sects, each having a special form of Church government, holding distinguishing creeds and conducting their services according to special forms and ceremonies. We see, too, vast numbers of societies and organisations for sending out missionaries, and generally conducting religious work, and in them all we see devoted men for whom we can truly thank God.

But, beloved brethren, as we look abroad at Christendom; as we see all this vast machinery for carrying on the service of God, we may well ask ourselves, Is this what God intended? Is all this religious machinery God's way of carrying on His work? Is it according to the pattern? This, surely, is a proper question to ask, and in order to answer this question we must go back to the Book, for the simple reason that it is not possible in a day of ruin and departure from the truth, to look abroad on this earth and see any concrete illustration of the House of God.

Therefore in order to get a true conception of the House of God — and here we are faced with a difficulty — we must get it in an abstract way. Abstracting our mind from all that we see around, we must seek to get before us the pattern of the House of God as presented in Scripture, going back to Pentecostal days. I think we shall get some true thought of the pattern of the House in a practical way, and, as I have said, we must have the pattern before we can talk of the law of the House. In the opening chapter of the Acts we are faced with three great facts. First of all, redemption is accomplished. In Acts 1:3 we read, "To whom also He shewed Himself alive after His passion". His sufferings then were over — redemption was accomplished. That was one great fact. Two other facts follow — the Lord Jesus Christ is received up into glory — the Holy Spirit is received upon earth. The Church could have no existence apart from the accomplishment of these three stupendous facts. Redemption must be accomplished to remove everything that would hinder God having His Church; then the Lord Jesus Christ must take His place in glory, and the Holy Spirit must come down to earth.

Now, dear friends, I want for just one brief moment to press those two latter stupendous facts, because every essential truth of Christianity hangs upon them. To-day there is a Man, a real Man, in the glory, and there is a Divine Person on earth. When I say there is a Man in the glory — you must not for a moment think that I am forgetting that the Man, the Lord Jesus Christ in the glory, is "over all, God blessed for ever"; He is that, but still the way Scripture presents the truth is that He has gone back to the glory as a Man. Stephen looked up and saw the Son of Man at the right hand of God.

Then, on the other hand, there is a Divine Person on the earth, and mark you, the One that has come down from the glory has come to represent Christ in you and me. That is to say the Lord Jesus Christ has taken a place in the glory as Lord, and the Holy Spirit has come down to make the Lord known in our hearts, and the Person that has come down is as great as the Person that has gone up — hence He is perfectly adequate, and perfectly competent, to take of His things and show them to you and me.

Well, the Holy Spirit comes down, and in Acts 2:1-47 He descends upon the hundred and twenty disciples gathered together. He doesn't come upon the twelve simply, but He comes upon the hundred and twenty. Before that day, you will remember, according to that word in John 11:52, the children of God had been scattered abroad, but now, at this moment when the Holy Spirit came, they were gathered together in one, and not only that, but the Holy Spirit indwelt them-they were sealed by the Spirit — and He was with them, and the result was that the House of God came into existence in a new way. The people of God formed the dwelling place of God on earth.

Now I want to present to you in a simple way seven facts in this chapter that I think will give us an idea of the pattern of God's House. If we get the pattern of God's House into our souls, we shall be able to see whether or not we have departed from it. Now the first great mark of God's House must of necessity be that it is the place where God dwells. Hence the first great thing that comes before us in this chapter is the presence, power, and control of the Holy Spirit. Now you will note how the instant the Holy Spirit comes, everything that these disciples do is in the power, and under the control, of the Holy Spirit. They proclaim the glad tidings, but it was, "As the Spirit gave them utterance". In Acts 4:8, we read, "Then Peter, filled with the Holy Ghost, said unto them, Ye rulers," etc., that is to say, when opposition arose, it was met in the power of the Holy Spirit. Then if we pass on we find in Acts 6:1-15 a question arises as the temporal needs of the saints, and immediately men are chosen to meet this difficulty who are "full of the Holy Ghost".

Then in the end of that chapter Stephen meets opposition, in the power of the Spirit. In the end of Acts 7:1-60 Stephen endures persecution, but he does it in the power of the Spirit - as we read, "He, being full of the Holy Ghost, looked up stedfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God". In the mighty power of the Holy Spirit he was able to face martyrdom. Passing on to Acts 8:29, we find Philip, the evangelist, receives his instructions from the Spirit, and so we find, if we follow on, chapter after chapter, that the Holy Spirit is present in the House of God to take entire control.

Now, beloved brethren, I think we may well pause for one moment to ask ourselves this question, have we not in great measure lost the sense of the reality of the presence of the Holy Spirit? What was the origin of the ruin of Christendom? Was it not the loss of all sense of the presence of the Holy Spirit? The outstanding sin of Christendom is that it has so largely set aside and ignored the Holy Spirit. By its religious organisations and religious machinery it has, to a large extent, shut out the Holy Spirit. The presence and control of the Spirit is then the first great mark of the House of God, and apprehending this, we shall be able to measure how great has been the departure from its pattern.

Before passing on, let me say that if the presence of the Holy Spirit is the first great outstanding feature in the House of God, it must involve that where the Holy Spirit is there can be no room for the flesh. Hence you will see in these early chapters of the Acts, that though the flesh seeks to intrude, yet, again and again, the flesh is dealt with. In the case of Ananias and Sapphira religious reputation is sought by lying, and is dealt with by the Holy Spirit; then in Acts 6:1-15, the flesh murmurs and is dealt with by the Spirit. Where the Holy Spirit is, the flesh must be excluded. Oh! brethren, looking around, we see, together with the loss of all sense of the presence and power of the Holy Spirit there is the allowance of the flesh in almost every form. We have practically said that the Holy Spirit is not able, that He is incompetent to move souls, and we have resorted to all

kinds of fleshly methods to try to reach and to touch people. By music, and choirs, and pathetic solos, and other fleshly methods the Holy Spirit has been ignored, forgetting that only by the Holy Spirit can souls be reached, and that He is adequate to meet every possible emergency that can arise in the House of God.

Let me then repeat that the first great mark of the House of God is the presence and the power of the Holy Spirit. May God give us to see how far we have departed from the pattern, and may He bring us back to it. The second great fact that comes out in this chapter is that the House of God is the place where the disposition of God towards men is made known. This is one great leading thought in the House of God. Hence, immediately the House of God is formed, men begin to hear, in all their different languages, the wonderful works of God. We get some of these wonderful works brought out in verses 22-36, how that God was with the Lord Jesus Christ; how He delivered Him up; how He was crucified; how He was raised from the dead; how He was received up into glory; and then mark what Peter says in verse 38: "Repent, and be baptised every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost". I do not think we always stop to think what a remarkable verse that is. Peter is speaking to the people who had spat in the face of their Messiah; they had nailed Him to the cross; they had crowned Him with a crown of thorns; they said, "Away with Him. Not this Man, but Barabbas". But the marvellous thing is that immediately the House of God is formed there goes out from the House of God this wonderful message which tells to the world the disposition of God to those very people who had cast out His Son. This is what Peter tells them — in spite of what they had done; in spite of the fact that they had rejected the Messiah and spat in His face and crowned Him with a crown of thorns, such was the heart of God, that He can say, "Repent, and be baptised every one of you" — not a single exception — "in the name of Jesus Christ", and you will receive the remission of your sins, and the greatest possible gift — "the gift of the Holy Ghost". Now that was the magnificent message that went out from the House of God.

Hence you will see another great feature of the House of God is that it is not only the place where God dwells, but it is the place where God is made known. Brethren, if we give up the gospel, we shall depart from the pattern of the House. And so you will find in chapter after chapter of this wonderful book that the gospel is told out, and the fact of the gospel being given up so much to-day in Christendom only shows how great the departure has been from the pattern.

Let me add in connection with making known the gospel, that not only is the House of God the place where God is witnessed to, but it is the place where God is witnessed to by God’s witnesses. That is to say in the House of God, God chooses to take up whom He likes to do His work; and, as a matter of fact, He takes up very often very simple people, as we read, in 1 Corinthians 1:26, "Ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called: but God hath chosen the foolish things of the world, to confound the wise, and God hath chosen the weak things of the world, to confound the things which are might; and base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are; that no flesh should glory in His presence". That is to say that God will have a wonderful witness going forth from His House, but He will have that witness carried out by His own witnesses, and His witnesses are for the most part the poor and feeble of this world. So in Acts 2:1-47, we read, "Behold, are not all these which speak Galilaeans?" Galilaeans, of course, were the simple country folk — the peasantry — and Peter an "unlearned

and ignorant" man was their leader, and for the most part the witnesses of God have been all through the ages the simple and poor of this world. God on occasions may take up a rich man, or a noble man, for some special work, but generally, as of old, so to-day, God’s witnesses are chosen from the despised of this world.

Passing on, we have in verse 41 a third fact. The House of God was formed by a people who were separate from this world. It says, "Then they that gladly received His word were baptised: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls". They were a separate company. Baptism, as we all know, presents the idea of separation. There was in that day, and there is in this day, the great world system, dominated by the power of evil and the will of men, but on the other hand there was a new circle formed by God, and in that circle the Holy Spirit dwelt. Dominated by the Holy Spirit, and the flesh excluded, there was a circle of life and light and blessing. The converts were separated from this world’s circle, and were brought into the Christian circle by baptism — the figure of death. They said in substance, "We are dead to that world in which we once lived; we have left it in order that we might come into that new circle of life and love where God dwells". Now, dear friends, look around at Christendom, and what a sight we see! We see the world and Christians so mixed up that you cannot tell the difference. Does this not show how great has been the departure from the pattern of the House of God? A fourth fact is in verse 42: "They continued stedfastly in the Apostles’ doctrine", or the Apostles’ teaching. The House of God is not a place where we are left in ignorance to follow our own way, and do the best we can; no, it is the place of divine teaching. For us to-day we have the Apostles’ doctrine enshrined in the epistles. In Acts 2:1-47, it was limited to what was then known; today, we have the whole revealed mind of God in the Scriptures, and Paul’s doctrine, which has come out since the day of Pentecost, is most important. The fact that the Apostles’ doctrine is so lightly set aside today only marks a further stage in the downward course of departure from the pattern. Brethren, we want to get back to the Word, and have our thoughts formed by the Apostles’ teaching. The fifth fact is, they continued in "fellowship". Fellowship, we know from 1 Corinthians 1:9, is the fellowship of His Son Jesus Christ our Lord — not fellowship with His Son, but fellowship of His Son. Fellowship is a very simple thought; it means that we participate in common, and that involves a bond which binds us together. We participate in common in the dominion and administration of the Lord Jesus Christ; we own one Lord. He is the bond of our fellowship, and, beloved brethren, we are responsible to be true to that fellowship. The sixth fact is "they continued . . . in the breaking of bread." In the breaking of bread we formally commit ourselves to fellowship in the death of Christ. "The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?" It is something we do ourselves. Baptism is the act of another. We could not baptise ourselves. But when we take the Lord’s Supper, it is something we do. We formally commit ourselves to the death of Christ, and that means, beloved brethren, a very great deal. It surely means that now we are responsible to allow nothing that is contrary to Christ’s death, that we are not to go on with that for which, and to which, Christ has died. Alas! in this respect, how great has been the departure from the pattern. The seventh fact is, "They continued . . . in prayers." Here then is the last great mark of the House of God. It is marked by being a place of prayer. As we read in the Old Testament the House of God should be the place of prayer for all nations, so, too, when you come to the doctrine in the Epistle to Timothy we see a very great deal is made of prayer. "I will therefore that men pray every where, lifting up holy hands". It is the place where we can get in touch with God on behalf of men in a perishing world around us. And being the place of prayer, it is the place where we express our

dependence upon God.

Here then we have seven marks of the House of God — IT IS THE PLACE WHERE THE HOLY SPIRIT DWELLS and WHERE HIS PRESENCE IS KNOWN.

IT IS THE PLACE FROM WHICH THE GOSPEL GOES OUT. It is the House of God that sets forth the disposition of God to this poor world. It is then not only the place where the Holy Spirit dwells, where the Gospel is told out, but it tells of SEPARATION FROM THE WORLD. It is the place too, where we have DIVINE LIGHT, CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP EXPRESSED IN THE BREAKING OF BREAD and in PRAYERS.

Now I am not proposing anything that is not possible to-day. We are in the midst of ruin; everything is broken up, but still we have the pattern of God's House, and if I once see the pattern, there are two things before my soul; first, I must refuse everything that is not according to the pattern, and, secondly, I am responsible to walk according to the pattern.

One more remark before I close. In taking you back to Pentecost it is needful to sound a warning note, because we hear a very great deal to day of going back to Pentecost, but what people mean, alas! is this, they want to make something of themselves by getting back to the outward power of Pentecost; they would like to get back to tongues and healing and miracles. I have no such thought. But what I do say is this — that while I have no thought of trying to go back to the outward power of Pentecost, yet I would seek to get back to the divine principles of Pentecost, and you will see that all I have brought before you this evening is quite possible to-day. The Holy Spirit is still here; the gospel can still be preached; it is still possible to be separate from this world; we still have the Apostles' teaching; it is still possible to walk in fellowship, to break bread, and to pray. There is not a single mark of the House of God, that I have brought before you, that is not possible to be walking in the power and blessing of. Hence we can go back to Pentecost for divine principles, but I do not go back for outward power. Do not let us presume to reconstruct anything, or set up to be a pattern of the House. We shall break down if we do. All we have to do is in all simplicity to seek to walk in accordance with the principles of that House, and, brethren, I say again, I don't go back to Pentecost simply for outward power.

If I want power — and I do want power — I say do not go back to Pentecost, but on to glory, and, beloved brethren, I delight to look on and see the power is coming. A day of display is coming. There will be power and there will be display, but you must look on for that. I know there is a tendency to look back and say that the days that are gone were the best days. Sometimes it is said the times of the early brethren were the best days; and I have no doubt they were saying what wonderful days they had in the days of Wesley and Whitefield; and I am sure they again would talk of the days of Samuel Rutherford and the Covenanters; and if you had lived in Aberdeen and got in touch with Samuel Rutherford, he might have said, "Ah! if you had only lived a hundred years ago in the days of Luther;" and Luther was looking back to the days of St. Augustine; and he again was looking back to the days of the Apostles; and so they were all looking back, and all looking the wrong way.

It may be we live in a day of great failure, we are a feeble folk, but the best days are coming; they are not behind; they are on before. Look on. The glory of the latter House shall be greater than the glory of the former. In spite of all the breakdown, and all the ruin and all the weakness, the best

times are coming, and in that great city — the holy City, New Jerusalem — I see the glory and power and display, and the weakness and the failure will have gone for ever, for the former things are passed away, and I see the purposes of God fulfilled in spite of the failure of man, so that, I repeat, if we want power and glory, we must look on, and if we want divine principles to guide us in the present moment we must look back. May the Lord give us a deeper sense of the pattern of the House according to His own mind, and may that pattern be transferred from Scripture to our hearts and minds so that we may seek to walk and live according to the principles and pattern of God's House! H.S. The Epistle of Jude VERSES 22 AND 23

Jude is something of a unique epistle. Although other New Testament Scriptures give various details relative to the apostasy, in Jude we have the whole course described. Certain men have crept into the Christian profession (verse 4), that is the start. Enoch's prophecy to execute judgments upon all (verses 14, 15) declares the finish. And of course we are now in days of apostasy, so this epistle has a special voice to ourselves.

It is delightful to trace that there is a company who have found mercy, even though this apostasy is all around them. They are beloved in God the Father (verse 1) as in the Revised Version and J. N. Darby translations. Three times they are addressed as beloved (verses 3, 17, 20) and they are exhorted to keep themselves in the love of God. It seems like John's writings dropped into the middle of Jude, suited ministry for closing days as we might glean from the mystic reference in John 21:22. This little company who have found mercy, and look for mercy (verse 21), are set to work. They have to contend earnestly for the faith (verse 3) and to build themselves up on their most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost. In other words they are not to get over occupied with the apostasy but rather take heed to themselves and to the doctrine (1 Timothy 4:16). In so doing they both save themselves and those that hear. It is "those that hear" which are our special interest in this paper. If we have contended earnestly, if we have built up ourselves, if we have prayed, then there is bound to be a genuine concern for others, and this brings us to the verses 22 and 23 of Jude. Are-there two classes in these verses or three?

Here is the King James version translation, "And of some have compassion, making a difference: And others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire; hating even the garment spotted by the flesh" — two classes. The J. N. Darby translation is substantially the same but in a footnote he adds, "I am disposed to think . . . the passage should read . . . And some who dispute, correct: and some save, snatching them out of the fire with fear, hating . . . etc. Perhaps this is the best reading. He tells them in fact to make a difference. If men contested, he put them to silence; if not, he saved- them with fear, snatching them out of the fire, hating every trace of evil". Again he sees two classes. There is however still a further suggestion. This comes from W. Kelly. His translation reads: "And some convict when contending, others save, pulling them out of the fire, and others pity with fear, hating even the garment spotted by the flesh" — three classes. A consideration of the manuscripts and the differing authorities for these differing translations is probably beyond most of us, but there is another factor which would seem to weight in favour of the W. Kelly translation. Looking at Jude as a whole it is manifest that he has a predilection for groups of three.

Here are a few examples:

(1) These who creep in are ungodly, turning the grace of God into lasciviousness and denying the only Lord God and our Lord Jesus Christ. (verse 4) (2) Three examples of judgment, Egypt, angels

and Sodom and Gomorrha. (verses 5,6, 7) (3) Three further examples quoted, Cain, Balaam and Core. (verse 11) (4) Those who defile the flesh, despise dominion and speak evil of dignities. (verse 8) (5) The saints are beloved in God the Father, preserved in Jesus Christ and called. (verse 1) (6) Mercy, peace and love are invoked upon them. (verse 2) (7) Of three activities, building, praying and looking are present imperatives. (verses 20, 21) (8) The doxology at the close is before the whole age, now and to all the ages. (verse 25) Let us then look again at W. Kelly's translation.

There is the first group, "And some convict when contending". And then the second group, "Others save, pulling them out of the fire". And then the third group, "Others pity with fear, hating even the garment spotted by the flesh".

I am indebted to a brother for putting it briefly this way:

DISPUTERS: convict DITHERERS: pull them out of the fire DEFILED: pity them This classification is also so true to everyday Christian experience that it seems to be a translation worthy of our consideration and judgment. We have disputers with us every day perhaps, they are to be convicted, though even apostles did not always accomplish this, as we see with a Diotrephes and Alexander the coppersmith. But at least we can seek to bring the Word of God to bear upon every such case. Then, happily, from time to time, we do see souls delivered from ecclesiastical systems of bondage, for God's testimony and praise. But then there are others, like those held in the grip of the Eastern apostasy of Islam where we can only pity them and pray for them, and trust that the Lord will raise up a witness for Himself in situations quite beyond us.

What has prompted this paper is the evident need with us all to be more concerned for others. If we are really in the positive gain of Jude's exhortations as to ourselves it will inevitably make us more concerned in our relations with others. The suggestions of three groups seems eminently suitable and acceptable and it is offered for the judgment of the reader.

D.W.P.

News from the Field January 16, 1991. Dear brothers in Jesus Christ,

First of all, let me introduce myself. My name is Gavrilut Radu. I am 38 years old and an engineer. I am married and I have three children. I am a Christian since 1975. When God started His work in my life I was attending a Baptist Church. From the very beginning this prayer was born in my heart: "Lord, I want Your will to be done in my life, no matter what the price I'll have to pay". And I really couldn't know the price at that time. I saw the wrong practices of the Baptist sect and, because I wanted to be at the Lord's disposal, to say what He gave me to say, very soon I had to face them. But God was with me. All these "fightings" lasted for five years. For example, I understood that I couldn't break bread with them, especially because I knew for sure some of their members weren't born again and others didn't believe in the unity of the One Body, so that they had their supper. There were other young people in whose lives God started to work, my wife was also one of them.

Reading Mackintosh's book "The Assembly of God or Jesus Is Enough" * caused me great joy. I also read, last year, Trotter's book, "Five letters about Worship and Ministry in the Spirit" I read it in Romanian, I don't know its original title). I found it to be the same Spirit that works in us. The same

things were sown in my heart as well, of course not so crystallized like in those books. At that time I didn’t know that there were brothers and assemblies of brothers in other countries. I could learn more about that only after the revolution. Before, we were not allowed to have Christian books or to be visited by brothers from abroad. We too, the brothers from Marghita with who I have fellowship, were suspected by the "Securitate", being on their "black list" because they couldn’t understand why we didn’t belong to one of the 14 official, legal sects allowed in our country. Actually, praise the Lord, we now have no problem from this point of view. I would like that the present circumstances should serve to advance the gospel.

There are more places in our country where brothers gather in the Name of Jesus Christ. We are beginners but we have confidence that He, who began His good work in us, will bring it to completion.

I would like to be visited by true brothers that come to Romania; there is the possibility of translating them from English. In our country there appeared books printed especially by baptists or pentecostals, they are not only of uncertain value but I didn’t find in them that gospel by which I believed. We, the brethren from the west with whom I have fellowship, (I mean the brothers from Romania, we live in the west of our country) have no connection with the pentecostal — charismatic movement, on the contrary, we consider it a great danger, a movement on totally unsound base.

I would like you to send me, if possible, a catalogue with the books printed by you. I’m sorry that actually we are not able to pay for such books but I hope the time will come when we won’t have to beg for them. I suppose you know we are lagging behind from all points of view.

Waiting for your answer I wish you grace and peace from the Lord, Your brother in Christ,

Radu Gavrilut.

{*In the U.K. this bears the title "The Assembly of God or, the All-Sufficiency of the Name of Jesus".} A letter from a leper Extract from a Letter written by H. G. Brand from Yokohama, Japan, on 12 September, 1892.

"Hatton, the poor leper who was converted through brother Maki, who attended him as physician, went to be with the Lord about ten days ago. Through his prayers his brother was brought to the Lord, and has now been breaking bread for more than a year. I enclose the letter Hattori wrote him just before his death". To my young brother Kanoko Goro, (translated by Yojire Asada) I Jisaburo, leave the following words to my dear brother Goro, for I am now about to sleep.

I wish you to fulfil Jisaburo’s last desire, by managing as follows. I have passed my whole life in calamities, and in the pain of sickness. The pleasures and happiness of the world did not accompany me, though the tears of sorrow and grief have always filled my eyes. To write thus seems to be bewailing my misfortune, but it is not so. It is to make you know how much I am beloved by God. I am certainly a most miserable creature in the world, but our God hath loved us and chosen us in our Lord Jesus Christ before the foundation of the world.

He hath given me this affliction by which my pride has been broken. I have been manifestly compelled to forsake all, and depend on God. It is written that the great merciful God scourgeth him whom He loveth. Ah! how delightful, how joyful it is, to leave this sin-loving world, filled with

discontent and evil, and enter the glory of God! But my disagreeable corpse will still remain, though my soul has left this wretched world, and gone to the happy Paradise, so I ask you to hide it. I am satisfied if you merely bury it, because it is like my shadow. Do not manage it luxuriously, according to the principle of the world, but be simple in all things. To call Buddhist priests, to read canons, to visit the tomb for worship, or to establish grave stones, are all useless.

You should abolish all such things, for I desire the name of Hattori Jisaburo to be quickly forgotten in the world, but do anything according to the will of the brethren and sisters in the Lord. It is important to be simple in all things, and not to incline to the condition of the world.

Now I ask you this one thing, to give me satisfaction. Dear young brother Goro, I have no time to write any other letter, for my fixed time is over. Consequently, present my compliments to my two uncles Noda, and to my elder brother Kamataro. Brother Goro, we have received much kindness from our uncles Noda, so that you must be obedient to them, and often call on them, to console them in their old age, and also do this for our mother. Be truthful before all men, and stedfastly keep the principles of the Bible, no matter what the result may be. Salute our holy brethren and sisters.

Glorify the Lord’s Name in all matters. On all occasions bear the witness of the Lord, because of which you will be hated by all men; but do not be afraid, Rather rejoice. Pray always for my family, and for all saints.

I go to the Lord before, and wait for you. Rejoice and give thanks to God for my sleep.

I have many things to write, but there is no time, for I am hastening on to sleep, so I present to you one volume, the Bible. Read it in the presence of the Lord, and refresh yourself morning and evening. I now stay my pen. H.J.

Brother Hattori Jisaburo fell asleep in Jesus, 2nd September 1892.

Book Review John Nelson Darby by W. G. Turner. 106 pages, paperback. Chapter Two, London, England, 1990. Price £4.50.

"The continued influence of this servant of the Lord is much in evidence to this day", states the first sentence on the back cover of this little paperback. True indeed, for the teachings rediscovered in God’s Word by Darby and his co-labourers have affected millions of Christians, most of whom, today at least, are totally ignorant of Darby’s name and contribution to their spiritual good.

Dispensational teaching, especially about the difference between Israel and the Church, the truth of what the Church is and how it is to function, the rapture, and the clear prophetic picture of future events, was again brought to light through the indefatigable labour and prolific pen of this remarkable man.

Classic Gold Medalist at Trinity College, Dublin, as a young man Darby later translated or collaborated in translating the Bible into English, French, and German and his textual studies and notes have been used as the basis for translation of God’s Word into other languages as well. He never married, but like the apostle Paul spent much of his life in worldwide travels in the service of his blessed Master. What has been collected and preserved of his writings fills more than fifty good-sized volumes, all done before the invention of typewriters and computers, and most still

valued and kept in print today.

Born in a well-to-do family and trained for the legal profession, he gave this up for conscience sake after his conversion, becoming a curate in the Church of England. He served in this capacity in a wild and remote part of Ireland where his life was characterized by devotion and self-sacrifice rare among the Anglican clergy of his day. A keen student of God’s Word, as a young man he courageously acted upon the principles he discovered therein. In consequence, he soon found himself outside the church establishment, having begun meeting with other godly believers, many of them young like himself, in simplicity around the Lord Himself. While such meetings began at Dublin in the second half of the 1820s, the Spirit of God was doing a similar work in other countries as well, and it did not take long for such groups to find one another.

J.N.D., as he is commonly called, soon became known and appreciated as an outstanding teacher and leader among these assemblies of "brethren", as they were termed, his facility with languages and his extensive travels helping in the cause. But as to the book before us, its front cover calls it a biography. It would be most difficult, however, to confine a biography of this versatile yet controversial servant of the Lord to the space of a hundred pages. The book is essentially a tribute, though it does not gloss over Darby’s weaknesses. W. G. Turner wrote much of it ninety years ago. His book has been reprinted a number of times in English and has been translated into Chinese, Dutch, and German as well. He is long with the Lord. Now Edwin N. Cross, the compiler of this edition, has amplified it with information written by others as well. Vast portions of Darby’s life, travels, and service are not covered by this book, especially those areas that involved controversies and sad divisions among the "brethren" with whom his life was identified. A complete, detailed account of Darby’s life and ministry is not necessary to understand the principles he stood for and was used of God to teach. The more closely one looks at a man, sad to say, the more one tends to see his personal flaws and failures which cannot help but have their bearing upon his service and place in life. This little book, while not the comprehensive biography of Darby some might desire, will serve to give a good picture of him in the spirit of Php 4:8.

Eugene P. Vedder, Jr. Grace & Truth.

Understanding Prophecy

’’ . . . We need not go beyond Scripture to understand prophecy. It is right spiritual use of what is in the Word of God, and I bless God for it. If you find the simplest man who only studies with diligence the Bible in his mother tongue, and is led by the Spirit of God, he has the elements and the power of a true interpretation. But as sure as a man tries to find an interpretation here and there, by the help of history and antiquities, of newspapers, and what not, he is only deceiving himself and his hearers. Such is the universal moral sentence of God upon the soul that searches, in what is of man, the proper key to God’s secrets. I must find it from God Himself by a right use of what is in His own Word’’.

W. K. (Lectures on the book of Daniel).

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Babylon

Quotations from Scripture are generally taken either from the King James translation or Mr. J. N. Darby’s translation. Quotations taken from any other translation will be indicated in the course of the article, or in a footnote to the article. The article that follows was submitted by a brother, now in his 99th year, who resides in a Christian old peoples’ home in Ipswich. It has a warmth and charm which the editors are sure Truth and Testimony’s readers will appreciate. The Life of Jesus

It is a very happy thing to speak about the Lord Jesus. To speak about others is sad history — but a black background to the coming in of Jesus. For He is another kind of Man altogether. God had looked to see if there was anyone that responded to Himself. The Epistle to the Romans shows that every member of man’s body was used in self-will in defiance of God in the practice of sin. Look at the summary of chapter three: his eyes, his tongue, his throat, his feet — all summed up as a person of wickedness. Now into the scene comes another Man for whom God has waited. Think of who He was that came! What care was divinely exercised that He should have a body suited to the glory of the Person who was to occupy it. See Luke 1:35; the amazing mystery! He was born in an outcast position in the poorest of circumstances. Jesus, of whom it is said that He is "God blessed for ever", was born in a stable! Just a part of an inn that was used for animals, and He was born there, touching creation humanly at its lowest level. His mother wrapped Him in swaddling clothes and laid Him in a manger. Oh strange, yet befitting, beginning to all that life of woe!

Strange, yet befitting. Think of heaven’s pleasure. We do not read much of heaven’s pleasure when other children were born, but it was declared then. The heavens resound with praise at the birth of One who was to be the pleasure of God. Oh what a Babe! How different from any other babe! We have very little said in New Testament testimony about the childhood and secret life of Jesus. This is remarkable, brethren. Yet in Psalms 22:1-31, which Jesus quoted when forsaken on the cross, it also speaks of the way He had depended upon God. It says in verses nine and ten, "Thou art He that took Me out of the womb; Thou didst make Me trust, upon My mother’s breasts. I was cast upon Thee from the womb; Thou art My God from My mother’s belly". Think of that. Passing in retrospect in the holy mind of Jesus, as He is about to lay down His holy life, He goes back to its beginning here when He was a babe upon His mother’s breasts. He trusted in God. There was never another babe like that. We shrink from saying much about this profound mystery. It is so holy. In the tiny conditions of infancy, He was cast upon God. What pleasure for God that must have evoked. Babies are not very old when they begin to show signs of self-will. A temper will display itself in the tiniest child. Never did it show itself in the Lord Jesus. "I was cast upon

Thee". This marked Him throughout His secret and public life.

Then in Isaiah 53:1-12, we are given a little touch of the life of Jesus. He was the Arm of the Lord. How choice it is to our hearts when the Arm of the Lord comes on our views. "He shall grow up before Him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground: He hath no form nor comeliness" when we see Him. These are expressions which refer to Jesus in His youth. Think of Jesus growing up as a tender sapling. The young people will have seen in the parks and gardens how men plant the tree saplings. They do not just put them in the ground and leave them in the wind; the storm will crush them. They give them a standard for support. That is how the Lord Jesus was here. In every moment of the day, every night, He would say, "Preserve Me, O God: for in Thee do I put My trust". Psalms 16:1. Think of Him saying that. We do not often talk like that. We make up our minds what we are going to do, and often turning to God is very remote even with the most pious of us; but not with the Lord Jesus, a tender sapling.

Defenceless, yet dependent and preserved as He trusted in His God. Has the meaning of 2 Corinthians 8:9 sunk into our hearts? Paul is speaking about the collection. He says "Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor". Think of the poverty of Galilee. What a rebuke to the sumptuous indulgence and self satisfaction of those at Corinth, and to those living in the present time! The Lord Jesus lived in poverty. The poverty of Galilee, as it was then, would have had to be seen to be believed. Jesus was born into it and lived in it to the pleasure of God. Hundreds of years before this, when King Solomon lived in his greatness, he built a house with the help of supplies from King Hiram of Tyre. He gave Hiram a reward for supplying the timber. He gave him twenty cities in the region of Galilee. We are told in 1 Kings 9:10-14 that Hiram came to look at them. He called them the land of Cabul, which means "as of nothing" or worthless. That is what he thought about Galilee. He did not mind being associated with Solomon in the splendour of his house and external glory, but he considered the reproach of Galilee as being worthless. Into these conditions came the Lord Jesus. He was brought up in Nazareth in poverty. Think of God looking down on those wretched dwellings, with the hand to mouth existence, the disease, the need and suffering of men under the rule of Herod, and seeing One Lovely Man there. Was there any chafing resentment in the heart of Jesus because of the conditions? No, not any. It is said in Psalms 16:6, "The lines are fallen unto Me in pleasant places; yea, I have a goodly heritage". "I have set the LORD always before Me" verse 8. Think of the Lord Jesus saying that in conditions where outwardly there was hardly a vestige remaining to show that it was the heritage of the people of God. Yet God had that in Jesus which the inheritance had never yielded to Him before.

Precious, holy life lived in secret; lived here among men for the pleasure of God!

Thomas Gray. Our dear brother was called Home to be with his Lord on August 6 while this issue of the magazine was in preparation. From Our Archive "The Morning Star"

INTRODUCTORY (first published in Dublin in 1912)

Paradise was not long enjoyed by our first parents. Through listening to the suggestion of Satan, they disobeyed the solitary commandment which had been given to test their dependence upon God in the scene where everything was prepared for their happiness, and where communion with their Creator would have been their supreme joy. All the other creatures, being by their nature

incapable of this blessing, had been made subject to Adam, according to God's first purpose, and God brought them to him to give them names (Genesis 1:26-28; Genesis 2:19-20). That dominion remained to him after his fall; but Paradise, where it had been for an instant enjoyed with God, was lost to him for ever, - lost through his disobedience. Into the details of God's subsequent ways with Adam we cannot enter, our present object being to draw attention to the fact that in judging the "serpent", God intimated that his final destruction would be wrought by the woman's SEED. She had been, in the first instance, seduced by Satan; and through her, the Deliverer was to come. Besides that, He was to be characterised by the obedience in which both she and Adam had failed.

Such is the real meaning of the words in Psalms 40:6, "Mine ears hast Thou opened".* The true sense of this figure in its moral bearing is given by the Greek version, quoted in Hebrews 10:5, "A body hast Thou prepared Me". The blessed Lord took His human body, "made of a woman, made under the law" (Galatians 4:4), in order that obedience might become possible for One who not only had made all things, but sustained and upheld them all "by the word of His power" (Hebrews 1:3). Before taking human form, He had never been in a position to obey; but having taken it, His delight was to carry out to the uttermost the Father's will who had sent Him, as it is indeed expressed in the words of the Psalm, "Lo, I COME: in the volume of the book it is written of Me, I delight to do Thy will, O My God: yea, Thy law is within My heart" (see John 6:38; John 8:29). Ever subject, He learned "obedience by the things which He suffered" (Hebrews 5:8; Isaiah 50:4-7).

{*The word "opened" as stated in the margin of some Bibles means literally "digged" or "hollowed out"; an allusion no doubt to the way in which a potter finishes off his work, by digging out of the clay the ''ears'' (or handles) which are needed to complete the circular part of the base made upon the wheel. The hearing ''ear" signifies obedience (Proverbs 4:1-4, 20; Proverbs 20:12).} His supreme act of obedience was His death, when He took upon Himself the penalty attached to Adam's disobedience, and its consequences: "For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of One shall many be made righteous" (Romans 5:19). Those words never could be true of any of Adam's seed according to the flesh. And here let us note how both the divine and human nature of our blessed Lord is clearly established in a way that reaches the heart and conscience of all who can say, He "loved me, and gave Himself for me" (Galatians 2:20). It will be our joy in eternity.

It is therefore not surprising that the coming of Christ, as expressed in those words, "Lo, I come", is one of the most prominent truths on the pages of the Old Testament. We find it both in direct and positive statements, and also in figures and in types which proclaim unequivocally not only His personal coming, but also His death and resurrection; for "without shedding of blood is no remission" (Leviticus 17:11; Hebrews 9:22). As time went on, the unfolding of these blessed truths became more complete in details, as in Isaiah 53:1-12 and the end of Daniel 9:1-27; but for various reasons, they remained more or less obscure. They were difficult to reconcile with other passages which spoke of His kingdom, power, and glory. The Lord Himself began to unfold them to His astonished disciples from the moment of His undertaking the last journey from Galilee to Jerusalem. He reminded them again of His death, at the last supper, on the night in which He was betrayed; and, again, after His resurrection, He showed how the scriptures set it forth (Luke 24:6; Luke 24:25-47).

It is remarkable that, in the gospel history, not one of the disciples asked Jesus an explanation as to how sins could be righteously forgiven, nor as to the reason for His dying. The scribes and Pharisees reasoned in their hearts when they heard Him say, "thy sins be forgiven thee"; but, not believing in His Deity, they treated it as "blasphemy" (Mark 2:5-12; Luke 7:49). No doubt they all believed, from Old Testament scriptures, that there was such a thing as forgiveness of sins. It had been first proclaimed on Mount Sinai, in the very spot from whence the Ten Commandments had been promulgated. It was given in answer to Moses' intercession after the first commandment of all had been violated in a way which trampled under foot God's goodness as well as His power, and also after Moses had broken the tables divinely made and graven; for he was overcome when he saw the extent to which the Israelites had debased themselves in presence of the golden calf. But Moses interceded, and God answered him; such was His grace then; and the moment was well suited for establishing the basis of future access into God's presence afterwards, figured by the blood sprinkled on and before the mercy-seat (Leviticus 16:1-34). Thenceforward, the faithful could say with the Psalmist, "There is forgiveness with Thee, that Thou mayest be feared" (Psalms 130:4). Forgiveness was an established fact, though as yet unaccounted for, and the blessedness of one forgiven could be celebrated, as by David in Psalms 32:1-11. But what the needed sacrifice was, or when it was to be offered, had not as yet been clearly understood. Even John the Baptist did not know it, though by the Spirit he had pointed out "the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world" (John 1:29). Only the Lord Himself could reveal it, and He only did so when the appointed moment had arrived to carry out God's will.

Many other features of the coming of Christ are set forth in the Old Testament. And these required time for making them known generally. He is the Prophet, Priest, and King. Personally, we find these typically in Abraham, Moses, and David; and the gospels of Mark, Luke, and Matthew correspond thereto respectively. Moreover, in Abraham, we find most particularly the fundamental principle of justification on the principle of faith. It is set forth in Romans 4:1-25. Not only so, but the portion of those justified through faith is shown to be heavenly, by the words which directed Abraham's attention to the stars, saying, "So shall thy seed be". How, where, or in what circumstances his seed was to be like the stars of heaven was not then stated, * nevertheless there was, in the words used, a present divine purpose for the blessing of Abraham's own soul, as is shown in Hebrews 11:14-16). This is why the saints of the present economy of grace are called "partakers of the heavenly calling". The gospel cannot be-properly preached now without insisting on the Saviour's present place in heaven (Acts 3:21), which, in His person, set forth God's purpose of having many sons in glory. There it is that Jesus can say in the fullest sense, according to His own heart's desire, "Behold I and the children which God hath given Me". (Hebrews 2:5-15; Hebrews 3:1; John 17:24).

{*God gave a further intimation of its meaning to Daniel (Dan. 12:3). Compare with Genesis 15:6. Righteousness was Abraham's portion from God as soon as he believed, but it was reserved for others to turn "many" to it, so that the heavenly "seed" might be manifested, as well as their consequent "shining" for the glory of God.}

All the scriptures which speak of Christ's power over this earth, when the judgment — over and over again predicted — must be carried out by Him, will also surely have their fulfilment. But even then, the judgment will not be unmixed with grace; for He is Priest as well as King, "and He shall be a Priest upon His throne", when He shall "bear the glory" (Zechariah 6:13; Psalms 72:1-20).

This supposes His coming again to this earth. He insisted particularly on His return, in speaking to His disciples before He left them, and it was definitely promised by angelic instrumentality when He went up from their midst on the Mount of Olives (John 16:16-22; Acts 1:11).

It is well to bear in mind, in reading the Old Testament, that its primary intention was to reach the consciences of those to whom it was first delivered, so that they might walk with God by faith in His written Word, and not by their own estimate of passing events. At the same time, prophetic announcements were, as Peter says, not "of any private interpretation"; that is, they were by no means confined to instruction adapted to the particular circumstances which gave rise to them. "Holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost", and had, by diligent inquiry, to learn that the Spirit was testifying to Christ, and consequently to future events which reached far beyond anything that their actual knowledge of God's plans and purposes could enable them to grasp (1 Peter 1:9-12; 2 Peter 1:20-21). Daniel himself "fainted, and was sick certain days", and had to record that "none understood" the vision that was shown to him (Daniel 7:28; Daniel 8:27).

All predictions of that which was to take place were necessarily partial, though sufficient to accomplish their object; not by flattering the intelligence, but appealing to the conscience of those who heard them. We have the advantage of beginning at the point to which the Old Testament saints looked forward, namely, the sufferings of Christ, which were needed to accomplish redemption. They could celebrate the blessedness of forgiveness as the only possible ground of walking happily with God, but none of them could point to the finished work of the Redeemer as their own start in a new life, to which they could look back. Whereas we, having the cross before our souls, can now enjoy to the full the divinely-given expressions of the blessedness that flows from it (Psalms 32:1-2; Psalms 130:3-6; Romans 4:3-8).

Faith is now, as it ever was, the only principle for a walk that is pleasing to God, such as Enoch's. And faith is formed and nourished by revealed truth. The principle is the same for all time (Hebrews 6:17-20); 11:4-6). But at any given moment of the world's history, only so much of the truth could be really made use of as had a direct bearing upon the circumstances of the time being. By this means true exercise of conscience toward God was produced, and the soul was animated by "the hope set before it" (Hebrews 6:11-12).

Abraham, for instance, had promises for this world, but his portion here was to live as a pilgrim and a stranger, while waiting for the things promised. We, knowing accomplished redemption, have other promises, heavenly in their character, for the full realisation of which we wait, though we are already made "partakers of the divine nature", and our calling is "heavenly" in principle (2 Peter 1:3-4, and 1 Peter 1:3-5). The above remarks, though short, will, we trust, suffice to explain why it is that, in the Old Testament writings, the first coming of Christ to this world, and His return in glory to set up His kingdom, are often treated as one single event, both advents being referred to in the same verse. The passage which the Lord read from Isaiah 61:1-11 in the synagogue at Nazareth is a case in point (Luke 4:18-19).* His purpose being to show from the Scripture what was the object and character of His ministry in Galilee, He read only so much of it as referred to His first coming, and "closed the book" in the middle of the second verse, when He came to words which spoke of a future "day of vengeance".

{*The adaptation to the day of Pentecost, of Joel's prophecy, is another instance (Joel 2:28-32; Acts 2:16-21).}

Elsewhere, as for instance in the latter halves of Psalms 14:1-7 and Psalms 53:1-6, we do find indications of two "comings", the first in grace and suffering, the second in judgment. But, as a rule, there was no need to speak more definitely at the time when these Scriptures were written, their essential object being to insist upon Messiah's personal coming to this earth.

He is the "anointed one" whose throne God was about to set upon His holy hill of Zion (Psalms 2:1-6). His authority must eventually be owned in the place where He was rejected and so suffered for us; ** and for His "glorious appearing" every loyal soul, whether he belongs to this Christian dispensation or not, must wait with a longing heart. Paul did so, not expecting his "crown of righteousness" until that day shall come (2 Timothy 4:6-8; Titus 2:13).

{*That the coming manifested glory of the Lord in His kingdom is the appointed counterpart of His sufferings here, is abundantly shown by the accounts of the Transfiguration in the first three gospels. Compare also Luke 23:42-43).}

Nothing is more definite, all through Scripture, than the Lord's personal coming to this earth. The first intimation of it on the occasion of Adam's fall and the consequent judgment of the serpent, is given in those striking words, "thou shalt bruise His heel" (Genesis 3:15). And the closing chapters of the Old Testament remind the faithful among His ancient people (how treated as "Lo-ammi," Hosea 1:9; Hosea 2:23), that the Lord whom they seek for shall suddenly come to His temple (Malachi 3:1). Indeed the returned captives in Zerubbabel's time had to be assured that the builder of the only temple that can have a permanent duration must be the Lord* who will "be a priest upon His throne", true Melchisedek, "the Son of David, the Son of Abraham"; Son of man, and Son of God (Zechariah 6:12-13; Psalms 8:4; Psalms 80:17; Psalms 110:4; Daniel 7:1-28; 1 Chronicles 17:13-14; Matthew 1:1; Luke 3:38).

{*Presented as "the Branch" 1:e. the Son of man who should "grow up out of His place" (compare Luke 2:40, 52).}

Besides His personal coming into the world, His death is abundantly set forth, not only in type, as by the sacrifices which are everywhere found in the Old Testament from Abel's onwards (see Hebrews 11:4; Hebrews 12:24), but also in direct testimony, as in Psalms 16:10-11, Psalms 22:15, Psalms 102:23-24; Isaiah 53:1-12; Daniel 9:26, etc. And death was to be followed by resurrection. He "showed Himself alive after His passion" to the "apostles whom He had chosen" during forty days, before He went up in their sight from the Mount of Olives (Luke 24:50-51; Acts 1:2-3; Acts 1:9-10; Acts 1:12). And to that spot He must return; His "feet shall stand" there (Zechariah 14:4). So that in every way Christ's return to this earth is abundantly guaranteed. The last prophecy of the Old Testament, addressed to those who fear Jehovah's name, presents the Messiah as "the Sun of righteousness" who shall "arise with healing in His wings". Yet it does not omit the mention of judgment which must also take place at that time, and burn up the wicked (Malachi 4:1-3; compare Matthew 25:31; Matthew 25:46). The coming of Elijah the prophet, to prepare the people for that day, is foretold in the same passage, so that grace might run its course instead of judgment. But the Lord, in referring to it, showed His disciples that for those who "could receive it", Elijah's mission had been already fulfilled by John the Baptist, who was sent of God to prepare the way of His own Son, by leading the people to repentance (Malachi 3:1, Malachi 4:1-6; Matthew 9:10-14; Luke 1:67-79; John 1:6). From this point of view the most important part of Christ's work was already accomplished at His first coming (see Psalms 40:7-8; John 17:4-5), and His present

glory with the Father is the answer to it. Indeed, all John’s gospel makes the Lord’s death exceedingly prominent, for without it no one could ever have part with Him in His glory, nor could He have prepared a place for any in His Father’s House (John 12:24, John 14:2-3).

He was indeed "the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world" (John 1:29), but the Baptist, though divinely instructed to point this out, was unable to tell any one of those who came to him that their sins had been forgiven; nor could he at all understand why Jesus should take a place with those who had confessed their sins at the Jordan (Matthew 3:14). His mission was simply to put God’s seal, as it were, by baptism on those who, by their confession, took their place before God as sinners; then he was able to direct their thoughts to One who was to come after, and who alone could baptize them with the Holy Ghost (Mark 1:1-8). For that, however, it was needful that Jesus should, in the first place, ascend to heaven (Mark 16:19; John 16:7; Acts 1:4-5; Acts 2:1-4; Acts 2:33). The Lord hinted that to Nicodemus when He intimated to him that He had "heavenly things" to communicate; and He could not speak to him of eternal life, until He had first shown the necessity of His being "lifted up" upon the cross (John 3:12-15, John 8:28, John 12:31-33). His death opened up the way to glory "above", in the Father’s house, not to Jews only, but to Gentiles - both being included in the words "all" and "whosoever". The "other sheep" were Gentiles (John 10:14-16).

Henceforward every hope, whether for the enjoyment of the FATHER’S HOUSE in company with the SON, or for the accomplishment of the promises made to the fathers by the prophets (Hebrews 1:1), depends upon the return to this earth of Him who, in His cross, laid the foundation of every blessing in store for this sin-stricken world. How and when these things are to take place, we have yet to examine. William Joseph Lowe (1838-1927).

(To be continued, if the Lord will.) The Old in the New Explained Jeremiah 31:15. Matthew 2:18.

"In Rama was there a voice heard, lamentation, and weeping, and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children, and would not be comforted, because they are not". The Rama or Ramah spoken of in these verses was a city of the tribe of Benjamin, some 5-10 miles north of Jerusalem (Joshua 18:21; Joshua 18:25). Already the ten tribes, which formed the kingdom of Israel, had been removed out of Jehovah’s sight by the Assyrian, the rod of His anger (2 Kings 17:1-41; Isaiah 10:5). The tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh, the descendants of Joseph, the first son of Rachel, were amongst them. Now the tribe of Benjamin, Rachel’s second son, along with the tribe of Judah, was being removed by Nebuchadnezzar "at the commandment of Jehovah" (2 Kings 24:1-20). In her desire to have children Rachel had called upon her husband to "Give me children, or else I die", but for a time God had withheld from her the fruit of the womb (Genesis 30:1-2). We can understand how she would weep and mourn that such a tragedy should overtake those descended from her. While this is so, the wider context of Jeremiah 31:1-40 shows that Jehovah will yet bring both the houses of Israel into blessing, under Messiah. Indeed, the chapter opens and closes with bright anticipations of that time.

There is the promise that Jehovah will be "the God of all the families of Israel, and they shall be My people" (verse 1), while verses 31 to 34 detail the terms of the new covenant that will form the basis of that relationship. Then will be fulfilled what is here said of the ten tribes, "Behold, I will bring them from the north country, and gather them from the coasts of the earth . . . " (verse 8) and of the two tribes "Refrain thy voice from weeping, and thine eyes from tears . . . they shall come

again from the land of the enemy. And there is hope for thy latter end, saith Jehovah, and thy children shall come again to the* own border" (verses 16 and 17).

Here in Matthew 2:1-23 we read of the calculating cruelty of Herod, who in aiming his blow at the children clearly intended to put an end to the One who threatened his throne. No doubt it was the devil who, well knowing Who it was that had been born, moved Herod to perpetrate such an atrocity (Revelation 12:4). Its purpose fails. Joseph is warned of the danger and takes "the young child and His mother" and flees into Egypt. Nevertheless the blow falls and who can tell the sorrow that it must have entailed? Though the circumstances and geographical location were different Jeremiah 31:1-40 verse 15 is applied as expressing the grief of those affected. The very next verse in Matthew 2:1-23 records the death of Herod. He was soon called from his seat and will stand before the great white throne for judgment as Revelation 20:11-15 describes. The remainder of the chapter explains why, though born in Bethlehem, our Lord was brought up in Nazareth, and notices the general testimony of the Old Testament prophets that He would be the more despised and rejected on that account.

R. F. W.

Jacob’s Last Words

(continued) 3. A HISTORY OF THE CHURCH

Whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning (Romans 15:4) and I am convinced that Genesis 49:1-33 contains important teaching regarding the history of the Church. Because of the rejection of Messiah, Israel was temporarily put aside, and God now has another people here on earth, the Christian company which, alas, has failed as much as God’s ancient people. The first four sons of Jacob show typically the characteristic blessings which God had bestowed originally upon His people:

— the blessing of sonship (Reuben);

— the blessing of hearing the Word of God and being guided by God’s Spirit (Simeon);

— the blessing of fellowship with God and with fellow-believers (Levi);

— the blessing of worshipping in spirit and truth in recognition of the authority of Christ who sings God’s praises in the midst of His own (Judah).

If we follow the history of Christendom we see that these privileges were soon lost sight of. Jacob’s sons did not really deserve their beautiful names, and likewise, the life of the Church often contradicted its high calling. Christians have mingled with the world at the price of subjection to the world, as is seen in Zebulun (= dwelling) and Issachar (= wages). Therefore Christ reproached the church at Pergamos with the words: "I know where thou dwellest, where the throne of Satan is" (Revelation 2:13). In defiance of its heavenly calling, the Church has become an important outward power here on earth, and therefore the world and "that woman Jezebel" (1:e. popery, Revelation 2:20) have ruled over it. In Revelation 2:1-29 this history of failure also culminates in idolatry, which in Genesis 49:1-33 is seen in the tribe of Dan. Jezebel’s influence is seen again in the end time in idolatrous Babylon the great (Revelation 17:1-18; Revelation 18:1-24). Here nominal Christendom is shown to be heading for judgment. In this situation only God can show a

way out. Therefore the prayer of those who remain faithful to the Word and the Name of Christ is, "I wait for Thy salvation, O Lord". Even in the darkest hours there is a victorious remnant (Gad overcomes his enemies). They rejoice in abundant spiritual food (Asher eats rich food), and have struggled out of the grasp of worldly and judaistic influences (Naphtali is a hind let loose). They will share the glory of Christ who is the Firstborn among many brethren (Joseph is the one distinguished among his brothers). They will also reign with Him over the earth and sit with Him on His throne (Benjamin divides the spoil). Thus the blessings which had been lost sight of in the beginning become the portion of a faithful remnant that is waiting for the full revelation of God's salvation in the second coming of Christ.

4. STAGES OF SPIRITUAL GROWTH

Apart from this, Genesis 49:1-33 contains valuable lessons for ourselves as individual believers. Our history as children and sons of God is not always flawless, as is shown in type in the first three sons of Jacob. The first lesson we learn is that "that was not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural; and afterward that which is spiritual" (1 Corinthians 15:46). In spite of all the privileges granted to us, our old self can be a great hindrance. Although we do recognise Christ's authority in our lives (Judah and Shiloh), we can be enslaved by the world, the law and sin (Zebulun, Issachar and Dan). Our need then leads to the prayer for the intervention of God's salvation: "I wait for Thy salvation" (verse 18). We learn from experience that we cannot expect anything good from ourselves, and that only God can bring relief. The New Testament counterpart of this prayer of Jacob is the exclamation in Romans 7:24 — "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" But the darkest hour is just before dawn. And just as the prophecy of Jacob takes a turn for the better from this critical point, the believer is blessed once his eyes have been opened to the fulness of salvation in Christ and to the fact that he has been set free from the law of sin and death. He learns to thank God, for he changes from a slave into a free man, and from a loser into a victor. Romans 8:1-39 depicts the Christian's victorious life in the power of the Spirit of God.

Now this is exactly what we find in the next three sons of Jacob. Gad overcomes the enemies besieging him. Asher shows the abundant life which is the victor's portion. He eats rich food and he yields royal dainties: he is able to let others share in his abundance. The picture is completed by Naphtali, who depicts the freedom and the joy that the believer enjoys after the struggle of Romans 7:1-25. He is a hind let loose and gives beautiful words: he sings the song of praise of Christian liberty and cries: "Abba, Father!". This process of spiritual growth finally reaches its height in that Christ Himself is seen in the believer. Living by the Spirit conforms us to the image of God's Son (Romans 8:14; Romans 8:29). This is shown in type by the last two sons of Jacob, Joseph and Benjamin, beautiful types of the Lord Jesus. Christ Himself is the climax of our blessing, the crown of our happiness. In Joseph we see Him both in His rejection and in His exaltation, and our lives should be in agreement with this. On the one hand Christ in His utter humiliation is our model (Php 2:1-30); on the other hand Christ in His heavenly glory is the goal of all our ambitions (Php 3:1-21). If He is formed in us in this way, our life will be more and more under the Lordship of the Man at God's right hand, who allows us to partake in the results of His victory (Benjamin divides the spoil). Thus we reach spiritual maturity, which is so often mentioned in the New Testament, and the image of Christ is clearly seen in us (1 Corinthians 3:1-3; Galatians 4:19; Ephesians 4:12-16; Colossians 1:28).

5. JACOB’S BLESSING COMPARED WITH THAT OF MOSES (Deuteronomy 33:1-29)

Jacob’s blessing has a remarkable counterpart in Moses’ blessing at the end of the Pentateuch. The main difference is that Genesis 49:1-33 stresses man’s responsibility, while Deuteronomy 33:1-29 emphasizes God’s plans and purposes. Genesis 49:1-33 is, in fact, one long history of guilt and punishment, failure and restoration, but Deuteronomy 33:1-29 is a picture of the people at the time when they, according to the gracious counsels of God, have been given possession of all the blessings of the Promised Land. In this latter chapter the Spirit of God passes over all the negative things that Jacob says about his sons in Genesis 49:1-33. Of course, there is also a difference in the way they are addressed. Jacob regards his sons as the heads and representatives of the twelve tribes (Genesis 49:28), while Moses speaks to the tribes themselves. The order of Jacob’s sons in Deuteronomy 33:1-29 is different from the one in Genesis 49:1-33. Reuben is immediately followed by Judah, who received Reuben’s position as the firstborn. Simeon is missing completely, probably because this tribe merged with Judah. However, there are still twelve names listed because Ephraim and Manasseh are mentioned separately in the blessing of Joseph. Now let us compare the order in both chapters:

Genesis 49:1-33 Deuteronomy 33:1-29 1. Reuben Reuben

2. Simeon Judah

3. Levi Levi 4. Judah Benjamin 5. Zebulun Joseph (Ephraim + Manasseh) 6. Issachar Zebulun

7. Dan Issachar

8. Gad Gad

9. Asher Dan 10 Naphtali Naphtali 11. Joseph Asher

12. Benjamin

Judah is followed by Levi, who carries off a rich blessing as a reward for his obedience to the Lord after Israel had sinned by worshipping the golden calf (Exodus 32:25-29). Along with Joseph he takes the most prominent place in Moses’ blessing, while in Genesis 49:1-33 this place is occupied by Judah and Joseph! Deuteronomy shows the people in possession of the land, brought close to God and living according to His commandments, for which Levitical service is necessary. After this the two sons of Rachel follow — first Benjamin, then Joseph, an order determined by spiritual reasons. As Levi had the service of the sanctuary, Benjamin had the location of the sanctuary. Jerusalem was part of Benjamin’s territory, and therefore it says here that he dwelled in safety close by the Lord and that the Lord dwelled between his shoulders (= mountain sides). This leads to the full blessing granted to Joseph who, as in Genesis 49:1-33, is called the "crowned" or "select amongst" his brothers. (See footnotes in J. N. Darby translation). Only then follow the two last sons of Leah and the four sons of the maids. Their blessings all relate to the possession and enjoyment of the inheritance in the Promised Land.

Moses spoke these things on the eve of the entry into Canaan under Joshua’s leadership. But apart from the historical fulfilment of a number of these blessings there is, just as in Genesis 49:1-33, an obvious prophetic and spiritual value. Deuteronomy 33:1-29 contains several references to the coming Kingdom, in which Israel will possess the land not just temporarily but for

ever. It is remarkable that in verse 7 Judah is said to be brought unto his people (from the Diaspora?). Levi will overcome his adversaries (verse 11) — and in the end time there will be plenty of them — and Benjamin will dwell in safety in the land (verse 12). Joseph will even rule over the nations and expand his dominion to the ends of the earth (verse 17). Zebulun and Issachar will call the nations to the mountain (verse 19), 1:e. the mountain of the Lord, the Temple mount, which in the last days will be established as the chief of the mountains (Isaiah 2:2-5). The last reference to the millennium is implied in the final verse of Moses' blessing, where it says that Israel's enemies will give feigned obedience to the people of God. This expression also occurs in the Psalms and ultimately points to the subjugation of the nations during the reign of Christ (Psalms 18:1-50, Psalms 66:1-20, Psalms 81:1-16).

There can also be no doubt about the practical and spiritual meaning of these blessings for ourselves. It is also true for us that it is the blessing of the Lord that makes rich (Proverbs 10:22). And our riches are of a spiritual nature in the first place, since we have been blessed with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ (Ephesians 1:3). As Israel received the Promised Land as their inheritance — the possession of which is actually the subject of Moses' blessing — so a vast territory of spiritual, eternal blessings has been granted to us to be taken possession of in faith. So the subject here is not, as in Genesis 49:1-33, the stages of spiritual growth, or the history of the failure and restoration of God's people as a whole. Here in Deuteronomy 33:1-29 the subject is the unhindered possession of God's blessings in the "land" that He has given us. Although these blessings are our individual portion, it is more the collective side of it which is shown here. They are enjoyed in the assemblies in which God places us and in which we live together (see also Psalms 133:1-3, where we read about the blessing that God commands where brothers dwell together in unity).

H. Bouter Jnr. The following paper was submitted in the course of a correspondence with one of the editors. It raises important issues which ought not to be passed over. To practise the principles adduced may not be easy but seeing those principles as firmly rooted in Scripture carries with it the responsibility of seeking to answer to them.

Churches: Confederacy or Independency. Which?

It is argued by many that since local churches are not seen in Scripture as forming a confederation, they must therefore be autonomous and independent. They are not to be formed into a definite circle accountable to some central ecclesiastical governing body at some designated location on earth. There is no such thing in the New Testament as a central oversight of the Churches of God. But the question still remains: Does this make local assemblies independent? The simple answer is, No it does not. The point is that neither a confederation of assemblies or ecclesiastical independency is the teaching of Scripture. The New Testament does not support either of these ideas. Let us be clear that the Church is seen in one aspect as the Body of Christ. That is, every truly born again believer on earth is a member of one Body which has its Head in heaven. The Head is the Lord Jesus Christ at the right hand of God exalted and glorified, and the Body is formed by each member being united to the Head by the Holy Spirit sent down from heaven.

Now it is said that we have no headquarters. But have we overlooked that the Church as the Body of Christ takes all its character from the risen and glorified Head in heaven, and that every member

of the Body on earth is linked to Him there? In short, we are members one of another (Romans 12:5) and all the members have the same Head (Ephesians 4:15). We must hold the Head (Colossians 2:19), "from which ALL the body by joints and bands having nourishment ministered, and knit together, increaseth with the increase of God". This rules out autonomy. Further, "the whole body fitly joined together, and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of EVERY PART, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love," (Ephesians 4:16). That puts to an end the notion of independency.

It needs to be appreciated that even in these present days of break up, the truth still remains: "There IS One Body". (Ephesians 4:4). After all, there is only one Christ; only one Head: therefore there cannot be two bodies or more. And local churches are "body of Christ" (1 Corinthians 12:27). That is to say, every local assembly is ’body-like’, it has the character of the Body and should express the glories of the Head of that Body in the district where it is. Local assemblies could not be independent bodies or the Christ would be a Head with many bodies. "For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body; so also is Christ. For by one Spirit are WE ALL baptised into one body", (1 Corinthians 12:12-13).

How is it therefore that unity is to be maintained without a central overseeing body on earth? The answer is plainly that every member has the same Head and is indwelt by the same one Holy Spirit. Not only so, but all have the same Word of God. We all must be walking according to the direction of the Head and in the power of the Spirit. Everyone must be guided by the Scriptures. Paul maintained that he had the same pattern for all the local churches. See 1 Corinthians 4:17; 1 Corinthians 7:17; 1 Corinthians 11:16; 1 Corinthians 14:33; 1 Corinthians 16:1. Everything in the local assembly must be taken up in the light of that which is true of the whole. The apostle wrote, "As in all churches". The great lack today, and the cause of all the breakdown, is our widespread failure to recognise the truth of the One Body, and thus lapse into the serious error of not holding the Head. When true Church ground is forsaken and Christ is not seen as all sufficient, then men’s ideas creep in and consequently many other heads displace the one true Head of the Body, leading to confusion and disorder: in short, the public ruin of the Church. Of course, no ruin can affect the Church in the counsel of God, and the truth remains that there is one Body. Let us therefore return to the ground of that Body and seek to be gathered to the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of the living God. There is no place for pride, but in humility, mourning the ruin, let us depart from ecclesiastical iniquity (2 Timothy 2:19), and go outside the camp unto Him, as we wait for the Lord from heaven. THEN all will really be gathered together forever around His blessed person.

M.B., Blackburn.

News from the Field REPORT OF VISIT TO INDIA BY ANDREW POOTS (NORTHERN IRELAND) AND DR. FARID ZAKI (EGYPT).

Leaving Belfast on 8th November I arrived in Egypt that same evening where I was met by brother Farid. We arrived at Bombay on the morning of Saturday 10th, and were able to spend three full weeks visiting and encouraging the brethren in India. So vast is that country, approaching nine hundred million souls, and such is the spread and extent of the work, that we were not able in the time available to visit every place where believers are seeking to identify with the testimony. There are opportunities on almost every hand for evangelism, literature distribution, and to instruct

believers further in the truth.

Bombay

We were met at the airport by brother Ronny Fernandes. Ronny has been engaged in Christian literature distribution since 1971. He has many valuable contacts throughout India. While working for a large international missionary organization he came in contact with the writings of the brethren, and this in turn led him to give up the independent position and in the 1980s commence to gather on the ground of the one body.

We went by taxi to the hostel where we stayed in Bombay, and Ronny came back in the evening with some young brethren from the assembly. We were able to have a Bible reading on John 10:1-42, and to answer questions on various aspects of truth, so that we have a very happy memory of our first contact with brethren in India. The following morning (Sunday 11th November) we met together to remember the Lord in the breaking of bread. The small assembly in Bombay is the only one where the meetings are conducted in English, and it was a joy to sing the familiar hymns in a new setting. Afterwards we underlined in ministry the important place cities had in the establishment of Christianity in the New Testament, and encouraged the brethren to seek to be active in gospel testimony and in instructing believers in Bombay, which has a population of over ten million people. A little children’s meeting was also held for the children present.

Brother Ronny frequently has to make long journeys throughout India to visit literature contacts, encourage isolated believers, and attend to printing work. These absences are felt by his wife and three young children John (10), Joseph (8) and Jeruel (2), who also need our prayers. Practically, much of the responsibility for the meeting is carried by Ronny and his wife. We need to pray that the Lord will add others to the little assembly. The young meeting needs shepherding and regular expository ministry.

Pune

Later that day we set out by long distance taxi to visit sister Benjamin at Pune, a hill station on the Deccan plateau 192 kilometres south east of Bombay. This sister is interesting in that her father was connected with the original testimony to the Lord’s name in India dating back to the last century. He was a personal friend of Colonel Jacob who laboured in India. When brethren again sought to give expression to the one body, Miss Benjamin was one of the first to be gathered out in Bombay. She retired from her position as matron of a large hospital in Bombay in April 1990, and moved to stay with relatives in Pune. As she was so isolated we sought to have some fellowship. The taxi had not travelled far beyond Bombay when there was a loud bang and the taxi rocked out of control. It had had a blow out on one of its front tyres. Thankfully we were not injured, but there we were, stranded on the outside lane of the main road to south India, lorries and buses thundering past on the inside, and some sacred cows wandering over to inspect what was happening. The tyres, including the spare, were completely bald. Indeed, if we had inspected them beforehand, we would not have set out on the mountainous journey in such a vehicle. We thus learned to inspect our transport for the remainder of the trip. We were in some perplexity as to what to do. Brother Farid said to me, "Satan is 100% against this trip", and so it seemed. But the Lord had something better in store. One of the onlookers had a friend who was driver of a tourist taxi. He volunteered his services, and we continued our trip, and the return journey, in a new 1990

registered car. Also, the driver was very skilled. This was a help due to the nature of the terrain, the heavy traffic and bad road conditions. In view of the above, our arrival was delayed until after nine o'clock. Miss Benjamin was glad to see us, and we were able to have a little time of fellowship remembering the Lord Jesus. Brother Farid then suggested that we should look at the closing verses of 2 Corinthians 2:1-17, and we were able to consider all the promises as secured in Christ, and counsels of God as fulfilled in Him. Sister Benjamin's relatives are believers, and she is seeking to interest them in the truths of gathering to the Lord's name in unity. We need to pray for this elderly, well-taught sister, and for the extension of the testimony in Pune. It is the intention of the brothers at Bombay that they should visit her from time to time to have fellowship.

We stayed overnight in Pune, and set out for Bombay early the following morning. The journey proved to be somewhat of a nightmare, introducing us to the uncertainties of Indian travel. A bridge on the main road was broken, and it took eight hours, mostly over dusty congested tracks in heavy bumper to bumper traffic beneath the hot sun, to return to Bombay.

Manipur

We were able, however, to turn the time to good account. A young brother B. Bhumeshor Sharma, a converted Hindu, accompanied us on the journey. He is from Imphal, Manipur, which is in the far northeastern area adjoining Burma. He was much interested in the truths of gathering, and also attended the conference of Tenali. He asked many intelligent questions on the return taxi journey to Bombay, and we had much profitable discussion with him and with Ronny. He desires to translate books and tracts into Manipuri, and to interest other believers in his own home surroundings in assembly truth. Foreigners are not permitted to visit in Manipur without a special visa. Ronny intends to visit him in his home surroundings, but vast distances are involved in travelling from one end of India to the other.

Andhra Pradesh The following day (Tuesday 13th November), we set out for Tenali. The main work in the state of Andhra Pradesh centres here, and in the surrounding villages. This state in south-east India has a population of over 64 million. The main language, and that in which the meetings are conducted, is Telugu. The first stage of our journey was by air to Hyderabad, the capital city of Andhra Pradesh. We had our first experience of Air India! At Hyderabad airport we were met by brother Rao, who took us to his home to rest for a few hours before continuing our journey by train. This brother seeks to identify with the testimony, and runs a very well stocked book depot from his home, but he lacks others of like mind with whom he can meet.

Another seven hours by train took us to Vijayawada, the nearest main junction town to Tenali. An hour or so later in the darkness we made our approach to Tenali, having dodged an assortment of buses, lorries, cars, rickshaws and bicycles, many without lights, travelling in the opposite direction on the narrow road. Brother K. Yohan, who lives in Tenali, welcomed us, and showed us to our quarters. My first real sight of Tenali was in the eerie dawn light at six o'clock the following morning when the town started to come to life.

Printing Press The following day (Wednesday 14th) we had an opportunity to visit the printing press, housed below the visitors' quarters in a large brick building. We were most impressed by what we saw. The old letterpress type is set by hand, letter by letter, word by word, line by line, page by page. It is possible to print in both Telagu and English. Brother Yohan and his staff are at

present nearing completion of the five volume Synopsis of the Books of the Bible by J.N.D. in English — a mammoth undertaking. While being shown round, five proof-readers were at work checking the typesetting. All were university graduates, two double graduates, but they were prepared to sacrifice worldly advancement in order to do this line of work, accepting much lower pay than they could otherwise obtain. The printing presses, one small for tracts, the other larger for books, are again hand-operated, page by page. Then the finished sheets are collated by hand, sewn and stitched by hand, and bound once more by hand. I am sure printers in our country would be amazed at the output from such primitive machinery and labour intensive methods, yet quality Christian literature is being produced.

Other Publishing Work Not all the printing requirements can be handled on the presses at Tenali, and in addition work is given to other printers. For instance, colour calendars are produced each year with Scripture texts in various languages, and many believers look forward to receiving these. As well as publishing in Telugu and English, the brethren also publish in Hindi (one of the national languages used throughout India, particularly in the north), Marathi, Gujarati, Punjabi, and Malayalam, and a start is also being made in Tamil, Bengali and Nepali. Given the size of India, and the fact that there are 14 major languages (and 200 minor languages and dialects), this translation and publishing work is of vital importance. We should seek to help this work forward in every way possible. A number of brother Heijkoop's books have already been translated into various languages, and find wide acceptance. Gospel tracts and ministry for believers are both needed. Brother Ronny has plans to produce the little booklet Pure Gold in six languages.

Book Room at Tenali

Alongside the print shop is another large brick building. The Christian Truth Book Room occupies the ground floor, with the meeting and conference room above. Here a wide range of sound Christian literature is available in various languages, with storage space behind for bulk stocks. Customers can call at the depot. In addition, in response to mail enquiries, from here, Bibles, books, and tracts are sent out all over India. During conference week when brethren were together from other parts, discussions were held here by those brothers closely involved in printing work, and many cups of tea drunk. They need our prayers as important decisions are taken with regard to printing priorities for the future.

Village Preaching As well as an assembly in Tenali, there are also seven in the surrounding villages. We had the opportunity to go in the evening to preach in one such village where some believers desire to form a new meeting. Seventy or eighty people gathered round as we preached by the light of a kerosene lamp under the open heaven, with mosquitoes and insects buzzing round. It was interesting to see many of the children carrying Bibles even though they could not read: such is the respect in which the word of God is held. A Canadian, Silas Fox, preached in the villages of Andhra with great power 30 to 40 years ago, and the results of his ministry can still be seen. Indeed, the first serious impressions were produced on brother Yohan through him, which later resulted in his conversion. Seeing the primitive conditions in which such missionaries of past generations laboured at great cost to themselves affected us very much.

Six Hundred at Tenali Conference

After a day of rest (I had developed fever and bronchitis), the three day conference commenced on November 16th. The rains had lasted longer than usual, and it was hot and sticky. There were upwards of 600 people crammed into the meeting room, rather a suffocating experience. The Lord gave the necessary strength for ministry and I took up assembly truth as illustrated in the book of Numbers (believers from various tribes gathered together around the divine centre, a picture of assemblies in different localities gathering to the Lord’s name; our position as workers, warriors, and worshippers etc.). Brother Farid looked at the young assembly at Thessalonica. As well as those from the surrounding villages, invitations were sent out to others who were interested. A number travelled long distances. Some were present from the meeting in Madras which we had not time to visit. We also met the children from the orphan home at Pallekona. A village evangelist from Nellore, John Lee, had a long and interesting conversation with me with regard to principles of gathering. I have since heard that he has opened a book room, and with twenty others is seeking fellowship, so that there is the possibility of a new meeting in Nellore also. Nellore is situated a considerable distance from Tenali between Tenali and Madras.

Another brother we met at Tenali was Daniel Jayaraman who is at present living in Kerala State with his wife and family. Daniel is from the highest Hindu priestly caste of Brahmins. After conversion he was completely disowned by his family. He has been greatly helped by reading the writings of C. H. Mackintosh, and with his wife has taken the path of separation, and our brethren in India have given him the right hand of fellowship. Brother Jayaraman studied English literature at Bangalore university, and can speak four languages. He has already commenced translation work into the Tamil language (spoken by over forty million people), and "A Letter for You" and "Safety, Certainty and Enjoyment" are in course of preparation, as well as some tracts on assembly truth. Madras is presently the only Tamil speaking meeting in India. Daniel needs our prayers as he is potentially a very useful brother for the testimony in India. On the last day of the conference 39 people were baptized in a nearby canal. The believers marched through the town singing hymns, a testimony to those living round about. Afterwards a large number gathered for the breaking of bread, followed by a further two lengthy sessions of ministry. It remained to distribute some relief to some of the very poor and sick believers from the villages, and to take our leave of the brothers and sisters gathered together from various parts. They were most appreciative of our presence with them. To be continued in next issue (D. V.)

Chapter 5

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Quotations from Scripture are generally taken either from the King James translation or Mr. J.N. Darby's translation. Quotations taken from any other translation will be indicated in the course of the article, or in a footnote to the article.

Editorial By the time this issue of Truth and Testimony is in the hands of the reader the new year will have begun. As it does so it affords the editors' opportunity to express their thankfulness to the Lord for the help He has been pleased to give thus far in connection with this project. We have been encouraged by the interest which the magazine has generated and hope you have found the contents stimulating and helpful. It continues to be our desire that wholesome and digestible spiritual food may be set before the believing reader and we value prayer to this end. It remains to mention the matter of subscription to the magazine for 1992. If the Lord will it is intended that Truth and Testimony will be published bimonthly from this issue onwards. There will be no subscription charge as such, though any wanting to make a contribution will find the approximate annual cost of producing and posting a copy of the magazine on the inside back cover. It would help administratively if everyone who would like to receive the magazine in 1992 would return the form at page 110 as soon as possible. The Editors.

Partial Obedience "For whosoever shall keep the whole law and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all" (James 2:10). So often we hear people say: "I have done my best. God can surely accept that. None of us is perfect." This seems quite reasonable to men as a whole, but we know that Adam and Eve transgressed the only commandment that God had given to them, and death entered into the world.

Centuries later the children of Israel, in their desire to be "like all the nations" (although this was contrary to God's intentions, since He had chosen them to be a peculiar people for Himself), came to Samuel with the request for a king, who would fight their battles and judge their cause. In spite of Samuel's warnings, they persisted in their demand: "Nay; but we will have a king over us" (1 Samuel 8:19).

We know how the newly-appointed king appealed to the people. He was tall and handsome, and even modest and self-effacing at first, but he had to be put to the test. Samuel came to the king, and reminded him that it was a divine commission that had put him on the throne. Now he has another message direct from the Lord Himself. God remembered how the Amalekites had laid wait for the children of Israel on their way from Egypt. Now this guilty nation had to be punished.

Samuel’s message was clear:

"Hearken thou unto the voice of the words of the LORD."

Nothing was left to Saul’s imagination. Amalek had to be exterminated, and nothing was to be left over to remind the nations round about that Amalek had existed. Not only the men of war, but the whole nation, and even their flocks and herds, were to be destroyed.

Saul went out, and smote the Amalekites, after first warning the Kenites to separate themselves from the doomed nation, since they, at least, had taken pity on the children of Israel when they were attacked by Amalek. Nevertheless, Saul was only partially obedient. He spared Agag, the king of the Amalekites, and encouraged his followers to preserve the best of the sheep and oxen that they found there. We read that "everything that was vile and refuse, that they destroyed," but the best of the sheep and oxen they would not destroy. No wonder God said to Samuel: "It repenteth Me that I have set up Saul to be king: for he is turned back from following Me, and hath not performed My commandments."

Saul was not the only one to be "partially obedient," though really there is no such thing. To be partially obedient is to be disobedient. How often we may think that we are being obedient to the Word of God, when we have only carried out a portion of the clear commandment of God. Other portions of Scripture remind us that "God hath spoken;" "He left not Himself without witness." More specifically we read that He commands all men to repent. To the believer the commandment is given to "love one another," "give none offence," ’seek those things which are above." In each of Paul’s epistles, after the doctrinal outline, we have practical directions about putting the doctrine into operation, with such warnings as "lie not one to another," "fathers, provoke not your children to wrath." So often we may dismiss a commandment that comes too close to us by saying: "That is only Paul speaking," forgetting that Paul himself writes: "If any man think himself to be a prophet, or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things that I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord" (1 Corinthians 14:37).

Saul seems to have no idea that he had failed in his task. When he returned to Samuel, he said: "I have performed the commandment of the Lord." He expected Samuel to congratulate him on his obedience, but Samuel said to him: ’’What meaneth then this bleating of the sheep in mine ears, and the lowing of the oxen which I hear?"

Saul is ready with his answer: "The people spared the best of the sheep and of the oxen, to sacrifice unto the Lord thy God; and the rest we have utterly destroyed." Samuel’s response is often quoted: "Hath the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams" (1 Samuel 15:22). He went on to point out that rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness ("self-will," J.N.D.) is as iniquity and idolatry. For this reason Saul was no longer regarded as the true king of Israel. God had a man in view, David, who would rule over God’s people in the fear of the Lord.

Saul, as we read, was ready to confess his sin, and asked to be pardoned, but we read that he "feared the people, and obeyed their voice," thus pleading "extenuating circumstances," as we should call it now, and so he pleaded with Samuel to go with him as if nothing had happened. It is to be feared that Saul was but a "profane person," as was Esau, who sought forgiveness without

true repentance. To go back in history, we are reminded of Aaron and Moses, of whom we read in Numbers 20:1-29, when they were almost within sight of the promised land. At the beginning of the wilderness journey, while Moses was in the mountain receiving details of the tabernacle and the worship of God, Aaron, like Saul, listened to the people, and fashioned a golden calf, and encouraged the children of Israel to worship the idol. Moses later tells us how ’’the Lord was very angry with Aaron to have destroyed him: and I prayed for Aaron" (Deuteronomy 9:20), and Aaron’s sin was forgiven. When, however, Moses took his rod, and smote the rock at Kadesh, Aaron did not restrain his brother, and so participated in his disobedience. For this reason Aaron and Moses were not allowed to enter the promised land. We understand that the rock was a type of Christ, who would be smitten once for all. Moses had smitten the rock at the beginning of the wilderness journey. At Kadesh he was told to speak to the rock, but he was disobedient. We should think that the idolatry of Aaron was much more sinful than the hasty action of his brother, but again we are reminded that "self-will" is as the sin of idolatry, since we are pleasing ourselves rather than God.

We have been reminded of Samuel’s words to Saul: "The Lord hath rent the kingdom of Israel from thee this day, and hath given it to a neighbour of thine, that is better than thou" (1 Samuel 15:28), but we must not think that David was always obedient to his God. We know how grievously he sinned in breaking the tenth and sixth commandments. We know that Nathan, the prophet, was sent to him with the parable of the poor man and his ewe lamb. When David rose up in wrath at the injustice of the rich man, and said to Nathan: "The man that hath done this thing shall surely die," he heard the solemn words: "Thou art the man." There is no doubt that David was truly repentant, and God forgave his grievous sin, but the history of his reign from that time reveals that this one sin had undermined his influence for good, and given the enemy an occasion to triumph. In the summing up of David’s life in 1 Kings 15:1-34 we read: "David did that which was right in the eyes of the Lord, and turned not aside from any thing that He commanded him all the days of his life, save only in the matter of Uriah the Hittite" (verse 5). What a sad epitaph! It reminds us of the words of the apostle to the Galatians: "Ye did run well; who did hinder you, that ye should not obey the truth?" (Galatians 5:7). May it not be with us that our testimony should be spoilt for the sake of being only "partially obedient"! We have proved that the Lord is gracious, but we must not presume on His grace. We know that there was only One who "did no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth." Nevertheless, we are called to follow Him, and we are reminded in the Scriptures that we have been called to obedience. May it then be true of us, as was said of Joshua and Caleb, that we wholly follow the Lord.

R.E.A.R. The Gospel Explained

Romans 1:16-17 In Acts 20:18-35 Paul gives an outline of the ministry our glorified Lord had entrusted to him. The gospel (=good message) of God was an important part of Paul’s service, which can easily be seen in the following outline of his fourfold ministry:

1. 5: 21 (A) repentance towards God and (B) faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ;

2. 5: 24 the testifying of the gospel of the grace of God;

3. 5: 25 the preaching of the kingdom of God;

4. 5: 27 the declaration of the whole counsel of God, connected with the Church (Assembly) of God, 5:28.

It is not now my intention to elaborate on these four basic aspects of Paul's ministry, but rather to try to give in this article a short outline of Romans 1:16-17 and to encourage the Christian reader with these thoughts, by the grace of God. In the book of Acts the wonderful good news of the grace of God is preached to lost sinners who repent, but in the epistle to the Romans the gospel of God is explained to believers. In other words: we are first brought into the good of it, accepting God's gospel (historical aspect), in order to understand it afterwards (doctrinal aspect). The same holds true for the Church: the believers were enjoying the light and life connected with the Assembly of the Living God first, according to the obedience of faith (Romans 1:5), before its doctrine was explained to them.

1. WHO IS THE SOURCE OF THE GOSPEL?

God Himself is the Source and Originator of the good news, and the One who takes the initiative for its proclamation (Romans 1:1; Romans 15:16). In Romans we find things examined and presented from God's perspective and for His glory; in our days of humanistic indoctrination one has to train oneself to see everything according to God's standards and purposes. The gospel of God is sometimes called the gospel of Christ, because it comes from the glorified Man Christ Jesus, and He is also the Theme of the gospel (see point 10). A similar thought we find with regard to God's judgment seat: it is the judgment seat of God as well as of Christ (Romans 14:10; 2 Corinthians 5:10).

Paul identifies himself with this gospel of God and Christ and the grace of God, and says it is "my gospel" (Romans 2:16); he was God's instrument for the revelation and communication of the gospel as connected with Christ in glory.

2. WHAT IS THE NATURE OF THE GOSPEL?

It is the power of God to salvation! The Greek word for power is the same from which our word dynamite is derived. In Romans we see how God blows away, as it were, all arguments, excuses and reasonings (Romans 1:20; Romans 2:1; Romans 3:19 f), which should lead man to repentance (see point 1 of the introduction). Then we see how the power of God brings in Another Man, in whom we may put our trust. In 1 Corinthians 1:18 the word of the cross is God's power to those who are saved; here we notice again the removal of the first man, in order to introduce the Second Man. Paul's message was brought in the same power of God (1 Corinthians 2:4). In Ephesians 1:19 we read about the exceeding greatness of the power of God, the Father of glory, which He wrought in raising Christ from among the dead and in giving Him a place at His right hand in the glory. This same power is operating in dead sinners to bring them to life and in giving saved sinners even now a heavenly position in Christ Jesus (Ephesians 2:5 f). All through the power of God and for the glory of God, blessed be His Name!

3. WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THE GOSPEL? The epistle to the Romans is as it were a systematic study of God's righteousness, showing that God is perfectly righteous in declaring a repentant sinner righteous, 1:e. in imputing God's own righteousness to him. Do you realise what this means? It means that God declares the repentant sinner as righteous, as Christ now is in the glory, after He had taken the sinner's place before a righteous and holy God (NOTE: the book also shows God's righteousness as Judge in condemning unrepentant sinners, placing themselves under God's wrath). In other words the gospel is the declaration of God's righteousness in saving

repentant sinners and clothing them in the garments of righteousness, an impeccable justice, as Christ now has in the glory. Therefore, it is also the gospel of the grace of God (Acts 20:24) and the gospel of the glory of the blessed God (1 Timothy 1:11). In the scope of this article one cannot discuss the different aspects of salvation, but I suggest that Romans 18 gives a systematic overview, covering a considerable part of the truth of salvation, in three points:

1. justification; God’s righteousness imputed to repentant sinners;

2. sanctification; God’s righteousness lived out in called saints;

3. glorification; God’s righteousness displayed in glorified sons of God. In other words salvation in its past, present and future aspects. The gospel presents this wonderful message, according to God’s sovereign grace, of the power of God working today in repentant sinners for salvation. The gospel not only declares this purpose, but it also shows at the same time the outcome. the result power of God working through the good news for salvation.

4. WHAT IS THE SCOPE OF THE GOSPEL?

God’s good news is for everyone who believes. On the basis of the accomplished work of our Lord Jesus Christ, to the full satisfaction of the holy and righteous God, the glad tidings can go out to the whole world. This letter shows how the entire human race is guilty towards God, and beyond recovery (the depravity of man), so that there is no difference from a judicial and moral viewpoint between races, nations, Jews or Gentiles. "For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23). All are condemned, (NOTE: although the actual execution still waits; after death there is no change possible any more, because opportunities for repentance are gone; the final execution takes place at the great white throne, Revelation 20:1-15), and stand as it were on the same basis before God, so that God’s message of sovereign grace can come to everyone.

Although the extent of God’s outreach includes all men, there is still a difference as to the procedure: first to the Jew and also to the Greek. In the book of Acts we find how Paul put this principle into practice. As long as the gospel is God’s power for salvation, this order of procedure is to be respected in the proclamation of the good news. The reasons for this are explained elsewhere, but just think of what the Lord said to the Samaritan woman at the well: "For salvation is of the Jews" (John 4:22).

5. WHAT ABOUT THE RECEPTION OF THE GOSPEL?

We have seen the universal scope of the gospel (to all) but now we come to the question of who are its recipients. The answer is very clear: every one that believes. In the context of this brief summary (Romans 1:16-17), the apostle Paul indicates very clearly the principles which he will work out in more detail elsewhere in his letter. Dear reader, do you belong to those who have received God’s message by faith? Faith is necessary for the appropriation of God’s righteousness, see again Romans 3:22. Consider also the following statement: "If you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation" (Romans 10:9-10). See also Php 3:9!

6. THE EFFECT AND EFFICACY OF THE GOSPEL. In connection with the last references I turn your attention to Romans 1:17. We could ask ourselves the question: how is it possible that God’s

power works for salvation, that His good news goes out to all and is received by faith by repentant sinners, without any difference in race, position or status? In this summary Paul mentions that in his message of the good news God’s righteousness is revealed and applied. Later on we find how this is possible (Romans 3:21-31), namely on the basis of the once for all sacrifice of our Lord Jesus. These passages answer Job’s question how man can be righteous with God. (Job 9:2) They also explain that this declaration of righteousness which was impossible under the old covenant, is now made possible and makes us acceptable and precious to God. "Him Who knew not sin He has made sin for us, that we might become God’s righteousness in Him" (2 Corinthians 5:21). Blessed effect of His sacrifice, praise God!

7. THE PROCLAMATION OF THE GOSPEL.

Just as the power of God starts a process, which will come to completion at the rapture and the manifestation of the Church (Php 3:21, Php 2:12; Php 1:6), so faith is at work on a continuous basis. We have seen that faith is necessary to receive the gospel, faith is needed for God’s righteousness to be applied, and so faith is a prerequisite for the proclamation of the gospel. This is shown e.g. in Romans 10:4; Romans 10:6; Romans 10:8; Romans 10:10; Romans 10:14-18; Romans 11:20. The reception of the gospel is on the basis of faith, but so is the whole life of the believer from that moment on. What is received by faith, produces faith. This principle of faith rules out all efforts of the flesh (see also e.g. John 1:12 f), and sets aside (morally) the whole system of sight connected with the first man.

8. WHAT IS THE RESULT OF THE GOSPEL? The result God’s good news brings about is something which was already announced in the Old Testament (Habakkuk 2:4) and of which faith, even then, would lay hold: "The just shall live by faith." Have you already noticed what an important place this principle has in the New Testament and in our lives as believers? In Romans the emphasis would be on just, answering the question "how can a man be just or righteous with God?" In Galatians the emphasis would be on faith, because of the contrast with works of the law (this element plays also a role in Romans, of course). Whereas in Hebrews 10:1-39 the wilderness journey of the present people of God is in view, with the emphasis on every day living by faith. (Romans 1:17; Galatians 3:11; Hebrews 10:38).

9. WHAT IS THE CONTENT OF THE GOSPEL?

Although we have a summary of the gospel and an outline of the epistle in Romans 1:16-17, I would like to call your attention to 1 Corinthians 15:18, where Paul shares the basic facts of the gospel: the death, burial, resurrection and glorification of our Lord Jesus. We have to study several Scripture portions in order to grasp the doctrinal and practical implications of these four important facts, like Romans 38; Galatians 3:1-29; Colossians 2:1-23. First of all that we may grasp more of what our blessed Lord has gone through, but also in order to understand our identification with Him.

10. THE THEME OF THE GOSPEL.

We now come to a point with which we might have started our little study, but it is also well to finish with it. The very Centre of God’s good news is a Person; not a doctrine, although this flows from Him; not an organisation, although He is the Head of the Church. Yes, the very Theme of the gospel is our blessed Lord Jesus, the great Creator-Redeemer, the Mediator between God and

men. Having accomplished His walk and work here on earth, He is now glorified and seated at God’s right hand. He is the Eternal Son (Romans 1:3), who is also David’s seed according to flesh, who is also marked out Son of God in power, according to the Spirit of holiness, by resurrection of (the) dead. What can we add to this? Only our worship and praise!

O Lord, Thy wondrous story Our inmost soul doth move;

We ponder o’er Thy glory Thy lonely path of love.

(Spiritual Songs 400:5) Do you understand now why Paul introduced his subject with these words: "For I am not ashamed of the glad tidings"?

Alfred E. Bouter (Quotations in this article are from the New King James Version) From Our Archive "The Morning Star."

Christ Our Hope.

(Continued from page 66) In our introductory remarks our thoughts have been chiefly occupied with some of the prophetic announcements of the personal coming of our blessed Lord to this earth. We may say that this is the central truth of the Old Testament from Genesis to Malachi and well it is for our souls if it has an abiding and increasing place in our hearts. None of God’s purposes of grace towards fallen man could possibly have their accomplishment without it. Promises and types all converge around that one blessed truth. The New Testament unfolds what was foretold in the ancient Scriptures: it opens with the account of Christ’s first coming and closes with the assurance of His speedy return.

Now this hope can only be kept alive and operative in our hearts through the power of the Holy Ghost, by means of the Scriptures (John 16:13-14). The Christian is thus enabled to walk here below in a way that pleases the Lord, "being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God" (Colossians 1:5; Colossians 1:10; Colossians 1:27; Colossians 3:4). The first portion of the New Testament that was written was directed to the Thessalonians, shortly after the apostle’s visit to that city. It speaks in every chapter of the Lord’s coming. Paul only had the opportunity of preaching to them on three successive sabbath days, before he was driven away by persecution raised against him and his companion Silas. The effect of his preaching was so marked that all the people in the country round about were informed of it, and the report which rapidly spread abroad testified as to its extraordinary results on those who had "turned to God from idols, to serve the living and true God; and to wait for His Son from heaven" (Acts 17:15; 1 Thessalonians 1:5-10). The method adopted by the apostle in his preaching is clearly indicated in Acts 17:13. In the synagogues he found copies of the Law and Prophets, which served his purpose. Consequently he sought out the synagogues and proved to the Jews, by their own Scriptures, that Jesus of Nazareth was indeed the "Christ" to whom they bore witness. He it was who had suffered, as it had been foretold, and was risen again from the dead. Numbers believed the message and in spite of the afflictions that awaited them they were filled with the joy of the Holy Ghost.

It will be of the deepest interest for us now to trace out briefly in the inspired record the way in which "the decree," which the Lord Himself was to declare according to Psalms 2:7, was eventually carried out.

It is so to speak from the earth, sanctified as never before by His blessed presence, that He does so, and according to the terms of the prophecy, in connection with God’s settled purpose then and there expressed, "Yet have I set My King upon My holy hill of Zion." God would set His King there in defiance of all the lawlessness which seeks to set aside and tread under foot every vestige of His authority. He finds delight in His Son alone, and the Son, as born into a world alienated from God, says "I will declare the decree: the LORD hath said unto Me, Thou art My Son; this day have I begotten Thee. Ask of Me, and I shall give Thee the heathen for Thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for Thy possession." That prayer has not yet gone up to God. Just before leaving His disciples to go to the cross He poured out His heart to the Father and, in commending to Him all His redeemed whom He owned as the Father’s gift to Him, He said, "I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for them which Thou hast given Me; for they are Thine" (John 17:9). Judgement must be the portion of the world when the Lord returns, as we have already seen, but in the meantime we learn the riches of God’s grace set forth in His love to the Son of His own bosom. Jesus would have His disciples know it, and how deep and full are the words which express it: "As the Father hath loved Me, so have I loved you: continue ye in My love" (John 15:9). This is our blessed portion now. In perfect accordance with it we find God working in His own way to carry out the promise He made to Abraham. Heavenly indeed was the promise in its character, but in order that it might be so for sinners, strangers to grace, it had to be carried out, in its most important features, on this earth, where alone the antitype of Abraham’s offering of Isaac could take place. Isaac bound and laid upon the altar became a vivid type of Christ upon the cross. When he was replaced by the ram provided as his substitute God gave Abraham the wondrous promise, "In thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed" (Genesis 22:18; Galatians 3:16). The seed, says the apostle, is Christ. The promise itself was of such importance that it was repeated both to Isaac and Jacob (Genesis 26:4; Genesis 28:14), and surely it was to this that Jesus referred when He said to the Jews "Your father Abraham rejoiced to see My day: and he saw it, and was glad" (John 8:56). Our minds turn instinctively to the earth when we think of the woman’s seed, who was to bruise the serpent’s head. In doing it His own "heel" must needs be bruised. The word "heel" * involves a walk on the earth. But we must ever bear in mind that the promise made of God to Abraham, after he had seen Melchisedec, turned his thoughts away from earth to heaven. He had previously heard that the Most High God was possessor of heaven as well as earth and the contrast was great between thinking of his future posterity "as the dust of the earth" and his having now to hear them likened to "the stars of the heaven" (compare Genesis 15:5 with 13:1517). The former had been sufficient to give him courage to deliver Lot but it needed the visit and the words of Melchisedec in order to keep him from losing the blessing prepared for those who confess that they are "strangers and pilgrims on the earth" (Hebrews 11:13). God was the "God of heaven" as well as of earth and He would be not only a shield to Abraham, but also his "exceeding great reward." God’s estimate of the future seed was to be measured thenceforward according to the glory of His own dwelling-place in heaven, rather than by Abraham’s path when walking by the sight of his eyes on earth. For journeying from place to place Abraham needed the light of day but God’s further communication to him was made in the darkness of the night, when nothing hindered the manifestation of heavenly glory, in the countless stars which testified of God’s mighty power and wisdom.

{*It is sometimes translated "footsteps" and it is used in connection with the iniquity inseparable from man’s walk on earth in Psalm 49:5.}

There was at that time no need for any explanation as to how or when God’s Word was to have it’s accomplishment: the effect to be produced by it was the faith needed for the walk here. Heavenly aspirations were doubtless produced by the words, "So shall thy seed be," but the faith that was formed by God’s Word, and that accepted it, is the faith to which justification is attached (Romans 4:3; Romans 4:5; Romans 4:9). As it was for Abraham, so it is for us. Faith, righteousness, grace, and glory all go together and "the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost, which is given unto us" (Romans 5:1-2; Romans 5:5). How blessed to know God in these three displays of His nature, love, glory and righteousness! But for this to be our portion Jesus must die and at His very entry upon this scene say "Lo, I come to do Thy will, O God" (Psalms 40:7-8; Hebrews 10:4-10).

Faith and hope are intimately connected and it has pleased God to illustrate both by Abraham’s instructive history, the former more especially in the epistle to the Romans, the latter in that to the Hebrews where our heavenly calling is so prominent: "Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen" (Hebrews 11:1).

We can enter somewhat into Abraham’s joy as, in the silence of the night, he gazed upwards on the well-garnished heavens and all the stars in divine chorus seemed to answer "So shall thy seed be." The hidden meaning attached to their shining was not needful for enjoying them, it was reserved to the close of the Old Testament canon after the return of the captives from Babylon to Jerusalem (Daniel 12:3). But we must follow the line of revelation. Nearly nine hundred years after God’s word to Abraham those same stars thrilled David’s soul and he was inspired to write of the glory of the humbled SON OF MAN, now crowned "with glory and honour" (Psalms 8:1-9).

Yet another thousand years, or rather more, had to pass before an angel brought the heavenly light down amongst the shepherds of Bethlehem, as they kept watch over their flocks by night, to convey to them the wondrous news that the Christ, the Lord, was at length born, that He was a Saviour for them and might be gazed upon in the most humble place of all, a place which, because of their occupation, belonged especially to shepherds. There they saw Him after they had heard on earth the acclamations of the heavenly host going up in praises to the Most High God (Luke 2:8-20).

Shortly after that, on another night, a new "star" His own arrested the gaze of Gentiles in the East and in that very quarter of the heavens where the sun is accustomed to rise. It was not at that time to usher in an expected day of glory but to fix their attention on the ONE who was coming and to constrain them to undertake a long and dangerous journey to the West, to see the ’’little child" who was "born King" in order to "witness to the truth" (John 18:37). Their inquiries for the King of the Jews in Jerusalem, His royal city, awakened consternation instead of joy. But the Scriptures had indicated Bethlehem as the place of His birth and when they sallied forth on another night in obedience to Herod’s order, "His star" again appeared to direct them to the very house where they found Him. There, in the quiet of the night, they were enabled to worship Him while laying their treasures at His feet (Matthew 2:11). And they disappeared from the scene returning to their country another way. In all these cases it was not the glory which belongs to Christ’s manifested power on earth which filled the hearts of those that belonged to Him: it was HIMSELF, His own person, who was their all in all. The aged Simeon, directed by the Holy Ghost into the temple at the critical moment, is another affecting example. He had long waited "for the consolation of Israel"

but when he took the little child into his arms he was led to see in Him God’s salvation and as to himself, in abounding joy, he could say, "Lord, now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace" (Luke 2:29-30). Christ was far more to him than all the glory to which an Israelite could look forward.

Such is our present portion while waiting for His return. It is the same for saints still living as for those who are called to rest before seeing the Lord. The great apostle of the Gentiles was enabled, in view of death, to say, "To depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better," better even than serving Him here below and participating in His sufferings in a scene which cast Him out. The "night" is still running its course but believers are "children of the day" and their aspirations and hopes are formed and maintained by Him who, not only prepared and sent His star on a fitting occasion, but who is Himself, for our hearts, "the bright and morning Star." That truth carries our hearts away from earth to heaven, centering them on our coming Lord.

Before the blessed Lord left His disciples He took care to comfort them in their sorrow by the assurance of His return. He had come forth from the Father in order to make the Father known to them and it was needful that He should go back in order to send the Holy Ghost (John 1:18; John 16:7; John 16:28). Their grief was great to learn that He was going but He said, "I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you" (John 16:5-6; John 16:22). That hope is still the comfort of His saints at the present time. We are still, to use the words of the apostle, waiting "for His Son from heaven" (Php 3:20; 1 Thessalonians 1:10).

We are all naturally more disposed to be occupied with the things which will take place at the Lord’s return than with the blessedness of seeing Him and being with Him for ever. But if we read the Scriptures attentively we cannot but be struck with the fact that God’s thoughts are concentrated on the Person of His Son, in whom and through whom all His purposes of grace are carried out. And He would have our attention fixed there also so that we may enjoy the communion to which we are all called (1 John 1:3-4). The first promise of the Deliverer was given on the occasion of Adam’s fall. The main point in that account is He was to be the woman’s SEED. She seemed to remember that word when her son was born however mistaken she was as to his character and being also quite ignorant of the time that was to elapse before the Deliverer came. But her words, "I have gotten a man from the Lord," surely show that, for her, the birth of the son was the chief consideration (Genesis 3:15; Genesis 4:1).

Again, in Abraham’s case, God allowed him to enjoy Isaac for many years before he was called to give him back and it was at that moment that God gave the promise, "In thy SEED shall all the nations of the earth be blessed" (Genesis 22:18). The promise was connected with Abraham’s obedience. Nothing is said as to how or when the blessing spoken of for the earth was to be realised but Jesus says to the Jews, "Your father Abraham rejoiced to see My day: and he saw it, and was glad" (John 8:56). We have too the divine assurance that the SEED spoken of is Christ (Galatians 3:16).

Later on, David’s desire to build for Jehovah a permanent temple in the midst of His people at Jerusalem was answered by God’s assurance that such a work, according to God’s intention and estimate of it, could only be carried out by his "SEED," whom God would, in the course of time, raise up after him. He alone was competent to carry out the Father’s thoughts in the Father’s own way. And when He received from Peter the true confession of who He was He intimated a new

kind of building, spiritual in its nature, which alone corresponded to the full revelation of the Father and the Son. "On this rock," He said, "I will build My assembly" (1 Chronicles 17:11-14; Matthew 16:16-18; Revelation 21:9-10). The Spirit of God would keep our thoughts set upon the Person of Christ in whom the Father found His delight. Only so can we really understand any truth affecting ourselves. With such a key for the right intelligence of all prophecy we are not surprised to find that Christ's second coming is in complete correspondence with His first appearance "born" in this world according to the foreannounced fact, "Unto us a child is born, unto us a SON is given." His names, including that of "the MIGHTY GOD," are noted at the same time (Isaiah 9:6). He was born to be seen and believed in when here (John 6:40; John 9:35-38). He it is for whom we wait (1 John 3:2).

All John's gospel carries the heart on from Christ as seen here to the realisation of the blessed hope of seeing Him again. The interval may effectively be treated as a parenthesis. A parenthesis is a sentence enclosed between two curved lines in the course of a larger one treating of any particular subject. Though needed for the better understanding of the matter in hand it may, if convenient, be omitted and the sense is not interfered with. The connection between what preceded it and the words which follow it is left unimpaired.

Now this is precisely what we find as to God's ways with the earth and more particularly with His chosen people Israel. His thoughts as to them are unchanged in spite of their being for the time "Lo-ammi," that is, "Not my people" (Hosea 1:9; Hosea 2:23; Hosea 3:4-5). His thoughts about them are set forth by Moses and by David; they had been taken out from among the nations, separated to God, to be on condition of their obedience His peculiar people (Exodus 19:5-6; Deuteronomy 4:7-8; Deuteronomy 4:20; Deuteronomy 4:31-38; 1 Chronicles 17:20-22). But they, like Adam, disobeyed (Hosea 6:7) and they lost their land. Notwithstanding that, after the Captivity, a remnant returned to it and in process of time the promised Messiah was born (Daniel 9:25). But Christ found them as rebellious as ever. On the way to the cross He wept over Jerusalem and had to leave their house "desolate" (Matthew 23:37-38). On God's side we always find His faithfulness to be unchanging (Psalms 89:33). Christ came to those that were peculiarly "His own" but "His own received Him not" (John 1:11). As said the prophet, they smote "the Judge of Israel with a rod upon the cheek," and were in consequence "given up" (Micah 5:13). Rejecting the counsel of God against themselves and despising their own mercies, they crucified the Son of God and put Him to an open shame (Jonah 2:8; Matthew 12:41-45; Luke 7:30; Hebrews 6:6). Nevertheless Paul, while weeping over them and still praying on their behalf, found comfort in the fact that "the gifts and calling of God are without repentance." He called to mind that "the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises" all belonged to them as God's special gift; the "fathers" too were theirs and of them, as concerning the flesh, "Christ came" (Romans 9:4-5; Romans 11:29). All that remains true and God will never forget it, but it is also true that they killed the Prince of Life, whom God raised from the dead (Acts 3:15). That act never could be undone. They refused the light, and darkness came upon them: Jesus "did hide Himself from them" (John 12:35-36). He never showed Himself to any but His own disciples after He had been laid in the tomb. All distinctively Jewish hopes lay, so to speak, buried there and there they must remain until His earthly people shall say as to Him in a day still future, "Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord" (Matthew 23:39). When He was here they said, "We will not have this man to reign over us" (Luke 19:14). In that coming day they will indeed

look on Him whom they pierced and will mourn for Him as for an only a firstborn son (Zechariah 12:10; Isaiah 66:7-8). But between these two moments of their final rejection of Christ and future reception of Him intervenes the parenthesis we speak of. When it is over the thread of their history will be resumed in connection with the accomplishment on earth of the promises made to Abraham. The Lord however did not leave the earth immediately after rising from the dead. He showed Himself to His disciples now and again "during forty days," but only to the "witnesses chosen before of God" (Acts 1:3; Acts 10:41). And He treated them as altogether apart from the Jewish world, taken out of it in order that they might be sent again into the world in its fuller extent (including Gentiles as well as Jews), even as He Himself had been sent of the Father (John 20:21). He had already prayed for them as the Father's own gift to Himself and as no longer belonging to the world (John 17:6-10; John 17:16). It was from their midst that He went up to heaven leaving them still to wait on earth for the promised gift of the Holy Ghost. He fulfilled that promise "when the day of Pentecost was fully come," ten days after His ascension. Thenceforward every saved soul was no longer considered as being on Israelitish or Jewish ground, with earthly hopes, but on the contrary as having heavenly hopes in and with Christ. Belonging to Him who was risen and glorified, they were "added to the Church" (Acts 2:1; Acts 2:47).

We may then consider the first curved line of the parenthesis in this world's history as being marked by the cloud which received Jesus out of the sight of His disciples when they stood on the Mount of Olives gazing after Him as He was taken up into heaven (Luke 24:50-51; Acts 1:3; Acts 1:9-11). From that moment dates the special calling and portion of the Church. It belongs to Jesus risen and glorified. The close of the parenthesis is indicated by another "cloud," which will receive, in like manner, every believing man, woman and child at the moment of the Lord's return. At the same instant every sleeping saint, that is, everyone who has believed and "died in faith," will be raised and all together will be caught up "in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord" (1 Thessalonians 4:15-17). Blessed is it to think of it! As soon as the Church is removed from this scene the remnant of Israel, with their earthly hopes, will come once more into prominence and a call to repentance in connection with those hopes will again go forth (Matthew 10:23). That will be the time of Zion's "travail" and those who lend a willing ear to the call will be considered as the remnant of Christ's brethren. They, instead of being added to the Church as we are, will then "return unto the children of Israel" and be reckoned with them (Isaiah 66:8-14; Micah 5:3). They will also be earnestly looking for the rising of the Sun of righteousness with healing in His wings that "Sun" which the disciples saw for a moment on the mount of the transfiguration (Malachi 4:2; Matthew 17:2). The Church will at that time be seen in her proper place in "heaven, for the righteous shall shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father" (Matthew 13:43; Luke 12:33). The glory will be ushered in for us by Him who, through grace, is already known to our souls as "THE BRIGHT AND MORNING STAR" (Revelation 22:16).

William Joseph Lowe (1838-1927) (To be continued, if the Lord will) News from the Field REPORT OF VISIT TO INDIA BY ANDREW POOTS (NORTHERN IRELAND) AND DR. FARID ZAKI (EGYPT) (continued from page 80) Visit to Tadepalligudem

Tenali is situated along the water basin of the Krishna river. Tadepalligudem is further north along in the West Godavari delta area. Brethren in Europe have been in contact with a work there for several decades. After the home-call of brother Sudarsgabam there were some problems in this work, but now his sons Wilson and Prakesh are seeking to revive the work and instruct the simple

believers in the villages, and they are in closer contact with the brethren at Tenali than previously.

We were able to visit (19th and 20th November) and have a one and a half day conference in one of the villages, where we were well received and the Word of God was attentively listened to by upwards of 150 believers. We sought to set forth fundamental gospel truth, and looked at instances of the grace of God in Luke's gospel. Brother Wilson had visited the conference at Tenali with some others, and enjoyed brother Farid's ministry on Paul's pastoral care of the Thessalonians very much. He told me that he had never heard such things before.

There are about eight preaching centres in the West Godavari District, with four village evangelists in addition to Wilson and Prakesh. At four of these places a breaking of bread takes place, and it is the desire of brother Yohan and others that in time full fellowship may be resumed. We need to pray for the continuance of the work here, and the spiritual growth of the believers. On the second day twenty-two were baptized, and brother Yohan noted that most of them were young an encouraging feature. They have also invited brother Yohan back to preach again, so that links of fellowship are being formed. We were treated very hospitably in the home of brother Wilson, and it was nice to see a photograph of brother Wilts of the Netherlands with his family on the wall. Evidently his stay there has not been forgotten. We were pressed by the brethren to return again. They have two meeting rooms in the villages. They were both extensively damaged by the cyclone in the early part of 1990, and need to be reconstructed. The poor in the villages also have material needs, and many also need to be taught how to read 80 that they can enjoy the Scriptures for themselves.

We made our way back to Vijayawada on the evening of November 20th in preparation for onward travel the following day, and it was our happy privilege to share with brother Yohan in personal conversation on the long journey back, discussing the possibilities and problems of the growing work.

Visit to Punjab The train from Vijayawada to Hyderabad was delayed "indefinitely," and as we had to catch a connecting flight, we had to make the long tiring journey by road in the hot sun. Once more we learned the uncertainties of Indian travel. We reached Delhi by aeroplane that evening (Wednesday 25th November) where we had a day's rest before taking the long train journey to the Punjab in the very north. Brother Ronny Fernandes accompanied us on our remaining travels in the north of India. The Punjab, an agriculturally rich part of India, is the homeland of the Sikhs (distinguished by the turbans the men wear) and in recent years there has been much terrorist violence. There were armed police and army at every corner, guarding buildings, travelling with buses even. It was like being at home in Northern Ireland! Indeed on the day we left Jullundur city, sixteen people were murdered there. We were conscious once again of the Lord's safe keeping. The purpose of our visit was to encourage brother Sat Pal Hans who lives in the village of Tanda about an hour's drive from Jullundur. This brother is a converted Hindu with a most interesting history. He had worshipped different Hindu gods, followed the teaching of gurus (religious teachers), meditated on mantras (prayer formulas or chants), even built a shrine to lord Shiva (one of the chief pagan deities), without finding peace. Then he attended a Pentecostal gospel meeting, was given a Bible, and later through a process of events came to a knowledge of salvation through the Lord Jesus Christ. Later through grace his wife was also converted, and he asked me particularly to pray for his mother and father who are still Hindus, and who live with him. For a time

he was with the Pentecostals, but literature received from brother Ronny helped him, and now that he has separated from them, he is almost completely isolated.

Literature Work in Punjab

Sat Pal Hans, in addition to his secular work, has been active in translating books into Punjabi. These include "Beginning with Christ" (now in a second edition of 8,000 copies), "The Book of Ruth" and "Unto Christ" with "Faith Healing" in preparation (all by brother Heijkoop), as well as an excellent gospel booklet "The Reason Why" almost ready. His "Shalom Literature Service" rents two small warehouse stores which are crammed full of books. Many other literature agencies have left the Punjab because of the uncertainties of the political troubles, so he is one of the few suppliers of evangelical literature remaining. To give some idea of the scale of operations, he orders 20,000 New Testaments in Punjabi and Hindi at a time from the Bible Society, and may use 100,000 gospel packets in both these languages within a year.

Breaking of Bread Commenced

Sham, one of Sat Pal Hans' cousins was most unexpectedly converted recently, and took an open stand for the Lord. Earlier in 1990 he was baptized, so Sat Pal now has a coworker. Sat Pal has three children, a boy Sandeep (14), and two girls Shyamly (13) and Saloni (8). They come together every evening as a family with Sham to read the Scriptures, sing and pray together. Recently they commenced to break bread together in fellowship with the brethren in Bombay and Tenali, and we need to pray that this weak and small testimony in the heart of the Punjab may be established and grow. It was truly a privilege to sit down with them to remember the Lord on our third and last Lord's day in India, and to listen to the rich singing in the Punjabi language. The simplicity of it made quite an impression on Farid who is accustomed to somewhat larger meetings in Egypt. In Belfast we have known something of the Lord's presence just as real with the two or three gathered to His name. We were able to spend two days in the Punjab, visiting our brother in his home in Tanda and seeking to study the Scriptures together. On one occasion another unconverted cousin accompanied him, and we were able to speak of the gospel in his presence. Pray that the word spoken may bear fruit. Despite the political trouble in the Punjab, there is still much demand for literature. We also need to pray that Sat Pal and Sham may be able to visit contacts in the villages around where the literature has gone out. We were given a warm send off by brother Sat Pal and his cousin as we left on the long train journey back to Delhi on the evening of Sunday 25th, ready to fly to Bagdogra early the following morning.

Bhutan

Bhutan (Land of the Thunder Dragon) is a small kingdom in the eastern Himalaya mountains situated between China and northeast India. The state religion is Buddhism, and the country was totally closed to the gospel until 1965. Recently, through Indians working in Bhutan, there have been some conversions, but believers are persecuted, and have to meet secretly in house groups. In March 1990 I received a letter from brother Jeremiah in Bhutan. He had read one of our publications, "The Christian at Home," by C. H. Mackintosh, and wrote "I cannot express in words the blessings it brought in my life." Accordingly, while in India, we made plans to visit him. It is not permitted for westerners to visit in Bhutan, so brother Ronny wrote for him to meet us at the nearest convenient point in India, which was Bagdogra airport. The intention was that we should

then spend some time together at the hill station of Darjeeling in the foothills of the Himalayas. The night before we were due to fly from Delhi, I had a very disturbed sleep, and one could almost feel the oppression of such a country which has been for so long a stronghold of Satan. A considerable time was spent in prayer, feeling that the adversary would try to prevent our contacts with anyone in this country. In the event, brother Jeremiah was not able to meet us. We proceeded on our own to Darjeeling where we had opportunity to rest in the refreshing air, surrounded by tea plantations, 2123 metres above sea level. We could also survey the spiritual needs of the teeming multitudes in this part of India, and in fact came in contact with a Christian believer in the market. This was the only real disappointment of our trip to India, but we are assured the contact was not allowed at this time for good and wise purposes, and we are confident that our God overrules in all things. Brother Ronny, being Indian, is permitted to visit within Bhutan, and hopes to be able to contact brother Jeremiah, and the meetings with which he is associated, in the future in the will of the Lord.

West Bengal

After a day and a half in Darjeeling, we again set off on our travels, this time to the teeming city of Calcutta, the capital of West Bengal, with a population of 12 million. Here, amidst the squalor, we saw scenes of human need and degradation that brought tears to the eye. The hostel we stayed in was rundown, to say the least; large cockroaches in the bathroom, no hot water, save what was carried up to you in buckets, and dirty bed linen. Nevertheless, we made the best of it, and had opportunity to visit some who were the Lord's, contacts of Ronny's, even in such a place. The following morning we set out for the village of Jiarah in the Hooghly district of West Bengal. Here a young brother Sunil Ghosh, who has worked with Ronny in the past, is working as a village evangelist, and has gathered some simple believers together. The village is interesting in that it is known as a potato centre in that part of India, famous for growing potatoes, therefore dear to the heart of an Irishman! Yes, they did prepare us a meal made with potatoes which was most enjoyable! But more important, in the morning and the afternoon we had opportunity to minister the Word of God to those that Sunil had gathered together, and the men and women listened very attentively. We spoke of the purpose of Christ's first coming, and then went on to speak about the expectancy of His second coming. Evidently the truth (which was new) went home to those present. One old brother said that he had just planted a field of potatoes. What would happen to them if the Lord were to return? So I could tell him that although I too liked potatoes, to eat of the tree of life which is in the midst of the paradise of God was something much better.

We presented the simple truths of gathering to the Lord's Name from Acts 2:1-47, and in connection with baptism pointed out how Christian living was entirely different and separate from their previous lives when Hindus. We were very conscious of help and liberty in the ministry of the Word. Afterwards the translator said that we were truly guided of the Lord to take up the subject we had. We received a very appreciative response from the womenfolk also, and were desired on every hand to pay a return visit. We feel that there is potential in these villages of West Bengal for an assembly work to be commenced.

These villagers are very poor, from the lowest caste (strata of society), having scarcely even a change of clothes, and not even plates to eat off. Most of them cannot read or write, and a village teacher is needed to at least teach them to read, so that they can read the Scriptures for

themselves. At present they meet in a mud hut which cannot withstand the wet season. Ronny has previously taken some visitors there in the wet season, and they had to take their shoes off and wade knee deep in the mud. Provision of a more permanent meeting-room would be a great help to them. This visit was one of the most challenging of our visit to India.

We returned after dusk, and had not gone very far when the lights failed in the taxi in which we were travelling. The driver commenced to work at the fuses by candlelight, at first without apparent success. We had to travel on congested village roads, the villagers returning from the fields by oxcart, bicycle, and rickshaw, or on foot; then on a busy main road with buses and heavy lorries. There were no garages near by, so all we could do was pray. A piece of wire was patched in, this time it did not blow, and the electrical circuits held all the way back to Calcutta. Once more, as throughout the trip, we had experienced the Lord’s gracious answer.

Return to Bombay The following morning we flew back to Bombay. Preaching in the open air under the hot sun had been quite exhausting. Now, the heat hit us again as we stepped out of the aeroplane. Then the hot sticky taxi drive in traffic to where we were staying. This on top of the fatigue of three weeks in India, travelling sometimes from early morning to late at night, left us rather nauseated. We were now on the homeward journey. Some time remained to rest and pack in Bombay. The following evening (Saturday 1st December) we made our way to the home of brother Ronny Fernandes where some believers had come together to meet us and give us a send off. After a meal together, we had opportunity to again discuss the Scriptures, answer many questions, and have a time of fellowship. From there it was a short drive to the airport where we checked in and waited to embark. The plane took off, leaving the great subcontinent behind us, leaving us with many thoughts.

We again record our thankfulness to the Lord for watching over us in many ways. Once, when I was feeling very sick in Tenali, brother Farid, who was enjoying his food, remarked, "This is a five star hotel." Brother Yohan, who was there, replied, "No, not five star, seven star, because the Lord is in the midst of the seven stars." The sense of the Lord’s care at such a time brought immense cheer. Also we had travelled much on dangerous roads, seeing many serious accidents, and, as brother Farid said, the Lord preserved us from death many times. Once, too, on a flight to Delhi, we hit a particularly bad air pocket, which had the aeroplane falling out of the sky, and the passengers screaming in terror, and later clapping loudly when the plane eventually landed safely.

Most of all, we are thankful to the Lord for giving us such good contacts with the brethren in many places. Besides the ministry of the Word in meetings, many valuable conversations took place. Truly "a great door and effectual is opened" (1 Corinthians 16:9). New meetings are being formed. We can help with our prayers, by encouraging the workers, by helping to publish and circulate Christian literature, and by meeting the material needs of the poor in various places.

A.J.P.

Book Reviews Facsimile of an Elizabethan Conference of Serious Christians

Chapter Two Publishers have reprinted in booklet form ’A True Report of a Conference’ held in an English town (not named) in 1588. This is a facsimile reprint from the original Geo. Morrish edition. The little work runs to no more than 38 pages but is of more than antiquarian interest. It has much to teach us as it shows the importance we should attach to serious confession of sins with the

intention of seeking the power and presence of God to be with us in our life and witness. The spirit of the Report is far removed from the lighthearted and even jocular spirit which marks too many modern meetings for fellowship and even prayer. After blaming their sins four-squarely on themselves alone, the believers, of whose conference this is the record, covenant together for grace to live henceforth a life of deeper consecration and obedience. The Elizabethan spelling is quaint but easily intelligible to the reader today. It is available from: Chapter Two, Booksellers and Publishers of Select Christian Literature, 95 Genesta Road, Plumstead, London, SE18 3EX.

(Banner of Truth Magazine) Day by Day Daily Notes on Bible Readings covering a period of five years.

Many Christians find that the use of some very simple notes to accompany their daily Bible readings helps in the understanding of the Scriptures, and often contributes to the practical application and challenge of the Word of God.

"Day by Day" provides this in a particularly convenient form. In its new form it is a republication of a work which has already proved its value to many who have used it in its original format. Its history is interesting. It was originally written in French by Jean Koechlin, and published in Valence by La Bonne Semence. It was then translated into English for Grace and Truth, and the second edition was published by Central Bible Hammond Trust, now operating as Scripture Truth Publishers and issued in booklet form. Each booklet covered a quarter of a year, and the whole series covered five years.

It has now been republished in Canada by Believers' Bookshelf Inc., Niagara on the Lake, Ontario, in five volumes, each covering one year's readings. The presentation is very attractive: each volume is a convenient size (about 15 x 11cm) and is well bound in a "permanised" paperback format with an attractive cover featuring scenic photographs in full colour. The full set is packed in a convenient decorated carton. It is available in the U.K. at a price of £9.95 for the set from Scripture Truth Publishers, Wooler, Words of Truth, Belfast, or Chapter Two, London.

It represents very good value. The notes are well written. Arranged on a daily reading basis, they provide a commentary on the Scriptures which will take the reader through the whole Bible in a period of five years. According to the passage read, the notes are devotional, expository or practical, and because the author has had the courage to tackle every Scripture, they will throw interesting light on many of the more difficult or obscure passages. There is everywhere in these notes a profound acceptance of the authority and sufficiency of the Word of God. This publication can be sincerely recommended. It has a double usefulness: it is an excellent aid to the reading of the Bible for "Quiet Times" or bedtime reading, but it also provides a readable and convenient commentary on the whole of Scripture in a form suitable to the general Christian reader. It could also be used helpfully in House Study Groups and other group discussion situations.

Gordon Spratt Behold My Servant Volume One of the Collected Writings of William Hoste.

Mr. William Hoste was one of the spiritual giants that emerged in the recently past generation, ranking alongside others such as W. E. Vine and W. W. Fereday. It is the intention of the publishers to make available most of his written ministry, and the first volume of his collected writings has come to hand.

It is suitable that this first volume should be taken up with matters concerning the Person and work of Christ. On such a subject one must heartily commend the author for his clarity and biblical accuracy. This volume is a collection of four compositions. The first is entitled "The Passion Song of Israel." It is a call to Jewish people to examine afresh the claims of the Messiahship of Jesus, the Son of David, with a special reference to Isaiah 53:1-12. This careful exposition will warm the hearts of His own, and also it would be helpful to any Jewish seeker that one should encounter.

Next is a short work called "Divine Relations before the Incarnation" which shows clearcut thought and Scriptural insight. One's attention was drawn to his interpretation of the text "Thou art My Son, this day have I begotten Thee" (Psalms 2:7). His understanding of the text follows the view of early orthodoxy, and he shows how this view conforms to Holy Scripture.

Thirdly comes "Christ, the Interpreter of the Father," showing how the Lord's words and works while He was here upon earth manifested the Father. Incidentally, this reviewer does not share the author's view that "the glory as of the Only Begotten of the Father" in John 1:14 was moral glory, but believes it was the glory of Deity. Whenever we read of someone confessing His Sonship, it is usually prompted by some manifestation of His Divine glory. The phrase "we beheld His glory, the glory as of the Only Begotten of the Father" is a parenthesis, and the words "full of grace and truth" should refer to His being made flesh and dwelling amongst us. The parenthesis is put in to safeguard the fact that, in spite of His becoming flesh, He did not cease to be truly God.

Lastly there is a choice exposition entitled "The Christ of God," which is mainly ministry on Colossians 1:15-19 and Php 2:6-11. These are well known Scriptures, but we can never exhaust their depths. No doubt this exposition will suggest new thoughts to many of us. The book is published by John Richie Ltd, Kilmarnock, and is available from Chapter Two. It is hardback and runs to 202 pages. It costs £6.95. The Old in the New Explained Isaiah 40:3. Matthew 3:3.

"The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make His paths straight".

(This verse is also cited in Mark 1:3; Luke 3:4 and John 1:23. The comments that follow are limited to the occurrence of the verse in Isaiah 40:1-31 and Matthew 3:1-17). The Scriptures considered thus far in this series attest the deity of the one "born King of the Jews", and draw attention to the cruel and heartless power of the enemy put forth against Him when a little child. Here in Matthews Gospel the little remnant of which Luke speaks in chapters 1 and 2 are not noticed, in order that the real condition of the nation might stand out in greater starkness. The only ones that rejoice at His birth are wise men from the east, while the city and people that we might have expected to rejoice are troubled by what they hear. To this condition of the people the ministry of John the Baptist is addressed. He preaches not in the city or towns and villages, but in the wilderness of Judea. He stands apart altogether from the people and is marked by a personal austerity that befits the message he has to preach. The kingdom of the heavens was at hand the kingdom that the God of the heavens was to set up (Daniel 2:44). But what of the children of the kingdom? Repentance was necessary. Self judgment and the confessing and forsaking of sins were morally essential if blessing and not judgment was to be their portion (5: 12). For the One whose way John was to prepare was Jehovah Himself (the) Lord. What then was John compared to such a glorious Person? He was but a voice. John's previous history is passed over. It was the message that he brought and the right response of his hearers to it, which was all important. In preparation for

receiving Jehovah their King they were to make His paths straight. As His people they were to walk in His paths and not paths of their own choosing. Reality and the evidence of it was what was required and not natural claim and empty profession. While there were those who "justified God, being baptised with the baptism of John", and the Lord Jesus in grace identified Himself with these, the "Pharisees and lawyers rejected the counsel of God against themselves, being not baptized of him" (Luke 7:29-30). The forerunner and his message rejected, it was certain that the King too would be refused (Matthew 17:10-13). The setting of the verse in Isaiah 40:1-31 is most striking. The rejection of the King by Jerusalem is assumed and as a consequence judgment is poured out upon the city (Matthew 23:37-39; Lamentations 1:8; Lamentations 1:17). The judgment is measured according to the righteous government of God but in the reckoning of His grace Jerusalem receives double for all her sins. This of course, is on the basis of the death of Christ for that nation (John 11:49-51). In the verses referred to in Lamentations chapter 1 we read "Zion spreadeth forth her hands, and there is none to comfort her..." (Lamentations 1:17) but now the word goes forth... "Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God" (Isaiah 40:1). This will be preceded by a testimony which, blessed of God, will produce a moral earthquake in the remnant of the Jews who receive it while at the same time judgment will bring down all that exalts itself against the Lord. (Isaiah 40:3-4; Malachi 4:4; Malachi 4:6). This testimony will again announce the coming of the King (this time in glory and not grace only) and stress the absolute stability of God’s Word, with all its promises for Israel, in contrast to the frailty and passing nature of flesh. Then will the delivered city, Jerusalem, the city that had refused the claims of its King, itself announce His personal glory as their God (Isaiah 40:9). They will celebrate Him as their Shepherd (Isaiah 40:11), and as Creator (Isaiah 40:12-31).

R.F.W.

Extract

If our souls go on with God, sweet as is the assurance that we, washed in the blood of Christ, belong to God, yet the uppermost thought will in the long run be Himself. We shall come back to His person. We shall in our praises weave with it what He has done, suffered, and won for us; but the first of all thoughts in our souls is, the first of all thoughts in heaven is, not what we have gained, however true, but what He has been for us and what He is to us, yea what He is in Himself. The Bible Treasury, 1869.

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Quotations from Scripture are generally taken either from the King James translation or Mr. J.N. Darby’s translation. Quotations taken from any other translation will be indicated in the course of the article, or in a footnote to the article. The Eyes of All were Fastened on Him

We read the above words in Luke 4:20, where we find the Lord Jesus in the synagogue of Nazareth reading and explaining a Scripture concerning Himself. This Scripture presents Him as the One anointed by the Spirit of God, in whom the fulness of the grace of God was to be made known to men. Indeed, gracious words proceeded out of His mouth, so that people were amazed and fastened their eyes on Him. What a privilege for us to know the Lord Jesus who is still the same and to have occasions when we are gathered around Him and receive some fresh impressions of His blessed Person. In such cases it is not difficult for us to have the eyes of our hearts fastened on Him. In daily life we often find ourselves in circumstances which are completely different. Difficulties sometimes surround us like "wind and waves". They can surround us in such a way that our eyes are no longer fixed on Him but on them, as was the case with Peter when he was coming to the Lord on the water. In the epistle to the Hebrews we find believers in such difficulties. They were in "a great fight of afflictions" (Hebrews 10:32), because they had to suffer persecution for their faith in the Lord Jesus. To encourage them the inspired writer turns their eyes four times on Him. In Hebrews 2:9 we read, "But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour". He, who had to suffer as Man on earth like none else, is now at the right hand of God, crowned with glory and honour. We do not see all things put under Him yet that will be the case in the millennium. But already now He has the place of glory and honour. All power is given unto Him in heaven and on earth. In Hebrews 2:1-18 we find the same glorification of Jesus as in John 13:32 where we read: "God shall also glorify Him in Himself, and shall straightway glorify Him". God did not wait for the kingdom to glorify His Son. His work was too precious to admit a delay and so God placed Him at His right hand. There we see Jesus now. What an encouragement for every believer. We see Jesus, who is already crowned with glory and honour and who will bring many sons to glory. If our hands are hanging down and our knees are feeble, as was the case with the Hebrew believers, let us look at Him! In Hebrews 3:1 we find the words, "Wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus". If we go through this epistle we find the glory of the Lord displayed in its many aspects. In chapters 1 and 2 we find His personal glory as Son of God and Son of man. But we find also His official glories, as in the verse above. He is the Apostle, the One sent from God; bringing God’s Word to men, and the High Priest, the One interceding for men before God. He is the One Mediator. Let us consider Him. If

we want to know the glory before us we look on Jesus, the glorified Man in heaven. If we want to know how God spoke to men we consider Him, the Apostle of our profession. If we need comfort on our way we consider Him, the High Priest of God, who passed through all the difficulties we can meet in our lives. If we want to be a worshipper of God let us consider His moral beauty and glory. In Hebrews 7:4 we read, "Consider how great this man was". If that could be said of one that was typical of Him, how much more of His Person, of whom the types are speaking!

Finally we read in Hebrews 12:13, "Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus the Author and Finisher of our faith; who, for the joy that was set before Him, endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God. For consider Him that endured such contradiction of sinners against Himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds". In these verses we have the picture of an arena we have the witnesses (the believers of Old Testament times as presented in Hebrews 11:1-40), we have the race with its hindrances, and we have a mark Jesus, the Author and Finisher of faith. To get the needed strength for the walk of faith our eyes have to be fixed on Jesus on Him who went before us in this race (the Author of faith) and Him who will bring us also to the end (the Finisher of faith). As He, when He was down here, looked forward to the joy following His sufferings, so we should fix our eyes on Him and the coming glory. But that is not all. We need also to consider Him who lived here as Man. Jesus had to endure much opposition from sinners when He was on earth and has given us an example, that we should follow His steps. In this twofold way we have to consider Jesus.

Going back to the gospels, we see that on several occasions people who knew the Lord Jesus failed to see or recognize Him, especially after His resurrection. What difficulty we often have in knowing Christ in resurrection! It is thus worthwhile to consider those scenes and to note the moral condition of hearts and what the Lord did in these cases in order that those who belonged to Him might know Him. The first scene is found in Matthew 14:1-36 where the Lord had gone up into a mountain apart to pray, while the disciples were at sea, struggling in the storm. In our considerations here this is the only scene that takes place before the cross and the resurrection of Christ, but in picture it speaks plainly of the position Christ has taken now in heaven. In verse 25 we read: "And in the fourth watch of the night Jesus went unto them, walking on the sea. And when the disciples saw Him walking on the sea, they were troubled, saying, It is a spirit; and they cried out for fear. But straightway Jesus spake unto them, saying, Be of good cheer; it is I; be not afraid". The condition of the disciples was that of desperation. Wind and waves were surrounding them. How did they come into such a situation? In verse 22 we read: "Jesus constrained His disciples to get into a ship, and to go before Him unto the other side". He had sent them; He allowed difficulties to come up as they did! Oh, if we meet problems in the way the Lord has sent us, we can be of good cheer, because He never forgets His own but comes to stay with them, as He came to help the disciples. But they did not recognize Him. Is that not something we experience also? The problems are so big that we do not recognize the Lord coming to help us. What does the Lord do then? He says: "Be of good cheer; it is I; be not afraid". Wonderful words! Oh, we find this "be not afraid" so often in Scripture! It contains such an encouragement. And He is still the same, the I am, the Eternal, the Son of God! May we also worship Him as the disciples did afterwards and say: "Of a truth Thou art the Son of God!" The next scene is found in Luke 24:1-53.

There we have those two disciples on the way from Jerusalem to Emmaus, talking about the things which had happened in Jerusalem, Then verse 15 says, "And it came to pass, that, while they communed together and reasoned, Jesus Himself drew near, and went with them. But their eyes were holden, that they should not know Him". Here we have two disappointed and dejected souls. This disappointment was the fruit of their having cherished expectations which were not warranted by the Word of God. They expected the glory of Christ without His sufferings. How easily we can be in a similar condition if things do not happen as we have expected! What does the Lord do then? Does He reveal Himself to them directly as the risen One? No, He turns their eyes to the Scriptures! They had to believe all that the prophets had said. How important for us also if we are disappointed. Let us take again our Bibles to ponder the things concerning Himself! How wonderful is the result. "Did not our heart burn within us, while He talked with us by the way, and while He opened to us the Scriptures?" The Lord is still the same who can revive our souls from disappointment to joy, so that we echo the words of the two disciples and say, ''Abide with us".

Then we have the case of Mary in John 20:1-31. She is at the tomb of the Lord weeping, because she can no longer enjoy the fellowship with Him as before the cross. (Have we ever wept because we missed communion with the Lord as Mary did?). Then we read in verse 14, "She turned herself back, and saw Jesus standing, and knew not that it was Jesus. Jesus saith unto her, Woman, why weepest thou? Whom seekest thou? She, supposing Him to be the gardener, saith unto Him, Sir, if thou have borne Him hence, tell me where thou hast laid Him, and I will take Him away. Jesus saith unto her, Mary. She turned herself, and saith unto Him, Rabboni; which is to say, Master. Jesus saith unto her, Touch Me not; for I am not yet ascended to My Father: but go to My brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto My Father, and your Father; and to My God, and your God". In Mary we find a sorrowful and depressed soul. Without the Lord her life is empty. Her eyes are full of tears so that she does not recognize Jesus. How marvelous is the way in which the Lord reveals Himself to her. First of all He shows His sympathy for her by His questions. He wants her to tell Him about her affliction. Then He calls Mary by her name and as one of His sheep she immediately recognized His voice. Lastly He teaches her, explaining to her the wonderful relationship into which she and all His brethren are brought with Him and the Father in consequence of His work. Today as Christians we do not know Christ after the flesh, but we know Him who is now in heavenly glory. If on earth we pass through sorrow and death we know that we can not be separated from Him, a fact of immense value. But in addition the Lord establishes our relationship to God the Father. What the Father is to the Son, He is also to the sons; and what He is as God to the blessed Man who has put away sin, such He is and nothing less to those whose sins have been put away. The Lord has not only revealed God as Father, but He has brought us also into relationship with Him as such by His work and in resurrection. What encouragement we find in these words of the Lord, if we are depressed and our hearts grieved. Let us think again of this wonderful relationship into which we are brought.

Finally, we have seven disciples of the Lord fishing, in John 21:1-25. Although they fished the whole night, we read, "That night they caught nothing. But when the morning was now come, Jesus stood on the shore: but the disciples knew not that it was Jesus. Then Jesus saith unto them, Children, have ye any meat? They answered Him, No. And He said unto them, Cast the net on the right side of the ship, and ye shall find. They cast therefore, and now they were not able to

draw it for the multitude of fishes". The moral reason why these disciples did not recognize the Lord was that they were too occupied with their work. Perhaps this condition comes nearest to most of us. We often do not see the Lord because we are too occupied, perhaps even with Christian work. The question of the Lord is very challenging: "Children, have ye any meat?" That is the way the Lord touches their hearts. He shows them the fruitlessness of their labour. They were not called by the Lord to fish that night. After the Lord had given command they caught a multitude of fish. They had to learn again that He is the Lord. John recognized Him first in this character. He said, "It is the Lord". May He give us that we learn to do every work with Him. If we do it, we will certainly recognize Him also in our work by His actions, which are always wonderful. May the Lord Jesus find us in our daily lives as those whose eyes are fastened on Him, that He may look down on us as those in whom He can find delight and rest during the time of His rejection. B.S. The Rise of Clergy in Early Christianity

Introduction In this article we will study the question of how and when clergy arose among the early Christians and on what Scriptural base. This will be preceded by a survey of New Testament data so that we can observe how the Lord Jesus Christ intended to direct the universal assembly and the local assemblies. Do we find in the New Testament something like clergy or clergymen ruling the laity? Did the apostles ordain some system of succession or did they give completely different instructions for the future? The New Testament Assembly

It is important to see that the first time the assembly is mentioned it is called by the Lord "My assembly" (Matthew 16:18). Later on, after His glorification, He identifies Himself totally with it when presenting Himself to Saul as "Jesus, whom thou persecutest" (Acts 9:5), although Saul intended to persecute the Christians, not the Christ. The expression "the assembly of Christ" does not occur in Scripture though in Romans 16:16 Paul speaks in the plural of "all assemblies of Christ". The most frequently used designation is "the assembly of God" (Acts 20:28; 1 Corinthians 1:2; 1 Corinthians 10:32; 1 Corinthians 11:22; 1 Corinthians 15:9; 1 Timothy 3:5; 1 Timothy 3:15 and twice in the plural, 1 Corinthians 11:16; 2 Thessalonians 1:4). Our conclusion must be that the assembly is not presented to us as an independent and self-supporting company. Divine Persons claim it as their property and this will have very practical consequences! The relationship between Christ or God and the assembly is illustrated by three well known figures in Paul’s epistles: a) the assembly seen as the Bride of Christ (Ephesians 5:1-33); b) the assembly seen as the Body of Christ (Ephesians 1:1-23; Ephesians 4:1-32; Colossians 1:1-29; 1 Corinthians 10:1-33; 1 Corinthians 12:1-31); c) the assembly seen as the House of God (Ephesians 2:1-22; 1 Corinthians 3:1-23; 2 Corinthians 6:1-18; 1 Timothy 3:1-16; 2 Timothy 2:1-26). For our subject the figures b and c are particularly important, because they instruct us about the divine guidance and authority given from above in respect of the assembly while still on earth. We will study therefore the gifts, given for the growth and health of the Body, and the offices, instituted for the order of the House. It is necessary to distinguish carefully between the gifts and the offices. Gifts can indicate the persons themselves, or the spiritual qualifications of the persons. In Ephesians 4:10-11 we find apostles, prophets, evangelists, shepherds and teachers, given by the glorified Lord "with a view to the edifying of the body of Christ". The Body is universal and so are the gifts. In 1 Corinthians 12:28-31 we have as persons apostles, prophets, teachers all given or "set" by God and as qualifications miraculous powers, gifts of healings, helps, governments, kinds of tongues (compare Romans 12:6; Romans 12:8). Paul, for example, was "teacher of the nations" (2 Timothy 1:11) and

could say "according as I teach everywhere in every assembly" (1 Corinthians 4:17). As to offices we find persons ordained to be elders (Gr presbuteroi) or overseers (Gr. episkopoi). It is interesting to see that these are designations of persons having one and the same office. In Acts 20:17 Paul calls for the elders of the assembly at Ephesus but when they had come to him at Miletus he addresses them in verse 28 as "overseers" and exhorts them moreover to take heed to themselves and to all the flock wherein, he says, "the Holy Spirit has set you as overseers, to shepherd the assembly of God, which He has purchased with the blood of His own". This passage is very instructive. We can conclude that God "set" the gifts in the Body of Christ and that the Holy Spirit "set" officers in the assembly of God. The elders or overseers were in, not above the assembly; they had a special responsibility to shepherd not their own, but God's assembly. This has nothing to do with ordination; the word 'to set" (Gr. titheemi and sometimes tithenai) points more to charging a certain service or activity to a person than to ordaining him in an official office (cf. the disciples, John 15:16; Paul, 1 Timothy 1:12; 2 Timothy 1:11; Christ, Hebrews 1:2). That the elders in Ephesus had actually been ordained by Timothy as the apostle Paul's delegate we may conclude from 1 Timothy 3:2; 1 Timothy 5:17.

We find assemblies then in which elders have been ordained by the apostles or by their delegates but never by the assemblies themselves. In Acts 14:23 we read that Paul and Barnabas (also an apostle, Acts 14:4; Acts 14:14) chose elders for the believers in each assembly, 1:e. in Derbe, Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch. Titus also had to establish elders in each city in Crete as Paul ordered him (Titus 1:5). Our conclusion must be that the activity of the elders in Scripture is restricted to the local assemblies and that their ordination presupposes the authority of the apostles or their delegates. We do not find any activity of the assemblies in this matter, which illustrates the divine principle that authority comes from above. There seems to have existed one exception to this rule that assemblies had no influence in matters of ordination: the deacons. In Acts 6:1-15 the local assembly chose the seven men but they set them before the apostles who established them over this business and laid their hands on them (verses 37). Concerning the role of the assembly we can only speak of influence, not of ordination. In 2 Corinthians 8:19 we find a brother chosen by the assemblies as the fellow-traveller of Paul to bring money to the saints in Jerusalem; but this had nothing to do with an official ordination. The assemblies had given the money and therefore they were allowed to chose someone they trusted to bring their gift to Jerusalem.

Apostolic Succession In the New Testament we have seen the principle: no ordination without apostles or their delegates. What should happen then in the time when the apostles would no longer be on earth? Do the Scriptures contain a procedure to choose or to ordain new apostles? It will be clear that this is not the case. God Himself was the giver of the apostles whose main characteristic was that they had seen the risen Christ (1 Corinthians 9:1) and whose service was connected with signs and wonders and works of power (2 Corinthians 12:12). They had laid, together with the New Testament prophets, the foundation (Ephesians 2:20) and in their teaching the saints persevered (Acts 2:42). For the future the assemblies were not to be dependent on successors of the apostles. The apostles themselves pointed another way: the Word of God. When Paul left the elders of Ephesus he committed them to God and to the Word of His grace and not to a new apostle (Acts 20:32). Peter did the same: the believers should, after his departure, "call to mind these things" (2 Peter 1:15). With an eye on a dark future he tells them "to be mindful

to the words spoken before by the holy prophets, and of the commandment of the Lord and Saviour by your apostles" (2 Peter 3:2). Also John said similar things: "As for you let that which ye have heard from the beginning abide in you" (1 John 2:24).

After the apostles: the Second Century

It is striking that the situation we find completely differs from what we would expect on the basis of the preceding lines. Saints did not look for a Scriptural foundation as to the actual organisation of the church; the New Testament seems not to have had any practical authority in this respect. Neither did anyone understand that the way things were rapidly changing could not stand the test of Holy Writ. In the middle of the second century a substantially uniform pattern of local ministry developed throughout the Christian world. In each city the Christians followed one principal leader and pastor, called the bishop (Gr. episkopos, the "overseer"). He worked together with some colleagues, the elders or presbyters (Gr. presbuteroi) and was assisted by several deacons (Gr. diakonoi) who served him in his administrative and pastoral functions. It is not easy to explain how this could happen. Let us look at some contemporary documents. THE LETTER OF CLEMENT OF ROME TO THE CORINTHIANS In AD 96 the Corinthians received a letter, commonly called "1 Clement", which shows how soon the path of the New Testament authors was abandoned. There were troubles in the church at Corinth about the bishop’s office, which necessitated that the bishop of Rome, Clement, write a letter about this matter to the Corinthians. In chapter 42 and 44 he writes (translation Lightfoot): So preaching everywhere in country and town, they (= the apostles, GHK) appointed their firstfruits, when they had proved them by the Spirit, to be bishops and deacons unto them that should believe. And this they did in no new fashion: for indeed it had been written concerning bishops and deacons from very ancient times; for thus saith the scripture in a certain place, "I will appoint their bishops in righteousness and their deacons in faith" (inaccurate quotation from Isaiah 60:17 : LXX, GHK).

(.....)

44. And our Apostles knew through our Lord Jesus Christ that there would be strife over the name of the bishop’s office. For this cause therefore, having received complete foreknowledge, they appointed the aforesaid persons (= the bishops and deacons of chapter 42, GHK), and afterwards they provided a continuance, that if these should fall asleep, other approved men should succeed to their ministration. Those therefore who were appointed by them, or afterwards by other men of repute with the consent of the whole church, and have ministered unblameably to the flock of Christ in lowliness of mind, peacefully and with all modesty, and for long time have borne a good report with all these men we consider to be unjustly thrust out from their ministration. For it will be no light sin for us, if we thrust out those who have offered the gifts of the bishop’s office unblameably and holily. Blessed are those presbyters who have gone before, seeing that their departure was fruitful and ripe: for they have no fear lest anyone should remove them from their appointed place. For we see that ye have displaced certain persons, though they were living honourably, from the ministration which they had respected blamelessly.

Here already we find three characteristics of the post-apostolic church:

1. The application of Old Testament prophecy to the church; there was a failure to see the difference between Israel and the church;

2. The idea that the apostles themselves instituted the system of apostolic succession;

3. The idea of influence ("consent") of the whole church concerning the appointment of bishops.

It is interesting that Clement still knew of only two offices, 1:e. those of bishop and of deacon. In his letter presbyter and bishop are still used as interchangeable words for the same office. Compare for this two fold structure of office, bishop and deacon, Php 1:1. THE "DIDAKEE" (= TEACHING) OF THE TWELVE APOSTLES, dating from the beginning of the second century, contains some practical instructions "for the gentiles", 1:e. the gentile churches. Here too we find, as in 1 Clement, the twofold structure of office. In chapter 15, 12 the author writes as follows (translation GHK):

Ye should choose therefore for yourselves bishops and deacons, worthy of the Lord, meek men, not fond of money, true and proved; because they also serve you in the service of prophets and teachers. So do not overlook them, for they are your honoured ones together with the prophets and teachers.

Again we see the idea of apostolic succession: the bishops are chosen or appointed by the church, together with the deacons (cf. 1 Timothy 3:1-16). The author also fails to see the difference between gifts and offices: he speaks about bishops and deacons (officers, functioning locally) serving as prophets and teachers (gifts, operating universally), although there also seems to have existed a more specific group of prophets and teachers separately. THE LETTERS OF IGNATIUS OF ANTIOCH The letters of Ignatius, bishop of Antioch, are interesting documents. During a persecution in his city he was sentenced to death. This sentence would have been carried out in Rome in the year AD 110, when the persecution itself had already passed. He had to travel from Antioch to Rome and during this trip he passed through Asia Minor and visited the churches in Philadelphia, Sardis and Smyrna. In Smyrna moreover he had an interview with delegates from the churches of Ephesus, Magnesia and Tralles and wrote letters to these churches and to the church of Rome. When he came to Troas, in the north of Macedonia, he also sent letters to the churches in Philadelphia and Smyrna and to Polycarpus, bishop of Symrna. When we compare his letters we see that things were changing in a certain direction. He presupposes a threefold structure of office: one bishop at the head of a local church, and several elders and deacons. This ministerial structure came to prevail in all the churches in the second century. There was a natural evolution of the twofold into the threefold structure of office, because Ignatius did not condemn the twofold structure expressis verbis. As a kind of foundation of the new situation he pointed to the essential unity of the church; he wrote to the Philadelphians in chapter 4 (translation Lightfoot): Be ye careful therefore to observe one eucharist (for there is one flesh of our Lord Jesus Christ and one cup unto union in His blood, there is one altar, as there is one bishop, together with the presbytery and the deacons....

Compare also chapter 7: l cried out, when I was among you; I spake with a loud voice, with God’s own voice. Give ye heed to the bishop and the presbytery and deacons. Howbeit there were those who suspected me of saying this, because I knew beforehand of the division of certain persons. But He in whom I am bound is my witness that I learned it not from flesh or man; it was the preaching of the Spirit who spake on this wise; Do nothing without the bishop; keep your flesh as a temple of God, cherish union; shun divisions; be imitators of Jesus Christ, as He Himself also was of His Father.

Mind that Ignatius speaks of the Spirit as his source, not the Scriptures! The stressed supremacy of the bishop is remarkable, whom he seems to compare with God Himself, as we also find elsewhere in his letters: the bishop must be seen as God Himself, as presiding after the likeness of God and the presbyters after the likeness of the council of the Apostles (to the Magnesians, chapter 6). Ignatius describes him as the central figure of church life in his letter to the Smyrnaeans, chapter 8:

Let no man do aught of things pertaining to the church apart from the bishop. Let that be held a valid eucharist which is under the bishop or one to whom he shall have committed it. Wheresoever the bishop shall appear, there let the people be; even as where Jesus may be, there is the universal church. It is not lawful apart from the bishop either to baptize or to hold a lovefeast; but whatsoever he shall approve, this is well-pleasing also to God; that everything which ye do may be sure and valid. The bishop seems also to have played a role when people got married; in his letter to Polycarp he writes:

It becometh men and women, when they marry, to unite themselves with the consent of the bishop, that the marriage may be after the Lord and not after concupiscence (chapter 5).

One can define the role of the bishop more and more as an intermediatory one, at the cost of the activity and spontaneity of the members of the flock. It is impossible to quote all the passages in the letters of Ignatius where he underlines the necessity to obey the bishop in everything and to honour him. In the abundance of these exhortations we may see an indication that the supremacy of the bishops over the local churches was by no means generally accepted. Nevertheless people got used to the existence of the growing class of "specialists" in the churches and to the authority executed by them. Hence in the second century we see the rise of what is generally called "clergy". This word is derived from the Greek word kleeros, the plural of which we find in 1 Peter 5:3 : "(2) shepherd the flock of God which is among you, exercising oversight, not by necessity, but willingly; not for base gain, but readily; (3) not as lording it over your possessions (= kleroi), but being models for the flock". These "kleroi" are here the elect body, or rather bodies, seen as God’s heritage, in contrast to those who had spiritual oversight over them. It is thus very striking that Scripture uses this word in a context that explicitly warns against assuming a place in which the ministers have put themselves. The present use of the word "clergy" points to the substitution of ministers in the place of the church of God. In Scripture the use of the word "clergy" is applied to what men have called the laity. That is God’s Clergy! The Third Century

We have seen that the rise of clergy took place in the second century. In the third century the church and its clergy became more and more powerful. The local churches increased in number and so did the clergy. The idea of more than one bishop in one city seems not to have occurred, although it would have been more in accordance with Scripture. Eusebius, who became bishop of Caesarea in 314, wrote in his Ecclesiastical History (quoting from the third book of Irenaeus against Heresies) that Polycarpus, who died in 166/7, was not only instructed by apostles and conversed with many who had seen the Lord, but was also appointed bishop by apostles in Asia in the church in Smyrna. The idea of the one bishop in a city was in this manner traced back to apostolic times, though Scripture itself speaks against this. What we find is an increasing number of presbyters. They became more and more important as the representatives of the bishops at local gatherings for instruction and, ultimately, for the celebration of the eucharist. The presbyters

became responsible for the neighbourhood assemblies in a large city, although within the bishop’s charge.

It is in the third century that we see the beginnings of an organization of the church above the local level. In the preceding century there had already been councils of bishops on a regional basis, debating about the Montanist crisis in Asia Minor and about the date of Easter. These councils became more and more usual. The bishops also cooperated to appoint new bishops. Bishops were chosen by the local congregation and consequently appointed by the neighbouring bishops who laid their hands on their new colleague. Eusebius tells us how in 230 the bishops of Caesarea and Jerusalem together ordained Origenes to the presbytery by laying on of hands (Eccl. Hist. VI 8:4); some years before, in about 215, the bishops of these two cities "requested" him to discourse and expound the divine Scriptures publicly in the church", although he had not yet received ordination to the presbytery (Eccl. Hist. VI 19, 16). New tasks and new ministers appeared on the scene: Eusebius quotes from a letter of Cornelius, bishop of Rome in the middle of the third century, informing us concerning the clerical system in Rome. There was 1 bishop, and there were 46 presbyters, 7 deacons, 7 subdeacons, 42 acolytes, 52 exorcists, readers and doorkeepers (Ecc. Hist. VI 43:11). These developments did not only take place in Asia Minor and in Europe but also in North Africa; on this continent there were bishops in about 200 cities at the end of the third century. The Fourth Century

Under the emperor Constantine the Great (305-337) Christianity became favoured and under Theodosius the Great (379-395) the state religion. It was inevitable that under such circumstances the clergy should occupy a privileged position. In 313 Constantine the Great exempted them from munera, personal services to the state without compensation (Eus., Eccl. Hist. X 7). The most expensive of these charges were the upkeep of the public post and the furnishing of quarters (hospitium) and rendering other services in connection with movements of troops, officials and supplies. In 319 Constantine exempted the clergy from taxation too, so that all their attention could be paid to the duties of their office. In addition to their authority in dogma and church discipline the bishops also acquired considerable power in secular affairs. During the periods of persecution in the third century many Christians had regularly submitted legal differences to the arbitration of their bishops, rather than resort to tribunals of state. Constantine the Great gave legal sanction to episcopal arbitration in civil cases. The local church was now recognized as a corporation which could own property. The bishop and his deacons became administrators of extensive properties. But also within the church things changed. Some bishops exerted spiritual authority over surrounding areas so that a system of mother and daughter churches came into being. The bishops of Rome, Alexandria, Antioch and Constantinople were now metropolities, which means that they were recognized (by the Council of Nicaea in 325) as preeminent in their own areas. Meanwhile the growth in the authority of the bishop of Rome WAS of vital significance. In Rome the bishop claimed the primacy not because of the status of his city in the empire, which was seen as an historical accident, but asserted that Rome’s position was due to its bishop’s position as successor to Peter, seen as the founder of the Roman church, on whom Christ had promised He would build His church. This view, though not for some time accepted even in the West, was the foundation for the eventual supremacy of the bishop of Rome in the Middle Ages.

Monasticism The late third and early fourth century saw the beginnings of monasticism (from the Gr. monos, "alone"), which became so marked a feature of the religious life of the Middle Ages. It

originated in the ascetic tendencies of early Christianity and may have been an expression of despair about social and economic conditions on the one hand and on the other a longing for a pure Christianity and a deep communion with God which they considered unattainable in the existing churches. The chief characteristics of early Christian monasticism were celibacy, fasting, prayer, surrender of worldly goods and the adoption of a hermit's life. This way of life developed in Egypt at the edge of the desert or in oases. Although he may not have been the earliest, Antony, an Egyptian peasant, was the first famous hermit, who started his monastic career in 285. His life, written by Athanasius, had a great influence on others, who followed his example. In this way unregulated monastic communities arose spontaneously out of loosely associated groups. From these unregulated colonies gradually evolved an organized form of monasticism, whose members lived a common life within a walled enclosure under the direction of new type of cleric, the abbot, who enforced rules governing their religious life and daily labour. This communal monasticism was begun about 320 by Pachomius, a converted soldier, who after discharge spent some time as a hermit before setting up his first ascetic community in upper Egypt. His "rule" of monastic life was widely adopted. He also opposed extremism by insisting on regular meals and worship and aimed to make his communities self-supporting through such industries as the weaving of palm mats or growing fruit and vegetables for sale.

We have seen that monasticism arose first out of eastern Christianity. But also in the West monasticism had the backing of church leaders such as Ambrose (who died in 397) from the very beginning. In this way it spread to Italy, Gaul and other parts of the western empire. Benedict became famous, founder of the monastery at Monte Cassino about 520. The Benedictine rule required monks to read as well as to work and to worship. This stimulated the collection of libraries in the monasteries and made the monks guardians of classical and biblical literature through the Middle Ages. The Eastern monks were especially noted for their fanaticism. Everywhere the abuses of early unregulated monastic life led to attempts to subject those monks who were not regular clergy to the authority of bishops. In Asia Minor it was Basil himself a bishop (370) and an ascetic who integrated the monastic communities more closely with the church. He believed the bishop should have ultimate authority over a monastery. His rule also, which discouraged excessive asceticism and stressed study and useful labour, became very popular.

Epilogue

We have seen that in Christianity little was left of the sound teaching of the apostles. Our story is actually a very sad one. One remark should be added, however. Systems and ways of thinking have been criticized, not persons. We are not able or allowed to judge hearts and motives, but we have felt obliged to judge words and practices. And for all the days of Christianity, past, present and future, we may know that what Paul wrote to Timothy a very long time ago remains true: "Yet the firm foundation of God stands, having this seal, The Lord knows those that are His". In this article we have been occupied with the other side of the same seal: "Let every one who names the name of the Lord withdraw from iniquity" (2 Timothy 2:19). May the Lord give us His grace to bear this responsibility, until He come!

G. H. Kramer.

Christian Liberty

Christ has set us free in freedom Galatians 5:1. This is real liberty. Of course the Christian will shortly enjoy the liberty of the glory Romans 8:21, but it is our privilege to know liberty now. The TRUTH sets us free, John 8:32, and if the Son sets us free, we are free indeed John 8:36. We read also that where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty 2 Corinthians 3:17. The Galatian error was to mix law and grace and it brings souls into bondage. Having begun in the Spirit were they to be made perfect in the flesh? We do well to remind ourselves as to the dimensions of this difficulty, and how widespread is the error. Paul, in his missionary journeys, was frequently in collision with the Jews. In his epistles he constantly does battle with their teaching, e.g. in Corinthians, Colossians, Timothy, Hebrews, at some length, and there are smaller references elsewhere. In Galatians his tone is most severe. For teachers who encroach on Christian liberty, let them be accursed! The problem, (need we say it?), is not limited to history. That which professes the Name of Christ on every hand is largely judaised; and to complete the picture, we all carry the principles of the law, "the elements of the world" in our own hearts. The purpose of this paper is to focus on a Scriptural situation where the Galatian error is the central consideration: the council of Jerusalem (Acts 15:1-41). In order properly to understand the council of Acts 15:1-41 it is necessary to look at the two assemblies concerned, in Antioch and in Jerusalem. The assembly in Antioch was a predominantly GENTILE assembly. We read of its formation and growth in Acts 11:19-26. Following the stoning of Stephen (Acts 7:1-60) there was a persecution with scattering of the saints to Phoenicia, Cyprus and Antioch, the Word going to none but the Jews. But some of them, from Cyprus and Cyrene (North Africa), when they came to Antioch, preached also to the Gentiles; and the hand of the Lord was with them, and a great number believed and turned to the Lord. The news of this came to the ears of the church in Jerusalem and they sent Barnabas, and when he came to Antioch, he saw the grace of God and was glad. We cannot pause and admire the features which came to light in this man. "He was a good man, and full of the Holy Ghost and of faith: and much people was added unto the Lord". May we not say, "praise the Lord and Lord, raise up some more like him in our day!" Well, Barnabas took account of the work, remembered Saul with whom he had already had dealings (Acts 9:27) and departed to Tarsus, which is not far away, and when he had found him he brought him to Antioch. This set in motion twelve months of most successful teaching and the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch (Acts 11:16). This is not quite the end of this story. It was in Antioch that the Holy Ghost said, "Separate Me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them". Paul’s first missionary journey began and ended in Antioch. In summary then we can say that Antioch was a predominantly GENTILE assembly with the Apostle Paul, apostle of the uncircumcision, held in high esteem and affection. The assembly at Jerusalem, on the other hand, was almost exclusively JEWISH. Jerusalem was the place where the Lord had been pleased to put His Name. The temple was there. For centuries Jews from every quarter came to Jerusalem for the festivals. They still do. With the advent of Christianity we read that a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith (Acts 6:7), and when Paul came to Jerusalem for the last time (Acts 21:20) they said to him "Thou seest, brother, how many thousands of Jews there are which believe; and they are all zealous of the law." Peter, the apostle of the circumcision was in Jerusalem, John also, and it seems James was something of a leader in the church. If these two assembly situations are kept clearly in mind it goes a long way to understanding the significance, and also the triumph of the important council in Acts 15:1-41. In Acts 15:1 we read of certain men who came down from Judea teaching that "Except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses ye cannot be saved". Well can

we understand that there was no small discussion and disputation. How thankful we can be that there were apostles in Antioch to handle this matter. Yet, although an apostle, and that to the uncircumcision, Paul was not allowed to silence these teachers. Had he done so there would have been peace doubtless, but also the very real possibility of a division in the church, a Gentile assembly in Antioch with Paul as the leader, and a Jewish assembly in Jerusalem with Peter, or perhaps James as the leader. The Lord however loves His people too much to allow such a division and we read that it was "determined that Paul and Barnabas, and certain other of them, should go up to Jerusalem" the very centre from which these troublers came "unto the apostles and elders, about this question". It is at this point we must bring in the additional details of Galatians 2:1-21. There we learn that Paul went up "by revelation", no new form of communication for Paul! He was clearly moving with God and it is a pleasure to see the success and ease with which this journey. was accomplished, Acts 15:3, "being brought on their way by the church, they passed through Phoenicia and Samaria, declaring the conversion of the Gentiles" (as they could do after Paul's first missionary journey) "and they caused great joy unto all the brethren. And when they were come to Jerusalem" ... here we revert again to Galatians 2:1-21, "I communicated unto them that gospel which I preach among the Gentiles; but privately to them which were of reputation, lest by any means I should run, or had run, in vain". When they (that is James, Cephas and John) "who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that was given unto me, they gave to me and Barnabas the right hands of fellowship; that we should go unto the heathen, and they unto the circumcision". The opposition party now appears. In Galatians 2:4 we read of "false brethren unawares brought in, who came in privily to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, that they might bring us into bondage". Certain of the Pharisees who believed (Acts 15:5) were also saying that it was needful to circumcise the converts and to command them to keep the law of Moses. To both of these groups Paul says "we gave place by subjection, no, not for an hour", and Titus the Greek, whom Paul had taken with them, was not compelled to be circumcised (Galatians 2:3). The apostles and elders, in a full assembly meeting, then came together to consider the matter. There was much disputing, but then Peter stood up (Acts 15:7) and recounted the events of Acts 10:1-48, in the conversion of Cornelius, a story he had already told in Jerusalem (Acts 11:1-30). "Now therefore" he says "why tempt ye God, to put a yoke upon the neck of the disciples, which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear?" Then all the multitude kept silence and gave audience to Barnabas and Paul as they declared (verse 12) the miracles and wonders which God had wrought among the Gentiles by them, a recitation doubtless of what we read of in Acts 13:1-52; Acts 14:1-28. Thus when they were finished James gives the summing up (verses 13-21) giving quotes from Old Testament Scriptures to confirm that what the Lord was now doing was in accord with what had already been foretold long before, that God would visit the Gentiles to take out of them a people for His Name. Doubtless this is a model brothers' meeting, beginning with tumult and ending in peace, the reverse sadly of what has too often been proved in brothers' meetings since that time! Here at least (Acts 15:1-41) there was peace, and we notice that letters were written and sent by chosen men to Antioch. The wording here should not be overlooked "the apostles and elders, with the whole church (verse 22). It seemed good unto us, being assembled with one accord (verse 25). It seemed good to the Holy Ghost, and to us" (verse 28).

We can well understand why such a letter, sent by, and with, such apostles and brethren, men that had hazarded their lives for the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ, (verse 26) supported too by chief men among the brethren (verse 22), rejoiced the hearts of the brethren and we read the multitude

gathered together "rejoiced for the consolation". (verse 31).

D.W.P.

Studies in Luke’s Gospel The Baptism and Temptation of Christ (A Bible reading at the Findochty conference in September 1991) Luke 3:21-22; Luke 4:1-13; Hebrews 2:16-18; Hebrews 4:14-16 Our time is a little limited this afternoon but I think we ought to cast our eyes back to the passage in which we find the record of the Lord’s baptism. We get mention of the baptism in John. John the Baptist is the witness of it. He saw the Spirit descending upon Him and abiding. It is what John the Baptist saw. The baptism is the beginning of the Lord’s public ministry. It is the point Peter mentions in the book of Acts. That "God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power; who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil" (Acts 10:38). This is what we seem to have at the baptism. It is recorded in all four gospels. It is important to see that the Lord is stepping out in public ministry here upon earth. I would like to stress that it is the first occasion in Luke where we get the Lord praying. He prayed at the baptism. On a number of occasions we get Him praying in Luke’s gospel. This is significant so far as the perfect Man is concerned. He was a Man that prayed. At every point in His life, every important decision, every exigency. How marvelous. He is the One who could say, "He wakeneth morning by morning, He wakeneth Mine ear to hear as the instructed" (Isaiah 50:4). In Luke’s gospel He is found praying a number of times. This comes out first at the Lord’s baptism. That would indicate that He was a dependent Man. It is interesting that on each occasion when He prayed we get the reason why He was praying in the context, and it comes out clearly that He was a dependent Man.

Another point is the striking way in which the Father speaks personally to the Son here at the baptism. In Matthew’s gospel} the words of the Father have more the character of a testimony. "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased" (Matthew 3:17), whereas in Luke it is the Father addressing the Lord Jesus personally and saying "Thou art My beloved Son". He does so in Mark as well, where the perfect servant is addressed. We have to remember that His baptism, while it looked forward to His public ministry, also referred back to the hidden life of 30 years. We have little record of what took place during those 30 years but we can conclude that the whole of those 30 years were lived in absolute perfection. There was moral worth and beauty from start to finish and it is then that the Father’s voice is heard saying, "Thou art My beloved Son; in Thee I am well pleased".

Yes, that is very apparent when you look at the literal or New Translation where it says "In Thee I have found My delight", which obviously is looking back. While there is little record of what took place in those hidden years there are some things we can say about them. Firstly they are not lost and secondly there are two comments in Scripture about them which though brief are tremendously weighty and full. One of these is from the Lord’s lips when He says, "Wist ye not that I must be about My Father’s business" (Luke 2:49); words that emphasize His unswerving devotion in a world where to a greater or lesser degree all had swerved. Then at the other end of those 30 years, in a world where one had been sought who did His will without swerving, the Father’s voice is heard saying "This is My beloved Son, in Whom I am well pleased". The words you have referred to in Luke 2:1-52 are the first recorded words of the Lord Jesus in Luke’s gospel. Being that they are very significant as covering the whole of the gospel. He was here to do the Father’s business.

Both these references also reflect what is at the very heart of Christianity, that is relationships. The character of the revelation is that of relationships which have existed from all eternity. The words that were so frequently on the Lord's lips in this world were 'My Father', and here we have the Father's voice saying, "My beloved Son".

Just one little point for the encouragement of any who take up any service for the Lord. In Mark's gospel it says a delightful thing about the Lord. It says "He saw the heavens opened" (Mark 1:10). This is recorded in Mark and there is the One who is the perfect servant who goes forward in His service drinking in and drawing on all the resources of heaven. We cannot but think of another servant, not altogether like the Lord but another servant, who could say "I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God" (Acts 7:56). Oh, how blessed that in the gospel which tells us about the perfect servant we read that "He saw the heavens opened".

You referred to Peter in Acts 10:1-48. Peter emphasised the tremendous resources that were available to the Lord as He embarked on His pathway. He was anointed with the Holy Spirit and with power and God was with Him. These were the resources He had as He set out on His public pathway.

Just before the Lord embarked on His public service and in tandem with the temptations, it is significant that at the baptism the perfect Man identified Himself with that on earth which was of God and the Father was happy to identify Himself with the Son. It would be well to establish this point, that when the Lord was baptised He took His place with the godly remnant who were submitting to the baptism of John. To take up the words used later on they didn't reject "the council of God against themselves" but they "justified God, being baptised with the baptism of John" (Luke 7:29-30). Yet He identified Himself with them. Although He was sinless, holy, altogether apart from any sin, yet He identified Himself with the godly remnant that were being baptised by John. This is one of those happy occasions where we see the Godhead working harmoniously in pursuing the will of God. To repeat the words of another, the Father was heard and not seen, the Spirit was seen and not heard but the Son was both seen and heard. So far as the Lord's temptations in this passage are concerned, they do seem to be connected with His baptism. Having been anointed with the Holy Spirit, He goes on to be tested by the devil. We don't get these temptations in John, not really, but we do in Mark, just briefly suggested, and in Matthew and Luke more fully. There are practical lessons for us lying on the surface of the temptations and it would be wrong if we didn't take them to heart. It is also of great importance that we get a right understanding of the teaching of the verses at the end of Hebrews 2:1-18 and Hebrews 4:1-16. Before we go on I would like to say a little about the differences between Luke and Matthew in order to throw into relief what Luke is all about. Luke puts events in a moral order. Quite often he goes outside the historic order. The record of the temptations is an outstanding example of this. They are not in the same order in Luke as in the gospel of Matthew. The probability is that Matthew gives these temptations in the historic order whereas Luke gives them in a moral order. Matthew gives the one about turning the stones to bread first. Then the one where the Lord was asked to throw Himself from the pinnacle of the temple, and thirdly the one where He is called to worship Satan. That is the order of the temptations in Matthew. It is different in Luke, where the moral sequence of events is given rather than the historic sequence. Could we say too that in Matthew He is carried up into the wilderness by the Spirit. In Mark He is driven into the wildness and in Luke He is led into the wilderness. There is a reason for these different presentations. Carried indicates what is

connected with the King. As a bondservant He is driven to a place of service and here as a humble and dependent Man He is led to a place of tempting. When you say a moral order in Luke, would you link it with the third chapter of Genesis?

I would and particularly with 1 John 2:1-29 which also gives a moral sequence and lines up with Luke's gospel. If we look at 1 John 2:1-29, John talks of all that belongs to the world. The world is this, he says, "the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life" (1 John 2:16). That order lines up with the order of the temptations in the fourth chapter of Luke. The stones being made bread, that would be the lust of the flesh. He was shown all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time, that would be the lust of the eyes. His casting Himself down from the pinnacle of the temple, that would be the pride of life.

Isn't Luke the only evangelist that says that He was full of the Holy Spirit? He was the perfect Man, the suitable vessel.

Yes, Luke is the only writer apart from Paul who speaks of being filled with or full of the Holy Spirit. Paul uses the expression once in the epistle to the Ephesians. Luke uses the expression a number of times in Acts and in his gospel. Paul says, "Be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit" (Ephesians 5:18). If I want to be a believer living here for the Lord's pleasure I can only do it in the power of the Spirit of God. There is no other way. How striking that all that the perfect Man did was in the power of the Spirit.

Any man who is under the influence of the Holy Spirit will be obedient to Him.

Yes, we will see that later on.

Luke has already said of a good woman that she was filled with the Holy Spirit (Luke 1:41). Luke has already said of a good man that he was filled with the Holy Spirit (Luke 1:67). So when he comes to the perfect Man he also says full of the Holy Spirit. So this is an example for resisting or overcoming the devil.

Yes, this is what I had in mind when I suggested we should gain some practical lessons from the passage. But what is the link with Genesis 3:1-24, already referred to?

Well, the woman saw that the tree was good for food, the lust of the flesh, that it was pleasant to the eyes, the lust of the eyes and a tree to be desired to make one wise, the pride of life. (Genesis 3:6). The first man faced with temptation succumbed to it, the second Man was triumphant over it.

Yet the circumstances were exactly opposite. One was in a garden which was well endowed with all that could satisfy. The blessed Lord Jesus was in a wilderness and we see what sin had brought This comes out also in the gospel of Mark. He was with the wild beasts (Mark 1:13). What a terrible place it must have been. With the Lord it was once for all. He was full of the Holy Spirit. With us it is a continual filling.

It is an exhortation in Ephesians. "Be filled with the Spirit". As far as I have been able to trace there are nine individuals in Scripture referred to as being filled with the Spirit, the fullness of God in operation. The first temptation had a particular appeal to the body. The second temptation had a particular appeal to the soul. The third temptation had a particular appeal to the spirit. The temptations were full and entire.

They touched Him in every part of His being. When the Lord Jesus entered into the scene of temptation, He did so as coming from the baptism. The Father's voice had been heard expressing His great pleasure in Him because for 30 years He had beheld a perfect and dependent Man. This perfect and dependent Man was put to the test here in the temptation. In the years prior to His coming into this scene man had been tried and tested. An independent man had been tried and failed, but here is a most remarkable thing a dependent Man is put to the test in these temptations and triumphs. It shows us that if we would triumph in the scene of temptation and trial it can only be in the way of dependence. The first thing that comes out here is the principle of dependence. "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every Word of God". What a message to us. Afterward He hungered. When the devil came to tempt Him He was hungry, but He met the situation by dependence. He quotes Himself, as it is written, That man shall not live by bread alone, but by every Word of God". This is surely an example to us in the pathway of trial and suffering. Is not the mark of dependence obedience? The Word of God is quoted here in contradistinction to Adam. He had the Word of God presented to him, but he disobeyed and fell. Now that this glorious Man has come Satan tempts Him and He quotes the Word of God. Reference has been made to the difference between the wilderness and the garden of Eden. The Lord here quoted from the book of Deuteronomy. It is the book for the land. But the land had become a wilderness because of disobedience. Now the Lord is showing the pathway that is to the glory of God that is a pathway of obedience. If we were honest we would all say our failures stem from not obeying the Word of God. This matter of "every Word of God" is an important one. In 1 John 2:1-29 we have the expression with regard to the young men that they have the Word of God abiding in them and because of that they've overcome the wicked one. Now where it says the 'Word' of God, the word used is logos which signifies the whole revelation of God. Here "Man shall not live by bread along, but by every Word of God", it is not logos but rhema the specific word for the situation. The Lord had been forty days tempted of Satan, but following that were these three temptations. He used the Word the Word to meet the moment. He met the attack by the particular word for each situation. If I haven't the Word of God abiding in me then I won't be able to pick out the Scripture to use when it is needed. For example in Ephesians 6:17, "The sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God", it is rhema not the whole Word of God but the particular Scripture to meet the situation. Can you say something about the forty's of Scripture?

Forty is a time of testing. There are several of them in Scripture. The Lord here faces forty days of trial and testing. In the first of the temptations there is the feature of dependence. We need to learn that if we are to overcome in the conflict. It does seem as to the second one, that it is rather the feature of obedience that is emphasised. In a plain way the Lord Jesus says, "Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve". If we are to overcome in a scene of trial and temptation we must have dependence and then obedience. Some have asked the question, how was it that the devil had authority to offer the Lord all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time? That is a big question. Every power is set up by God, but I have wondered if, when a nation turns its back on God and doesn't discharge its responsibilities, it opens the door for Satan to come

I suppose Satan has gained influence over men because of the fall and he has that which he puts before the eyes of men in allurement. Men are ambitious and Satan uses this to allure them along a wrong path. But it says here ... "In a moment of time", a word that means a pin prick. That's all he

can offer. Nothing of value, nothing eternal. But he does offer the Lord this power, the kingdoms and their glory. In obedience, the Lord answered "Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve".

It does show the tremendous power that Satan has and we have the Lord's own words three times in the gospel by John, that he is "the ruler of this world" (John 12:31; John 14:30; John 16:11).

I think we should bear that in mind. We must not minimise the power of the devil. We get here the way to overcome and I believe it is connected with being full of the Holy Spirit. In many ways we can be overcome by the subtle power of the devil.

He has only power over us when we deliver our minds to him. He has no power over us if we are full of the Holy Spirit.

Yes, that principle is applicable to the youngest as well as to the most mature. Satan cannot do anything to anyone who is moving in a path of obedience. That doesn't need long years to learn. If we are obedient Satan has no power against us at all and it is demonstrated here in all its perfection. The Lord says, "it is written". It is God's Word that binds the conscience. The Lord will get this authority won't He?

Oh yes. There was an attempt here to divert the Lord from the cross. He also used Peter to try to do this. "Be it far from Thee, Lord: this shall not be unto Thee. But He turned, and said unto Peter, Get thee behind Me, Satan; thou art an offence to Me; for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men" (Matthew 16:22-23). Is there any reason why it is the devil that is spoken about here and not Satan? The devil is the slanderer. Satan is the adversary. It is diabolos here, the devil. The Lord Jesus had just come from the baptism where His Father's voice had been heard declaring Him to be His beloved Son. The slanderer comes along to divert Him and turn Him away from the path of dependence and the path of obedience. The third of these temptations touches another feature which ought to mark us as Christians confidence. "Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God". Was there any need for the Lord to put God's Word to the test? The devil quotes from the Psalm here, "He shall give His angels charge over Thee" etc. In the very Psalm from which that quotation comes God says, "Because He hath set His love upon Me, therefore will I deliver Him ... " (Psalms 91:14). He dwelt in the secret place, the shadow of the Almighty (Psalms 91:1) and the devil uses a Scripture to seek to divert Him from this path of confidence in God's Word. We can trace these three happy features here, dependence, obedience and confidence. They are what characterised the Lord Jesus as the perfect Man, seen here in combat with the slanderer, the devil and He defeats him by the power of the Word of God and these three moral characteristics. At the beginning of Psalms 16:1-11 He puts them in the order we get in Matthew 4:1-25. "Preserve me, O God", that is the dependence. "For in Thee do I put my trust", that is confidence. "Thou My soul has said to Jehovah, Thou art the Lord", that is obedience. The order is a little different here but the same features come to light as characterising Him in the path of conflict.

If we ask ourselves why we don't get the temptation in John, we have the answer here. In John the presentation is of the personal glory and essential deity of the Lord Jesus. It would not be appropriate to include temptation. "Thou shalt not tempt the Lord Thy God".

Yet the Lord does say in John, "the prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in Me" (John 14:30). This is one of the features of John. We don't get specific mention of the temptation or Gethsemane but we get many allusions to these things.

Yes, features come in each gospel, but there is a distinct emphasis in each and these particulars are not in John.

It is particularly lovely though because it does underline several of the things that have been said. It is on that very occasion that the Lord says "that the world may know that I love the Father; and as the Father gave Me commandment, even so I do".

Oh yes, there is much in John's gospel that contributes to what is said in the synoptic gospels and that is why I think we ought to turn to John's gospel when we need to supplement what we are saying from the synoptic gospels. But I think these passages are very important just to see Him as the One who was dependent. We come back to it again. "Thou didst make Me trust, upon My mother's breasts" (Palm 22:9). "I will put My trust in Him" (Hebrews 2:13). "Preserve Me, O God: for in Thee do I put My trust" (Psalms 16:1). He took a course of faith here and covered the whole course of faith from beginning to end as Hebrews 12:1-29 tells us. He was a Man who moved here by faith, although a Divine Person. How remarkable.

You wanted to say something about Hebrews?

Yes, because there are those who say wrong things about the Lord Jesus. There are those, Christians mind you, who say that the Lord never sinned but that He could have. They ask "How could He suffer in temptation if it wasn't possible for Him to fall in it". You get this kind of thing said and how easily we can be taken in by it. So Paul says in Hebrews "He Himself hath suffered being tempted" (Hebrews 2:18). He really did suffer. I have asked myself the question sometimes, how is that He suffered being tempted?

Because of His sensitive nature?

Yes, that's one reason. In Hebrews this is a qualification for Him in His High Priestly service. Because of it He is able to succour them that are tempted. I think one of the things we connect with the temptation is, it was to qualify Him as Great High Priest.

It also says something about the Lord's uniqueness. Very often for us temptation can be a matter of pleasure. But for the Lord it was never a matter of pleasure but of suffering. It must say something about His sinless nature. He perceived temptation with all the horror with which God would perceive temptation and so necessarily it was a matter of suffering for Him.

Temptation only causes suffering when it is resisted. If you don't resist the temptation you don't suffer, do you?

That's right. That's what Peter presents in 1 Peter 4:1-19. You either suffer, or you sin (1 Peter 4:1).

Because the Lord was not able to sin His suffering would have been all the greater for it. He had no means whatever of relieving Himself of it.

He was the perfect Man here upon earth, perfect in every possible way and having these dreadful temptations thrust across Him by the devil himself, how He must have suffered. The other thought in Hebrews 4:15 we do well to get a hold of ... "but was in all points tempted", and here in the King James translation it says "like as we are yet without sin". This translation might just seem to let in the error that He could have sinned. The real text says, "In like manner, sin apart . It wasn't just that He didn't sin no He couldn't sin. The idea of sin was altogether foreign to His holy nature. Sin made no appeal to Him whatsoever the holy Son of God. He suffered because of His holy nature. The consequences of sin were all around Him. Death, disease and Satan's power and all these things affected His holy, sensitive spirit and He did suffer. He was troubled in Spirit, He groaned, but sin had never any entrance or attraction to the Son of God. The barrier against it all is "That holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God" (Luke 1:35). He did not progress in holiness, He was intrinsically holy. The sad fact about this is that it is in Christian circles that these things are said. We do well to be clear in our own minds as to verses like these. Sin apart does not mean only that He didn't sin. It means that sin had no appeal to Him whatsoever.

(One other reading in this series to follow, if the Lord will). From Our Archive "The Morning Star"

Christ Our Hope (Continued from page 98)

Shortly before his departure the Apostle Peter, feeling the necessity of stirring up the saints by putting them in remembrance of what they had already heard, was led to recall that wondrous scene when he, with James and John, were eye witnesses of the Lords glory on the "holy mount". It was, so to speak, his legacy to the church. And we may notice that he calls especial attention to the "voice" which they were then given to hear, and which centred all their thoughts on the Lord Himself as the object of the Father's delight. This expression of delight was a notable feature of Isaiah's prophecy given 750 years previously (Isaiah 42:1), but when quoted in Matthew 12:18 the word "beloved" is added by the Holy Spirit, thus linking the passage in a very marked way with the testimony already given at the Lord's baptism and repeated at the transfiguration (Matthew 3:17; Matthew 17:6). Peter adds that the voice "came from heaven", identifying "the excellent glory" they saw with "heaven" whence the Holy Spirit descended in bodily form after the Lord's baptism (see also Mark 1:10-11; Luke 3:21-22).

Let us pause here to take note of three wonderful things:

(1) The Father's good pleasure is equally centred and expressed in the SON, when He condescended to identify Himself in baptism with confessed sinners hoping for mercy as when He shows for a moment His coming glory in the kingdom.

(2) The mystery of the Trinity is for the first time manifested to human eyes and ears at the baptism (John 1:33-34; 1 John 1:3). The communion which we are now called to enjoy is founded upon this.

(3) Though on earth carrying out the Father's will and purpose the humbled Son of man belonged to heaven and in the mystery of His divine Person was ever there. Consequently, as He says to Nicodemus, He alone was able to unfold "heavenly things" (John 3:12-13).

These blessed facts lie at the basis of Christianity and have evidently the most important bearing upon "the heavenly calling" of which every believer in the present age is made a partaker (Hebrews 3:1). It is very little understood and as a consequence the "hope" which should animate our souls is enfeebled and our practical walk often comes far short of what it ought to be. Is it not a sad fact that in the minds of many the "hope" is reduced to a vague idea of getting to heaven eventually because they find they cannot live for ever on this earth as they would like to do? That is very different from the glory of the mystery given to Paul to reveal which he says is "CHRIST IN YOU, THE HOPE OF GLORY" (Colossians 1:27). And the practical consequence flowing from the possession of such a hope is that abiding in Him we should walk "as He walked" (1 John 2:6) The Christian calling is heavenly in principle because it is God's purpose to bring "many sons unto glory". They are made "sons" by receiving God's testimony about His own blessed Son and they are the Father's gift to Him, Christ, who was ever His delight the Son in the Father's bosom who became flesh in order to carry out all His will in redeeming them. Having thus become "the Captain of their salvation" He is now seated at His own right hand in the heavens. It is as speaking from thence that Jesus says, "I and the children which God hath given Me" (Hebrews 2:9-13; Hebrews 8:12; Hebrews 10:8-10; Hebrews 10:12-14). Surely all this is in contrast to the blessing reserved for God's ancient people of Israel who will have their portion on earth in the promised land when Christ shall come in Person to make it theirs (Zechariah 14:4-5; Malachi 3:1). And it is this future deliverance of the people which is referred to in Isaiah 8:17 to Isaiah 9:7 where there is no mention at all of Christ's present place "on high", nor of the coming of the Holy Ghost.

It is true that Abraham's thoughts were turned toward heaven when God spoke to him of the "stars" but heaven was not mentioned in his call which was simply to go forth into the land of Canaan, into which he came (Genesis 11:31; Genesis 12:5; Genesis 12:7; Acts 7:3-4; Hebrews 11:8). The earthly inheritance will eventually be made good to the earthly people, that is, to Abraham's natural descendants, when God's time is come to establish them once again in Canaan; but in the meanwhile Christ has His own place in glory and with Him are associated in the most intimate way those who are consciously at the present time the fruit of His sufferings on the cross. That is why they are called "holy brethren" and "partakers of the heavenly calling". And it is to this incorruptible inheritance, reserved for the saints in heaven that Peter drew the attention of the converted Jews to whom he wrote. Naturally enough they looked for the accomplishment on earth of the promises made to their father Abraham, all the more so as they were strangers scattered abroad far away from Palestine. But what they lost on earth was made good to them "in heaven". It is quite true that the glory of that which is "reserved" for believers of the present day will only be fully known at the "revelation of Jesus Christ" for which we wait; but the "spirit" of it is to animate the souls of those now called to be "partakers of Christ's sufferings" (1 Peter 1:3-13; 1 Peter 4:12-13).

Everywhere we find in the epistles that this glory is the counterpart of sufferings endured in the present time. It is to be our eternal portion after we have suffered awhile down here (1 Peter 5:10; so Romans 8:18; 2 Corinthians 4:17; 2 Timothy 2:12 &c). And how beautifully that is set forth in the transfiguration scene when we learn that Moses and Elias "appeared in glory, and spake of His decease which He should accomplish at Jerusalem"! They were occupied with Christ's sufferings whereas the disciples had the privilege of seeing His glory, "and the two men who stood* with Him" (Luke 9:30-32). May the Lord lead our hearts into more constant and diligent occupation with

the Person of Christ in His present glory that we may realise more of that change "into the same image from glory to glory", now being accomplished by the Spirit of the Lord (2 Corinthians 3:18)! We have to be transformed by the renewing of our mind in order not to be conformed to this world (Romans 12:2).

{*Compare with this what is said of Moses when called to go up into Mount Sinai the second time, when God graciously stood with him there and showed him as much of His glory as it was possible for him, in his human body, to see (Ex. 33:21-23; Ex. 34:58).}

All these Scriptures that we have passed rapidly in review bring us again to the parenthesis in God’s ways of which we have already spoken (pages 96-98). How needful is it that our souls should get confirmed in its distinctive and moral features in order that our practical walk may be in accordance with it! The more we realise its character the more readily we can understand the difficulty felt, even by the apostles who had seen the Lord on earth, in laying hold of the meaning of His words, "Ye are not of the world" (John 15:19). It needed the presence of the Holy Ghost, who came down on the day of Pentecost, to teach them all things and bring to their remembrance all that He had said to them, besides those other things which they were not able to bear, or enter into at all, until after His death and resurrection (John 14:26; John 16:12-16). So complete a change in all their thoughts and aspirations must needs be gradual. His death had seemed to blast all their Jewish hopes in connection with their Messiah whom they rightly believed Christ to be (Luke 24:21) and when they were assured of His resurrection it was their familiar hopes that were naturally revived. We observe it in the question "Lord, wilt Thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?" (Acts 1:6). The Lord’s answer was confined to insisting upon the character of their testimony to Himself as He had previously told them (John 15:27; Acts 1:8) while waiting for the coming of the Holy Ghost. Little by little their thoughts were turned into another channel as the meaning of His death and resurrection dawned upon them while they still waited for the coming of the Comforter. When He came down on the day of Pentecost a new era began for them but as yet they had no idea at all of the glad tidings going beyond the limits of Israel; and for the moment they were so enthralled by the great facts of the Lord’s ascension to the right hand of God and of His having sent the Spirit as He had promised that they had enough to do to preach the gospel of the remission of sins to "the house of Israel" (Acts 2:14-39). They knew full well that this gospel must go to those "afar off", as the Lord had distinctly told them more than once, but they were very slow to carry it to them and the majority of those converted in Jerusalem could not conceive it possible that Gentiles could be brought into the enjoyment of its blessings. Even Peter himself presented to the Jews the acceptance of the gospel as a reason for the Lord’s immediate return to accomplish the earthly promises made to their fathers (Acts 3:9-26). Many were scattered abroad afterwards by persecution but the apostles, in spite of the Lord’s charge to them, remained at Jerusalem (Acts 1:8; Acts 8:1). They were slow to fulfil their commission of going to "the uttermost part of the earth". But God carried out His thoughts in His own way as we shall see.

William Joseph Lowe (1838-1927) (To be continued, if the Lord will).

News from the Field

SCANDINAVIA

Over a hundred years ago in the 1870s and 1880s there was a great work in Scandinavia with a good number coming out of the world and brought into the assembly. Over 20 gatherings were formed with encouraging numbers. For example in 1879 there were 50 brethren in fellowship in Gothenburg (S) while in Stockholm 35 "mostly poor" persons were in fellowship. In Norway there were meetings in Moss, Christiania (Oslo), Ferderikstad, Frederikshald, Drammen, Holmstrand, Drobach, Horten, Langesung, Porsgrund, Kagero, Laurvig, Holmsbo etc. Until the second world war there were also two meetings in Denmark. Since then there has been a marked decline so that by the 1970s there were only three brothers left in practical fellowship known to us. They were brother Carl Prydz of Oslo (N) and the Jacobsen brothers on Donso off Gothenburg (S). The enemy has been at work and scattered and divided the saints of God. But we can thank God that He is working and precious souls are coming to trust our Lord Jesus for salvation and some are desiring to continue in those good things the Word of God sets out for every believer to enjoy. In the mid 1980s we began to have contact with a few individuals ordering books from the depot in Plumstead. The need was also felt to be able to supply Scandinavian literature by brethren whose doctrine was true to Scripture. We found in fact that there was very little. Some of Mackintosh's notes in Finnish, a second hand set in Swedish and a few books and pamphlets by Darby, Kelly, Dennett and Cutting in Norwegian, Swedish or Danish. In all around only 50 or 60 titles known to me by reliable authors. The need for more good literature and attractive gospel material is evident. In order to assess this more effectively journeys have been made to Denmark (twice), Sweden and Norway and visitors from the Faroes and correspondence from Greenland and Finland have also been informative.

We rejoice that the contacts made through the literature work are increasing little by little. The links are few but we are thankful for the small and steady trickle of orders for books and requests for the Scriptures. In order for this work to broaden out and take definite shape we believe that your remembrance of us at your prayers will be used of the Lord to set the work forward. In September last year I was privileged to visit Norway and meet believers in our Lord Jesus who desire to go forth unto Him, without the camp. Before giving a brief account of the visit I would like to give some brief notes as to Scandinavia.

DENMARK The Pure Gold tract (Purt Guld) has been distributed in many thousands in almost every place except North Jutland and Bornholm. We frequently receive requests in response to this tract and send out a New Testament and Safety, Certainty and Enjoyment. The tract A Letter For You has been translated and typeset into Danish. We would like to print 10,000 "Et brev til dig" for free distribution. The need for more gospel booklets and tracts is a burden we are bringing to the Lord in prayer.

GREENLAND A missionary in this Danish territory has ordered 500 Purt Guld. We look to the Lord for a response to His Word.

FAROE ISLANDS

We are enjoying more contact with believers in these islands. We would like to get Pure Gold into Faroese as well as some other items. The correspondence and visit from Faroe has been very uplifting and we trust the Lord will draw us closer together.

FINLAND

Here our brother and sister Eddy and Mirja Moorrees labour for the Lord. They live in Joensuu and seek to bring the true gospel to the multitude outside Christ. His work is hard there is much Vodka addiction and though much preaching and tract distribution takes place yet so far few are prepared to identify themselves with the Lord in His rejection. Puhdasta Kultaa, Pure Gold, has been published and we trust the Lord will be pleased to use this booklet as He has the English edition.

ICELAND

More books per head of population are published here than any other country. The Icelanders are avid readers. But alas we have no literature available.

SWEDEN

There is an open door for the gospel. The Lord has bidden us to pray Him, the Lord of the harvest, to send forth labourers into this part of the field that the few embers of the testimony might be graciously revived. I had the opportunity to visit Magnus Jacobson on Donso and the meeting room there. His isolation was not only geographical but also linguistic. He speaks only Swedish. A dear brother from Germany has visited several times.

NORWAY

Various contacts had shown encouraging interest in the books and intimated their desire to meet us face to face. Through the Lord’s mercy I was enabled to go to Norway in September 1991 and an account of that visit will follow in the next issue, if the Lord will.

E.N.C.

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Quotations from Scripture are generally taken either from the King James translation or Mr. J.N. Darby's translation. Quotations taken from any other translation will be indicated in the course of the article, or in a footnote to the article.

There Is One Body

Ephesians 4:4 When the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, ascended to glory He sent down the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost to indwell the bodies of those who believed on Him. They were united to Him by the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 6:17), and to each other in the power of the same Spirit (1 Corinthians 12:13). The body of Christ was formed then and has continued until the present moment. Only those who are real believers, born again and possessing the indwelling Spirit of God, are members of the body of Christ. They are ONE body in Christ (Romans 12:5). Only those who are real are IN CHRIST. God has set the members, each one of them, in the body as it has pleased Him. It is inconceivable that God would put in the body any who are not genuine believers in Christ (1 Corinthians 12:18). The body is OF CHRIST and derives FROM Him (Colossians 2:17; Colossians 2:19). The body of Christ is not the sphere of profession. It is a living organism, the fruit of the work and service of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. When the body of Christ was first formed there were two great religious systems existing, Judaism and Paganism. A member of Christ could not be a member of either of those systems (Acts 15:7-11; 1 Corinthians 10:19-21). A member of the body of Christ should not belong to any other membership. The body of Christ includes all who belong to Christ. Religious memberships are connected with the name that they bear and regrettably there are many in Christendom. The true and only Scriptural gathering point is Christ. He is absent in glory and believers gather to His Name. His Name involves all that is true of Him (1 Kings 8:27-30, 1 Kings 9:3; Matthew 18:20; 1 Corinthians 1:2). Every believer who gathers to the Name of Christ is privileged to enjoy all that His Name involves. They are also responsible to be true to all that this Name represents. His Name represents His love for His own and therefore all true believers can gather to His Name. His Name also represents His holiness and truth. All that is evil and erroneous is excluded in gathering to His Name. Fellowship, ministry and care operate for the benefit of all who gather to the Lord's Name. Discipline is exercised to protect the honour of the Name to which they gather. The Bible has many names for believers. Members of the body, saints, brethren, elect, children of God, sons of God, priests, and many more. It does not present any Name to gather to except that of Christ. All those who were in the Upper Room at Jerusalem when the Spirit descended upon them at Pentecost would remember that experience for the rest of their lives but they were not called PENTECOSTALISTS. The New Testament instructions for the care of assemblies mentions the

functions of elders (presbytery — 1 Timothy 4:14; Titus 1:5), but the assemblies were not called PRESBYTERIAN. The believers in the early days of the church believed in and practised baptism (Acts 8:38), but the churches were not called BAPTIST. There are instructions for bishops (overseers Php 1:1; 1 Timothy 3:1) in the writings of Paul but the churches were not called EPISCOPALIAN.* Elders and bishops (overseers) are names for the same persons in Scripture. See Acts 20:17; Acts 20:28; Titus 1:5; Titus 1:7; 1 Peter 5:1-2. The believers in Colosse were commended by Paul for the order (method) that existed among them, but they were not called METHODISTS. The believers in New Testament times believed in the indwelling Holy Spirit and the name of friends (Romans 8:9; John 15:14; 3 John 1:14), but their gatherings were not called THE SOCIETY OF FRIENDS (QUAKERS). Believers at the beginning gathered together (congregated 1 Corinthians 11:20) and heard letters read mutually. They were not independent of other companies composed of members of the body of Christ (Colossians 4:16), but they were not called CONGREGATIONALISTS. All believers in the early days were referred to as brethren. But not BRETHREN with a name attached to it or with a capital B. Believers in Rome were called saints (Romans 1:7). Believers in Corinth or Galatia or Thessalonica were not called Roman Christians.

{*Episcopalian denotes governed by or relating to a bishop or bishops.} The body, all true believers in Christ, is denominated (to give a name to) the body of Christ. It is derived from Him. It is sustained by Him. It is joined to Him. A denomination, a collection of individuals called by the same name, is a sect. Interdenominationalism is the mutual embracing of all denominations. When believers were enlightened to the truth of Christ's Headship and His body at the beginning of the last century these truths led them out of the systems of men and the denominations too. They owned no name except Christ's. They owned no membership except that of the body. They met in homes and rooms which bore no distinctive name or title. It was impossible for them to call themselves the church of God in any place. Such a title would have excluded those who did not meet with them. They believed in churches because the New Testament speaks of such but they did not call themselves THE CHURCHES OF CHRIST or THE CHURCHES OF GOD. They met simply as members of the body of Christ. Scripture did not teach them any other name or membership. These brethren did not attempt to set up a unity of the body. They believed rightly that the unity existed unbroken in spite of the confusion. All they endeavoured to do was to humbly and dependently express the unity that existed. The movement of the Spirit of God was such that companies of believers were formed all over the world. These companies sought to move together as one. There was no thought of independent companies although each company was responsible to maintain the truth revealed. There was no recognised universal leader but spiritual men were honoured for their service. No governing body formulated rules and regulations. Christ was recognised as Head and The Leader. The Scriptures of truth were the sole authority for all matters pertaining to assembly functions.

Alas! Satan could not allow such a wonderful expression of Christ's Headship and blessing to continue. Soon sorrow and division wrecked the revival of the truth. Today the movement known as Brethren is broken into many fragments. Some are reasonably strong and active. Some are weak and dying out. What is the path for those who desire to be true to the truth that remains in spite of the sad failure?

First of all, and perhaps the most important, a true and contrite humiliation for all the failure of the past and present. Personal and collective failure must be recognised and confessed in truth. God appreciates wholesome confession and readily responds to it in blessing. Independency, individual and collective, replaced by corporate activities. Walking shoulder to shoulder with one objective Christ's honour and glory. Where this is done there will be blessing in the companies and more zeal for the unconverted. A home divided against itself cannot stand and a company of believers which is divided in loyalties and activities cannot make progress. The truth of the body teaches that all believers need each other. Where the truth of the body regulates the believers there will be increase. The Scriptures say this (Ephesians 4:7-16). This section of God's Word teaches the supremacy and glory of Christ, the Head. His wisdom in giving gifts to whom He will, the spiritual growth of believers which enables them to detect and refuse error and the whole body working together to the mutual benefit of all the members and to its increase. The Lord is coming soon. That is a fact that many believers now recognise. May God in His great mercy enable those who are exercised about moral and spiritual conditions to devote themselves to prayer, exercise and obedience. The truth remains. It cannot be destroyed. The Spirit remains. He will be here until the end of the dispensation. These are our great and unfailing resources in the last days. May there be a revival of interest and devotion that will remain until the coming of the Lord.

F. Wallace The Suffering Servant In Isaiah 49:1-26 we read of God's servant Israel; but as we find references to this same Servant in Isaiah 42:1-25 and Isaiah 52:1-15 applied in the New Testament to our blessed Lord, there seems to be no reason why this chapter should not also be applied to Him. It is true that others, such as John the Baptist and Paul, were called from before their birth for a special task, yet one feels that this applied in a unique way to the Lord Jesus. In verse 2 we read: "He hath made My mouth like a sharp sword." In the description of the glorious Overcomer in Revelation 19:1-21 we read that "out of His mouth goeth a sharp sword", and we know how He could silence His enemies with a word: "But I say unto you ..."

Israel as a nation failed to be the witness that God had intended them to be, but this blessed One fulfilled the third verse of our chapter: "Thou art My servant ... in whom I will be glorified." The next verse, however, sees a remarkable contrast: "I have laboured in vain, I have spent My strength for nought, and in vain." This could well describe that terrible scene "when God's plans seemed all confounded in Thee on the tree seen dead" (hymn 478 in "Spiritual Songs"). Even the disciples, who had said: "Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life," forsook Him and fled, as He had foretold. Even Peter, the boldest of all, denied Him three times. It is good to read the rest of our verse: "Yet surely My judgement is with the Lord, and My work with My God." It could not be otherwise. He had come to glorify the Father, knowing from the beginning the awful price that would have to be paid. In the hours of darkness He could say: "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" but His last words were: "Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit." The work of redemption was completed, and, as a result, He "was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father". When the Lord was presented in the temple as a child, Simeon could say: "Mine eyes have seen Thy salvation." While He was there as the witness to God's earthly people, as He reminded His disciples more than once, yet Simeon could recognise Him as "a light to lighten the Gentiles". That is what we find in our chapter. In verse 5 the Lord says: "Though Israel be not gathered, yet shall I be glorious in the eyes of the Lord, and My God shall be My strength." This is answered in the next verse: "It is a light thing that Thou shouldest be My servant to raise up

the tribes of Jacob ... I will also give Thee for a light to the Gentiles, that Thou mayest be My salvation unto the end of the earth."

It is remarkable that God reveals Himself now as the Redeemer of Israel. He was this at the very beginning of their national history, but now it must have seemed to the godly ones left in Jerusalem that He had ceased to be a redeeming God. Here, too, He couples Himself with His Holy One, which could be no other than our blessed Lord, which is confirmed by the next description of Him: "Him whom man despiseth, ... whom the nation abhorreth" (verse 7). This anticipates the well-known words in chapter 53: "He is despised and rejected of men." Such was men's reception of God's well-beloved, but as the chapter proceeds, we see that there is to be a glorious climax as a result of His redemptive work. In verse 12 we read of people coming from far, even from the land of Sinim (China). No doubt the ultimate fulfilment of this will be when "all Israel shall be saved", but we already see something of the fruit of the travail of His soul in all that hear the good news, and turn to the Saviour in this day of grace. No doubt the words used in verses 20 and 21 will have their fulfilment when Israel is back in the land, but surely we can recognise the contrast between the loneliness of the Lord when deserted by all His followers, and the coming day of glory, when He will say: "Who hath begotten Me these? ... Behold, I was left alone; these, where had they been?" As we read at the end of Isaiah 53:1-12 : "He shall see of the travail of His soul, and shall be satisfied." An earlier chapter is quoted in Hebrews 2:13 : "Behold I and the children which God hath given Me." As we are reminded in Hebrews 12:1-29 : "For the joy that was set before Him" He "endured the cross, despising the shame." As Henri Rossier expressed it:

"Thou wilt behold the object of Thy choice, Thy spotless bride for whom Thou, Lord, hast died; And in the travail of Thy soul rejoice, Thy perfect love for ever satisfied."

R.E.A.R.

Studies in Luke's Gospel The Path of the Disciple and the Transfiguration of Christ (A Bible reading at the Findochty conference in September 1991)

Luke 9:21-36 This afternoon our subject is mainly concerned with the event in the Lord's life which in Matthew and Mark's Gospels is referred to as the transfiguration. It is only recorded in what we call the synoptic Gospels, Matthew, Mark and Luke. Having said that, I am anticipating someone saying something about a verse in John's Gospel chapter one. In our reading we have started, not with the transfiguration, but with the passage leading up to it. It is striking that in each of the three places where this event is brought before us it is preceded by a call to discipleship. One would come to the conclusion that there is a definite link between the two incidents. His followers were called to a pathway of discipleship and one feels that the mount of transfiguration was brought before them to encourage their hearts in that pathway. That would indicate that the path of discipleship is very closely connected with the kingdom. The mount of transfiguration is a preview of the kingdom manifested in glory and discipleship here determines ones position in the kingdom then. This would be one of the great levers for our taking up discipleship now, in view of whats to come. In comparing the accounts one notices that Luke puts in a word that Matthew and Mark do not. He says, "If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me". Discipleship is a daily thing. Luke impresses this upon us. This teaching occurs at least six times in the Gospels, so it must have great significance.* {*Matt. 10:38; Matt. 16:24; Mark 8:34; Mark 10:21; Luke 9:23; Luke 14:27.}

It is well worth stressing because there are those today who speak about loving oneself as if it were a right thing, whereas in second Timothy it is noted as a feature that marks corrupt Christian profession in the last days "Men shall be lovers of their own selves" (2 Timothy 3:2). The path of discipleship has been marked out by the Lord. His path to glory was a pathway of suffering. It is noticeable that the first thing that is said here about the disciple is "if any man will come after Me". We would all be very happy to be identified with the Lord in the coming day of glory and display but plainly these verses say it is our responsibility to be identified with Him in the day of His rejection and this will involve suffering and sacrifice.

Yes. The Lord seems to base this call to discipleship and the suffering connected with it on the fact that He Himself as the Son of man was going to suffer and be killed and raised again the third day. He was going to have a pathway of rejection so the disciple will have a pathway of rejection too. The disciple takes up his cross. This speaks of rejection with Christ. He takes it up daily and follows the Lord. Is that the reason why He commands them in verse 21 to tell no man that He was "The Christ of God", the Messiah connected with Israel? He speaks of Himself instead as the Son of man.

It was obvious that He was going to be refused as the Messiah and hence He takes up this wider glory, but it meant going into death.

We shouldn’t mistake the cross for a thorn in the flesh.

No. People sometimes say if they’ve got some kind of illness, "that’s my cross to bear". People sometimes use that expression but that is not what we have here. This is following the rejected Christ, a Christ that died here and we follow Him by taking up the cross.

It is "taking up" his cross. It shows that it is a voluntary act which is done every day. We can lay it down or we can take it up. Is this the acceptance of the reproach and the stigma that is connected with the cross?

I’m sure it is. It is a pathway of following Him daily. Is it an individual thing?

It is. It says, "if any man". In those days if anyone was seen carrying a cross it meant that he was going into death. I notice that He doesn’t say take up My cross.

No, but one has thought that His cross becomes ours as we walk in the pathway following Him. We take up the same course and we meet with rejection as He met with rejection.

I think the statement in Peter comes very near to it. "Forasmuch then as Christ hath suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves likewise with the same mind" (1 Peter 4:1). That of course is not the atoning sufferings.

You are not saying that if you don’t do this you cannot be saved?

Oh no. This is discipleship. This is the course of the believer after conversion. If we have trusted the Lord Jesus Christ as our Saviour then what are we doing with our lives? How are we using our time? Are we spending it on self? Has self become the object of our lives? Is it me first? Paul wasn’t like that, he was Christ first. "For to me to live is Christ." Put into practise by brothers and sisters, old and young alike, this would fill the meetings with freshness and vitality. In Romans Paul

says, "If so be that we suffer with Him, that we may be also glorified together" (Romans 8:17). This is always the order. If we suffer we shall reign, and that is the line we are noticing here. There is the call to discipleship and then the transfiguration scene. Is this one act or is one consequent upon the other, denying oneself and taking up the cross?

It is one act, one commitment. I know that the word commitment isn't in the Bible but it is a good word. I think this would all be included when we make a definite commitment to the Lord. Have we made a definite commitment to the Lord, have we all done it?

We are to render to God the things that are God's. In Romans 12:1-21 Paul beseeches that we present our bodies a living sacrifice. Is the reward for this only in the millenial kingdom or do we get a present reward? Is it part of the life we enjoy now or do we have to wait until the Lord comes? In the main it is in the future, though of course there is a present happiness and joy in taking up the cross and following Him.

There is a promise to the overcomer in Thyatira that seems to answer the question. The Lord says ... "he that overcometh ... to him will I give power over the nations: And he shall rule them with a rod of iron" and shortly afterwards He says, "And I will give him the morning star. " Clearly ruling the nations with a rod of iron is being associated with Christ in the day when His glory shall be universally displayed, but in referring to the morning star the Lord is saying you will have in your heart now the bliss that will fill the world to come when I have My rightful place.

We need to examine ourselves in the light of what we are saying. The disciples were speaking in terms of what they had left behind physically, but we have to leave self behind and live in the light of another day. Self has no part in this. This isn't an easy pathway. It is a pathway of reproach, of suffering and of shame and self-denial, but Christ really captures the affections and through Him we are sustained. On that particular line, it is possible to deny oneself and yet not take up one's cross. There is many a Christian who has denied himself, who has spent his life in the service of others, but does not know the reproach of Christ. The two must go together. In verse 26 he writes about the day when the Lord shall come. This is the day of His appearing, when He shall come "in His own glory, and in His Father's, and of the holy angels". This seems to be connected with our pathway here. "Whosoever shall be ashamed of Me and of My words, of him shall the Son of man be ashamed, when He shall come." Here we have the day when there will be rewards and the kingdom. When faithfulness to Him will be rewarded. I notice that in both Matthew and Mark He speaks about His coming in His Father's glory and with the angels, but only Luke says "in His own glory". It is only Luke that says in regard to the transfiguration that "they saw His glory". What is preeminent in this account of the transfiguration is His glory. That would give the opportunity to say something about the verse referred to in John's Gospel chapter 1. "And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth" (John 1:14). In the middle of the verse there is a parenthesis and in the parenthesis it says "and we have contemplated His glory, a glory as of an only-begotten with a Father". We have no details of the transfiguration in John as we have in the other Gospels, but there is just a suggestion here, "we have contemplated His glory".

It may be included in it. It seems to me that the glory that shone from the mount of transfiguration was of an official character, regal glory. John seems to take a wider view of all that he saw. He wrote many years afterwards, when he looked back and he says, "we have contemplated His glory, a glory as of an only-begotten with a Father". That seems to sum up all that he saw in that

blessed life lived down here for the pleasure of God. I would be quite happy to say that perhaps the transfiguration is included in it, though John is mainly concerned with the personal glory of Christ whereas the mount of transfiguration is chiefly His official glory.

One suggestion for the non-inclusion of the event in John is that no exaltation is possible or conceivable for Him who ever dwells in the bosom of the Father.

There is a link in that the King is the Son and that is the thing that is stated in the parenthetical reference in John 1:1-51. Peter emphasises it when he says we "were eyewitnesses of His majesty". What shone was regal glory but when the testimony came from heaven, the testimony was "This is My beloved Son."

Don't you think that when you get some office filled by the Lord Jesus the Spirit of God is very careful to tell us who it is that holds the office? As in the epistle to the Hebrews. It is the person who is the Son of God who fills out every official position. Would that reference in John be about His moral glory?

I don't think so. His moral glory is that which came out in His life. When I think about moral glory I think of His righteousness, and His grace, and His love, and a blending together of all that ought to have marked man. It all came out in Him. When John says, "we have contemplated His glory, a glory as of an only-begotten", a unique Son, "with a Father", that is personal glory.

Why does Luke speak about the kingdom of God? In Matthews Gospel it's "the Son of man coming in His kingdom". In Mark it's the kingdom of God come with power. In Luke it just says the kingdom of God (5: 27). There may be points connected with the present character of the kingdom though Peter says that the transfiguration looks on to the coming kingdom of the Lord Jesus (2 Peter 1:1-21). That would be the way they would see the kingdom of God before they tasted death. They saw it in a miniature form. They saw a little picture of what is going to be in the day of the kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ. This was to be an encouragement to His disciples at that moment when He was going to the cross. He was going to leave them and they were shown this picture of the coming kingdom to encourage their hearts in the path of Christ's rejection. Is this the same as when the dying thief said "Remember me when Thou comest into Thy kingdom?" (Luke 23:42).

There is a connection. Because of the use of the preposition the words "into Thy kingdom" could be translated "in kingly glory" and that is obviously what we are reading here. You could speak of it as the kingdom in miniature because they saw the regal glory of the king shining.

I note that after the call to discipleship, Matthew and Mark say "after six days Jesus taketh Peter, James and John" but Luke says "about an eight days after". Why is there this difference?

One would say that, as being found in Luke's Gospel, there is a moral reason. There may be two part days included at the beginning and end of the period to make up the eight, but I think there may be significance in the eighth day inasmuch as it marks a new beginning.

There is no real numerical discrepancy anyway because the modern equivalent of saying "about an eight days" is to say about a week. The actual number of days must have been six but that's about a week. I agree that the moral reason is the one you have given. There is an indication that God is about to bring in something new and that gives added pertinence to the rest of the text.

Eight is the number of resurrection. Matthew and Mark bring out the millenial glory of the Lord Jesus on earth whereas in Luke the emphasis is more on His heavenly glory which we shall see, and even now, following on from His resurrection, He is in it.

Yes. In Luke's Gospel the account is a little different. We have the expression "they feared as they entered into the cloud", which is a very significant expression and seems to belong in many ways to the present day in which we live. In Matthew it is "the Son of man coming in His kingdom", and when they saw Him it says that "His face did shine as the sun." It also speaks of His garments being "white as the light". In Mark it says that His garments were so white "as no fuller on earth can white them". Today our wives have all kinds of ways to get the clothes as white as they possibly can but there isn't any fuller on earth, no cleansing agent anywhere, to make them as white as His garments. Wonderful isn't it. That is found in the Gospel that tells us about the perfect Servant. In that day there will be an answer to that perfect life. Here in Luke we are told His raiment was "white and glistering". Darby uses the word effulgent. The word has to do with a flash of lightning and the revised version translates it "dazzling".

Outshining is the idea.

Yes, it is a dazzling light. That is what we have in Luke. The sun in Matthew's Gospel is connected with kingly glory and majesty. The Son of man coming in His kingdom looks forward to the day of His kingdom in power and glory. "The Son of man, o'er all supreme" as we sometimes sing. This glory emanated from Himself.

What was within began to shine out. At a reading some two years ago a brother asked what the difference was between the word for change in Php 3:21 "Who shall change our vile body" and the word for change or transfigure which is used in Matthew 17:1-27 and Mark 9:1-50. The answer given was worth its weight in gold. It was stated that the word used in Philippians indicates the influence of an outside agent. Something being done from outside, just as a person who is highly skilled with a lathe can produce a beautiful piece of work. The brother went on to say that the change which is spoken about in Matthew 17:1-27 and hence here is not something that is done from the outside but rather the shining out of what is inside. It is like the beauty of a flower, no hand touches it from the outside but what unfolds from the inside is beautiful to behold. That is the transfiguration. It was inherent glory which began to manifest itself.

David spoke about it before he died. Malachi spoke about it before the Old Testament closes. "And He shall be as the light of the morning, when the sun riseth, even a morning without clouds" (2 Samuel 23:4). "The Sun of righteousness (shall) arise with healing in His wings" (Malachi 4:2). He will fill the universe with glory, shining to the corners of the earth.

One can't help but connect that with Matthew's point of view where you have His face shining like the sun. Again in this passage, the Lord is praying and His dependence comes out. Isn't that a wonderful blending of glories. Here He is on the mount of transfiguration and if we do think of the kingdom of God as having a present bearing here, how happy it is that as He was praying the fashion of His countenance was altered. That has been put forward as a proof that what is here is the present character of the kingdom of God but one only goes along so far with that suggestion. Actually the word transfiguration doesn't occur here in Luke's account. It does occur in Matthew and Mark. What it does say here is that "the fashion of His countenance was altered". That means

that the emphasis is on what shone out, upon what was outward. I quite agree with what has been said about what was inward, inherent, but the word transfiguration is not used here and the emphasis seems to be on what is outward. His glory is emphasised here, and it was that which was outwardly seen and manifested to them. The fashion of His countenance was altered.

There are a great many Scriptures which make it apparent that as the Lord passed through a sad and sullied world it left its impact on Him. He was a Man of sorrows and Isaiah says very plainly "His visage was so marred more than any man." But there came a time when not what was outward but what was inward had its effect upon His face. Whilst it was glory that shone, it was a result of what was inward, and that was absolute perfection. With us circumstances and crises often expose us, but with the Lord, every crisis brought out the absolute perfection that was in Him.

Before we talk about Moses and Elias can we consider briefly the passage referred to in the first chapter of 2 Peter. Peter says when he writes about the transfiguration, we "were eyewitnesses of His majesty. For He received from God the Father honour and glory, when there came such a voice to Him" and then he says, "We have also a more sure Word of prophecy." How gracious the Lord is to supplement what we know of the Old Testament Scriptures by what we see on the holy mount. Those to whom Peter was writing had all the Old Testament Scriptures about the coming kingdom of the Lord Jesus. But he says we have the prophetic Word made surer by what we've seen on the holy mount. For what they saw, as we've been saying, was a little picture of the coming kingdom of the Lord Jesus.

Doesn't he couple the "Word of prophecy" with "a light that shineth in a dark place"?

Yes, that's what prophecy is, and we are to take heed to it. There are some who would tell us that we don't need to bother about the prophetic Word, but to study the prophetic Word is a worthwhile occupation. It is a light to us in a murky place.

It didn't come by the will of man, but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.

Yes. We have emphasised there the truth of inspiration. It may be that the day dawn refers to the coming kingdom, while the morning star arising is the heavenly hope which burns in our hearts now while we wait for the coming of the Lord. That's really all I wanted to say about 2 Peter 1:1-21.

Peter, James and John seem here to represent the earthly company, while Moses and Elias are representative of those who have been raptured to glory.

Yes, and Moses and Elias were talking with Him. Matthew and Mark tell us this but only Luke tells us what they were talking about. They were talking about His decease, His leaving the world at Jerusalem, a reference of course to His cross.

Like several other things in Luke, the decease is spoken of not as an accident or an incident, but as an accomplishment. And the coming kingdom rests on the immutable foundation of the death of Christ. The word exodus (decease) indicates His going out and although He went out by way of the cross, He was carried up into heaven and I think that would be included here.

Yes, in fact both Moses and Elijah had outstanding exits from the world. Moses died and we have the remarkable statement that God buried him (Deuteronomy 34:5-6). Elijah was raptured up (2 Kings 2:11). Yet they were speaking of His exodus. They were recognisable and able to talk to one another. They knew more than the disciples knew too. What the Lord had told the disciples about His death didn't sink down into their hearts until after His resurrection, but these two men who lived hundreds of years before them knew that He was about to give His life at the cross. If they were talking with the Lord about His decease, they knew about it from their own writings. As has been said already Moses died and was buried. Elijah was raptured up. He was caught up to heaven without seeing death at all, and it is because of this that one has thought that Moses and Elijah here prefigure the heavenly company in the kingdom. We know from the fourth chapter of 1 Thessalonians that at the coming of the Lord for His saints the dead in Christ shall rise first then we which are alive and remain, shall be caught up together with them. Moses is a picture of one who has fallen asleep and Elijah one who was still alive.

How did Peter, James and John know who they were?

I once heard someone say that we'll know each other up there as we've known each other in Christ down here. If that is right, it certainly means that we ought to do all we can to strengthen our spiritual links with one another down here. Of course the disciples hadn't met Moses and Elijah but through the Scriptures they had gained some acquaintance with them and hence recognised them on the mount. Do we learn from this portion that as Moses and Elias were talking about our Lord's decease, so this will be the theme in heaven. As Mr. Darby's hymn puts it "With Thee in garments white, Lord Jesus, we shall walk; And spotless in that heavenly light, Of all Thy suffering's talk."

I'm sure that Mr. Darby had this passage in mind when he wrote those words. This is an example of what will happen to all of us. One day we shall open our eyes and we shall see His glory.

Before we close we should say a little about the words of the Father. Peter says that "there came such a voice to Him from the excellent glory". That would be the glory which had filled the tabernacle and the temple. The voice came from the excellent glory, but we have the words as well "This is My beloved Son: hear Him". It has been said that these words were for Peter. Peter had put these three all on the same level, Moses, Elijah and the Lord. But the Lord must have the preeminence. He is the One to whom Moses and Elijah always looked and wrote about. When he recounts it in his second epistle the whole incident seems to have grown in his appreciation. He speaks about the holy mount, such a voice, the excellent glory. But what about ourselves? When we listen to ministry does it enlarge our souls? Peter never forgot this. It affected him deeply and he recounted it for the sake of the saints.

We need also to have an appreciation of what the Father thought. We have here the Father's voice. He could not hold back from declaring His delight in this Person.

Yes, and don't you think that we need to have an appreciation of that as well? Whoever it was who entered into the cloud, they suggest those who are taken in to enjoy and to know something of the Father's thoughts of the Son. It seems to me that while we have regal glory in the transfiguration we are taken in to the inside place. We hear the voice from out of the cloud and we learn something of the Father's delight in the Son. A Few Simple Thoughts on the Prophetic Word

Introduction

"Blessed [is] he that reads, and they that hear the words of the prophecy, and keep the things written in it; for the time [is] near" (Revelation 1:3). This verse is an encouragement as well as an incentive for every Christian. Dear reader, what about your interest in the prophetic Word? Or are you just curious to know what will happen tomorrow? There are three messages in this verse.

1. For the one who reads. If I have an interest in the prophetic Word, I should read the whole Bible, in order to take in God's thoughts gradually and systematically. Many people today want instant answers to their questions, without realising that God's Word is higher than man's thoughts.

2. For the one who hears. This verse does not mean that you have to know and understand all the prophecies of the Bible before you can be blessed. To hear the words of prophecy means to take in by faith that which God presents to us through His Word. It is His plan to glorify His Son in the same world where He has been rejected and crucified. Is it not a blessing to be occupied with the coming public glories of our Saviour?

3. For the one who keeps. In other words, the one who gives heed to the things written. This implies for example the respecting of God's authority and sovereignty. To the world system we are living in this is an unbearable thought and it is therefore even more challenging for Christians to honour God. Do we also realise His goodness towards all men, despite all the things happening? Do we understand that God is faithful to His promises, towards us but also, in relation to the prophetic Word, towards Abraham and his descendants, the Jews, the nation of Israel? Do we respect God's holiness and righteousness in our daily lives? Then we will be able to grasp the moral principles of the prophetic Word and thus be blessed!

Prophecy is for bondmen of God

"Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave to Him, to shew to his bondmen what must shortly take place; and he signified [it], sending by His angel, to His bondman John" (Revelation 1:1). This verse is a healthy and sobering introduction to the Word of prophecy. It addresses bondmen of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ. This passage of Scripture confronts us with this question: am I a bondman, a slave of God? In Romans 6:1-23 we are instructed how every Christian has become a bondman of God, having been delivered from the slavery of sin. But do I practically realise the Redeemer's claims? This book, and even this one verse, puts things in the proper perspective. Only when I am practically His slave/bondman, will I be able to grasp the meaning of this book and of the prophetic Word in general. We should therefore ask ourselves the following questions. Do I accept His rights as Creator. In this book of Revelation and in the prophetic Word in general, we find how these rights are maintained through the period of judgments. Do I accept His rights as Upholder and Sustainer of the universe and thus also of the minutest details of my life? Do I accept His rights in my individual life as the Ruler of the history of the nations, as we see Him to be in this book. If I do I will have no difficulty in honouring His claims as Saviour (1 Corinthians 6:20) and Judge (Acts 17:31). Are you His bondman, am I?

"Poor and feeble though we be, Saviour, we belong to Thee;

Thine we are, Thou Son of God, Thine, the purchase of Thy blood."

Anna Dober tr. J. Wesley Prophecy's purpose

"For we have not made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, following cleverly imagined fables, but having been eyewitnesses of His majesty. And we have the prophetic Word [made] surer, to which ye do well taking heed" (2 Peter 1:16; 2 Peter 1:19).

What is the purpose of prophecy? It has a moral and spiritual goal, which is to introduce Christ, either morally or publicly. Besides these verses in 2 Peter 1:1-21, Revelation 19:10 would be a wonderful passage to meditate upon: "For the spirit of prophecy is the testimony of Jesus." All parts of the prophetic Word in one way or another refer to the person of Christ. Prophecy is not just a manual of events. However, there is a definite plan, of which He is the centre, as we find for example in Ephesians 1:10, with regard to the administration of the fullness of times, when all things will be publicly placed under Christ's headship. What a time that will be! Do you look forward to it? Paul did, and he wanted to share his desire with all believers who would love the Lord's appearing (2 Timothy 4:8).

All these verses, especially 2 Peter 1:1-21, show at the same time important principles for interpretation. The whole prophetic Word is one complete unity and all parts are put together in a well-balanced, harmonious system. This is one of the reasons to study the whole Word of God, in order to gradually grasp the meaning of the individual passages. There is no room for speculation, or for interpretation in self-will. All the passages are grouped together around the Centre, our blessed Lord, who is the lamp of the prophetic Word, as well as the light of the day to come and the morning star. What is He for your heart? The character of prophecy in our days, according to 1 Corinthians 14:1-40 and Romans 12:1-21, only underlines this moral dimension of prophecy as related to world events.

Prophecy's centre

"For prophecy was not ever uttered by [the] will of man, but holy men of God spake under the power of [the] Holy Spirit" (2 Peter 1:21).

What is a prophet? According to the original meaning, somebody who speaks on behalf of someone else. Thus Abraham was a prophet, Genesis 20:7 and Aaron was Moses' prophet, according to Exodus 7:1. The further biblical meaning which is developed gradually, has to do with the introduction of God's Anointed One, when there is a time of decline, in order to bring God's people back to Himself. See for this, Acts 3:20-24; Acts 13:20. What is the perspective of prophecy and where do we find this in Scripture? It is God's Anointed, introduced into this world. Thus Christ is the very Centre of prophecy (as well as of all God's truth). A right understanding of this will lead us to praise and worship, Revelation 4:1-11; Revelation 5:1-14. We find different aspects of the scope and centre of prophecy in historic events, types, feasts, the Psalms, as well as of course, in the books of the prophets, written by those holy men of God.

Prophecy has to do with this earth in God's counsel from the foundation of the world and with Israel, which is the centre of God's ways with the earth and with the nations (Deuteronomy 32:8). The calling and rapture of the church is in itself not part of prophecy: the last trumpet of 1 Corinthians 15:52 has nothing to do with the last trumpet in Revelation 11:1-19. Likewise the Lord's day in Revelation 1:1-20 has not much in common with the prophetic day of Jehovah. Our understanding of prophetic events will be greatly stimulated once we see the difference in position between Israel and the church. The church is rather related to God's eternal purpose. What we

see happening today could be compared with the pieces being put together on the chess board. The "game" itself will be "played" after the rapture (compare Revelation 4:1-11; Revelation 5:1-14; Revelation 6:1-17) and under God’s full control (Daniel 10:1-21, Revelation 13:1-18).

Prophecy and providence

"The kingdom of the world of our Lord and of His Christ is come, and He shall reign to the ages of ages" (Revelation 11:15).

Compare this verse with Psalms 2:1-12, where we learn how God is in charge of the events in heaven and on earth. Although God seems to be silent and even entirely absent, all details are in His hand, as another passage graphically suggests, Isaiah 18:1-7. Thus, in His providence, God has used World War I in order to give the land (in part) back to Israel. World War 2 caused many Jews to return to their country. The events in our days may ultimately lead to the reconstruction of the temple.

Along these lines many preparations may take place, while the true church is still on earth. The professing and later apostate church will continue on the earth after the rapture and till the days of judgment. However, the definite fulfillment of prophecy will take place after the rapture of the saints. That does not mean that there will be no believers left on earth. God will form different companies of believers (one discerns seven groups in Revelation), whereas in the day of grace in which we live all believers form one Body in Christ.

Some key passages for the study of prophecy A key passage for the study of prophecy is Daniel 2:1-49, which teaches us that historic events cast their shadows long. This chapter speaks of the ultimate and definite change of world order, when the Stone will destroy man’s kingdoms, in order to introduce a reign according to God’s thoughts, through the

Man of His choice. See also Psalms 80:1-19; Revelation 17:1-18; Revelation 18:1-24; Revelation 19:1-21; Daniel 7:1-28; Daniel 9:24-27; Daniel 11:36-45; 2 Thessalonians 2:1-17; Revelation 13:1-18; Revelation 14:1-20; Revelation 19:1-21; Revelation 20:1-15. The book of Revelation gives the framework in which all the Old Testament prophecies fit beautifully together.

A. E. Bouter. From Our Archive "The Morning Star"

Christ Our Hope (Continued from page 146) The assembling of so large a multitude on the occasion of the miraculous effects accompanying the descent of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost made it necessary that Peter should show the Jews that their own Scriptures were accomplished by what had taken place. For the Lord’s death, resurrection and ascension to the Father’s right hand had all been set forth in so many words a thousand years previously.* Peter’s preaching was in the power of the Holy Spirit which he had received, an evident token of God’s gracious purpose to lead His rebellious people to repentance, so that they might learn the fullness of His grace in the forgiveness of their sins. Let us, however, not lose sight of the fact that the forgiveness they needed was the Father’s answer to the prayer of His blessed Son at the moment when He was nailed to the cross (Luke 23:34).

{*The Scriptures quoted by Peter from Ps. 16 and 110 furnished the needed proof His sermon was an example of what is stated in Ps. 68:18; compare Eph. 4:7-11.} Their reception of the gospel message was followed by baptism. It was only right that they should thus testify to a complete and

definite change of position, involving their giving up Jewish privileges and boasts in order to own the lordship of the Messiah they had confessed. God had made Him "both Lord and Christ", and they must needs confess it by being baptised unto His death. The repentance of the Jews, thus marked, made a distinct change between them and the leaders of their nation who, persisting in their unbelief, soon began to persecute the followers of Jesus of Nazareth (Acts 4:1-22; Acts 5:17-18; Acts 5:28; Acts 5:40). The Lord's words in John 15:17-21, both as to the hatred shown towards His disciples, and the persecution of which they were to be the objects, were very soon fulfilled. Those that believed were "added to the church"; those that refused the proffered forgiveness maintained their place and position in the world which hated the Father and the Son (see also Romans 8:7). The importance of such an inevitable separation of the church from the world is too great to be overlooked, all the more so because of the increasing tendency in the present day to obliterate this distinction. The climax of the foretold "strong delusion" will be reached when Christianity is reduced to an outward improvement of the world with a view to finally getting rid of the name of Christ altogether and substituting for Him a political and a religious leader, all whose power, in both cases, will be derived directly from Satan himself (2 Thessalonians 2:9; Revelation 13:4-12). And consequently, wherever God works in His longsuffering grace, a persecution of all who are faithful to Him must necessarily follow. It has often been so in the history of the church, though with less pretension to universal success than at present. But the enemy outwits himself and the supposed emancipation of mankind so much in vogue will end in a slavery far worse than any which they think they have a right to complain of When the church is gone persecution will burst out in a fresh direction namely, against the Jews who will then once again be God's messengers to a Christless and Christ-hating world. But let us pursue the history. After the descent of the Holy Spirit God's work prospered in Jerusalem for a time. The numerous converts to Christianity felt the necessity of being together and of having "all things common". The outward unity of the church was thus borne witness to, but they had much to learn as to the faith they professed. That was the case even with Peter himself and with the others who were all slow to understand and carry out their commission to go to "Samaria and unto the uttermost part of the earth" (Acts 1:8). Though seven deacons were chosen to look after the temporal administration and care of so large a multitude of believers, in order that the apostles might be free for the ministry of the Word, God made use of two of these very deacons to carry out the ministry first confided to the apostles. One of them, Stephen, gave the last and crushing denunciation of Jewish apostasy; the other, Philip, was the first to visit Samaria with the gospel. Later on Peter, much against his Jewish thoughts, received a special call to carry the gospel to Gentiles at Caesarea, after which he was severely taken to task for it by the leading converts at Jerusalem (Acts 10:9-21; Acts 11:2-3; Acts 11:18). The true character of Christianity was only apprehended by degrees. Peter, led of the Holy Spirit, had spoken of "the Father" on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2:33), but present relationship with Him, according to the Lord's first message after His resurrection, "My Father, and your Father", was not entered into (John 20:17). Nor does it appear in their prayers, recorded in the early chapters of the Acts. They address God as "Jehovah", which is represented by the Greek word "Lord", and once (Acts 4:24) as Master or "Sovereign Ruler" (as in Jude 1:4), and they speak of the Saviour as God's holy "child" or "servant".* They had not yet realised what the apostle John afterwards described as the Father's "manner of love" (1 John 3:12). Jewish aspirations and Jewish hopes filled all hearts, engrafted on a sense of forgiveness by the accomplished sacrifice of Christ, such as had never been known

under John the Baptist's preaching, or since. Peter's stirring call to repentance in Acts 3:1-26 was based, as already remarked, upon the realisation in the near future of national hopes inspired by the prophets of Israel when they foretold the earthly blessings to be inaugurated on Christ's return.

{*"Son" in Acts 3:13, 26, should be "child" or "servant", as elsewhere, and Acts 8:37 is known to be an interpolation.} A further testimony was needed of a wholly new character in order that these hopes might become heavenly in accordance with Christ's present seat at God's right hand in glory whither He had gone to prepare a place for those whom the Father had given to Him (John 14:2). This special testimony God, in His sovereign mercy, was now about to bestow. And that it might be effective in every way three conditions were satisfied: the witness had to be a pharisee of pharisees thoroughly versed in Jewish modes of thought and withal a man of spotless life (Acts 26:5; Php 3:5-6); secondly, the most desperate persecutor of those who followed what they esteemed to be a delusive novelty (Galatians 1:13-14); thirdly, he was to be admitted to see the personal glory of the Lord (1 Corinthians 9:1; 1 Corinthians 15:8). By such means God not only operated his conversion, but also gave to his ministry the needed power. This witness was Saul of Tarsus, afterwards known as the apostle Paul. He had never seen Jesus on earth and consequently his start on the Christian career bore the stamp of what he saw and heard when, as persecutor, he "drew near to Damascus" (Acts 9:36). The person of Christ in the glory was everything to him, accompanied by the deepest self-judgment (1 Corinthians 15:9-10); and he was the first to preach Jesus in the synagogues that "He is the SON OF GOD" (Acts 9:20). To Paul were confided truths of a peculiarly Christian character and of which we find little or no mention in other writers of the New Testament but which have their source and living expression in a glorified Christ and this explains the fact of the glory being such a remarkable feature in the epistles he wrote, as for instance in Romans 5:2; Colossians 1:27; Hebrews 2:10; 1 Thessalonians 2:12, &c. The first particular communication was made to him at the time he wrote the first Epistle to the Thessalonians, explaining how it was that the Lord will bring His glorified saints with Him when He returns to this earth. The fact is stated in Zechariah 14:5 and Jude refers to it as Enoch's prophecy (though in this case "saints" might refer to angels). But no explanation had as yet been given as to a previous removal from this earth of both sleeping and living believers. The next became the subject of the Epistle to the Romans which unfolds "the righteousness of God" in forgiving sins on the ground of Christ's sacrifice and the character of the glory which is to be revealed in those who are made the "sons of God", so that Christ may be "the firstborn among many brethren", all of them being "conformed to the image of HIS SON" (Romans 8:19; Romans 8:29-30; Galatians 3:26).

Another truth was the freshly established ordinance of the Lord for His church on earth, to show His death "till He come" and that is intimately connected with the glory as we find in both Epistles to the Corinthians (1 Corinthians 10:17; 1 Corinthians 11:23-26; 1 Corinthians 15:20; 1 Corinthians 15:23; 1 Corinthians 15:49-57; 2 Corinthians 4:17-18; 2 Corinthians 5:19).

Lastly, the full revelation of the "mystery" of the body of Christ (unfolded in the Epistle to the Ephesians and referred to at the end of the Epistle to the Romans and in that to the Colossians) was confided to Paul alone and gave colour to the gospel he preached (Acts 20:27; Colossians 1:25-26). A very little reflection suffices to convince the attentive reader that all these truths, peculiar to Paul's writings, depend upon what Christ is in His own Person, now seated "on the right hand of the Majesty on high", after having by Himself purged our sins when He suffered on the

cross (Hebrews 1:3). And how infinitely precious it is for us to know that Christ must needs, in the first instance, satisfy His own heart, not by a public display of His power in this world, but rather in presenting to Himself His bride-elect, the Church which He has purchased with His own blood (Acts 20:28; Ephesians 5:25-27). The more we meditate upon these special revelations made to the apostle the more our hearts are drawn out to the blessed Person of the SON OF GOD, which Paul was the first to preach. He began at once in the synagogue at Damascus. The persecutions he had been a chief means of carrying out necessarily recoiled upon himself when he preached the faith he had previously sought to destroy (Galatians 1:23). But had he not heard from heaven the underlying truth of all his future ministry when Jesus, whom he persecuted, intimated the marvelous identification of His saints with Himself in the glory, in those words of pity and love, "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou ME?" (Acts 9:4).

Paul's ministry has a character of its own. It is distinctly "heavenly" and is largely illustrated by his life which forms the subject of more than half of "The Acts". Luke, who was the author of the book, became Paul's companion when he left Troas to go into Macedonia, and thus take the gospel for the first time into Europe. We may well say that his peculiar testimony had its source in heaven, from whence the Lord revealed Himself to him, when he was intent on persecuting the saints in foreign parts and was approaching the city of Damascus furnished with authority from the chief priests at Jerusalem to deliver the saints to prison or to death (Acts 26:10-12). The Lord arrested him with the words, "Saul, Saul, why persecutest though ME?" Did not these words contain the essence of the "mystery" afterwards more definitely revealed to him the mystical union of Christ and the church, "which is His Body" (Ephesians 1:20-23)?

Furthermore, Paul received for his own soul a wonderful accession of power, granted to no one else, when he was "caught up into paradise", whither the Lord took the repentant thief crucified at His side (2 Corinthians 12:1-10). On that occasion the Lord gave His servant a "thorn in the flesh" to keep him humble, and to maintain in him a deepened sense of his own weakness — the proper condition for not merely knowing but feeling that all true power is from the Lord alone. There was real danger lest, through the abundance of the revelations, he should "be exalted above measure". Dependence upon the Lord is constantly needed for all true ministry and particularly for such as Paul's.

Besides that, the Lord's word to Ananias had to be fulfilled in regard to the apostle: "I will show him how great things he must suffer for My name's sake" (Acts 9:16). Without the suffering here there can be little spiritual power for entering into the glory set before us; it would be shorn of its true incentive and energy in the soul through not being linked, as it should be, with the blessed Lord's pathway and life on earth. Consequently the apostle's evangelistic service was a continuous series of bitter persecutions, especially from the Jews. On his many journeys he had to brave every kind of danger on land and sea and was often in peril of his life, to say nothing of bonds and imprisonment (2 Corinthians 11:23-27). No other witness of the truth was called to suffer in the same degree and thus "fill up", or complete what might be lacking in those outward afflictions which served to show how the church's course on earth is practically identified with Christ's (Colossians 1:24). Every Christian has in some way thus to learn by experience how hostile is the world which nailed Christ to the cross. "Unto you it is given," says the apostle, "in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on Him, but also to suffer for His sake; having the same conflict which ye saw in me, and now hear to be in me" (Php 1:29-30). The Lord Himself, after His resurrection,

showed to the two disciples on the road to Emmaus how intimately connected are "the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow" (1 Peter 1:11). Such indeed is one of the chief burdens of the Old Testament Scriptures (Luke 24:25-27; Luke 24:32; Luke 24:44-47). Is it not precisely on this principle that Christ's present place in glory, after having suffered, indicates the believer's hope? A little serious consideration will surely make this plain and first as to life possessed. The Lord, in answering the cavils of the Jews, shows that every living soul must know the Son of God in one of two ways: either as the life-giving Spirit at the present time (1 Corinthians 15:45), or else as the Son of man to whom all judgment has been committed by the Father (John 5:19-29). Now the believer, through grace, does not look for judgment, Christ having already borne that for him and met every claim against him in righteousness when He bore "our sins in His own body on the tree". The assured portion of every redeemed soul is consequently to be with the Saviour in glory and there to enjoy the rest that remaineth to the people of God (Hebrews 4:9). Those who do not thus know Christ through the gospel have before them all the terrors of awaiting the judgment and fiery indignation which shall devour the adversaries (Hebrews 10:26-31). From that judgment to come there is no escape for one who refuses the gospel of God's grace offered to every one NOW. But judgement is deferred till Christ's return. In other words for a believer the present age is characterised by the Lord's absence from this world as He said to his disciples, "I came forth from the Father, and am come into the world: again, I leave the world, and go to the Father ... And ye now therefore have sorrow: but I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you" (John 16:5-6; John 16:22; John 16:28). The gospel has gone forth and it is still being proclaimed. The gospel net has been cast by the Lord Himself into the sea and the work of the fishermen ever since has been gathering "the good into vessels" (Matthew 13:47-48). Presently the reverse will take place for at the end of this age "the angels shall come forth, and sever the wicked from among the just; and shall cast them into the furnace of fire". The preparatory work of binding the tares "in bundles", is already going on (Matthew 13:30; Matthew 13:49-50). But the saints that form the church have nothing to do with judgment; they await the Lord's return.

God is still speaking in the SON (Hebrews 1:1). Judgment is, however, rendered necessary by the lifting up of the Son of man upon the cross. It was in view of His death that Jesus said, "Now is the judgment of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out" (John 12:31-36). But previously to the judgment, that is before He begins to carry it out, Jesus will come to take all His redeemed to be with Himself for ever in the Father's house (John 14:2-3). For that we are now waiting. Paul bears constant testimony to the same truth (see Romans 8:18-19; Romans 8:29-30; Php 3:20-21). The Thessalonians, who had only heard the gospel on three successive Sabbath days, were converted — turned to God from idols — "to serve the living and true God, and to wait for His Son from heaven" (1 Thessalonians 1:9-10). They were characterised by their work of faith, labour of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ, in the sight of God and our Father. There were no printed Bibles in those days; no part of the New Testament had then been even written. Notwithstanding this does not the energy of their faith put us to shame when we think of the advantages we enjoy? Is the Lord Jesus Christ "our HOPE" (1 Timothy 1:1)? Are we all earnestly looking forward to be with Him? Do our ways and walk prove it to those who know us?

We do well to ask ourselves a further question. Is Christ, in this sense, the "anchor of the soul"? Is it not a fact that the Lord is as it were anticipating the heavenly hope even now, by appearing for

us in the very presence of God? (Hebrews 2:10; Hebrews 2:13; Hebrews 6:19-20; Hebrews 9:24). His prayer to the Father on behalf of His redeemed must have its fulfilment: "Father, I will that they also, whom Thou hast given Me, be with Me where I am ..." (John 17:24). By all these passages is our place shown to be for ever with the Lord. Even a believer who dies in this present time departs to be "with Christ", which is far better even than serving Him on the earth (2 Corinthians 5:6; 2 Corinthians 5:8; Php 1:23). Jesus who is already in the glory is our "forerunner", which He could not be if none were to follow Him there. We should be looking forward at any moment to meet Him in the air (1 Thessalonians 4:17-18). He will never fail us. Does He find us faithful?

Paul's ministry came early to a close in martyrdom. But the Lord took care that it should receive a final and authoritative confirmation from both Peter and John who survived him and who had both seen the blessed Lord on earth and were also present at the transfiguration scene. The importance of what they then saw and heard "in the holy mount" cannot be exaggerated. We have already referred to it on page 142. There were three witnesses whom Jesus expressly called aside and Satan's object was evidently to get rid of them. Herod put James to the sword but when he was, as he thought, keeping Peter safely shut up in prison for the same purpose, the Lord sent His angel by night to open the prison doors (Acts 12:1-11).

Both Peter and John were preserved to the end of apostolic history. Peter's mission was to explain the import of the transfiguration as related by Matthew "the Son of man coming in His kingdom" (Matthew 16:28). In other words, that is from the point of view of God's governmental dealing with His saints at the present time of suffering in view of the Lord's return. This is also pointed out in its moral features in Mark and Luke. John, on the other hand, does not mention the occurrence, but is really occupied with the voice heard "from the excellent glory". For both in his gospel and in his first epistle he unfolds Christianity from the special standpoint of present relationship with the Father as set forth in the Lord's message confided to Mary Magdalene: "My Father, and your Father" (John 20:17). The Gospel of John unfolds this relationship as seen in the person of the SON (John 1:1-51; John 2:1-25; John 3:1-36; John 4:1-54; John 5:1-47; John 6:1-71; John 7:1-53; John 8:1-59; John 9:1-41; John 10:1-42; John 11:1-57; John 12:1-50), and made good in our souls by the power of the Holy Spirit (John 13:1-38; John 14:1-31; John 15:1-27; John 16:1-33; John 17:1-26). The epistle deals with the effects of sonship in believers, both as to their life and hope. Finally, the closing page of the Revelation emphasises the hope by confirming the promise made by "the Son of God" to the overcomer in the address written to the church of Thyatira: "I will give him THE MORNING STAR" (Revelation 2:18; Revelation 2:28).

Peter calls it the "day star", literally a "lightbearer" or "lightbringer", evidently referring to its moral character and intimating that darkness still reigns at the time of its rising. We have only to compare the closing chapter of the Old Testament in order to be penetrated by the complete contrast between the Jewish hope, only to be realised after the church is gone and the Christian's portion in an actually glorified Christ. The "Sun of righteousness" (Malachi 4:2) speaks of outwardly manifested blessing on this earth, the attendant effects being shown in the expression "healing in His wings", whereas the "day star" is evidently a call away from this earth, only seen by those who are watching in the night. The saints should be ever watching. How much the Lord insisted upon it shortly before His death! (Mark 13:34-37). In full accordance with this attitude of watching Peter's desire is that the day star should be as it were already risen in our hearts, with all its sanctifying power and the day time of Christ's glory be dawning there.* In his first epistle this is called "the

revelation of Jesus Christ" fraught with the final grace of completed salvation (1 Peter 1:5; 1 Peter 1:7; 1 Peter 1:13).

{*The passage, 2 Peter 1:19, is somewhat obscure in our Authorised Version on account of the position given to the words "more sure". This is corrected in the Revised Version. The meaning is that the transfiguration confirmed in an extraordinary way, and thus mode more sure the "word of prophecy" with which the Jews were more or less familiar. Once this is understood much light is thrown upon the passage. The Father's voice heard on the mount not only confirms all prophecies relating to the Son but imparts to them a fresh and deeper signification with an accompanying effect on the believer's heart similar to that of putting aside a candle because the day is dawning. Prophecy refers to future blessing on this earth but it also speaks largely of Christ's personal sufferings and coming glory. Its scope is therefore not to be limited to the special circumstances or events which gave rise to it in any particular case. In this sense it is not of any private or restricted interpretation, like a human sentence, for "holy men of God spake under the power of the Holy Spirit".} William Joseph Lowe (1838-1927).

(To be continued, if the Lord will). The Old in the New Explained Deuteronomy 8:3; Matthew 4:4 "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." At Sinai the children of Israel had said "All that Jehovah has spoken we will do" (Exodus 19:12). These were their words both before and after the terms of the legal covenant were made known to them (Exodus 19:8; Exodus 24:3; Exodus 24:7). As a consequence their blessing and unique place as a people with Jehovah became conditional on their obedience (Exodus 19:5

6)* This foolish self confidence was tested when they were "led these forty years in the wilderness, to humble thee, and to prove thee, to know what was in thy heart, whether thou wouldest keep His commandments or not" (Deuteronomy 8:2). The results of this testing are well documented in Scripture. They were shown to be "a stubborn and rebellious generation; a generation that set not their heart aright, and whose spirit was not stedfast with God" and few indeed of those that crossed the Red Sea entered in to the promised land (Psalms 78:8; Numbers 32:10-12). Addressing the people Moses speaks of them as having "rebelled against the Word of Jehovah" their God (Deuteronomy 1:26; Deuteronomy 1:43).

{*In making such a statement it is necessary to guard against the unscriptural idea that the nation as such has now been cast off forever. See Romans 11.} The section here in Deuteronomy 8:1-20 focuses upon one particular test the provision of the manna. It was given that "He might make thee know that man doth not live by bread alone, but by everything that goeth out of the mouth of Jehovah doth man live" (Deuteronomy 8:3). Only as the manna was gathered according to the divine directions given could the food provided be appropriated (Exodus 16:4-5; Exodus 16:13-19; Exodus 16:21-26). Those who disobeyed found none (Exodus 16:20; Exodus 16:27-29). In this way the lesson that life and obedience to the Word of the Lord are intimately connected was brought before the people. It is remarkable that the lesson seems to have gone unheeded. The manna was first given before Sinai had been reached. The unbelief and disobedience of the people had already been manifested, yet at Sinai they still asserted their readiness to be obedient (Exodus 16:1; Exodus 19:12). As before, so subsequently, what was in their hearts was laid bare, while at the same time Jehovah's faithful care was shown (Deuteronomy 8:3-6). Sadly, what "types of us" we find in all this (1 Corinthians 10:6 J.N.D. translation). When we turn to the Lord

Jesus what a contrast we see. His words by the mouth of David were "I delight to do Thy will, O My God: yea Thy law is within My heart", yet He too was to be tested (Psalms 40:8). For this purpose He was "carried up into the wilderness by the Spirit to be tempted of the devil (Matthew 4:1). He fasted forty days and forty nights, and was afterwards an hungered. In His hunger there was no murmuring, as there had been with the people before Him, but only absolute dependence (Matthew 4:2; Exodus 16:23). Born under the law, He kept it perfectly and needed no chastening, as the nation did, because they broke it (Galatians 4:4; Deuteronomy 8:5). Where the people had failed He did "magnify the law, and make it honourable (Isaiah 42:21). Yet how far beyond the requirements of the law His obedience went (Philip. 2:8). As the eternal Son of God He had title to do as He pleased but in becoming flesh He took the place of one from whom obedience was due (Psalms 115:3; Psalms 135:6; Psalms 40:7-8). He did the will of His Father, and not His own will, cost Him what it might (John 4:34; Matthew 26:39; Hebrews 5:7-8). Could He be drawn out of this position? Called upon by the devil to "command that these stones be made bread" the perfection of His dependence and obedience once again shines out. The thrust of the adversary was turned aside by the use of that which was His meditation day and night (Psalms 1:2). May it be that, as the congregation of the children of Israel beheld the glory of the Lord when they looked towards the wilderness, we too may have our eyes opened to His glory and excellence more and more, as we consider Him in this temptation scene.

R.F.W.

News from the Field REPORT OF A VISIT TO NORWAY 21-28 SEPTEMBER 1991 On arrival in Bergen, Norway, I was met by two brothers, Jarle Anderson and Cato Haukeland. It was a joy to see these face to face and get to know them. Jarle had been ordering books from Chapter Two since 1989 and had entered into correspondence on various spiritual subjects. In his letter inviting me to visit, he had warned me that they were a poor expression of the assembly but that they desired further help. We spent the first evening reviewing their struggles and exercises. On Lord’s Day the first part was spent in private meditation on the Word of God. After a meal with Jarle’s parents there was a time of fellowship opening up the Word and answering many questions. They are still under exercise since leaving an independent Pentecostal group and do not as yet break bread. They are eager to be instructed in the way of God more accurately and we trust that with the Lord’s help they will know establishment in Divine things. Jarle’s sister is troubled about assurance and the depth of reality of her faith. She expressed the desire to see meetings according to New Testament principles in Bergen. The believers need much help and encouragement as well as instruction. They read much and value the books written by John Nelson Darby and William Kelly. But regular spoken ministry of Christ would feed them as well. There are other contacts in Bergen who I trust will meet up with each other and be a help in standing together for the Lord. On Monday after visiting three Christian bookshops in Bergen I travelled to Sandnes where I stayed with Mike and Audrey Vienot from the USA. They have been in Guildford, England, for a number of years and fly back periodically for the breaking of bread and fellowship. It was my desire to acquaint them with the exercises of these Norwegian believers with the view of possibly being an encouragement to the Norwegians. We enjoyed a very happy evening of Christian fellowship together. I was very thankful to the Lord for their loving hospitality and to have the opportunity to talk together about the Lord’s interests with like-minded brethren. On Tuesday morning I moved on to the southernmost town of Mandal. I had missed the train and

the bus, so my only alternative was to hitchhike. The first few miles I walked carrying my luggage wondering if I'd ever get a lift. This anxiety was brought to the Lord and after a little while a farmer offered me a lift. He spoke no English so this put me to the test. It was my first attempt at conversation in Norwegian. After a few miles he reached his destination and accepted a "Rent Gull" (Pure Gold) tract. The next driver to give me a lift refused the tract and was very much hardened to the gospel but he gave me his address for further contact. The stretch of road he left me on was very deserted. The rain clouds were gathering, so I began to wonder how I'd manage if it poured down. The last lift was from a very interesting fellow. He had various questions and doubts but was very receptive to the gospel. Do pray for Rolf Davidsen. It may be the Lord will work in his heart. He drove me all the way to Mandal (a journey of 2 hours) where I was met by Kjell Dahlene.

Kjell Dahlene has studied the influence of brethren upon Norwegian church life and has bought many books from Chapter Two. He found a copy of a hymn book used by the former Norwegian meetings and sent it to me. It was edited by Georg Johansen in Oslo in 1941. The last brother of that locality in fellowship with us was Carl Prydz. He died in the 1980s. Although these faithful men were few yet their influence was great. On Tuesday evening Kjell and his wife arranged for a group of ten or so to come together to hear the preaching of the Word. The merciful Samaritan in Luke 10:1-42 was the theme taken up. Kjell translated for me. They kindly expressed appreciation and asked for Rent Gull (Pure Gold) to distribute to their families and neighbours. That evening a storm had begun and on our return to Kjell's home we could feel the wind buffeting the house. His house is perched high on a great rock. News had come that the ferry service to Karmoy had been withdrawn due to the gale. I wondered if I would be able to accomplish the next part of the journey. The Lord has these matters in His hands. The next morning I awoke at 6 o'clock to a calm day. The sun shone, the storm had abated. The train journey took me along the Southernmost coast of Norway. Sometimes through long tunnels carved out of the mountains, sometimes through beautiful valleys with waterfalls rushing down the rocks into swift rivers. The scenery can be quite dramatic. The train journey took 3 hours. At Stavanger I searched for the two Christian bookshops in the town and then proceeded to the ferry for Karmoy. The hour crossing was uncomfortable but uneventful. On arriving brother Henrik Gautesen collected me and we drove to his house at Aakrehamn. We had very positive conversations about the faith and also our mutual love for books. The responsible brethren in Karmoy have read much of assembly authors. They have also translated Ruth by Hamilton Smith, Unto Christ by H. L. Heijkoop, as well as his book Faith Healing, Speaking in Tongues, Signs and Wonders in the Light of Scripture. We would also like to see a start on The Watching Servant by J. N. Darby and one or two others by this writer. We also discussed possibilities of getting more done in Norwegian, especially a good selection of gospel tracts. Perhaps it will be possible to get Pure Gold, A Letter for You and The House of Gold into Norwegian. Getting Christians Gathered in the Name of the Lord Jesus translated would also be useful. They have a small publishing depot and issue Norwegian literature. They have also published Russian booklets and have been distributing Bibles and books in Russia. They publish their own magazine Lys pa Vegen (Light for the Way). Brother Henrik indicated that 1,500 were circulated. The meeting for ministry began at 7.30 and was very well attended with over 60 present. Together we considered the vital features that should mark the assembly in these last days. The believers here appreciate expository ministry but have lacked it for some years now. As with us all there is need for adjustment and I am sure that with the Lord's help they will bow to His

Word in such areas where help might be needed. I stayed two days with these brethren and was greatly refreshed by their kindness and devotedness to the Lord.

There are 3 or 4 other locations up the coast where similar believers can be found but time failed me to visit any others. If the Lord has not returned it may be possible to go further north to Trondheim next summer and see how it is with these somewhat isolated saints. In former times Edward Dennett, W. T. P. Wolston, James Boyd and A. J. Pollock visited Scandinavia. We desire to see the Lord at work. The seed may be dormant for a long time but God gives the increase and we look for His gracious work in the hearts of these believers. Meanwhile do pray for these dear believers. Eighty years ago Norwegian brethren were fined or thrown into jail for breaking bread without an "ordained Priest". The enemy was a roaring lion then but now he is working as a subtle serpent or an angel of light. The world has had its effect on the children of God but in the past two years the Spirit of God has worked in the lives of many and so we are encouraged to look up for the Lord’s blessing.

E.N.C.

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Quotations from Scripture are generally taken either from the King James translation or Mr. J.N. Darby's translation. Quotations taken from any other translation will be indicated in the course of the article, or in a footnote to the article. The Life of David (1) David The Beloved

"As his name is, so is he" said Abigail to David concerning her foolish husband, Nabal.* (1 Samuel 25:25). Abigail's judgment was correct. But David, the shepherd boy who became king of Israel, bore a name that was true of him. His name means "beloved", and he was beloved.

{*Nabal means foolish.} That David was beloved of God there can be no doubt. He was described as a man after God's own heart. (1 Samuel 13:14). He was God's choice for kingship over the nation of Israel, God's people. (1 Samuel 16:6-13). God is always justified in His choosing and David was no exception. David's physical appearance indicated how attractive he was. 1 Samuel 16:1-23 verses 12 and 18 show that he was a young man with exceptional capabilities. Above all that he was naturally God was with him and the Holy Spirit had come upon him. He was greatly blessed. In all these features David is an excellent type of God's Beloved Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. When Christians are taught in Ephesians 1:1-23 verse 6 that they are accepted in the Beloved they are in no doubt as to who the Beloved is. He is the glorious Son of God. He was loved before worlds were made. (John 17:24). After a life of obscurity in Bethlehem, Egypt and Nazareth, His Father from heaven declared Him to be His well Beloved Son. (Matthew 3:17). Prior to His death on the cross again the Father's voice was heard claiming this lowly Man as His Beloved Son. This after a life of perfect obedience in service. (Matthew 17:5). Jehovah's perfect Servant was His Beloved Son. (Matthew 12:18). His Father loved Him when He laid down His life to accomplish His Father's will. (John 10:17). Peter, when preaching in the house of Cornelius, testified of Jesus that God was with Him and that He had been anointed with the Holy Spirit and power. (Acts 10:38). The life of Jesus, God's Beloved Son, as portrayed in the four gospel accounts, reveal Him as a most attractive and accessible Man and a Man with exceptional powers. He was great David's greater son. A few persons are recorded in Scripture as lovers of David and an examination of their love is a profitable one.

Saul Loved David. 1 Samuel 16:21. A Love That Turned To Hate.

Saul's first impression of David was favourable and he gave David a position of trust beside him. Saul became indebted to David as David's skilful playing of the harp was sweet comforting music to Saul's troubled spirit. When David triumphed over the Philistine champion Goliath, David was enhanced still more in Saul's esteem. Beauty, ability and power were valuable features in Saul's appraisal of David but his love for David was soon tested and found wanting. When David returned

after killing Goliath women praised Saul for smiting thousands, but David tens of thousand. For Saul, who was head and shoulders above all the men of Israel, this meant one thing. He might be great, but David was greater. His love for David was forgotten; his indebtedness to David was forgotten. David became in his envious mind a dangerous enemy aspiring to his throne. What a change in this poor demented man! Instead of love to David he expressed himself towards David in anger, (1 Samuel 18:8), violence (1 Samuel 18:11), deceit (1 Samuel 18:21), and murder (1 Samuel 19:1; 1 Samuel 19:10; 1 Samuel 20:33). David's experience was realised in a greater measure by Jesus, God's anointed Man. Prophetically it could be said of the Lord Jesus, "they have rewarded Me evil for good, and hatred for My love", and again "They that hate Me without a cause are more than the hairs of mine head: they that would destroy Me, being mine enemies wrongfully, are mighty ..." (Psalms 109:5; Psalms 69:4). The important lesson that we learn from this tragic episode in Saul's life is that the flesh has no appreciation of Christ. The Spirit of Jehovah had left Saul because of his unfaithfulness (1 Samuel 16:14). Jehovah had departed from him also (1 Samuel 18:12). He was left with his own resources and they failed him. Every true believer in Christ is indwelt by the Spirit of God. Because of this the believer is enabled to appreciate the glories of Christ and also the great blessings received through His death and resurrection. The Spirit's great service is to glorify Christ (John 16:14). Israel in the flesh could say "there is no beauty that we should desire Him" (Isaiah 53:2). The Christian, indwelt by the Spirit, says "in all things He" must "have the preeminence" (Colossians 1:18).

Michael Loved David. 1 Samuel 18:20; 1 Samuel 18:28; 1 Samuel 19:11-17; 2 Samuel 6:16; 2 Samuel 6:20-23. A Natural Love That Was Limited. The references in 1 Samuel 18:20; 1 Samuel 18:28 are sufficient testimony that Michal, the daughter of Saul, really loved David. Her father, in his enmity towards David, thought to use her as a snare that would cause David's downfall. His efforts failed. Michal loved David and she proved her love for him by saving his life through a stratagem by which David eluded those sent by Saul to kill him. In New Testament language she cared for her husband's interests (1 Corinthians 7:34). How sad that her natural love should have blinded her eyes when David danced with all his might before the ark of Jehovah. (2 Samuel 6:12-16). Her cutting and sarcastic remarks offended David. Perhaps she wasn't pleased because he wore a priestly ephod instead of the princely garment he received from Jonathan (1 Samuel 18:4). Whatever the reason for her defamatory remarks David pointed out to her that Jehovah and His people were his prime interest, and she, above all people, should have recognised it. The breach, created by her lack of appreciation of David's enthusiasm for the ark of Jehovah, apparently was never healed. While natural feelings and responsibilities have a place which is honoured by God, they should never take precedence over the spiritual. When God created Eve it was that she should be a helpmate to Adam (Genesis 2:18). Michal was prepared to help David on the natural level but not on the spiritual level. It is a happy situation when husband and wife are united in spirit on both levels, but especially in the things of the Lord. Zacharias and Elizabeth in Luke 1:1-80 verse 6 provide an excellent example as do Aquila and Priscilla in Romans 16:1-27 verses 3 and 4 and other passages. It is better for a wife to see her husband a humble but efficient servant and lover of Christ, than to encourage him to be a successful business man, or important in politics or the affairs of this doomed world, and yet without power or influence in divine things. Proverbs 31:12 is a good guideline for any Christian wife "She will do him good and not evil all the days of her life".

Jonathan Loved David. 1 Samuel 18:14; 1 Samuel 19:2; 1 Samuel 20:17; 2 Samuel 1:26 A Wonderful Love That Had A Sad Ending. The mutual love that existed between David and Jonathan is one of the most tender episodes in the life of David. Jonathan, a formidable warrior in his own right, was captivated by the young victor over Goliath, the champion of the Philistines (1 Samuel 14:1-52 :

1115). As David humbly spoke to Saul, Jonathan's father, with the head of Goliath dangling in his hand, Jonathan's love went out to David. Eventually a covenant was arranged between them. Jonathan stripped himself and presented David the shepherd with a princely robe, dress fit for Saul's court, and instruments of war. Jonathan, the heir to the throne of Israel, saw in David one superior to himself in every way. (1 Samuel 18:14). Jonathan's love for David was soon put under stress and it was proved to be real. When Jonathan's father Saul, the king of Israel, gave ominous indications of his hatred towards David, Jonathan courageously and wisely spoke well about David to his father. When that didn't succeed Jonathan warned David of Saul's evil designs toward him. He was a loyal friend to David. The time came when it was too dangerous for David to remain in Saul's court and when Jonathan and he met secretly they covenanted together (1 Samuel 20:8; 1 Samuel 20:16; 1 Samuel 20:23; 1 Samuel 20:42). The last view we have of David and Jonathan together is in 1 Samuel 23:15-18. Jonathan confidently affirmed that David would eventually be the king of Israel, and hopefully he would be next to David in the kingdom. Then they separated. David to the wilderness, Jonathan to his father's court. It is at this point that we see a fatal flaw in Jonathan's undoubted love for David. He was not prepared to share in David's trials and sorrows but hoped to share in his eventual triumph. Instead of fighting for David he fought for his father's interests and perished with him. (1 Samuel 31:1-13). That David appreciated and highly valued Jonathan's love is seen in David's lamentation because of the death of Saul and Jonathan (2 Samuel 1:26). "Thy love to me was wonderful, passing women's love". It is to David's credit that he did not belittle Jonathan's love for him, but it has to be said that Jonathan did not share David's trials and support him to gain the throne that God had decreed he would fill. There is a solemn lesson in this for believers in the Lord Jesus. Our Lord is a rejected King. That one day, perhaps very soon, He will occupy the throne and administer the earth for the glory of God is what the Bible teaches. Are we anticipating the high honour of sharing in that administration and prepared to share actively in His rejection now? (Romans 8:17; 1 Peter 4:12-14. See also Matthew 19:27-29). Is our love for Jesus, our Saviour, able to withstand the claims of nature and the allurements of this poor doomed world? Can we go through the probings of our consciences as Peter experienced and exclaim as he did "Lord, Thou knowest all things; Thou knowest that I am attached to Thee" (John 21:17). If we do we shall hear the Lord say to us "Prove your love to Me by caring for My sheep".

All Israel And Judah Loved David. 1 Samuel 18:16. A Fluctuating Love.

David's victory over Goliath won the hearts of the tribes of Israel and Judah, but a long time elapsed before David was undisputed king over them. After the death of Saul and his sons on mount Gilboa a period of uncertainty prevailed in the nation of Israel. Judah was faithful to David and the other tribes of Israel were for the house of Saul. (2 Samuel 2:8-11). Eventually the house of Saul was defeated and all Israel and Judah gave their allegiance to David (2 Samuel 5:1-5). But Israel's love for David was a fluctuating love. They left David and followed David's rebellious son, Absalom (2 Samuel 15:16; 2 Samuel 15:13). After Absalom's defeat and death they were restored

to David. (2 Samuel 19:9-10). When Sheba, a Benjaminite, moved Israel to leave David they did so but again returned to David when this rebellion was defeated. (2 Samuel 20:1-22). Judah, although not without blame and failure, were in the main faithful to David. What does all this confusion and failure teach us today? If love for David should have unified the tribes, love for Christ and His interests should unify the believers in Him. Love for David should have refused the subtle wiles of Absalom. Love for Christ should enable believers in Him to refuse the claims of Satan and the world. Love for David should have enabled the tribes to avoid words and feelings that divided them. Love for Christ should help believers in Him to forgive each other and work together for Christ's glory. Let professed lovers of Christ heed Paul's last words to the Ephesians in his letter to them "Grace with all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in incorruption" (Ephesians 6:24).

Hiram Always Loved David. 1 Kings 5:1. A Constant And Proved Love.

After David captured Jerusalem from the Jebusites he became greater and greater. Best of all, God was with him, which no doubt was the main reason for his continuing success. (2 Samuel 5:6-10). It is at this juncture that Hiram, the king of Tyre, is introduced. There is no record of David and Hiram meeting each other or why Hiram was so ready to give David workers and materials to build a palace for himself Perhaps Hiram, like many others, was captivated by David's abilities and military prowess. It might be correct to say that David had become his hero. When this love and interest in David began we do not know, but we do know that Hiram proved his constant love for David in works and words.

Reference has been made to his works as recorded in 2 Samuel 5:11. These works were valuable and substantial. There is a reference to his words in 2 Chronicles 2:11-16. In verse 12 Hiram refers to David as "the king". He appreciated his royal dignity. In verse

14 he refers to David as "my lord". He acknowledged David's supremacy over him. By his works and his words Hiram gives evidence of a well balanced love. What a pleasing example Hiram sets before us. Most Christians would acknowledge that the dignity and glory of Jesus is unique. There is no one like Him. As we sometimes sing "We love Thee for the glorious worth which in Thyself we see". But is our love so great for Jesus that we can say to Him as Hiram said about David "my Lord". True love will be seen in us when we acknowledge that the Lord Jesus has supreme authority over us, and we do the things He tells us to do. "If ye love Me, keep My commandments" (John 14:15). True love for the Lord Jesus will be seen in the way we use whatever possession we have. Hiram used his servants and his goods to supply David with a palace. Our true love will be seen in the way we love the Lord's people, the way we use our homes, the way we use our time and the way we use ourselves for Him. In this context it is not our speaking that is important, it is our doing. To sum up, it means that to have a constant love like Hiram's for David, we must have a worshipful, obedient and practical love for our Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God. Hiram was always a lover of David. Among all David's lovers he stands out as the best. May we all covet to be Hiramites.

F. Wallace The Hiding Place

Most of us, at some time or other, feel that things are getting on top of us. If only we could hide somewhere until the problems have been solved, or we have built up our courage to take over our

responsibilities again! David knew this feeling only too well. When Saul was hunting him down, and later when his own rebellious son drove him from his throne, we find David sighing for a place where he could hide for a while, and revive his spirit. We know that he was courageous enough to slay a lion and a bear while he tended his father’s sheep, but even for this brave man there were moments when he sighed for a hiding-place "until these calamities be overpast."

Happily David had learnt where to find the true hiding place. In Psalms 17:1-15, for example, he pleads with God: "Keep me as the apple of the eye; hide me under the shadow of Thy wings" (verse 8). There were enemies that compassed him about, but he had found One who was able to shelter him, as the mother bird hides her fledglings under her wing. In Psalms 27:5 he expresses his confidence in this God of his salvation: "In the time of trouble He shall hide me in His pavilion: in the secret of His tabernacle shall

He hide me: He shall set me up upon a rock." Not only was he hidden, but he knew the security of that place of nearness to his Lord. When we come to Psalms 31:19 we find him sharing this place of safety with others: "How great is Thy goodness, which Thou has laid up for them that fear Thee; which Thou hast wrought for them that trust in Thee!" He goes on to say: "Thou shalt hide them in the secret of Thy presence from the pride of man." No wonder he calls upon them to recognise the grace that has been shown to them: "Love the Lord, all ye His saints!" How can we do otherwise, since "the Lord preserveth the faithful"? In the following Psalm David speaks of his own experience as one that had been forgiven, and also had communion with his Lord, to whom he says: "Thou art my hiding place; Thou shalt preserve me from trouble; Thou shalt compass me about with songs of deliverance."

"One string there is of sweetest tone, Reserved for sinners saved by grace;

’Tis sacred to one class alone, And touched by one peculiar race."

T. Kelly, 1769-1854.

Therefore he can encourage his fellow-believers: "Be glad in the Lord, and rejoice, ye righteous."

Psalms 64:1-10 is a prayer for preservation. He appeals to God to save his life, and particularly "Hide me from the secret counsel of the wicked; from the insurrection of the workers of iniquity" (verse 2). This could well have been composed when Absalom had driven him from his throne. Happily he could cast himself upon the mercy of God, who would still be his hiding place. He could leave the future to Him, knowing that "the righteous shall be glad in the Lord, and shall trust in Him." We are reminded of Paul, writing from prison: "All men forsook me ... notwithstanding the Lord stood with me, and strengthened me."

Psalms 143:9 is another appeal for deliverance, but this time he can positively say: "I flee unto Thee to hide me."

"Ah, whither could we flee for aid When tempted, desolate, dismayed? Or how the hosts of hell defeat, Had suffering saints no mercy-seat?"

H Stowell, 1799-1865.

One more reference to the hiding place is found in Psalms 119:1-176 verse 114. The Psalmist (it could well have been David) says: "Thou art my hiding place and my shield: I hope in Thy word."

How grateful we must be that we now possess the entire Word of God. In prayer and meditation on this Word, we too may find hope and security in the One who is our hiding place. The Psalmist sets us also a good example in verse 11: "Thy Word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against Thee."

R.E.A.R. The Armour of God

Introduction

Ephesians 6:1-24 may be called a topical Scripture. It speaks of "the evil day". In one sense it is always an evil day, but at times the enemy presses home his attack and we are made particularly conscious that it is so. It is then we are reminded of the need to withstand and having done all, to stand. And it is then moreover we marvel at the wondrous grace and provision of God that we should be able to do so and that provision is found in the whole armour of God. The present Scripture has "come alive" to the writer in putting it alongside a similar Scripture in Romans 13:1-14, as follows:

Ephesians 6:1-24 : "Put on the whole armour of God" 5:11. and Romans 13:1-14 : "Put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ" 5:14 The imperatives "Put on" and "Put ye on" are precisely the same in the original language and I think we shall see that our blessed Lord, in dependent manhood, perfectly exhibited the individual pieces of the armour and indeed will do so still in His abiding manhood in the coming day when His glory is manifested. As we are occupied with Him, delighting in Him, admiring Him, the same features in a small degree will be wrought out in us. In other words the details of the armour so blessedly manifested in Him objectively will be wrought out in us His people subjectively. And this is the way and the only way we shall be able to stand in this evil day.

Before embarking on our passage a few general observations are necessary. For example we must never forget that the instruction in relation to this armour comes at the close of Ephesians, an epistle which gives us the top note of Paul’s ministry. It is in this letter that we have unfolded the whole counsel of God, the Divine purpose in relation to Christ and the church, reaching out to every family in heaven and upon earth. Doubtless in other Scriptures we have other high notes, John for example in regard to eternal relationships and the family, and Peter in regard to the kingdom etc., all areas which have been the subject of enemy attack. Indeed which of the foundations of the faith have not been assaulted? It does not require much discernment however to see that it is the ministry of Paul which is constantly under debate, e.g. the gospel as preached by Paul, the mystery of which he is the minister (Ephesians 3:7), the truth of the rapture and the imminent return of the Lord Jesus (1 Thessalonians 4:1-18 and 1 Corinthians 15:1-58) and the supper (1 Corinthians 11:1-34). What need then there is to understand this clearly, otherwise we shall not even know what the conflict is about, let alone know what it is to stand. Judging from the commentaries written, as well as the comments made by devoted and godly men, this seems to be where the chief difficulty lies in seeking to answer to the pointed exhortations we find in this Scripture. Do we all grasp the lofty position taken by Paul? An illustration may help. The epistles of Paul by general consensus, represent a progression in his teaching. In Romans, where we have our identification with Christ’s death, we are seen as crucified, dead and buried with Him (Romans

6:1-23). In Ephesians rather, where our union is with Christ in glory, we are seen as quickened, raised and seated together with Him (Ephesians 2:1-22). Romans takes us over the Red Sea into the wilderness, with a view to our living in newness of life. Colossians and Ephesians take us over Jordan into the promised land with a view to our setting forth the features of the new man. Colossians however only takes us to Gilgal, the place of circumcision, with a view to conquering the land. Ephesians however sees us in possession of the land. It will then readily be seen, if this progression is followed, how remarkable this Ephesian epistle is. Blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ, the Lord Jesus in highest glory (Ephesians 1:20-22), the church as His body associated with Him now and shortly to be manifested in glory. Little wonder the apostle finds himself carried into the region of the Divine superlative (Ephesians 3:1-21)-a world for God's pleasure as well as for our deep and lasting blessing. If this can be clearly seen and thoroughly grasped it makes the understanding of the armour comparatively easy. The armour in Ephesians 6:1-24 is DEFENSIVE armour. In Ephesians we are viewed as being in possession of the good land and the enemy of our souls seeks to dislodge us. But the armour of God is God's gracious provision to enable us to withstand the enemy and having done all to stand. The next point to consider and seek to understand is the character of the opposing forces. If Ephesians sets before us God's blessings at their best, if we may so speak, the enemy of our souls brings against us his forces at their best. "We wrestle not", says the Scripture, "against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, and against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places." By no means can we afford to underestimate this foe and his resources. Even Michael the archangel in a different situation durst bring no railing accusation but said "The Lord rebuke thee" (Jude 1:9). Other illustrations may help. In 2 Kings 6:1-33 the Syrians at Dothan surrounded Elisha, a great host both with horses and chariots. The prophet was at peace but his servant was not so. Elisha prayed and said "Lord, I pray Thee, open his eyes, that he may see". And when his eyes were opened "behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha". It is evident in this incident that divine illumination was needed to see the resources of faith. In Ephesians 6:1-24 we need similar divine illumination to see what is ranged and set against the truth which Paul so clearly ministered. How often we underestimate the unseen forces of the evil one, "the universal lords of the darkness of this world" to quote a footnote from Mr J. N. Darby's translation. In very truth we need help from God and blessedly it is readily available. A well known Scripture comes to mind. "Give me a man", says Goliath (1 Samuel 17:10). How glad we are to know that God has given both Goliath and us a Man, a blessed, loving, lowly, victorious Man! The Lord Himself speaks about it in Luke 11:21-22. "When a strong man armed keepeth his palace, his goods are in peace." I need hardly tell you that this is a picture of the devil himself, and we his captives, in unconverted days. "But when a stronger than he shall come upon him, and overcome him, He taketh from him all his armour wherein he trusted, and divideth His spoils." This is exactly what our blessed Lord has done. We are set free and we notice in this Scripture the only other reference to this word for armour in the New Testament. The whole armour of the devil is taken away and we are now to take to ourselves the whole armour of God. If we are not to underestimate the power of the enemy neither are we to overestimate his power. The Lord Jesus Christ has met Satan in the wilderness, defeated him and Satan had to withdraw. The Lord Jesus also met him at the cross and He spoiled principalities and powers (Colossians 2:15). In resurrection and glory He has led captivity captive (Ephesians 4:8). He is coming again (Isaiah 59:17) with breastplate and helmet and in Revelation 19:1-21 with a sharp sword. What

pictures we have here of victory, power and might and what force these figures give to the Scripture "Be strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might". Bible students will know, but we should all understand, that the words that are used here (imperatives) are the very words which are used in Ephesians 1:19-20 (verbs) in connection with the resurrection of the Lord Jesus working, mighty power, wrought in Christ. Briefly stated it is in resurrection power we can stand against what ever the enemy may throw against us, either individually or collectively. Wonderful thought indeed!

Just one more point must be made before we consider the armour in detail. It is this. Let none of us imagine that it is an "optional extra" as to whether we put on and take to ourselves the whole armour of God. It is a happy thing to encourage one another in the matter of victory, the victories of God. The devastating and bitterly sorrowful results of defeat however are frightful and frightening. In taking possession of Canaan, at Ai, Israel underestimated the power of the enemy; sin was found in their midst and the armies of Israel were put to flight (Joshua 7:1-26). Later, with the Gibeonites, they succumbed to the wiles of their enemies: they "asked not counsel at the mouth of the Lord" (Joshua 9:14). These Gibeonites later brought a famine of three years on Israel and cost Saul his seven sons (2 Samuel 21:1-22). Other cases could be multiplied when Israel was in possession of the land, which is nearer to the truth of Ephesians. How our blessed Lord delights to see us in victory, even a patch of lentils defended against the Philistines (2 Samuel 23:11-12). D.W.P.

(To be continued, if the Lord will). The Old in the New Explained Deuteronomy 6:16; Matthew 4:7 "Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God". In meeting the first of the devil’s temptations recorded in Matthew 4:1-25 the Lord Jesus had shown how absolutely subject He was to the Word of God (Matthew 4:4). In the case of the temptation following the devil himself took up the words of Scripture, though his quotation from Psalms 91:11-12 was incomplete, as served his purpose. He had set the Lord

Jesus on a pinnacle of the temple at Jerusalem and proposed that He cast Himself down from it. If He was the Son of God, the Messiah of Israel, here was a Psalm that spoke of Him. "He shall give His angels charge concerning Thee: and in their hands they shall bear Thee up, lest at any time Thou dash Thy foot against a stone". But what word was there that He should cast Himself down or take Himself out of the hands of the One in whose secret place He dwelt, and under whose shadow He abode? (Psalms 91:1). His confidence was altogether in Another. "I say of Jehovah, My refuge and My fortress; My God, I will confide in Him" (Psalms 91:2). In fact, when the time came, He refused to call for such angelic aid, having a deeper work in view, by which He would "Tread upon the lion and adder; the young lion and the dragon shalt Thou trample under foot" (Psalms 91:13; Matthew 26:53-54). In meeting the temptation the Lord Jesus quoted from Deuteronomy 6:16 "Ye shall not tempt Jehovah your God, as ye tempted Him in Massah". The reference is to Exodus 17:1-16. In Exodus 16:1-36 the people had murmured in their hunger and now they murmured in their thirst (Exodus 16:23; Exodus 17:13). Yet it was specifically by saying "Is Jehovah among us, or not?" that they tempted Him (Exodus 17:7). How could they raise such a question? Had not the manna fallen around the camp that very morning, and could they not see the pillar of cloud that spoke of His presence? (Exodus 16:35; Numbers 14:14; Exodus 14:24).

It was "an evil heart of unbelief" that made them so insensitive to the goodness and presence of their God (Hebrews 3:7-12). Nevertheless "where sin abounded, grace did much more abound". (Romans 5:20). The same "rod of God" that had turned the river and waters of Egypt to blood fell upon "the rock" so that the people might drink (Exodus 4:20; Exodus 7:17-21; Exodus 17:5-6). These things, of course, pointed on to Christ as the lowly one here (the manna), who as "the rock" was smitten by God upon the cross. As risen, ascended and glorified, the Holy Spirit has been given by Him, and all true believers made to drink into that one Spirit (John 6:30-59; 1 Corinthians 10:14; John 7:37-39; 1 Corinthians 12:13). The Lord Jesus had set His love upon the one who had sent Him, and did not need to put Him to any kind of test, since He was always conscious that the Father was with Him (Psalms 91:14; John 14:31; John 8:29). The Psalmist had said "He shall cover Thee with His feathers, and under His wings shalt Thou trust: His truth shall be Thy shield and buckler" (Psalms 91:4). So this temptation too was met and turned aside by the victorious Son of God.

R.F.W. The Wisdom From Above

"Who is wise and understanding among you; let him show out of a good conversation his works in meekness of wisdom ... But the wisdom from above first is pure, then peaceful, gentle, yielding, full of mercy and good fruits, unquestioning, unfeigned." (James 3:13; James 3:17)

"Heaven is our home" we sing in one of our hymns. If that is the case, this should be seen in our lives. That is why James presents to his readers the wisdom from above. We learn in this wonderful epistle how these two worlds, the one from above and the other from beneath, are placed opposite to one another. The challenge is: which world do we promote in our daily lives? Let us study together seven points with regard to this passage. l. THE SCHOOL OF GOD My first point is this: as believers we are in the school of God. Do we like being in the school of God? We read in James 1:2 "Count it all joy, my brethren, when ye fall into various temptations." Are we to be happy when difficulties, trials and afflictions come our way? Yes, they too are instruments for our education as we go through God’s school. It is therefore not surprising when some say, "I don’t like being in God’s school, because of the trials which this involves." Of course, that depends on how we look at it. Being trained in God’s school, we must understand that God will use various methods for our instruction, of which trials may be but one. There is a remarkable verse that supports this thought.

"But we do know that all things work together for good to those who love God", or to paraphrase it freely, "We know that God makes all things work together for the good of those who love Him" (Romans 8:28). When we consider the school of God, the idea is that there is a goal in view, and schooling is the means by which we are brought to that goal. This involves:

- teaching or instruction, in order to help the pupil make progress, - discipline, so as to draw the student to conformity and - rewards, for a task well done.

All these together are used to produce a well balanced, mature, and spiritually intelligent student (disciple), taught in all the principles of God’s school and ready to practice what has been communicated. As James expresses it: the school of God is for lovers of God. This may sound strange, especially if we want to go our own way, yet we are still in God’s school and God will deal with us accordingly. Remember what we read about bit and bridle in Psalms 32:1-11? It speaks

about discipline as being part of the school of God. I encourage you to study the wisdom psalms, of which Psalms 32:1-11 is the first. In God’s school we start in the first form and progress onwards. We are all familiar with this principle. We don’t begin in the sixth form. Likewise Psalms 32:1-11 lays down basic matters, like the forgiveness of our sins. It would seem that we enter the school of God the moment we are saved.

I would like to share another point related to this subject. In Isaiah 55:8-9 we read "For My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways My ways, saith Jehovah. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways and My thoughts than your thoughts". When we speak about the school of God we not only have to learn certain things, but we also have to "unlearn" other things, because we entered this school with our mind set on our own ways. Therefore God speaks about His thoughts as being higher than our thoughts and His ways as being different from our ways. That’s what we find out in the school of God. The school of God also implies discipline, even for lovers of God. Perhaps we don’t like this word very much, because in our minds it has negative connotations. But really, discipline is positive. It is to draw us. In certain languages, like Dutch and German, we have a word for discipline and its root refers to this basic thought: to draw. Discipline actually is being drawn. Drawn to the Father of lights, drawn to the Lord of glory, drawn to the wisdom from above, drawn through the Holy Spirit who is in control (James 4:1-17). That is God’s principle of discipline. Now if we follow our own ways, God sometimes has to deal with us in a harsh manner, in order to remove hindrances and obstacles. He has to stop us, sometimes to force us, although He doesn’t like to do so. God acts according to the principle of attraction, but at times He has to correct us or to punish us in His governmental dealings (Galatians 6:1-18).

There was only one in the school of God (Isaiah 50:1-11 speaks about Him as being a disciple), who never needed correction. He was a true Son in God’s school. He was a real student, a real disciple, but He never needed to be disciplined, unlike you and me who need correction, and I use this word discipline in a broad sense. On the one hand this suggests that we are disciples, that we are followers of the Lord Jesus, that we are drawn to a Divine Person. On the other hand it implies the thought of correction, when necessary. In Hebrews 12:1-29 we see that He chastises or disciplines whom He loves. Discipline will be exercised by the hand of one who loves us. This also is part of the school of God.

2. WISDOM AND DISCIPLESHIP IN GOD’S SCHOOL The second point is "wisdom". In Job 28:1-28, Job speaks about the wisdom of God that can be learnt. He concludes: "Lo, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom; and to depart from evil is understanding". In James we read a lot more about wisdom, firstly in chapter 1:5. We all need wisdom and we can go without hesitation to Him who gives freely. If we ask our God, He will give to us without reproach. Does wisdom not speak of God’s unlimited resources?

What then is wisdom? As we find in Proverbs, it means knowledge which is applied in the right way as well as at the right time. We may already have a certain understanding of God’s principles, which is good, but how do we apply these principles? Putting into practice God’s thoughts needs real dependence as expressed in a consistent prayer life. That’s why we should go to the Lord and ask for wisdom to know what to do in specific cases, in certain circumstances and at the right time. This is wisdom. We could put the so called Sermon on the Mount alongside James. In Matthew

5:1-48; Matthew 6:1-34; Matthew 7:1-29 the Lord gives much teaching for disciples. This is not theoretical. Read these chapters and see how practical the teachings of the Lord are. Then also read the books of Proverbs and Psalms. In these wisdom books you'll learn very practical things. And that is what James wants to share with us: heavenly wisdom. Of course, there is an extra dimension to it, because James refers to what we see in the life of our Lord Jesus.

We could connect with this the need for discipleship. This is a way of life which responds practically to God's wisdom. In the school of God there are disciples, learners and pupils who put these teachings into practice, by following the Lord Jesus. A disciple is always a learner. This brings us to the third point which is:

3. THE TEACHER IN GOD'S SCHOOL Who is the teacher? It is our blessed Lord! Did we not notice earlier with regard to His life on earth, how He has been a learner? He was always at God's feet. When we think of Mary, we see her on several occasions at the feet of the Lord Jesus. But do we realize that the Lord Himself was found at God's feet? His Father would instruct Him morning by morning. Now let us examine this important point: the great Teacher was first the great Learner.

Don't we often think that after a prescribed period of training, we have learned enough? Then we stop learning and start to rely on ourselves, instead of listening to God's voice. We also think we can tell others what to do. Obviously, that is a great mistake. In God's school we are always learners. Therefore, we will go on learning, even if we live to be eighty-five or ninety years old. We will learn new lessons in the school of God. As long as we are on earth we will not be finished. Until the rapture we will continue to be learners in order to put into practice what we have learnt. This harmony between learning and doing would open the door to teach others. To the extent that we have learned our lessons, we can communicate what we have learned to others. Thus the Teacher would use us.

Another verse comes to mind, where the Lord says "Come unto me". Perhaps you think of this only as the message of the gospel. But it is also for us as believers to respond when He says "Come unto Me", whatever the circumstances in which we are found. Even if you forget all about my seven points, you should keep this thought before you: the Lord Jesus has said "come unto Me and you will receive what you need." Go to Him with all your burdens. Even little children and our young people sometimes have terrible burdens. The question is, to whom do you go? "Come unto Me," is really an invitation.

However, the Teacher adds something to it. "Take My yoke upon you." Are we willing to take His yoke upon our shoulders? That would mean identifying ourselves with a Master who is rejected in this world! Don't forget for one moment that we have associated ourselves with a rejected Lord, with a rejected Messiah, with a rejected Christ (see the context of Matthew 11:1-30; Matthew 12:1-50). But how blessed it is when we can take His yoke.

What does it mean to take His yoke? It means that we are going to be subject to God's will in the same way that He was subject to God's will. Let us not think that this is for the sisters only, who are to be submissive to their husbands. It is up to all believers to be subject to God's will. We learn this in the school of God. There we have great privileges as well as responsibilities. It is there that we meet a wonderful Companion, even the One who says: "Take My yoke upon you." This implies that He carries that yoke thus. That is real companionship. When I am subject to the will of God He

says: you are My brother and sister and mother(Matthew 12:48; Matthew 12:50). It is the one who does the will of God and who takes this yoke upon his shoulders, to whom the Teacher says: you are My friend. Then we will have the greatest of all friends as our companion.

What is the measure and standard in God’s school? It is enough for a disciple to become as the teacher. It is enough for the bondman to become as his Lord, the teacher. Too High? This is what the Teacher and Lord has in mind for disciples, Matthew 10:24-25.

Then He adds: "Learn from Me; for I am meek and lowly in heart." This is the only right attitude: submissiveness, meekness. Do we not get easily offended? A brother or a sister says something which is perhaps not entirely right and we get offended, or we may do something and someone else gets offended. This is not meekness. Meekness does not give and does not take offence. This is what we learn in the school of God, in the company of this amazing teacher and companion. Because:

4. THE TEACHER IS OUR EXAMPLE AND MODEL The Lord Jesus not only tells us what we should do. He is what we should be and do. He is what He says. In John 8:25 He says He is "Altogether that which I also say to you" and thus He is the living expression of His teachings. Here is where we fall short. In James 1:1-27 it is said: "be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only". This is our problem. We like to hear, we like to study, but what about our practice? The Lord Jesus put into practice the things He taught. Therefore, He is a perfect example. He attracts us so much. He not only says do this, do that and don’t do that. He teaches in such a way that we love to follow Him. So He is our model.

We may link this with the beginning of James 3:1-18 where we find that the tongue leads in a certain direction, just as the rudder steers the ship or the animal is controlled by bit and bridle. Thus we see in the Lord Jesus an Example for us. He leads us in the right direction. I like to link this with James 3:11, where he mentions the fountain of water. When we are in the company of the Lord Jesus, we will be blessed. Learning from His example, we will be encouraged, we will be refreshed and like these fountains produce sweet water to drink. James also uses the example of a tree which produces fruits. When we are in His company we will produce the right fruit. Psalms 1:1-6 and Jeremiah 17:1-27 and many other passages show us how we can learn from His example. The fruit of righteousness (James 3:18), and the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23), link themselves with the fruit of holiness which we have seen earlier (Hebrews 12:1-29).

5. PROGRESS AND MATURITY This point is directly connected with what we have seen already. James’ exercise was to help his brethren grow up to spiritual maturity. Many of our problems arise and develop because we are spiritually immature. Perhaps we have learnt a lot as "head" knowledge, but we do not put it into practice. That is a form of immaturity. Fights, conflicts and speaking against one another, are all different forms of spiritual immaturity. Our Lord, who is the divine Teacher, wants to take us through another class in His school. He takes us to His side and then teaches us, that we may grow towards maturity.

James puts two worlds opposite to one another. To which of these two worlds do we belong? Either we belong to God’s world, to the Father of lights, to the Lord of Glory, to the wisdom from above, or we are subjects of Satan’s world. In James 3:1-18 puts both wills beside one another and he shows - firstly, the difference in origins, - secondly, the difference in the methods used, and

- thirdly, on the positive side, the results in spiritual growth and maturity.

Growth can involve what is painful. Even in the natural realm, when children grow up and reach puberty, this time of growth may be a painful process. Those who are older will remember these painful experiences. This is another aspect we find in James 3:1-18, where growth will involve a purification process in God’s school. Some other passages may help us to understand why this is so. In Luke 9:1-62, on the Mount of transfiguration, we read how the Lord’s face was changed before His disciples. This is an illustration of how the disciple will change in the school of God. In Malachi 3:1-18 we find the Lord seated as a gold or silversmith. He would purify the precious metals to remove the unclean elements, till He can see His own face reflected in the gold and silver. That is what happens in the school of God. The Lord is there to deal with us. He wants to help us grow, but He has to remove the obstacles. He has to remove the elements mixed with the gold and the silver that are not good. This testing and purification process is part of God’s school. The testing in James 1:1-27 is to show that there is good material present but, at the same time, this is a painful process because the elements which are not good have to be removed. For example, self-will has to be judged and arrogance has to be dealt with. There has to be an attitude of true repentance. The Lord gradually removes these negative elements and He does it with divine wisdom and care, never forgetting the purpose He has in view: our "growth". This purifying and refining process is part of growing up. He uses trials and tribulations. Although it is not pleasant, the end is very positive. He will not be satisfied until this glorious result has been achieved. Thus it is that He leads us to maturity.

6. CHRIST REPRODUCED IN HIS OWN

We have arrived at the sixth point: the final result of this formation and purification process. The objective is not only spiritual growth in itself, which is very important, but rather what we read in verse 17: "the wisdom from above is pure, peaceful, gentle." That is Christ Himself, but reproduced in you and me. Although "heaven is our home", heaven is also right here, seen in you and me. Christ wants to display Himself in you and me. The Lord is rejected in this world, but now He wants to use believers, that they may display Him. In this way we may be His witnesses, His disciples, showing Him forth as this heavenly wisdom in its seven beautiful features. These seven points concerning the heavenly wisdom are put over against seven points of the devilish wisdom. Comparing them, you can see the two different origins, the two different messages and the two different results. On the positive side the final result is that His character is reproduced in you and me. That is what God, the Father of lights, wants to obtain. You call yourself a Christian? Then God says: I want to see Christ in you and nothing else. And this is what the Holy Spirit would produce (Galatians 5:23; Php 4:8). He will produce these fruits: Christ in you and me. Results towards God, results towards men and also a change as to ourselves. His features will be reproduced.

7. WHO IS WISE?

Why is this so important? Because we are living in the closing days of this dispensation and God is looking for wise men even at the very end. Think of Daniel and his friends, who were wise in days of great change and trial. Think of the future remnant among the Jews, who will have acquired special wisdom in God’s school. But now it is for us to learn wisdom in God’s school. There are four elements connected with this question, which we find in four different Scriptures.

1. Psalms 107:43; wisdom is based on redemption and is acquired in submission to God’s ways (see the whole Psalm).

2. Jeremiah 9:12; wisdom understands God’s dealings with His own people in judgment. The prophet Jeremiah was not only well taught, but he also submitted himself to God’s thoughts.

3. Hosea 14:9; wisdom understands God’s principles and the rightness of His ways in dealing with His people. Who is wise? Who will take these things at heart?

4. This fits in with James 3:14-17, where we are at the end of the Jewish "economy" (before the destruction of the temple), which is an illustration of the end of the present dispensation. Compare also Revelation 13:18 for those who will go through the Great Tribulation: "Here is wisdom."

It is because we are at the end of the present dispensation that we have the special privilege of learning more about the ways of God. James encourages his readers to become familiar with the wisdom of God, because this is much needed by those who are living in a mixed condition of things. Matters are becoming increasingly difficult to such an extent that often we have no idea what to do. So who is wise amongst us? Let us learn here in the school of God. We are living in very dark days, but the more we study in the school of God, the more we will be conformed to our blessed Lord and the better we will shine for Him.

We read about the Father of lights. He wants us to be shining as lights. Especially in our days it is very important to focus our attention on the Lord, who is the Sun of righteousness and we, believers, are like planets turning in orbit around Him. He is the very centre, the Lord Jesus, the Son of God. He is the Sun and we are attracted by His glory, so that we can reflect His light in various ways in the dark world where we live. May the Lord help us.

Alfred E. Bouter Principles in Reception No one would dare to suggest that reception is an easy matter, especially in days of laxity on one hand and legality on the other. But the question ought firstly to be asked, "To what are people received and on what basis?" If we say, "To the local assembly," we need to be clear as to what a local assembly is, and, further than that, what the assembly is.

It should be pointed out that both assembly and church are translations of the same Greek word "ekklesia". We cannot make a distinction between the two, except that assembly avoids the idea of a particular kind of building or a denomination (or it used to). The assembly of God has been purchased with the blood of His own (Son) (Acts 20:28). It was formed when the Holy Spirit was sent down from heaven (Acts 2:1-47) and will be on earth until the rapture (1 Thessalonians 4:1-18). It is seen in Scripture as a body into which all believers have been baptised, in the Spirit’s power. (1 Corinthians 12:13). And there is only one such body (Ephesians 4:4) for the simple reason that there is only one Head, Christ risen and glorified (Ephesians 1:22). The assembly of God is also the house of the living God (1 Timothy 3:15) because every believer indwelt by the Holy Spirit is a living stone in it (1 Peter 2:5) and God by His Spirit dwells in His house on earth (Ephesians 2:21-22), just as the assembly as Christ’s (mystical) body is united to Him in heaven (Ephesians 2:6). There are not, however, two assemblies: it is one assembly seen in two aspects.

We may now take up the question of the local assembly. The apostle Paul, to whom was revealed the truth of God’s assembly, indicates in 1 Corinthians 12:27 that the saints in a place are (the)

body of Christ there. That is, the assembly in Corinth was characteristically and representatively Christ's body in Corinth. They were members, not of a local assembly, but of the body of Christ as 1 Corinthians 12:1-31 plainly shows. They were interdependently linked with all others in every place who called upon the Name of the Lord (1 Corinthians 1:2). Thus, even as to local assemblies, the oneness of all believers, the unity of the body, is maintained. There is no such thing in the New Testament as independent local assemblies. That there are those who teach that local assemblies are independent shows that we need to be careful in receiving the ideas of men. The Bible is our final authority.

Again, as we speak of "assembly fellowship", we need to bear in mind that Scripture teaches that we are called of God "unto the fellowship of His Son Jesus Christ our Lord." (1 Corinthians 1:9) While fellowship may take on different aspects, nevertheless, there is only one true Christian fellowship to which all Christians are called. Whether all enjoy and appreciate it is another thing.

Having made the above remarks, it can be observed that it is not according to Scripture to speak of "receiving to God's assembly", for God has put all true born again believers into it (Acts 2:47), nor to talk of being in fellowship in a local assembly merely, when the fellowship is universal. Any thought of being added to another assembly than the body in which every saint has been placed by God as a member is not only superfluous, but contrary to the mind of God. A Broken Church

Now, someone may ask, "Was not this in the days before men devised their own systems and denominations?" Indeed, this is so. But who suggests that God abandons His principles because saints divide themselves into sects? Has God given up the truth of the one body? Does Christ no longer care about His body and bride? It is assumed that all would agree that the answer to such questions is, "No." God still sees the assembly as one and the Scripture cannot be broken: "There is one body," still. Then the question have to be asked "How are we to act in the present outward break up of the church; what guidance have we in a day of apparent ruin in the church? Are we to start again and build another assembly?" Of course not. There is but one foundation, and that has been laid (1 Corinthians 3:11). Neither do we leave the professing church, we cannot. But we can go outside the camp of men's systems, in simplicity of faith, unto Christ and seek to take up, perhaps in a small way, the truth of the assembly and act according to the grace of God on its principles. If 1 Timothy was written when God's house was in order, we have adequate guidance in 2 Timothy when the house is in disorder. We cannot leave the house, but we can first separate from vessels to dishonour in it, that is, impure things outside us. Then, having fled youthful lusts, that is, impure things within ourselves, pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart (2 Timothy 2:22). We can in effect return to "that which was from the beginning" as Matthew 18:20 still applies even in a day of ruin. The present course, therefore, is to be gathered to the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ simply as members of His one body outside the denominations of men. At the same time we do not use His worthy Name as a party badge. We are not extra special Christians, but seek only to act according to the principles of the assembly of God, gathering to Him who is the true Centre for all (John 12-32). The basis on which to gather is that of the one body, owning even in a time of ruin the oneness of all saints on the face of the earth. And, if we were truly humbled, we would mourn the ruin as part of it (Ezra 9:1-15, Nehemiah 9:1-38, Daniel 9:1-27). We should nevertheless rejoice that we can still walk according to the light of assembly truth, though we would never dare to claim that we are THE assembly. We can, however, claim to be gathered on the ground of God's assembly, and in this

sense as an assembly.

Having learnt what the assembly is, and having understood the ruin that we find all around us, but having seen that we can still gather to the Lord’s Name as members of the one body of Christ, how are we to receive among us any who may arrive by chance or be brought by another? We have seen that it is not appropriate to speak of "receiving to God’s assembly" as if we were it, but we may speak of "receiving to practical fellowship in assembly privileges", of which participation at the Lord’s table is one. We must remember that all saints are members of the one body, the only membership known in Scripture, and therefore we cannot make members of an assembly. Indeed, the notion of a table which is only for some saints instead of embracing all the saints is pure sectarianism and contradicts the teaching of 1 Corinthians 10:17. This is why it is an evil for a company to act independently of the truth of the one body and then have the arrogance to claim that they are God’s assembly.

Care in reception

Having considered the aspect of the assembly as the body of Christ, we must remember that it is also the house of God. Holiness is the "law of the house" (Ezekiel 43:12). "Holiness becometh Thy house, O Lord, for ever." (Psalms 93:5). It follows that a company gathered to the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ is aware of the conditions appropriate to His worthy Name and the need for a true atmosphere of holiness in God’s house. Hence it may well be that not all can be received into the practical fellowship of assembly privileges, which includes the gathering to break bread, since there are Scriptural reasons for exclusion. Some may not be sound in doctrine (1 Timothy 1:20), others may be disqualified on account of sinful conduct (1 Corinthians 5:1-13), yet others may have to be refused because of association with evil (2 John 1:10; Haggai 2:11-14). Indeed, some could be under discipline elsewhere.

If someone is received in one place, however, because they are fit for fellowship in that place, they are fit for fellowship everywhere, since there is only one fellowship: that of God’s Son. Since it is the Lord who is the bond of this fellowship, it could not be imagined that standards could vary in different localities. Although a person is received to enjoy fellowship practically in one place, nevertheless, the fellowship is not limited to the scope of a local assembly merely. The idea of receiving into fellowship in one place, or putting out from a company locally, should be done in the light of universal principles of the assembly of God (1 Corinthians 1:2; 1 Corinthians 4:17; 1 Corinthians 7:17; etc.), and on behalf of the whole. The thought of the possibility of being free to break bread in one place but not in another is a denial that assemblies are all responsible to the same Lord (1 Corinthians 8:6), and that all the members of the body, irrespective of locality, have the same Head.

We should receive someone who shows evidence of being genuinely saved, therefore, because they are a member of the only membership Scripture speaks of for Christians, and that is that they are a member of the body of Christ. If there is nothing that Scripture would indicate to refuse them from taking up fellowship practically among us, as having returned to God’s true ground of gathering, reception in one locality should be on behalf of all who are in principle similarly gathered. A person excluded in one place is excluded from the whole until repentance has wrought the necessary adjustment that they may be received.

Letters of commendation should be carried by those who move from one locality to another (Romans 16:1-2; 2 Corinthians 3:1). Besides helping to reinforce practical fellowship between assemblies, they give confidence in principles of reception for "doorkeepers" who would otherwise be confronted with an apparent stranger. Fellowship can be immediately enjoyed when the bearer of a letter of commendation has the ready evidence that they are a true believer. Someone who arrives without a letter at the door the moment the meeting is about to begin can hardly expect to be received, for how in a short time can reality be proved?

M. B., Blackburn The Breaking of Bread in Days of Ruin PRINCIPLES AND PRACTICE The meeting for breaking of bread is in principle the meeting together of all Christians in the unity of the body of Christ. Every Christian, then, has a right to share in it. But at the same time, in the present state of Christianity, we are called to maintain, scrupulously, faithfully, and with zeal, the holiness of the Lord’s table (2 Timothy 2:22).

Now, the assembly is in no way a voluntary meeting of Christians who have chosen the assembly, for in that case it would be a sect. It is, so far as such a thing is possible now, the meeting of all the members of the body of Christ.

We must have sufficient evidence that those who desire to take part in it are true Christians, and that their walk is moral, Christian. Now, if they habitually meet with those who deny the truths of Christianity, they are defiled; and it is so also if they meet where immorality is allowed.

Difference in ecclesiastical views is not a sufficient reason for shutting out a soul. But if one wanted to be one day among the brethren, the next among the sects, I should not allow it, and would not receive such a person; for, instead of using the liberty which belongs to him to enjoy the spiritual communion of the children of God, he puts forward the pretension to change the order of the house of God, and to perpetuate the separation of Christians.

J.N.D. (1881) From Our Archive "The Morning Star"

Christ Our Hope (Continued from page 176) In connection with the apostle Peter’s account of the transfiguration, we do well to notice that his second epistle is of a more general character than his first. It evidently embraces the whole church and thus falls into line with the wider application of the gospel, as it was committed to Paul. See Galations 2:6-10. To Peter had been committed "the gospel of the circumcision"; which means that Jews and proselytes were naturally first in his thoughts; and ministry to Gentiles, as in the case of Cornelius, was exceptional (Acts 10:1-48; Acts 11:1-30). Paul, on the contrary, was sent definitely to the Gentiles, while not excluding the Jews whom he necessarily met, and had first to deal with in the synagogues. For his habit was to go there in order to find the copies of the Old Testament Scriptures from which he proved that Jesus of Nazareth was "the Christ" to whom those Scriptures everywhere bore witness (Acts 9:15; Acts 17:13; Acts 26:17-18).

Peter’s first epistle was addressed more particularly to the converted Jews scattered over the provinces of Asia Minor, probably before or about the time that Jerusalem was destroyed by Titus. All who heeded the Lord’s warning had then to leave the city (Luke 21:20-24). This extended to a period of forty years after the Lord had suffered on the cross. Terrible indeed were those "days of vengeance" on the unbelieving people, then weeping in vain for themselves and their children (Luke 23:27-31). We can thus understand better what reproach "for the Name of Christ" meant in

those days (1 Peter 4:14). But in the second epistle, the apostle had good reason to feel that Jerusalem as a centre was blotted out from the earth, and that both Jew and Gentile must rally round the character of the gospel specially entrusted to Paul. It was no longer a question of Jews being blessed in a new way, that is with a full knowledge of accomplished redemption, and of the efficacy of the blood of Christ, but, notwithstanding that, on lines set forth in Abraham's history, who confessed that he was a stranger and pilgrim on the earth (Hebrews 11:13). True as that must needs remain for Christians in all time, there was and is a still deeper truth at the basis of the church's standing, namely the personal knowledge of the SON OF GOD. The Jews naturally looked for blessing on earth; the Christian finds it already in the person of Christ.

Now Paul began with this in his preaching at Damascus. And in agreement with it, Peter's second epistle speaks of the precious things "that pertain unto life and godliness" through the knowledge of God and of our Lord Jesus Christ.* In that "knowledge" we have to grow and increase, learning not only the grace but also the "fulness" which is in the SON (John 1:14-16). That is the great theme of John's writings, both of Gospel and epistle.

Moreover, it is interesting to notice the humble place that Peter takes, putting "servant" before "apostle" in the opening verse of this second epistle, besides referring so definitely to "all" the epistles of "our beloved brother Paul", at the close. His conclusion is "Grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." God takes up man as he is, without taking into account national distinctions of any kind; for there is "no difference" in this respect, that "all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:22-23). But then again, "the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon Him"; and with this Peter's words agree. His second epistle is addressed "to them that have obtained like precious faith with us." Do not these words recall what the blessed Lord said on the occasion of the coming of the Greeks who desired to see Him? Speaking of His suffering on the cross, so soon to come about, and of the consequent "judgment of this world," He added, "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all unto Me" (John 12:32). See also John 11:52; John 3:16. The gospel cannot be shut up within narrow Jewish limits, in spite of their great privilege in possessing the Scriptures. All are naturally dead in trespasses and sins dead to God; and He comes in on their behalf with that quickening power, shown in raising up Christ from the dead (Ephesians 1:19-23; Ephesians 2:1-10). What a blessing it is for us to have this assurance from God Himself! But if, on the one hand, nationalities are dropped, so that there is "neither Greek no Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free: but Christ is all, and in all," there is also another kind of distinction more difficult to overcome, that of religious and class hatred, a distinction found often in the gospel history amongst the Jews themselves, and well illustrated by the parable of the Pharisee and the publican in Luke 18:1-43. That feeling was deep rooted in Saul of Tarsus when the Lord met him in grace. But even he had to come into blessing together with the thief on the cross, whose language he practically uses at the end of Galatians 2:1-21, when he says, "I am crucified with Christ." The cross is thus, so to speak, the birthplace of "the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of Him that created him" (Colossians 3:10).

{*We may usefully compare in this respect 2 Peter 1:2, 3, 8; 2 Peter 2:20; 2 Peter 3:18; with Colossians 1:10, and Phillipians 3:8.} And how infinitely precious is this knowledge of the Son of God! Paul's object in life was to "know Him." The excellency of that knowledge delivered him entirely from his own righteousness and enabled him to count those things which were, from a

Jewish point of view, most advantageous to him, to be but loss for Christ (Php 3:3-11).

We may go even further in considering the account of his conversion and affirm that the practical apprehension of the "mystery," afterwards confided to his ministry, was in the persons of those whom he most hated on account of his religious zeal. This is a matter of the deepest importance for us all. And we may ask ourselves individually the question, what is the Person of the Christ to my own heart? Are all its hidden, ardent, inward longings expressed in those few words, "That I may know HIM"? When the voice from heaven said, "Why persecutest thou ME?" who were they that, in the Lord's judgment, were signified and embraced in that word "ME"? Was it not the very ones that Saul was committing to prison and to death (Acts 22:4-5; Acts 26:10-11)? Are we accustomed to realise and enjoy in this way our position and privileges, as members of the body of Christ? That is to say, not so much by our own personal feelings as by what all His "members" are to Him, and by the love and care which He bestows upon His church? Do we enter practically into the meaning of that word, "to comprehend with all saints ... the love of Christ" (1 Corinthians 12:25-26; Ephesians 3:18-19; Ephesians 5:29)? If not, would it not suggest that, in our minds, there are lurking many of the thoughts and prejudices common to the Pharisees among the Jews? Surely this calls for much self-judgment. When we begin to learn our own privileges by what is realised in the consciences of our brethren, "love in the Spirit" asserts itself, as in those to whom Epaphras ministered (Colossians 1:7-8; Colossians 4:12). That love is measured by the Lord's love to all His redeemed, and again by the Father's love to Him (John 15:9-13). May the apostle's earnest desires be more found in each one of us, as the fruit of the operation of the Holy Spirit, "To know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God" (Ephesians 3:19)! The Holy Spirit's mission is to take of Christ's things and show them to us, and thus lead our souls into the practical enjoyment of the Father's love (John 16:13-15).

It is true that Paul does not actually refer to the "morning star" in so many words; but all his epistles set forth what it is to the heart occupied with Christ who is now hidden in the heavens. He is our "life," though not as yet in outward manifestation, for it is "hid" with Him in God; He Himself is also our "hope" (Colossians 1:27; Colossians 3:3-4; 1 Timothy 1:1). He it is to whom the Father bore witness on the mount of transfiguration, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye Him" (Matthew 17:5). In keeping with this, Paul gives expression to what he learned on the road to Damascus in that remarkable word, "It pleased God ... to reveal His SON IN ME, that I might preach Him," and, further on, "The life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the SON OF GOD, who loved me, and gave Himself for me"; and again, "Ye are all God's sons by faith in Christ Jesus" (Galatians 1:16; Galatians 2:20; Galatians 3:26).

Christ glorified in the heavens is the source of all our present blessing now and occupation with Himself gives power in the soul to enjoy it. He it is who gives us that closing word, 'I AM ... the bright and morning star."

Sonship The morning star has a heavenly character peculiar to itself as a "star," and is thus connected with the church in a twofold way, as we shall see, whether we consider it as the house of God now on earth, or as the body of Christ. The latter was the "mystery" specially confided to the apostle Paul (Ephesians 3:2; Ephesians 3:4). All the truth about the church depends upon and flows from what Christ is in His own Person-THE SON OF GOD. And therefore sonship is a prominent feature in the passages which unfold it. This calls for serious attention. The church is

first mentioned in Matthew 16:1-28. At the close of His patient ministry in Galilee, the Lord asked His disciples, "Whom do men say that I, the Son of man*, am?" Various were the thoughts about Him, but as soon as He received from Peter the desired answer, He said, "Blessed art thou, Simon BarJona:-for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but MY FATHER which is in heaven." We are thus placed at once in the presence of THE FATHER and THE SON, which is the great theme of John's Gospel (John 1:18; John 20:17). Then Jesus added immediately, "And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter (that is, a stone); and upon this rock I will build MY CHURCH." Peter was thus recognised by the Lord as a representative "stone" in the building; that is to say, that every one of those who thus form a part of it, are characterised by this confession made to the Lord Himself, "Thou art the Christ, the SON of the living God" (Matthew 16:13-18).

{*How simply and perfectly are the two sides of the Lord's Person set forth, without any human effort, in the second Psalm, verse 7! It is Messiah, the Anointed One, who says, "I will declare the decree: Jehovah hath said unto Me, Thou art My Son' this day have I begotten Thee." Born into this world, He is declared to be the 'SON OF GOD." Compare Isaiah 7:14; Isaiah 9:6; Luke 1:35. The Father's voice confirmed this when, at His baptism, Jesus associated Himself outwardly with those who had confessed their sins under John the Baptist's preaching; the voice from heaven proclaimed, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased" (Matt. 3:16-17). the Lord will have the same confession from the heart and mouth of His disciples, as in the case of Peter (Rom. 1:4; Rom. 10:9) The word "build" is an evident allusion to a well-known Old Testament figure of the dwelling-place of God in the midst of His redeemed people.* It will have its counterpart in the eternal state (Rev. 21:3). As an apostle, Peter had his place in the foundation (Eph. 2:20), the blessed Lord Himself being "the chief cornerstone," or, according to the passage in Matthew, "the rock" on which the church is built (see 1 Cor. 3:10, 11). No other foundation can ever be laid. More than this, the fact of God's present dwelling in the midst of His saints involves personal responsibility on their side which is of the deepest moment (see Ps. 68:18; 2 Cor. 6:16). The apostle insists upon it after speaking of the church in its future completed glory, in Ephesians 2:20, 21. Considered with reference to the future, it is growing "unto an holy temple in the Lord", but at the same time it is equally true that believers are now "builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit" (ver. 22).

{*See Zech. 2:10; Zech. 3:9; Zech. 4:6-10; Zech. 6:12-13, 15. It is true that the first form of God's dwelling-place in the midst of His redeemed people was necessarily a "tabernacle" or tent, as long as the people were in the wilderness, moving from place to place (Ex. 25; 8; 1 Chr. 17:56). When, after David's time, they were peacefully settled in the land of Canaan, the tabernacle was replaced by a temple built of stones. In this way Solomon's Temple, glorious as it was, but finally destroyed by the Chaldeans on account of the sins of the people, is still a figure of what is to be in a yet future day, when the millennial temple described in Ezekiel, will be built (Isa. 2:23, etc.). Here again there is a divine forecast of the spiritual or heavenly Jerusalem.} The history of God's ancient people is full of instruction for us. We are told that, "Whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope" (Romans 15:4). Consequently we may observe in all these Old Testament passages that we have referred to, besides many others (such as Ezekiel 37:26, etc.), a deeper spiritual signification addressed to the heart and conscience of believers at the present time. The Lord's answer to Peter involves this, and the epistles, especially Paul's, make it clear. We need,

however, to remember that in the case of Israel their future establishment and blessing will be on earth and in the Holy Land, whereas in the case of the church in its future manifested glory, it is seen to come down from God, "out of heaven" (Revelation 21:10-11). This contrast between earth and heaven must be borne in mind. No adequate estimate of the church, even in its most elementary character as a spiritual building, can be formed apart from its heavenly origin. That is to say that its final manifestation in heavenly glory is but a consequence of its heavenly start in connection with the Person of the Son of God, now seated "on the right hand of the Majesty on high" (Hebrews 1:3; Hebrews 8:1-2). That its very constitution is heavenly would appear from a comparison of Hebrews 8:1-2 with Exodus 15:17; and we may infer it from the Lord's words to Nicodemus (John 3:12-13). For He came to speak of "heavenly things." But the formation of the church was still future when the Lord spoke to Peter, for He said, "upon this rock I will build My church (Matthew 16:18).

William Joseph Lowe (1838-1927).

(To be continued, if the Lord will).

News from the Field

Dear Brother, By God's grace and mercy Gloria, the boys and I were able to make the 22 day trip to Bhutan and Manipur via Calcutta. We returned to Bombay a few days ago totally exhausted because of the long hours of travel on the trains and buses, and in temperatures of up to 42°C. In spite of all the hardships and difficulties we had to face we are so thankful to the Lord that we made this trip because the saints were encouraged and we ourselves were blessed and challenged by the faith and love of the believers, especially of those in Bhutan.

We are always challenged by the faith and love of our dear brethren in Bhutan. In spite of their situation, they have such a cheerful disposition and love for the Lord and His people. We were able to visit Phuntsholing, Gaylegphug and Thimpu. It was a blessed experience to break bread in Phuntsholing and Thimpu. The situation in Bhutan is very sad these days. Almost 100,000 Nepali Bhutanese have been expelled from Bhutan. They have lost everything houses, lands, jobs, and have been separated from loved ones and they are now in refugee camps on the Nepal border. Amongst these are more than 30 believer families. Brothers Jeremiah Dhakal and Som Bahadur visited the camps before we reached Bhutan and said the plight of all the refugees was very bad. They said that tears would come to our eyes if they told us everything. Actually, all the time we were in Bhutan, our hearts were heavy because we knew the brothers and sisters were thinking of their loved ones. They all kept saying to us that their own position was not secure as any day they too could be in the camps. None of them could guarantee that they would be in Bhutan in November. Many of the believers have good jobs in the Govt. services, but any day they may have to leave. What impressed us most was that in spite of this bleak future before them, all of them are strong in the faith, attend all the meetings, and are encouraging one another to press on.

We were able to have meetings with these dear saints and also to answer many of their questions. Those with whom they were in fellowship up to 3 years ago are seeking to cause discord and confusion amongst these simple believers. Many portions of Scripture are taken out of context and used to confuse the saints. The brethren requested us to come as often as we can because of this. My wife was able to spend much time amongst the sisters and to answer their questions.

Many of the sisters had questions about women's place which we were able to clarify from the Scriptures.

Brother Jeremiah and others are in the refugee camps as I am writing this letter. We were able to give some funds for medicines, milk and food. We are planning to go to the refugee camps in July, and also to spend some more time with the saints in Bhutan. From Bhutan we returned to Calcutta and then flew to Imphal. Here we were met by Bro. Bhumeshor Sharma who is in fellowship with us, but is at the present time all alone. We have a literature depot in Imphal which is looked after by Bro. Sharma. We hope to reach out with literature to all the North East states of Manipur, Nagaland, Mizoram and Meghalaya. About 150 years ago most of the people in these states were head hunters, but the gospel came to them and their forefathers became Christians. The main denomination here is the Baptist Church, but sad to say, today, the lives of most of these people is very worldly and evil. Many are on drugs and there are many aids cases. What a bad testimony for the Lord Jesus Christ. Please pray for our literature work here. We can thank God that many can speak and read English, so we can use our English literature here. There is a great demand for Bibles, because the people like to own a Bible, even though they may not read it. There are so many tribal languages also, but we can get Bibles in these languages too. So, we have an open door here for the gospel and we also pray that there will be those who are interested in the assembly. God is able! We were able to speak to some young brothers about the ground of gathering.

We were able to spend one Lord's Day with the saints in the village of Bro. Sunil Ghosh, and were encouraged to see these simple poor believers living for the Lord amongst Hindu neighbours. It is not easy to be a Christian in an Indian village surrounded by Hindus and all the strange customs of village life. In India, people think that only low castes become Christians.

Three Brothers from Patna, Bihar, came along with us on the trip to Bhutan. They were much encouraged by the lives of the Bhutan saints. All the believers in Bhutan are from a Hindu background; there is not a single believer from a Christian background. This had a great impact on the three young men from Patna, because they also are from a Hindu background. They face much hardship as they stand for Christ, and may even have to literally give up all for Him. There are six young men now in Patna who want to remember the Lord, and we hope to visit them in July on our way to Bhutan. The little book room in Patna run by Bro. Anand Prasad and his five friends is being used to reach out to many in Bihar. All our Hindi literature contacts are handled from here. We have much to praise the Lord for as we labour for Him here in India. With almost 900 millions and a wide open door we have much to do.

We send love and greetings to all the saints who are praying for us, and the work in India.

Yours in Christ, Ronny Fernandes, Bombay.

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Contents Our Resources in a Day of Departure — An Address on Second Timothy A Man of God in the Old Testament The Life of David (2) David's Army Enoch, or Walking with God The Armour of God (2) From our Archive — The Morning Star News from the Field

Quotations from Scripture are generally taken either from the King James translation or Mr. J.N. Darby's translation. Quotations taken from any other translation will be indicated in the course of the article, or in a footnote to the article. Our Resources in a Day of Departure An Address on Second Timothy

I wish to draw your attention to the last epistle written by the apostle Paul, and it has particular reference to the declension and disorder prevailing in the Christian testimony in the last days. It has therefore a special interest for us today, so I would like to emphasise the special features of each chapter in turn.

2 Timothy 1:1-18 The Purposes of God in a Day of Defection

Verse 15 stresses the defection that characterised Paul's day and alas our day too. "This thou knowest, that all they which are in Asia be turned away from me; of whom are Phygellus and Hermogenes." How sad that the one who had been used of God to unfold the truth of the heavenly calling and the mystery of Christ and the church should be deserted by those to whom he had brought the truth! It was not that these saints had turned from Christ, but they were not prepared to be associated with the apostle in the outside place of rejection. They were not prepared to share the reproach of one who was then a prisoner for Christ's sake. But the question is, what is there for us in such a day of defection, a day of turning away from the truth? And surely it is a day of departure, for many who once walked in a path bearing the reproach of Christ have now given it up for a wider path which offers more attraction to the natural heart and has a greater appeal to the flesh. What is there then for us in a day of such extensive departure? First of all, we are exhorted as Timothy was, not to be ashamed of the testimony of the Lord. What is this testimony? It is the testimony of the glorified Lord, the testimony concerning the glorified Man in the supreme place of power on high. But more than this testimony we have the purpose of God revealed in the gospel, and this remains true and steadfast, as real to us today as ever it was. The apostle bids Timothy not to be ashamed of such a testimony or of him as a prisoner, but to be a "partaker of the afflictions of the gospel according to the power of God; Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling". It is clear that the two great themes of the gospel are salvation and calling. On the one hand the gospel proclaims the way of salvation: on the other it presents the purpose of God for which we are saved. It is plain that the first great object of the gospel is our salvation, and God would have us to be in no uncertainty as to this. He "hath saved us" — it is a perfect and accomplished work. But not only has God saved us, He has "called us with an holy calling". It is a heavenly calling in Hebrews 3:1-19, in contrast with the earthly calling of the Jew; it is the calling

on high in Christ Jesus in Php 3:1-21 as opposed to those who mind earthly things. But here it is an holy calling: there is no lowering of God's standard in a day of increasing evil. In the calling of God there is spread before us a vast vista of heavenly blessing, for we are blessed with all spiritual blessings in the heavenlies in Christ. And all this blessing was purposed for us in Christ before the foundation of the world. This eternal purpose has now been "made manifest by the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ, who hath annulled death, and hath brought life and incorruptibility to light through the gospel." Our very bodies will share the fruits of the mighty victory of our Lord over death and the grave. "For our commonwealth has its existence in the heavens, from which also we await the Lord Jesus Christ as Saviour, who shall transform our body of humiliation into conformity to His body of glory, according to the working of the power which He has even to subdue all things to Himself" (Php 3:20-21).

2 Timothy 2:1-26 The Path of Separation in a Day of Corruption

It is a day of corruption, for all kinds of false teaching and heretical doctrine are abroad. Two false teachers are actually named: Hymenaeus and Philetus, who declared that the resurrection was already past. That is they were making it a spiritual thing, probably basing their contention on Ephesians 2:1-22, where we are said to be quickened with Christ. And are not some so-called church leaders today leading souls astray by denying the virgin birth and the bodily resurrection of the Lord Jesus? Surely these are vessels to dishonour in the professing church today. And as in Paul's day, so in ours, the faith of many is being overthrown.

"Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure", says the apostle. In spite of the ruin and wreck of the outward testimony, what God has established remains firm and immovable. It is not a question here what the foundation is (though there be but one, namely Christ) but it is rather the fact that there is a foundation of God, which is absolutely beyond the reach of all Satan's devices. This foundation has a double seal, God's sovereignty ("The Lord knoweth them that are His") and man's responsibility ("Let every one who names the name of the Lord withdraw from iniquity").

We are living in a day when the house of God on earth has become like a great house — a sphere in which believers and mere professors have become mixed and indistinguishable. The figure used is that of a great house built by a man of substance, and containing all kinds of vessels for the master's use, some to honour, some to dishonour.

Separation from evil is the first step in God's path. However great the corruption there is never a period in the church's history on earth when the godly are left without direction. God has foreseen the ruin, and He has provided clear directions for us to follow in a day of ruin like the present. We are called upon to separate from iniquity, from all that is unrighteous in the sight of a holy God, and also to separate from persons associated with evil, the vessels to dishonour. Only thus can we be vessels unto honour, sanctified and suitable for the Master's use, and prepared unto every good work. Do we not desire to be clean and sanctified vessels that the Master can take us at any time and use in His service and to His glory?

Then there is the positive side of separation. "Flee also youthful lusts: but follow (or pursue) righteousness, faith, love, peace with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart." Righteousness, practical righteousness, is very important in these days. We need to exercise ourselves, like the apostle, to have a conscience void of offence toward God, and toward men

(Acts 24:16). Our practice must go hand in hand with our doctrine. Faith too is very important, for without faith it is impossible to please God. The apostles cried, "Lord, increase our faith", but the increase comes when we put our faith into practice. The more we use our faith in full confidence in God, the more it grows. Then love is essential to a victorious and harmonious Christian life. It is like the oil that keeps the machinery running smoothly and effectually. How important this is in our assembly life! Peter draws an interesting distinction between brotherly love and love: he exhorts us to add to brotherly kindness love (2 Peter 1:7). Brotherly love goes out to those whose qualities appeal to us, we cannot help loving them, but what about that difficult brother or sister with whom we don't seem to get on so well? We must love them because they belong to the Lord equally as ourselves. The love of God is shed abroad in our hearts, and we must let it flow out to all who are the Lord's. Lastly, we are to follow peace, as we are reminded in Hebrews 12:14, "Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord". "Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God" (Matthew 5:9). In the assembly let us aim at being a peacemaker rather than a disturber of the peace!

2 Timothy 3:1-17 The Sufficiency of the Holy Scriptures in a Day of Imitation This third chapter gives a solemn description of the terrible condition into which the Christian profession will fall in the last days, and are not these features true of the present day? — "men shall be lovers of their own selves — lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God". Jannes and Jambres were the magicians who withstood Moses and Aaron in the presence of Pharaoh. When Aaron cast down his rod before Pharaoh, as the Lord had commanded, and it became a serpent, the magicians also did the same with their enchantments (Exodus 7:10-11). Thus they resisted the truth by imitating the action of the Lord's servants; and it is in this way that the truth will be opposed in the perilous times of the last days. But is not this imitation of the truth the great danger of the present day? Satan is busy presenting that which may seem like the truth, but mixed up with it is poisonous error calculated to deceive unwary souls. "Evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived" (verse 13). So what is our resource in this day of imitation? Our safeguard against error is the inspiration and sufficiency of the holy Scriptures. Paul says to Timothy, "Continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them; and that from a child thou hast known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus." Salvation here would be not only the salvation of our souls, but would include the day by day salvation from the wiles of the devil.

Then he goes on to emphasise a most important truth: All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, or is God breathed, that is, given by the operation of the Holy Spirit through human vessels as a revelation of the divine mind. Doubtless the holy Scriptures which Timothy had known from a child would be the Old Testament Scriptures, but when the apostle states that "Every Scripture is divinely inspired" he includes all the writings of the New Testament too. Thus we have in God's holy and inspired Word all that we need to maintain a godly walk down here.

2 Timothy 4:1-22 The Lordship of Christ in a Day of Coercion The aged apostle is at the end of his pilgrim journey. "I am now ready to be offered;", he says, "and the time of my departure is at hand." He is under great pressure. "For Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world ... Only Luke is with me ... Alexander the coppersmith did me much evil . . . of whom be thou ware also; for he hath greatly withstood our words. At my first answer no man stood with me, but all men

forsook me." There is more to come, but this is sufficient to indicate the intense pressure upon the dear apostle in the closing days of his testimony. What was his resource at such a time? It was the Lordship of Christ. "Notwithstanding the Lord stood with me, and strengthened me". Read the chapter through and see how many times the Lordship of Christ is referred to.

Look again at verse 16, "At my first answer no man stood with me, but all men forsook me". I think this refers to his first appearance before the Imperial Tribunal at Rome. No one was found to accompany him to the court, all forsook him. Yet in the face of such bitter desertion he was assured of the Lord's presence, and he could say, "Notwithstanding the Lord stood with me, and strengthened me (or gave me power)", so that the effort of the enemy was turned into an occasion for the proclamation of the gospel to the Gentiles who filled the court of trial. And the apostle tells us that he was delivered out of the mouth of the lion: he was delivered out of the hands of the wicked Emperor Nero, who was but the tool of Satan now going about as a roaring lion seeking whom he might devour. Such was the confidence of the apostle that he could say, "The Lord shall deliver me from every evil work, and will preserve me unto His heavenly kingdom". One has said that the heavenly kingdom may indeed be reached through a martyr's death, but the apostle knew that to die was gain, for it would bring him into the presence of his beloved Lord in His heavenly glory.

Very beautifully Paul closes this epistle to Timothy with the desire that the Lord Jesus Christ may be with his spirit. It has been said that we may be right in doctrine and principle, and even outward conduct, and yet be wrong in spirit. If the Lord Jesus is with us in spirit we shall exhibit, in our words and ways, the very spirit of Jesus Christ our Lord.

A.R.C. A Man of God in the Old Testament The expression "man of God" occurs about 76 times in the Old Testament, and only two times in the New. Except where Moses is spoken of, it refers to those who witnessed to God's people in a day of departure. Let's take a brief look at some of those whom Scripture calls "a man of God". AN ANGEL OF THE LORD This person announced the birth of Samson, declaring that he would be a Nazarite, set apart for God, in a day when the people of God suffered under the oppression of the Philistines (Judges 13:6-7).

SAMUEL As the "seer" he "saw" things as God did and was able to communicate these things to the people of God. He was a forerunner of David, the man after of God's own heart (1 Samuel 9:6; 1 Samuel 9:10).

DAVID

He appointed the service of God for priests, Levites, singers, musicians and doorkeepers in relation to the temple and the city of God (2 Chronicles 8:14; Nehemiah 12:24; Nehemiah 12:36).

SHEMAIAH

He commanded King Rehoboam not to fight "his brethren", the recently separated ten tribes (1 Kings 12:22; 2 Chronicles 11:3).

ANONYMOUS

God sometimes commissioned unnamed men of God to give a word of correction to His backsliding people. He used such men to speak with spiritual power:

- To Eli the high priest because of failures in his family (1 Samuel 2:27).

- To King Jeroboam of Israel for replacing Jehovah’s chosen centre with an idolatrous and independent religious centre of his own making. (In this case the prophet is called a man of God 17 times in 1 Kings 13:1-34 and 2 Kings 23:1-37.)

- To King Amaziah of Judah who obeyed His word by separating from an unholy alliance with Israel (2 Chronicles 25:7; 2 Chronicles 25:9).

ELIJAH AND ELISHA In a special day of ruin among the ten tribe kingdom of Israel, God sent these two special witnesses to bring back the heart of the people to Himself; and to bring out the unlimited resources of His sovereign grace (see 1 Kings 17:1-24 through to 2 Kings 13:1-25). Both of their lives invite detailed study. The expression occurs at least seven times for Elijah and thirty times for Elisha.

HANAN At a time in Judah’s history when departure from God’s chosen centre of worship had succeeded a special revival under King Josiah, we meet Hanan (Jeremiah 35:4). His name (meaning a "gracious giver") reminds us of God’s sovereign grace, also available to us. His father’s name, Igdaliah (meaning "God will wax great") suggests that we can find a continual remedy and preservative for our hearts in the greatness of God. Note that Jeremiah (meaning "Jehovah is highly exalted") prophesied during the same dismal period, one so similar to our days.

MOSES

Moses was the deliverer of God’s people out of Egypt. He was their lawgiver, leader, shepherd and intercessor. He is a type of the Lord Jesus as the great apostle (see Hebrews 3:16).

God used him to reveal His thoughts to His people.* Deuteronomy 18:15 calls him in that context a prophet. It is striking to see the various Scriptures which denote him as a special man of God:

{*Moses laid down the whole foundation on which the rest of the Scriptures have been built. In Luke 24, the Lord speaks about the writings of Moses as clearly distinguished from the prophets. The latter were used by God to bring the backsliding people back to Himself There is also a reference to the other Scriptures (sometimes under the collective name of "the Psalms"), where we find especially the experiences and feelings of the people of God, under God’s discipline and restoration.} Deuteronomy 33:1 — In blessing Israel in connection with the land and the purposes of God.

Joshua 14:6 — In expressing the value of the promised land to a true overcomer like Caleb.

Psalms 90:1-17 — In relation to the wilderness experiences after the people had rejected the promised land. (See the heading of the Psalm.) Ezra 3:2 In revealing the thoughts of the God of Israel as to His altar and His burnt offerings.

1 Chronicles 23:14 — In his sons and descendants being named among the tribe of Levi and given a place in the service of the temple.

2 Chronicles 30:16 In the recovery under Hezekiah the priests and Levites "stood in their place . . . according to the law of Moses the man of God".*

{*In the first three references, the main thought is God’s promised land. According to Moses’ example, a man of God today is occupied with the things which are of special interest to God’s own heart. The people of Israel despised the land of God’s choice: likewise, many Christians today have often no idea of our heavenly, spiritual and eternal blessings, which belong to our heavenly calling and position in and with Christ in heaven. In the next three passages the leading thought is recovery and restoration, although only a small remnant was brought back from the Babylonian captivity. Ezra, Nehemiah and the books of Chronicles were written from the perspective of God’s sovereign grace, in order to realise a restoration with regard to the things He had given earlier, connected with the man after His own heart.}

CONCLUSION What does God expect from a "man of God" today?

- To be occupied with the things which are of special interest to His own heart. As Moses valued God’s promised land in spite of the indifference of Israel, so we must value our heavenly blessings, calling, and position in spite of the general indifference of Christendom.

- To seek recovery and restoration among God’s people in accordance with God’s principles. As God’s sovereign grace restored things through "men of God" after His own heart in the history of Israel, so it would restore things in our present day of ruin through such "men of God" men who maintain divine principles in a spirit of grace rather than one of legality and formalism.

- To love the One who is the very Centre of everything in God’s world . . . to centre all our thoughts and actions around the true Man of God, His beloved, our Lord Jesus Christ.

Alfred E. Bouter.

(An article by the same author on "A Man of God in Our Day" is to follow in the next issue, if the Lord will). The Life of David (2) David’s Army. 1 Chronicles 12:8; 1 Chronicles 12:40 A king without a throne has no authority. A king without an army has no power. David, the man after God’s own heart, was anointed king over Israel by Samuel the prophet of God (1 Samuel 16:13). He was unable to occupy the throne of Israel because Saul, the rejected king, sat on it. Saul had been rejected by God because he had been disobedient (1 Samuel 15:9; 1 Samuel 15:12). Because of Saul’s unjust enmity towards him David had to leave the king’s presence and instead of sitting on Israel’s throne he lived in a stronghold in a wilderness (1 Chronicles 12:8). It was in that situation that David began to gather to himself an army, an army that eventually enabled him to gain the throne of Israel. David, the attractive young man, the conqueror of Goliath, the victor over the Philistines, was the gathering centre of his army. They separated themselves to him (5: 8), they came to him (5: 16, 22, 23), they were with him (5: 39), and they professed "Thine are we David" (5: 18). All this teaches a very solemn, yet encouraging, lesson for our day. Jesus, God’s anointed King, is not occupying His regal throne and ruling over the world (Psalms 2:6; Luke 1:30-33; John 19:17-22). His rights are refused and usurped by rebellious and disobedient men who are energised by Satan, the arch enemy of Christ. The Lord Jesus was and is rejected by this world. However, He is the gathering centre for many who love Him and are prepared to uphold His rights in their lives whatever is against Him and them. Willingly they have fellowship in His sufferings and as good soldiers of Jesus Christ they patiently wait the day of Christ’s manifestation when those who suffer with Him now will share in His glory.

Jesus, the rightful King of Israel, was rejected by Israel and crucified. God raised Him from the dead and exalted Him to His right hand. In that glorious place He is crowned with glory and honour, as Hebrews 2:9 tells us. He received the victor's crown. In Revelation 19:11-16 where Jesus is depicted coming in power and glory He has on His head many crowns, the emblem of kingly or imperial dignity.*

{*The word for "crowned" in Hebrews 2:9 is stephanoo and in Revelation 19:12 it is diadeema. This shows the accuracy of Scripture. Jesus is King, but He is not yet reigning. See W. E. Vine's Dictionary of Greek Words.}

David's army was not a motley, indisciplined rabble. On the contrary they present a most interesting collection of warriors and a consideration of them will supply important truths for our edification.

Separated and Committed The Gadites, courageous men of war, separated themselves to David (1 Chronicles 12:8-15). The children of Benjamin and Judah committed themselves to David, "Thine are we, David, and on they side, thou son of Jesse" (5: 16-18). T o be separated to David meant separation to him and his interests and separation from Saul and his interests. A very serious and deliberate decision to make. To be committed to David meant the acknowledgement of his complete control over them. These two features are indispensable for an army. Soldiers who have no interests but those of their commander in chief, and who are loyal to his commands, constitute an army that will be formidable in battle. Transfer these principles to believers who follow the Lord Jesus and they present encouragement and also a challenge. When believers in Jesus, the Son of God, were baptised in the early days of the church, they virtually said "If we are Jews we are finished with all that is connected with the synagogue. If we are Gentiles we are finished with all that is connected with pagan myth and idolatry. We are baptised to Christ and desire to live for His interests solely". What was true then is true today. Every baptised person is responsible to rightly support the interests of Christ. Such soldiers of Christ should have no entanglements (2 Timothy 2:4). How many interests interfere with Christ's interests? Too many, perhaps. Separation to Christ is a great honour and privilege. It is also a great and solemn challenge. To confess Jesus Christ as Lord brings salvation to the confessor but it also brings a very great responsibility. When Jesus is confessed as Lord it means that He alone has authority over us and there are no other lords to whom we give our loyalty. He is our "One Lord" (Ephesians 4:5; 1 Corinthians 8:5-6). How many loyalties interfere with loyalty to Christ? How much better to be positive soldiers of Christ and in single minded separation and loyalty to Him to serve Him as enabled by the Holy Spirit and in obedience to the Word of God. This will involve our time and talents and bring testings and trials but will earn the Commander's thanks. "Well done, good and faithful soldiers".

Why Fight for David?

History abounds with reasons for warfare. Some wars were waged in order to gain increased power and territory. Others were fought to stop aggressors and evil tyranny. While some nations fought from the urge to kill and plunder, David's army had a cause and it was both good and uncomplicated. The cause was to make David the undisputed king over Israel. As far as God was concerned Saul was rejected from his kingly position and another, better than him, was chosen to be king (1 Samuel 15:23; 1 Samuel 15:28). That word was final and irrevocable. David's soldiers

were in accordance with God’s will and sought to make it a reality. Saul had proved incompetent and disobedient. David had justified God’s choice. It would be difficult to avoid the teaching of verse 23. The flesh is incapable of pleasing God (Romans 8:7-8). Christ is the delight of God’s heart (Matthew 3:17; Matthew 12:18). If David’s soldiers enlisted to transfer the kingdom from Saul to David, Christians should be concerned to be in line with God’s declared will. In Romans 6:6 the old man, the man incapable of pleasing God, has been crucified with Christ. And, according to Romans 8:3, God, in sending His own Son to be a sacrifice for sin, has condemned sin in the flesh. God has completely rejected the old man and his practices in the death of His beloved Son. The Christian, because of the death, resurrection and ascension of Christ and the descent of the Holy Spirit, is, in the sight of God, no longer under the influence and power of the old man and his ways. In Romans 8:14 he is viewed in relation to God’s Man, Christ Jesus. He is in Christ Jesus, a new position, no longer in the flesh (Romans 8:9). He has a new power, the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus. He has a new practice, the righteous requirement of the law is fulfilled in him in the Spirit’s power. But soldiers are engaged in conflict and Galatians 5:16-26 is a passage that indicates the kind of conflict a Christian wages against the flesh in the power of the Spirit of God. Who is going to be paramount in our lives? Christ, God’s Man, or the man after the flesh whom God has condemned in the death of Christ? A great challenge and one that faces us each day of our lives. How wonderful it would be if all believers in Christ could imitate Paul and say that they are crucified with Christ and Christ lives in them. The cause in our lives will determine the course it takes.

There were those who were expressed by name, to come and make David king (1 Chronicles 12:31). Using a well known term "they stood up to be counted", and there were eighteen thousand of them. That was a dangerous and courageous decision for the half tribe of Manasseh to make. If David’s bid for the throne failed they could expect Saul’s anger to fall upon them. But these loyal soldiers didn’t reason that way. Their lives were at the disposal of David and his interests and all and sundry could take account of it. Are our names known to be connected with Christ and His interests? Are we known as practicing Christians to our neighbours, fellow workers, school friends and relatives? The challenge to stand up and be counted is an ongoing one. "The disciples were first called Christians in Antioch" (Acts 11:26). Are we known as Christians in the place where we live?

Verse 38 presents a heart impulse in joining David’s army. "All these men of war, that could keep rank, came with a perfect heart to Hebron, to make David king over all Israel: and all the rest also of Israel were of one heart to make David king". These soldiers had a perfect heart (no other object) and a united heart (one will and motive) to make David king over all Israel. Outward order and discipline are extremely important in an army, but it’s mettle and spirit are equally important. The undivided affections that motivated these soldiers on David’s behalf contributed to the morale of his army. What a lesson for believers in our Lord Jesus Christ! If Christ’s Headship of the body had been affectionately guarded and obeyed the appalling divisions and troubles that have afflicted the church would never have occurred. To love Christ is to keep His commandments (John 14:15). To love Christ is to care for His flock (John 21:15-17). The Equipment of the Army An army without the necessary equipment to wage war is an army destined for total defeat. David’s soldiers were well prepared to fight for him. They had shields and spears; they were armed for war with weapons of war. They were fighters with fighters tools. David’s soldiers had the

necessary tools and were trained and ready to use them to make David supreme in Israel. Do Christians require armour and weapons? Yes, if they are going to be good soldiers of Jesus Christ (2 Timothy 2:3). The whole armour of God is available for all believers in Christ (Ephesians 6:13-18). The armour is necessary, indeed is vital, to engage in the conflict with the unseen forces of Satanic evil. Without the whole armour of God believers in Christ are vulnerable to Satan's power and wiles. Every part of the armour must be put on. Any part that is left off exposes a part of the soldier which the fiery darts of Satan can pierce. The strongholds of the enemy are powerful but the Christians weapons, empowered by God, can topple them to the ground (2 Corinthians 10:3-5). No Christian need be afraid of the powerful enemies of the faith. A good Roman believer uses his armour, as does a good Thessalonian believer (Romans 13:12; 1 Thessalonians 5:8). Thank God for the abundant and reliable equipment that is available for Christians in their good warfare (1 Timothy 1:18). But do believers enter into the divine armoury and equip themselves to wage warfare? That is a serious problem. If the armour and weapons that are made available for Christians are lying rusty and unused it is certain that many casualties will occur in the daily conflict. Satan is always attacking the truth of Christianity, which involves the honour and glory of Christ. Christians properly clothed with truth and the Holy Spirit's power must be ready to defend and to attack as their great Commander directs. It is very sad and solemn to remember that there was a period in Israel's history when they had no weapons of war (1 Samuel 13:19-22). They had to rely on farm implements and axes to wage warfare with the powerful Philistines. Why was there this unpreparedness? Because for years there had been gross unfaithfulness in the nation. Sin leads to weakness and weakness leads to defeat and dishonour.

Soldiers of Christ, arise, and put your armour on, Strong in the strength which God supplies through His eternal Son:

Strong in the Lord of Hosts, and in His mighty power, Who in the strength of Jesus trusts, is more than conqueror.

C. Wesley (1707-88).

F. Wallace.

(The second part of this article will follow in the next issue, if the Lord will).

Enoch, or Walking with God "And Enoch walked with God; and he was not, for God took him" (Genesis 5:24).

Enoch's name means "initiated" or "taught one", and hence also "teacher". Through walking with God he obtained an insight into God's thoughts and plans, and this enabled him to teach others as well and to act as a prophet of God in an evil world. For we are expressly told in the epistle of Jude, that Enoch prophesied, namely about the coming of the Lord to judge all the ungodly (Jude 1:14-15). Yes, God reveals His plans to His servants the prophets, as we read in the book of Amos: "He revealeth His secret unto His servants the prophets" (Amos 3:7). It is in God's heart to share His thoughts with His own, as we also see in the life of Abraham: "And the Lord said, Shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I do?" (Genesis 18:17). But this requires true knowledge of God and a walk that is pleasing to Him. How can a sinful man, who is estranged from God, be brought into a position where he is, so to speak, close to His heart and is taught about His intimate secrets? This can only be realised by the new birth and the indwelling of the Spirit of God, which

brings man into harmony with God. When we are born of God we know that God hides nothing from His dear children. So we read in 1 Corinthians 2:1-16, that it is by God's indwelling Spirit, and the inspired Word, that we know God's intimate thoughts, His plans of love. Just as it is written, "Things which eye has not seen, and ear not heard, and which have not come into man's heart, which God has prepared for them that love Him" (5:9). This is our present privilege as children of God, while we live in a world that is without God and without hope. Do we know this fellowship, this sweet communion with Him? Do we grow in the knowledge of Him and of His plans and counsels? Let us examine ourselves whether we truly walk with God.

Walking with God was Adam's privilege in the garden of Eden, but it was forfeited by man's fall. God walked in the garden in the cool of the day, but after the fall Adam and Eve hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God. However, it was at any rate enjoyed by Enoch who was taken up from this scene, and also by Noah who was brought safely through the water to reach a new world (Genesis 5:22; Genesis 5:24; Genesis 6:9; cf. Psalms 25:14, "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him"). Enoch's rapture from the earth after many years of walking with God is typical of the rapture of the church, while Noah is a type of the believing remnant of Israel that will have to pass through the "waters" of the Great Tribulation.

We as Christians acquire knowledge of God by His own revelation, the Spirit-breathed Word. We learn to know Him as our God and Father through the Lord Jesus Christ. By the Word of God we also acquire knowledge of ourselves, both of our natural condition and of our standing in Christ. We are complete in Him, in the Beloved. We also learn God's thoughts about the world in its present condition — under the rule of the prince of this world, as well as in its future condition under the rule of Christ. And we are taught as to our future portion with Christ, His coming for His own, the rapture of the saints and their introduction into the glory of the Father's house. We also learn about our role in the millennium, when we will rule with Christ over the earth after His appearing in glory and power. But we have to walk with God and only on this condition can we have an understanding of these matters. The turning point in Enoch's life seems to have been the birth of his own son. "And Enoch walked with God after he begat Methuselah three hundred years" (Genesis 5:22). Perhaps he was impressed with God's majesty as the mighty Creator. The goodness and blessing of God which he experienced in his own family, led him to repentance and a real walk with God. Then he persevered in walking with God, during three hundred years — an enormous span of time. Perhaps I may venture to say that there was not a day in all those many years that Enoch left God's side and refused to walk with Him. When we grow older, and have walked a good many years with the Lord, we tend to turn away from Him and follow our own ways (cf the life of king Solomon, who served strange gods when he grew old). But Enoch clung to the Lord, like Elisha clung to Elijah, and Ruth clung to Naomi. His long life ended in a glorious way, in that he was suddenly taken up. We as Christians have the same bright future.

Now I want to look with you at three aspects of Enoch's life being three important consequences of a walk with God:

1. As to ourselves, we learn from Enoch that we can walk in happy fellowship with God, in sweet communion with His Son. We will be blessed in the presence of the Lord, while waiting for His return from heaven to take us up and to receive us into glory (1 Thessalonians 1:9-10; 1 Thessalonians 4:15; 1 Thessalonians 4:18). Yes, we have this blessed hope that we will not see

death, but will be taken up, will be translated from this earth, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, to meet the Lord in the air (cf 1 Corinthians 15:22). In Genesis 5:1-32 the end of Enoch's life on earth stands in contrast with all the others, of whom it is repeated over and over again, "And he died". In the same way we as believers will be the great exception in this world, which is still subject to death and corruption. When "we which are alive, and remain unto the coming of the Lord," we will not see death but will be taken up to meet the Lord in the air, and thus we shall always be with Him. In the meantime He will bless us in His presence. While we walk with Him through the barren wilderness, we also stand as priests in His presence in the sanctuary (Deuteronomy 10:8), and even recline like John on Jesus' breast in the upper room (John 13:23).

2. Our walk will please the Lord, for a walk with Him will be according to His will and His thoughts. In this way God will find practically His good pleasure in His sons (Ephesians 1:5). Christ Himself is our perfect Model in this respect, for God was well-pleased in Him (Matthew 3:17). In the Septuagint (quoted in Hebrews 11:5) the words that Enoch walked with God, are rendered that he was pleasing to God. Enoch's life contrasted sharply with that of people in the line of Cain, who went out from the presence of the Lord and refused to walk with God (cf. Genesis 4:16-17). A very important feature of such a walk with God is that it is a life of faith, for "without faith it is impossible to please Him" (Hebrews 11:6). We have been justified by faith, and so we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ (Romans 5:1). But then as Christians we should continue to live by faith, for the righteous one shall live by faith — not by sight (2 Corinthians 5:7; Hebrews 10:38).

3. We will be witnesses to the world, namely of things to come, of the coming judgment over this world, and also over the religious world, nominal Christendom (Jude 1:14-15). We will warn the world through preaching the gospel, knowing the terror of the Lord (2 Corinthians 5:11). We who live in the end time — will prophesy, just as Enoch did long ago in the seventh generation from Adam, "Behold, the Lord has come amidst His holy myriads, to execute judgment against all". For He is ready to come and to execute judgment upon all: both upon an unbelieving and rebellious world, and upon apostate Christendom. Then He will introduce true righteousness, peace and happiness on earth. So let us walk with God, while waiting for His Son from heaven, and witnessing for His Name in this evil world.

H. Bouter Jnr. The Armour of God (continued from page 191) Let us now consider the various pieces of the armour. In Ephesians 5:14 we read:

"Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth." A good beginning is to gather together a few Scriptures in relation to the loins. "Gird up now thy loins like a man", God said to Job, twice, and to others also. Elijah girded up his loins and ran before Ahab (1 Kings 18:46). There are many other references, Behemoth for example, the dinosaur. We hear a lot about dinosaurs today, well, "his strength is in his loins" (Job 40:16). But the same word precisely is used of the woman of worth (Proverbs 31:17). We don't seem to hear so much about her, perhaps. She girdeth her loins with strength. There are also other references but taken together they certainly confirm what we have always heard that the loins are the seat of strength. There is other teaching also. The loins are connected with the mind. "Gird up the loins of your mind" (1 Peter 1:13). Levi was also in the loins of Abraham (Hebrews 7:5), and other references, seem to connect the loins with fruitfulness. These are a few thoughts in relation to the loins, although there is more. Our Scripture now tells us "having your loins girt about with truth". What is truth? Thy Word is truth (John 17:17). The Spirit is

truth (1 John 5:6). The Lord Jesus is the truth (John 14:6). We seem to have here what the Old Testament plainly speaks of as "truth in the inward parts" (Psalms 51:6), or, in New Testament language, "the word . . . dwelling (in us) richly, in all wisdom" (Colossians 3:16), or again "Christ dwelling in the heart by faith" (Ephesians 3:17). We are all challenged by this, doubtless. Is the Word the source of all our strength, our thinking, our fruitfulness? The encouragement of our meditation is this, that when we turn our eyes to the Lord Jesus, at all times, it was so with Him perfectly. He did not live by bread alone but by every Word of God. God's Word was hid in His heart (Psalms 119:11). In the types, the tables of the law were hidden in the ark (Exodus 25:16). It is possible (and some have done it) to build up the whole life of the Lord Jesus from the Scriptures of the Old Testament, His birth, His pathway, His ministry, His death, His resurrection, His glory, His coming again. It is evident that the Scriptures were ever in His heart and on His lips. He referred to about 20 Old Testament characters and about 19 different books in His ministry and as we move on to the close we have not only the facts but the feelings of Jesus, expressed in the very words of Scripture. Indeed on the cross 3 of the 7 sayings of Jesus were Old Testament quotations and He died with Scripture on His lips (Psalms 31:5). Nor is it otherwise in resurrection. It is just the same. On the Emmaus road and in the upper room it was still "Moses, the prophets and the Psalms". In very truth we can say His loins were girt about with truth. We put on this piece of the armour when we walk in His steps. May we do so more and more! The next words are:

"having on the breastplate of righteousness". This is not the righteousness of God, before God, as Paul teaches us in Romans. This is practical righteousness when we stand before men. Righteousness, briefly, is what is right, but what is the standard? It is for this reason we spent so long at the beginning in opening up the teaching in Ephesians. The practical life that is looked for in this epistle manifests itself in the features of a heavenly man on earth, not doing dramatic things necessarily, as we have already seen, but bringing the ribband of blue, to use the Old Testament picture (Numbers 15:38), the heavenly colour, into all the relationships and activities of everyday life, the home life, the business life, our relations with one another, our relations with all men. Moreover, since here we have mention of a breastplate it supposes a defensive position when the enemy is looking for points to attack and if there are holes how he will exploit them! Think for a moment then of our blessed Lord in what may be called a battle scene, John 8:1-59. Here you will remember He was surrounded by religious leaders, bitter enemies. At the end of the chapter they took up stones to stone Him. Later as we all know, they engineered His death. Well, that is the scene in John 8:1-59 and our blessed Lord does not hesitate to unmask them. In a lengthened discourse He shows them their true character: "Ye are of your father the devil" (5: 44). The shaft struck right home, and the response was: "Say we not well that thou art a Samaritan and hast a devil" (5: 48). A tense situation indeed! How the enemy would have loved to find a hole in His armour at such a time. Could they? Certainly not! "Which of you convinceth Me of sin?" (5: 46). Does it not gladden your heart as it does mine that we have such a captain of our salvation? No weapon that was formed against Him could prosper and every tongue that rose against Him did He condemn (Isaiah 54:17). It will be just the same in glory. When the heavenly warrior comes (Isaiah 59:17) He will wear the breastplate of righteousness. "In righteousness will He judge and make war" (Revelation 19:11). But when He has cleared the scene in judgment (what judgment!) and all His enemies will be dust (Psalms 72:9). He will be justified when He speaks, and clear when He judges (Psalms 51:4). Each one, saint and sinner, will feel that their assigned position in that day will be perfectly just. Our blessed Lord wears and will still wear, the breastplate of

righteousness. But what of ourselves? Victory is possible, as Paul shows us in 2 Corinthians 6:1-18. In defending his apostleship (what a need there is today to defend that apostleship) he could speak of "the armour of righteousness on the right hand and on the left" (5: 7). A hole in the armour is disastrous as even Shakespeare notices "conscience doth make cowards of us all". But "the righteous (that is, those practically righteous) are as bold as a lion" (Proverbs 28:1). The breastplate covers our vital organs and how we need it all the time! The next part for our consideration concerns our feet.

"shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace".

Some beloved brethren say that this is a matter of preaching the gospel. Well, we trust nothing that is now written will discourage any true gospel preachers. "Preach the Word" says the Scripture (2 Timothy 4:2) and may the Lord Himself, the Lord of the harvest, thrust forth His labourers! But when we look a little more closely at this Scripture it would not seem to refer to the preaching of the gospel. Does it not rather speak of the peace which flows into the soul that stands in the good of the gospel of peace? This needs a little explanation. If you consult the dictionary (I mean the ordinary English dictionary) you will find that peace is defined as the absence of war. That is the highest to which dictionaries can reach. But if you read your Bible you get a different thought. Briefly stated, Bible peace is peace in the midst of war. This is very arresting. One could not imagine for a moment that our God is at all disturbed or caught unawares by any storm down here. God’s throne is set in heaven and our God is a "God of peace", a description I think we find 6 times in the New Testament. This is what characterised the Lord Jesus in His holy pathway here. Again we must limit ourselves, because of space, but consider Him for a moment in those scenes that we so often ponder at the breaking of bread "when the darkness round did thicken". All Satan’s power and more was about to be let loose upon Him, despised, betrayed, forsaken . . .! And what does He say? "Peace I leave with you, My peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth (notice, not like the dictionary definition). Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid" (John 14:27). He was not only enjoying peace Himself, He was spreading it abroad to others. It is the same in resurrection, the Lord out of death, and commissioning His own "to be for Him where He had been". Characteristically His word to them as He stands in the midst is, "Peace". And why? "In the world ye shall have tribulation, but be of good cheer ("peace") I have overcome the world" John 16:33. It is abundantly clear from many other Scriptures that our pathway in this world will not be an easy one — suffering, reproach, the cross. "We must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God" (Acts 14:22). But what our Scripture is teaching us is that there is One who delights to stand alongside and breathe peace into our souls and not only into us, but that we should radiate that peace to others. I was very interested in pursuing this study to discover that the Roman soldier (from whom this imagery is taken) had hob nails in his sandals. In other words his sandals gave him a good grip of the ground on which he was standing. I think this is very attractive. We are to have a good grip of our standing in Christ and then we can begin to become helpful to others. We shall be able to bring peace into the situations that we meet, and that is what this Scripture supposes you and I are to do in the midst of some of the many problems that crop up in the present evil day.

Before we move on to the next piece of armour we do well to notice that the first three pieces of the armour seem to stand together — truth, righteousness and peace. Moreover there seems to be a moral order in it. Although the section begins with the word "stand" (5: 11 and 5: 13), truth

and righteousness precede the consideration of the feet. We cannot adopt a peaceful stance unless first we are established and grounded in truth and righteousness! We now come to a new series of three (5: 16) and the opening word "above all" is translated "besides" or "in addition" in other translations, so we seem justified in regarding the first three as basic matters. Above all then take "the shield of faith". In the original language there were two words used for shield. There is the smaller round shield which was used in individual combat but then there is the big shield, either oblong or rectangular. The word here bears resemblance to the word for a door. The Scripture therefore becomes clearer. If you are hiding behind a door you are in a pretty safe situation. But further, if you put down your shield in front of you and the man next to you puts down his shield in front of him and so on and so on, you have a wall, quite an impregnable position. That seems to be the picture here. Now we notice, "Wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked". They are fiery darts, notice, not just darts, but fiery darts. Fire in Scripture often sets forth God in the figure of judgment, "our God is a consuming fire" (Hebrews 12:29). The very worst thing that can happen to any one of us is to allow the enemy to introduce any doubt into our minds as to the love of God which is behind ALL His dealings with us. Let Scripture explain. You will recall the case of Job, that worthy patriarch, "perfect and upright, one that feared God, and eschewed evil". Satan was allowed to tempt him. He lost his possessions, he lost his family, he lost his health. His was an extreme case doubtless, worse to be sure than most of us. But then the enemy shot a fiery dart at him. It was his wife in Job's case, and this gives one to notice that although we wrestle not with flesh and blood (Ephesians 6:12) nevertheless sometimes the enemy uses flesh and blood when he attacks us. Well, his wife said to Job "Curse God and die". That was a cruel thrust; but Job, using our present Scripture, met that thrust with the shield of faith "What? shall we receive good at the hand of God and shall we not receive evil?" (Job 2:9-10) and the fiery dart fell to the ground. But we can also think for a moment of an assembly situation, not an individual now but a company. Think of the Thessalonians. They were having an awful time, persecuted, maligned and experiencing suffering such as the church of God has oft times endured and which some of our beloved brethren are proving at the present time. The enemy took advantage of the situation to shoot a fiery dart — "it is the day of the Lord" he said (2 Thessalonians 2:2). Not at all says the apostle, don't you remember when we were with you we told you "We should suffer tribulation — we are appointed there unto" (1 Thessalonians 3:4). They were not to go through THE tribulation, they were to be raptured, a communication clothed with all authority, "the Word of the Lord" (1 Thessalonians 4:15). Thessalonians, put up the shields! Stand firm! All this is rather more practical than some realise. In Hebrews 12:1-29 when the saints were suffering, chastened, rebuked, scourged, is it not remarkable and very beautiful, that the Spirit of God changes the description from God to Father. I forget how many references there are to God in Hebrews but it is many, but when you come to this very practical chapter how tenderly the apostle (and the Spirit) deals with the very real sufferings of the saints. He speaks of the Father, precious reminder of a love and care that is unchanging. This is precisely what we see with our blessed Lord. His whole life of course was lived in the "calm unclouded enjoyment of the Father's love" but when the final crisis came, in the garden, with all the mighty issues of the cross (ponder it, my soul) from whom did He receive the cup? From the devil? Certainly not! "The cup which My Father giveth Me, shall I not drink it?" What a moment that was "Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from Me. Nevertheless, not My will but Thine be done". What a model for us. Oh for grace to walk more closely in His steps and to take to ourselves the shield of faith! And now, "the helmet of

Salvation".

Well, certainly we all need a helmet, all of us. The helmet protects the head. The enemy is making great attacks today upon our heads, our thinking. What an array there is of false teaching, false prophets, false cults, let alone the tireless energy and volume of the media, from morn till night. It reminds us of Jeremiah's day. He was at the close of God's dealings with Israel just before the deportation. He had more to do with false prophets I suppose than any other but he certainly wore his helmet! There are about 359 references to the phrase "thus saith the Lord" in the Old Testament (so I am told) and about 157 are found in Jeremiah! He knew what it was to "eat" God's Word (Jeremiah 15:16). This helmet in Ephesians 6:1-24 is a very interesting helmet. It keeps the head cool! Most helmets make your head hot; this helmet enables you to have cool clear thinking even in the heat of battle. Another feature about this helmet is that it ensures that you hold up your head when engaged in conflict. If you don't hold up your head your helmet will fall off! Perhaps that is why in Thessalonians the helmet is described as the hope of salvation (1 Thessalonians 5:8). It is a most comforting and sustaining thought that very shortly the whole battle will be over so the conflict won't be long. Naturally we would now like to know why the Lord Jesus also is pictured with a helmet, as we have it in Isaiah 59:17. I am indebted to another for a thought which to me sounds very attractive. The suggestion is that the sight of that helmet would strike terror into the hearts of the enemy. The imagery here is Roman and it is not difficult to imagine that any forces confronted by a band of Roman soldiers might very well be saying to themselves — "Well, there aren't many soldiers here but they are Roman soldiers, and that means that all the power of Rome is behind them. Perhaps we had better send an embassage and desire conditions of peace!" (Luke 14:32). And what of when the rider comes on the white horse (Revelation 19:11)? The Kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men . . . and every bond man and every free man will hide themselves in the dens and in the mountains . . . terror indeed . . . fall on us, and hide us from the face of Him that sitteth upon the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb. In that day we shall ride also, following this rider (Revelation 19:14) but at the present time it is our privilege now to take the helmet of salvation. Very likely the adversaries are more afraid of us (and our Lord) than we are of them. Let us look up! And now we come to "the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God." This also, need it be said, is a most attractive weapon, especially when we view it in relation to the Lord. Again, in the original language, we take account of two words for sword. In Revelation 19:15 a sharp sword goes out of His mouth. This is a great sword, may we say, like a Scottish broad sword, an enormous weapon. When the Lord wields this (and even His arrows are sharp in the heart of the kings enemies. Psalms 45:5), the slain of the Lord shall be many, and Balaam's prophesy will be fulfilled (Numbers 24:23), "Alas, who shall live when God doeth this". But the sword we have in Ephesians 6:17 is a short sword for hand to hand encounter with the enemy. How forcible are right words (Job 6:25), the right word, at the right time, delivered in the right spirit, that is, a word coming forth from His presence. Alas too often we feel, minutes after a contact, if only I had this right word, (that is, the word that now comes to remembrance!), I could have met that situation! Well, happily, our business now is to look for encouragement and it is not far to seek. When David met Goliath (1 Samuel 17:1-58) he only took 5 stones out of the brook. Doubtless they were all well washed in water, smooth, carefully chosen, perhaps bringing David on to his knees to find them. But those five stones were all that were needed, one for Goliath now, and four for Goliath's brother later (2 Samuel 21:22). When we think of the Lord Jesus many examples could be quoted. I mention only one, a very attractive one in Matthew 22:1-46. You

remember the occasion, the Lord was surrounded by Pharisees, Sadducees and Herodians, seeking to catch Him in His words. They brought their questions and He answered them, but then He put His question "What think ye of Christ? Whose Son is He?" They marvelled and it wasn't the only occasion that men marvelled at Him! Never man spake like this Man (John 7:46)! Well at the close of Matthew 22:46 no man was able to answer Him a word, neither durst any man from that day forth ask Him any more questions. The Lord Jesus knew how to use the short sword also.

These then are the six pieces of the armour. Opinions differ as to the seventh. Some say prayer is not part of the armour. Bunyan, not so, speaks of the "weapon of all prayer". One thing is certain, none of the other pieces are of any value apart from prayer, real dependence upon God. You may remember Goliath wore greaves of brass upon his legs. The greaves protected the legs from the knees to the ankles. Goliath needed them because he was standing up. The dependent soul doesn't need them because he is kneeling down. How beautifully the Lord Jesus exhibits this feature. "Preserve Me O God for in Thee do I put My trust" (Psalms 16:1). How many times in Luke's gospel, where we find the perfect manhood of the Lord, do we find Him in prayer, sometimes all night in prayer. What a model for us. Help Lord! But before we leave this section could we notice how solemn and imperative is the appeal to prayer in verses 18 and 19. Men ought always to pray, as our Lord taught us (Luke 18:1), everywhere (1 Timothy 2:8), for all men (1 Timothy 2:1), for everything (Php 4:6). All this, without ceasing (1 Thessalonians 5:17). I am not aware that anywhere in the whole Bible is there so solemn and serious an appeal to pray as is found here. It is not only prayer, but also supplication, and the subject is all saints. There are many examples of prayer and intercession in both the O.T. and N.T. but to repeat, subject to correction, I am not aware that anywhere in the whole of the Bible is there so solemn and serious an appeal to prayer as is found here. How relevant this is in Laodicean days. In Laodicea there is need of nothing and hence there is no prayer. May the Lord graciously keep us prayerful. And perhaps we should notice here, before we close, that the apostle also solicits the saints' prayers and in a very specific way for himself. He values the prayers of the saints manifestly but what concerns him here is not what he says but how — "that I may open my mouth boldly". This is utterance of a Divine sort and a voice that will be heard. This then is the armour, Divinely provided, exemplified in Jesus and it is armour for us to put on. This, and this alone, will enable us to stand and withstand in the evil day. We cannot withstand the enemy ourselves. What folly to try! But the great Captain of our salvation has met him and defeated him and as we are occupied with Him, keeping close to Him, feeding on Him, He will give us the victory and He does. This paper is not complete however without one more word. Life happily is NOT all battle. There is conflict, in dead earnest too at times, but not always. And at the close of this wonderful epistle the apostle retreats from the battle, if we may so say, to enjoy the "home of the heart". That home is LOVE and in these closing verses there are four references to love. In 5: 21 we have Tychicus, a beloved brother. He is faithful too of course but love is mentioned first. And what is he going to do? He will let you know my affairs and how I do. Evidently the apostle could count on the loving interest of the Ephesians in himself, Paul. In these two references we have love on what we might call the horizontal level. In 5: 23 we come to the perpendicular "Peace be to the brethren, and love with faith, from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Then in 5: 24 "Grace be with all them that love our Lord Jesus in sincerity". Perhaps most of us know that Ephesians is really an epistle of love (about 14 times) — an attractive subject in itself. Very shortly every family in heaven and upon earth will be touched by that love — the love of Christ which passeth knowledge (Ephesians 3:19). The Lord is looking for

hearts to be touched by that love today, here and now. May our meditations make Him increasingly precious to every one of us as we look for His sure and certain soon return. "Grace be with all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity" 5: 24.

Amen.

D.W.P. From Our Archive "The Morning Star"

Christ Our Hope (Continued from page 210)

Let us then return to consider the question and answer on which the Lord based the first intimation to His disciples of that which He, as a Builder, was about to do. His first care was to draw, from them all, the confession of what He was, and especially of what He was to GOD. His words were, "whom say ye that I am?" Peter, who answered, had still to learn that what he said was a direct revelation from above, "flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but MY FATHER which is in heaven". The truth embodied in the answer was new to them all: "Thou art the Christ, the SON OF THE LIVING GOD". What could be clearer than, as above remarked, that the heavenly source and character of the revelation centred round the Person of the eternal SON? What that means for the saints of this present economy of grace is unfolded in John’s Gospel. The first message sent by the Lord to His disciples, after His resurrection, shows its effect, "My Father, and your Father;" and "My God, and your God." Sonship can only be truly known by us as manifested in the Person of the Son, and as the direct fruit of His death and resurrection (John 1:18; John 12:24; John 20:17). It is made good in our souls by the Holy Spirit (Galatians 4:6).

Furthermore, in considering the formation of the church as the house of God, we see that Christ keeps it in His own hands. He is the foundation, and He constructs it. Every individual believer has his place in it as a "living stone" (1 Peter 2:5-6). The position given to each one, assigned by the Lord, is also maintained by Him in such sort that "the gates of hades shall not prevail against it". What a comfort it is to be assured that all the efforts and power of Satan are fruitless in the case of the Lord’s church!

Peter, in his first epistle, treats of the church as a "spiritual house", in the Lord’s keeping, and already in existence, so that worship and praise to God may go on in it, and service go out from it. In the epistle to the Hebrews we find the same figure of the "house"; and besides that, an allusion to the heavenly city "Jerusalem which is above" (see also Galatians 4:26). This was afterwards shown to the apostle John (Revelation 21:1-27). It is instructive to notice in all these passages the place that "sonship" has; and that is even carried on to the eternal state (Revelation 21:7).

Let us now refer briefly to another truth revealed to the apostle Paul that of the BODY of Christ. This was the mystery kept secret, "hid in God", and of which we find no indication in Old Testament times. The type of the "bride" was indeed seen in Eve and others (Ephesians 5:31); but the figure of the body is different. In this case also, as we have already noticed, the sonship of Christ is prominent.

Paul was the first to preach Him as "the Son of God" (Acts 9:20). We have only to read carefully his epistles to see the effect of the apostle’s call on his own soul. In writing to the Corinthians, especially as to church order, he begins with reminding them that they had been called by God into the "fellowship of His SON Jesus Christ our Lord". To the Galatians, who, through Judaising

teaching, were in danger of losing this truth, he insists upon it in the most pointed way. (See Galatians 1:16; Galatians 3:26; Galatians 4:7; Galatians 4:28-29.) And as if to bring home to their consciences what they were giving up, Paul associates with himself "all the brethren" (Galatians 1:2); for indeed the relationship with the Father was the common portion of them all, and by no means confined to any special leaders or labourers amongst them. As to himself he says, "It pleased God . . . to reveal His Son in me, that I might preach Him among the heathen". In believers the Holy Spirit is called "The Spirit of His SON". The great subject of the epistle to the Romans is the gospel from the particular point of view of God's righteousness revealed in it (Romans 1:16-17). Yet the opening verses declare that the subject of it is the SON (5: 3); and in Him, and His redeeming work, the love, righteousness, and glory of God are inseparable (Romans 3:21; Romans 5:2; Romans 5:5). God's glory is our "hope", as soon as justification is known, and sonship in its final character and manifestation in glory is largely developed in Romans 8:1-39, as well as that personal witness of the Holy Spirit "with our spirit" which makes it effectual in every believer's soul. The end and aim of it is the glory of the SON, that he may be "the firstborn among many brethren" (5: 29). The epistle to the Ephesians which unfolds the "mystery" of the "body of Christ", subject to the Head in heaven, also opens with this blessed truth of relationship with the Father, who has chosen us in His SON "before the foundation of the world", and "marked us out beforehand for adoption through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will". In Colossians, we are called to give thanks to the Father, "who has delivered us from the authority of darkness, and translated us into the kingdom of the SON of His love" (Colossians 1:12-13). This truth of sonship so characterised the apostle's early preaching, that in the case of the Thessalonians everybody was speaking of how they had "turned to God from idols, to serve the living and true God; and to wait for HIS SON from heaven . . ." (1 Thessalonians 1:10). The Lord grant that, with a deepened sense of this blessed relationship, such waiting and watching may become more vivid and habitual with each one of us!

William Joseph Lowe (1838-1927) (To be continued, if the Lord will.) News from the Field

NIGERIA Area: 924,000 sq km Population: 92,000,000 (Africa's most populous state) Capital: Lagos, est. 5,000,000 In the 1920s brethren from Jamaica came for employment and began breaking bread in Lagos and other towns, notably Ibadan. J. A. Whitbourne, Noel Moss and P. S. Browning were instrumental in this. In 1948 W. G. Houghton settled in Nigeria and visited various regions and met numerous believers. In the late 50s through to 1967 the Swiss brother G. Hausamann visited Lagos to encourage the believers there. Later the troubles that afflicted Nigeria caused many to be scattered. The brethren in America and Germany continued to send a very great deal of evangelistic material. Considerable correspondence resulted. In 1979 brothers Baseler and Redekop visited Kaduna and other towns. These visits have been used of the Lord to establish more firmly contacts and links with those seeking to go on with the Lord. Others have visited more recently with happy consequences. From Mushin, Lagos, has come the following from a brother who is labouring to bring the truths of Scripture to his fellow countrymen. He is one of a number of gifted servants of Christ. His understanding of the doctrine regarding the assembly is both instructive and exemplary. May the Lord help us all to appreciate these things better and to walk in His ways.

CHRISTIANS WHO MEET ON THE BASIS OF Matthew 18:20.

"for where two or three are gathered together in My Name, there am I in the midst of them".

These are Christians who have sought to be identified with the worthy and preeminent Name of the Lord Jesus Christ. They meet solely in the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ as the divine gathering centre. They refuse as unscriptural, all denominational names, and all systems of human devising for church order. Believing that the assembly is one body, composed of all believers, they refuse to assume any name that is not common to all the people of God, and therefore prefer the simple title of "Christians", "brethren", "saints", etc., which apply to all the children of God.

They believe in the absolute and perfect inspiration of the Bible, which they hold to be, not in name only, but in reality, the Word of God (2 Timothy 3:16-17; 2 Peter 3:16). Being convinced of the absolute authority of God’s Word and of the completeness of its teachings, these Christians believe in the unity of "the church of the living God", which is "the pillar and ground of the truth" (1 Timothy 3:15).

They believe that the one true church of God was formed on earth by the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost and embraces all who are children of God by faith in Christ Jesus, as all believers are sanctified and baptized into the body of Christ by the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:1-47; 1 Peter 1:2; 1 Corinthians 12:13).

They believe that the body of Christ is therefore a living organism made up of many members united in an unbreakable union (Romans 12:4-5; Ephesians 4:1-16).

Because these Scriptures and others teach that God Himself has constituted this organism from the beginning they seek to act upon it by meeting simply as members of the body of Christ.

THEY HAVE SOUGHT TO RETURN TO NEW TESTAMENT PRACTICES and not to form a denomination or ecclesiastical organisation. In fact, many of them have purged themselves from such affiliations to be gathered unto Christ outside the camp bearing His reproach and to give clear expression to this precious truth of the one body (Hebrews 13:13).

They stress that all who have repented and believed the gospel are their brothers and sisters in Christ, and fellow-members of the one body. In as much as the incoming of sectarianism and denominationalism in Corinth was described as carnality by the apostle Paul and was therefore condemned outrightly, these Christians have humbled themselves to heed the appeal of the apostle Paul in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, not to be part of any schisms in Christendom (1 Corinthians 1:10-13; 1 Corinthians 3:15).

They would therefore love to see all Christians likewise meeting in this simple fashion, giving pre-eminence to the only Head of the body, Our Lord Jesus Christ (Colossians 1:18). In their local assemblies, they endeavour to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace (Ephesians 4:13) by recognising all other assemblies who likewise seek to gather simply to the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ on the ground of the one body.

They believe in the presence, leadership and guidance of the Holy Spirit in the assembly (John 14:16-17; John 14:26; John 16:13-14). Thankfully recognising that they have been made worshippers and given the dignity of priests they desire to give Him complete liberty in their meetings to use whomsoever He wills as His mouthpiece in prayer, praise and in exhortation (1

Peter 2:5; 1 Peter 2:9; Revelation 1:6). Understanding that all believers have spiritual gifts given by God, they seek to provide opportunity for the use of these gifts under the guidance of the Holy Spirit for the glory of God (Romans 12:5; Romans 12:8; Ephesians 4:7-11; 1 Peter 4:10-11).

If one called by the Lord gives his life to the ministry of the Word or some other service, he goes in his work with the approval and fellowship of his local assembly (Acts 13:13; Acts 14:26). This does not suppress his personal responsibility to the Lord as he walks by faith. He remains subject as is every brother and sister to the care and discipline of the assembly.

LOCAL ASSEMBLY RESPONSIBILITIES

They believe that each local assembly has the responsibility to maintain the holiness of God’s house in dependence upon God (Psalms 93:5; 1 Corinthians 5:11-13). This includes a concern and care for one another, as well as giving warning, comfort and support as needed (1 Thessalonians 5:14). It also includes the putting away of those whose walk or doctrine become evil and the restoration of such when they repent (1 Corinthians 5:9-13; 2 John 1:9-11; 2 Corinthians 2:5-11).

They believe that each assembly is a local representation of the whole body and recognise its actions in the Name of the Lord and according to the Word of God as authoritative and binding everywhere (Matthew 18:18).

They believe that Scripture teaches that sisters are to be silent in the meetings of the assembly and that they cover their heads in symbolic recognition of the headship of the man and that the Lord’s leadership and glory are to be displayed in the assembly (1 Corinthians 14:34-35; 1 Corinthians 11:3; 1 Corinthians 11:13; 1 Timothy 2:8-12).

According to Acts 2:42, they have meetings for the ministry of the Word, the breaking of bread and worship, and prayer.

They seek to give attendance to reading, to exhortation, and to doctrine. Therefore they read from the Word of God and allow the Holy Spirit to give the sense of the reading through whomsoever He wills (1 Timothy 4:13; Nehemiah 8:8). ON THE LORD’S DAY The Lord Jesus Christ instituted the Lord’s supper shortly before His death and solemnly charged His disciples to partake of the bread and wine in remembrance of Himself. It was further revealed to Paul that "As often as ye shall eat this bread, and drink the cup, ye announce the death of the Lord, until He come" (1 Corinthians 11:26 JND translation).

Therefore these Christians have sought to steadfastly continue in the breaking of bread in remembrance of the Lord Jesus Christ every Lord’s Day as practiced in the early church among the disciples: "And the first day of the week, we being assembled to break bread" (Acts 20:7(a) JND).

Therefore, if you enter the modest meeting place of Christians gathered to the Lord’s Name on a Lord’s day morning you will see them gathered around a table upon which is a loaf of bread and cup of wine. The bread symbolises the body of Christ which was given for us, and the cup symbolises His blood which was shed for us (1 Corinthians 11:23-25). This is the only prominent feature, for there is no presiding clergyman, elder or human being in charge.

If you ask who will dispense the bread and the cup, you will be told that any brother in good standing in the assembly may do so. In this meeting, the believers function as "an holy priesthood" to bring praise and worship to the Lord and to remember Him in His death and offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ (1 Peter 2:5). A brother may minister the Word of God after the observance of the Lord’s supper or at a separate meeting at a convenient time during the day.

RECEPTION TO THE LORD’S TABLE

These Christians desire to joyfully receive for the breaking of bread all believers who desire to walk in godliness and truth according to God’s Word (Acts 2:41-42). This reception is to all privileges and responsibilities of assembly life and fellowship. Such believers are received as members of the body of Christ, not as "members of our church" since all Christians become part of the one true church at conversion, and any further membership is unnecessary and divisive (Acts 2:47 b).

Reception to the privilege of partaking in the Lord’s supper, is not to an "open" or a "closed" communion, but to a "guarded" table of the Lord in responsibility to the Holy character of Him whose death is commemorated.

They believe that those who partake of the Lord’s Supper express in this way their remembrance of the Lord. In this act they also partake of the Lord’s table, thereby expressing their fellowship and oneness with all others partaking with them of the bread and the cup (1 Corinthians 10:14-22).

Having the understanding of these truths, therefore requires partakers to individually examine themselves before partaking of the Lord’s Supper, lest they do so unworthily and bring dishonour upon the Lord Jesus whom they are remembering (1 Corinthians 11:27-34).

Partakers also are to individually partake only in assemblies which meet on the ground of the one body, and not on denominational or independent ground. The desire of those who participate in such assemblies is to do so in accordance with the truth of the one body of Christ, whether in their home assembly or when visiting other places.

While rejecting any suggestion that the tables of professing Christian congregations are tables of demons, they fully accept the principle of association taught in 1 Corinthians 10:18; 1 Corinthians 10:20-21, and therefore desire to partake of the Lord’s Supper only where the unity of the body of Christ and the holiness of God’s house are understood and accepted.

ACCOMPLISHED REDEMPTION These Christians have no uncertain belief in the doctrines as unfolded in the Scriptures: The fall and absolute ruin of man, his guilty, lost and helpless condition; the utter worthlessness of works, lawkeeping or reformation as a ground of salvation; the amazing love of God in providing a Saviour in His blessed Son; the spotless perfection of Christ, both in His Divine nature and His true humanity; reconciliation by the shed blood of Christ on the Cross, by which alone redemption has been accomplished; His resurrection as the proof of God’s acceptance of that atonement.

There is, therefore, no other Name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved except the Name of the risen Christ, for "to Him give all the prophets witness, that through His Name whosoever believeth in Him shall receive remission of sins" (Acts 10:43). This is the Man

who by His own blood entered in once into the holy place having obtained eternal redemption. "And being made perfect, He became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey Him" (Hebrews 5:9).

These Christians therefore see that every believer is warranted to have the fullest assurance of their present and eternal salvation, and that this assurance comes not through feelings or experiences, but by Christ's work once and for all. The believer can never be lost, but is as secure as though he were in heaven already because of Christ's death and resurrection (1 John 3:2, John 10:28-30).

They see however that Scripture guards from abuse of this doctrine by insisting upon good works as the fruit of salvation and strictly taking heed to Titus 2:11-15.

CONCLUSION The presence in the assembly of the Lord Jesus, who died and rose again from the dead, draws the children of God together by the power of the Holy Spirit. Those gathering together unto His worthy Name affirm by doing so that they recognise His rights and His authority.

They proclaim allegiance to His Word. They confess that He alone is Head of His Church and deserving of preeminence in all things. They also proclaim love to all the children of God — a love measured by the twin standards of obedience to God and care for one another (1 John 5:2). A welcome is extended to anyone interested in hearing the gospel of God's saving grace and ministry of the Word of God to attend meetings of these Christians. As the answer of the Lord Jesus Christ to perplexed and questioning souls was "come and see" so we say COME AND SEE (John 1:39).

D. S. OMOJOLA

Vol 02 - Truth & Testimony Vol. 2, No. 1, 1993.

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Quotations from Scripture are generally taken either from the King James translation or Mr. J.N. Darby's translation. Quotations taken from any other translation will be indicated in the course of the article, or in a footnote to the article. In The Wrong Place 1. Abram in Egypt Genesis 12:10 Anxiety 2. Lot in Sodom Genesis 19:1 Ambition 3. Jacob in Shechem Genesis 33:18-20 Half-heartedness 4. David on the housetop 2 Samuel 11:2 Indolence 5. Man of God under an oak 1 Kings 13:14 Self-complacence 6. Elijah under a juniper 1 Kings 19:4 Discouragement 7. Jonah in the ship Jonah 1:5 Self-will 8. Peter at the fire Luke 22:55 Fear 9. Paul in Jerusalem Acts 21:15-26 Spiritual Zeal

How easily we may discern the grave mistakes of these beloved saints of God, in being where they were, and the positive harm that resulted. Yet, can our hearts possibly ignore the sad fact that these same alarming motives noted in the last column have had far too great an influence in leading us also astray? What formidable enemies are these, against which we have no real protection unless armed with "the whole armour of God." If "the shield of faith" is only briefly dropped, Satan will use his "fiery darts" to full advantage. If we quietly analyse all of these motives, every one will be seen to stem from personal pride, which is the one principle in man that will respond to the cunning deceit of the enemy, who himself fell through pride. But it is good to have these things so broken down for us that we may be able to discern the working of such motives in our own hearts, and to judge them unsparingly.

1. Who has not known something of Abram's anxiety, not only for himself, but for his loved ones, when famine struck the land of promise? Led by sight, he goes where he sees the food is. Faith had wavered, for God had brought him to the land, and would He not sustain him, famine or not? Shall we leave the place of God's testimony because apprehensive of the future, and seek other fields that appear greener? Whether for material or spiritual need, let us "Be careful for nothing; but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God" (Php 4:6). It is this that brings "the peace of God," not seeking elsewhere some provision that seems attractive. If there are stern tests of faith, they are intended to test us. But "the trial of your faith" is "much more precious than of gold that perisheth" (1 Peter 1:7). Why should we be content to fail the test — and suffer for it?

2. From this backsliding, however, Abram was fully recovered: Egypt's attractions deceived him only for a time. Not so with Lot. Rather than being recovered from a spirit of anxiety, he allowed it to grow into worldly ambition. We may sincerely insist that it is necessary for us to make a living on earth; but how many who do so are very soon trapped by the snare of seeking worldly advantage and position! Lot may have persuaded himself that he was really trying to improve the condition of Sodom, as certain Christians endeavour to improve the world; but is this thoroughly honest? He sat as a judge in the gate. Could he dare to say that it was really Sodom's improvement he was seeking, with no concern about his own earthly circumstances? O no, he was ambitious for himself, and he lost everything. What a warning for the child of God!

3. In Jacob something of this same spirit is evident in Haran, and he laboured hard to "provide for his own house," yet in his case he did not forget that he owed much to the grace of God. God indeed seeks by this same grace to fully restore him, when He tells him to return to Bethel, "God's house." But Jacob lingered on the way, and at Shechem "bought a parcel of a field," and settled down. Instead of leaving the world fully behind, he bought a little part of it, and the price he paid later was far higher than silver or gold. How easily we too, because of divided affections, may be content with a half-way house, instead of being in God's place for us, "God's house." But the results here, in Jacob's family, were the most shamefully evil in his history. Let us beware of a divided heart, partly for the Lord, partly for the world; but rather pray in earnest with the Psalmist, "Teach me Thy way, O Lord; I will walk in Thy truth: unite my heart to fear Thy name" (Psalms 86:11).

4. However, on the other hand, supposing we do learn to refuse worldly ambition, does this mean we may give ourselves up to a lazy existence? Can it be that such a thought as this influenced David at a time "when kings go forth to battle." If there was no need to gain anything for himself, did he forget that there was yet much to gain for God? Indolence will lead to positive sin. David, energetic, devoted man of God as he had been, found himself now with nothing to do but to walk upon the roof of his house, though Israel had gone forth to war. Are we in vital exercise as to the things of God? — not settling down in selfish contentment, but using leisure time in storing our souls with the truth of the Word of God, and going forth to bear a consistent witness to the Lord Jesus, as good soldiers of His? If we are willing to allow indolence in our lives, the world has its thousands of attractions to excite our natural senses, for which, if we were properly engaged, we should have neither time, or inclination. Can the eternal God of glory not supply us with enough to profitably occupy our time? Let us make no excuse for failing to serve Him.

5. Yet another danger presents itself even to those whom the Lord may use in faithful service. The man of God in 1 Kings 13:1-34 had obeyed the voice of the Lord in bearing solemn witness against Jeroboam and his idolatrous altar at Bethel, and obediently began his return journey, going by another route. Why did he stop to sit down under an oak tree? It was here that he was deceived by the old prophet, and fell into the snare of which God's Word had solemnly forewarned him, and he was killed by a lion. If the horror of the evil of Bethel had had its due weight with him, as attested by the solemn Word of God, certainly he would not have lingered for a moment. But allowing himself some pleasant satisfaction at having faithfully spoken the Word of God, instead of feeling still the force of that Word in his own soul, he was in a state fit to be deceived. What a warning! Let us indulge in but a little self-complacency, and we too may be deceived into actual disobedience to the Word of God. Though the old prophet was guilty of deliberate deception, yet it

was the man of God who was guilty of being deceived, and it was he who suffered. How good to take to heart the words of the Lord Jesus, "So likewise ye, when ye shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants: we have done that which was our duty to do" (Luke 17:10).

6. Elijah illustrates another very real danger in connection with the service of the Lord. Here is another man of God who had, after deep exercise of soul, stood firmly, alone, for the living God, had brought down fire from heaven, had destroyed the prophets of Baal, and whose prayer brought rain to a desolate land. Yet immediately after he is found under a juniper tree, fleeing from Jezebel, and in utter discouragement asking God to take away his life. Of course he thought that through God showing such mighty works of power, Israel would be brought back to God, and now found that no such moral and spiritual effects had taken place. He feels his efforts have not been appreciated: he is despised and alone. Has not every true servant of God had to feel this in some measure at least? But can discouragement ever be right? Never! It is God who decides the value of our service for Him, not man. If the service has been done for the Lord, the results may be left fully with Him. It is not easy for us to apply this in real simplicity of faith, but we must remember that we are only servants, and the same truth of God for which Elijah could stand before Ahab is really sufficient to sustain Elijah when he is utterly rejected and despised. Let us have our eyes simply upon our holy Lord, and discouragement will not overwhelm us. "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord" (1 Corinthians 15:58).

7. As though this were not enough, there is yet a worse evil that may attack a servant of the Lord, and it must not be forgotten that today every child of God is a servant of God and intended to serve him "acceptably with reverence and godly fear" (Hebrews 12:28). Jonah writes concerning himself, and exposes his own motives, which seems a clear indication that in his judging such motives, God did in grace recover his soul. Instead of going to Nineveh when God had sent him, Jonah is found in a ship, asleep, which led to an experience of intense anguish in the belly of a great fish. The reason for his disobedience he himself reveals in Jonah 4:1-2. He felt that if he went and warned Nineveh of the awesome judgment of God, Nineveh might repent, and God’s judgment be averted, for he knew that God is gracious! When this actually happened, he was very angry, possibly because he felt his reputation as a prophet would suffer, or else because he would rather see Gentiles perish than repent! Can it be that the motives of a child of God can descend so low? Sadly, it is true. In order that I may be something, it is possible I may cruelly desire to have others put down. Do we honestly pray for all men — the lowest, the vilest? Do we rejoice in the thought of guilty sinners turning in repentance to God? May our hearts go out in true, active love for souls, and we shall be preserved from this cold-hearted self-will that does what one prefers rather than obey God. Ought not Jonah to have rejoiced that his preaching was used by God to turn a whole city in repentance to cry to Him for mercy? But if we know nothing of a repentant spirit ourselves, then the repentance of others will fail to move our hearts with thankfulness.

8. The case of Peter is a more common one, however, for have we not all too frequently found ourselves in his company as regards the sadness of his failure when his Master faced the cruelest hour of man’s persecution? What powerful enemy so weakened this fervent, affectionate follower of the Lord Jesus? Simply "the fear of man," which "bringeth a snare." Can it be that this man, so naturally bold and courageous, will cringe and speak falsehood when confronted by a woman?

Alas, how weak are our hearts! But why should he be afraid? He had before assured the Lord he was ready to go with Him to prison and to death (Luke 22:33). At that moment, though, the Lord must go first to the garden of Gethsemane, where His soul was poured out in agonizing prayer to God, in holy preparation for the deeper agony of the cross. Peter neglected such preparation, and was asleep. What a lesson for us! In the things of God, natural courage will fail. Only God's divine power and grace can sustain us and preserve us from fear. "What time I am afraid, I will trust in Thee" (Psalms 56:3). "I will trust, and not be afraid" (Isaiah 12:2). Most strikingly, Isaiah 51:12-13 shows that fear, no less than the other evils we have noted, is the product of mere pride, little as we might it think so: "Who art thou, that thou shouldest be afraid of a man that shall die, and of the son of man which shall be made as grass; and forgettest the Lord thy Maker, that hath stretched forth the heavens, and laid the foundations of the earth?" Is this not a stern and righteous reproof to our foolish fear of man? The results of Peter's fear were humiliating in the extreme, nor shall we escape reaping what we sow. Yet divine grace did, and does, wonderfully restore.

9. However, this element of fear has no place whatever in Paul's going up to Jerusalem when the Spirit of God had plainly warned him against it. But he was certainly not in the right place, however bold he may have been. In fact, it was a consuming love for his own people Israel, and a desire for their salvation, that moved him so powerfully in seeking to attract their ears to the gospel. But the truest spiritual desire cannot be substituted for the guidance of God, who knew that Paul's testimony would not be received at Jerusalem. This is a lesson not easy to be learned in practice, a most humbling lesson, and necessary for the most earnest servants of God. The fact that Paul had been so greatly used by God in the salvation of Gentiles in other lands was no indication that he would be so used in Jerusalem with his own people, the Jews. How can we escape the sad conclusion that there was some element of pride in his feeling that he could persuade these Jews, and specially after God had told him he could not? How we need the clear Word of God for every step! Not that spiritual zeal itself is an evil: it is not; but if we depend on this, we shall find it will mislead us, and we shall reap the results. Constant, consistent communion with God and submission to His Word is our only real protection, and of all these cases this last no doubt is intended to press this upon us most positively.

These are by no means all the cases of saints in wrong places recorded in the Word of God, and we should do well to consider such histories as those of Abraham's going down to Abimelech the Philistine, of Samson's many compromises with the Philistines, of Elimelech and Naomi going down to Moab, of David's sojourn at Gath, and later at Ziklag, of Jonathan's choosing the court of his father Saul when David was in rejection, of Jehoshaphat's going down to visit the wicked king Ahab on friendly terms, and of Obadiah the servant of the Lord found serving Ahab. So numerous being the cases of such failure, they are surely serious warnings. Certainly they are not intended to provide us with any excuse for our own failure, but as warning signposts that we may avoid the same pitfalls, and rather find in the Lord Jesus the strength and grace necessary to meet these things, cultivating the positive motives of faith in the blessed Son of God, and of love for Himself and for others.

"Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and, having done all, to stand" (Ephesians 6:13).

L. M. Grant Consider Your Ways The prophet Haggai was raised up by God at a time in Israel's history very similar to that in which we live. We know practically nothing of the prophet himself. His name means "festive," and Ezra refers to him simply as "Haggai the prophet." We know from Ezra's record that the Jews' enemies had written to King Artaxerxes, suggesting that the rebuilding of the temple constituted a threat to his authority. Consequently the work ceased until the second year of Darius' reign, when enquiries were made, the decree of Cyrus was produced, and the rebuilding was once more put in hand. It was easy to blame the enemies, and the political climate, for ceasing to work, but the real trouble was with the Jews themselves. That is why God raised up faithful men, Haggai and Zechariah, to encourage the people to carry out the task that had been abandoned. In the first place they were UNWILLING TO WORK.

They had returned to the promised land. God had been faithful and gracious to them, but they were settling down in comfort while God's house still lay waste. No wonder things went wrong! God's Word to them, and perhaps also to us, is "Consider your ways." They sowed much, and reaped little. They ate and drank, but were not satisfied. They earned good money, but it trickled away as in a bag full of holes. No doubt they blamed the recession, the political instability of the time, the abnormal weather conditions. It never occurred to them that God was trying to get through to them. "Why? saith the Lord of hosts. Because of Mine house that is waste."

It is noteworthy that in this book God refers to Himself as "the Lord of hosts." We find this title originally in the first book of Samuel, in the time of the judges, when every man did that which was right in his own eyes, much as is the case today. In that difficult time we read of Elkanah and Hannah, who went to Shiloh to worship "the Lord of hosts." The name is used by many of the prophets, particularly in days of weakness and failure. It is good to know that, in spite of man's failure, there is an all-sufficient God, who has unlimited resources at His disposal. A HEARING EAR

Happily, the leaders of the people listened to Haggai's words, and obeyed the Word of the Lord. We read also that they "did fear before the Lord," that is, they revered Him. Seeing this, the Lord gave them a reassuring message, "I am with you." Thus encouraged, they set to work with a will, and the Lord stirred up the spirits of the leaders and all the people. THE WORK WAS COMPLETED

Four weeks later the prophet was given another message to the leaders of the people. Some of the older ones could remember the glorious temple that Solomon had built. How small and insignificant was this new temple by contrast. In Ezra 3:1-13 we read that they wept with a loud voice. Some of the older ones among us may remember conferences with many hundreds of brethren present and local gatherings too that were not only large, but of spiritual significance. Some may weep to see a decline on every hand. Nevertheless, God had a message even for these older ones, "Yet now be strong," leaders and people, "for I am with you, saith the Lord of hosts." Moreover, the Word and the Spirit of God, remained with them. They were still the people of God. He could say to them, and to us, "Fear ye not."

Before there could be complete restoration, the people had to be reminded that divine principles were unchanged. In Haggai's fourth message to the people he is instructed to ask the priests "If one bear holy flesh in the skirt of his garment, and with his skirt do touch bread, or pottage, or wine, or oil, or any meat, shall it be holy? And the priests answered and said, No." On the other

hand, "If one that is unclean by a dead body touch any of these, shall it be unclean? And the priests answered and said, It shall be unclean." "So is this nation before Me, saith the Lord; and so is every work of their hands." All that they offered was polluted. But the God of all grace will not leave the people there. He pleads with them to consider once more. If they will be obedient, He will bless them.

I HAVE CHOSEN THEE The prophecy of Haggai concludes with a personal message of encouragement to Zerubbabel, the representative of the house of David. Thrones and kingdoms would be destroyed, but Zerubbabel would be as a signet on the Lord's hand, "for I have chosen thee." Today the weakest saint can say:

'Tis not that I did choose Thee, For, Lord, that could not be; This heart would still refuse Thee, But Thou hast chosen me."

J. Conder May we also take to heart the warnings and the promises found in this little prophecy, and thus live fruitful lives to the glory of our God and Father!

R.E.A.R. From Our Archive "The Place which the Lord shall Choose"

Deuteronomy 12:1-32 and Deuteronomy 16:1-22 The most cursory reader, and still more the diligent Bible student, must be impressed with the frequent recurrence of the words which we have selected as the title for this paper. We refer to them because "Whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope" (Romans 15:4). We trust we shall see as we proceed that as the Lord gave guidance to His people in that day, so He makes known His mind to "His own" in this day and as there was "the place" then, so there is "the place" now.

Turning then to Deuteronomy 12:1-32 we find, in the first instance, that when the children of Israel came into the land, their attitude to the existing religion thereof was to be one of uncompromising separation from it and they were to be characterized by unflinching fidelity to Jehovah. Their enemies had had "places" where they had "served their gods," but for them there should be only "The place which the Lord shall choose." They were not to choose for themselves; the Lord was to choose for them. The place which He should choose was to be the place of "His habitation" (verse 5). In other words, His house would be there, His Name would be there, and there was He to be known. They were warned against following the bent of their own will or preferring what they might have chosen (verses 13, 14) and they were instructed that the place of the Lord's choice was to be the rallying point for them. Herein there is for us a lesson of the first importance.

We are living in days when the word "toleration" is the slogan of the religious world. It is said, in effect: "It does not really matter to what we belong, where, how, or with whom we worship; we are all bound for the same place and it will be all right in the end." Then there are those who have got light beyond this, who look abroad and see many different companies of true Christians sincerely seeking to answer to the revealed truth of Holy Scripture and they say: "They seem to be all pretty much alike and it makes little difference where we are found." Had an Israelite been tempted to argue thus he would have heard a voice saying to him: "Take heed to thyself that thou offer not thy burnt-offerings in every place that thou seest: but in the place which the Lord shall choose in one of thy tribes, there thou shalt offer thy burnt-offerings, and there thou shalt do all that I command thee" (verses 13, 14). We judge that the Lord is no less careful, and our path is no less clear, in

this day.

Why should this be insisted upon and repeated with such constant reiteration? We may be sure the Holy Spirit never indulges in needless repetition. If "the place" was to be "His habitation," that meant that the Lord would find pleasure in surrounding Himself with those whom He loved and whom He had chosen to be "a special people unto Himself" (7:6, 8). So now our blessed Lord loves to gather "His own" around Himself and to take His place amongst them. We wish to give Him that joy; but where? "In the place which the Lord shall choose."

Verses 21 to 25 show the gracious and tender consideration of the Lord. Some might, from various legitimate causes, be prevented from reaching that place. Such might enjoy communion with Him where they were, but a limit was put upon that. The "holy things," the "burnt offerings," had to be offered at "the place which the Lord shall choose." There are devoted saints in these days who are bedridden or who in other ways are prevented from being gathered with their fellow-believers and such may know the sweetness of communion where they are. It is, however, when assembled together around the Lord Himself that, as nowhere else, His love is apprehended, His preciousness is appreciated, and true Spirit-begotten worship rises through Him to God the Father. Some say, "We can enjoy the Lord at home; we can worship in our own room." We have known those who living in a spot where the Lord had "much people" preferred isolation to fellowship: for such, verses 26-28 have a solemn admonition. In chapter 16 there is again the injunction to adhere to "the place which the Lord thy God shall choose to place His Name in" (verses 5, 6). This chapter may be summed up by verses 16 and 17. The males were looked upon representatively. The three feasts were the outstanding feasts in the Israelitish calendar and have a very real significance for us. As we consider them we are at once reminded of the Lord’s Supper and of that which the Lord would have us to learn from that sacred feast. "The feast of unleavened bread" is inseparably connected with "the passover." We begin with redemption. So in the Lord’s Supper we remember a dead Christ. We recall the settling of the great sin question, the accomplishment of the mighty redemptive work; we see how God’s glory has been maintained, the majesty of His throne has been upheld, the righteousness of His character has been vindicated, the love of His heart has been revealed, the basis has been laid for all His purposes to be fulfilled and our adorable Lord has secured for Himself that upon which His love was set. There is, however, the "unleavened bread" connected with this and in this chapter it is called "the bread of affliction" (verse 3). Never must we forget that it was our sins that made that work a necessity. This will prevent flippancy in manner and in language when gathered to remember Him.

"The feast of tabernacles" points on to Israel’s glorious future; it indicates the ultimate triumph of our Lord Jesus Christ. In eating the Lord’s Supper we contemplate His victory in all its fulness — not simply as applying to Israel, but as that which will be consummated by His delivering up the kingdom to God, even the Father . . . "that God may be all in all" (1 Corinthians 15:24; 1 Corinthians 15:28). We announce His death "till He come" (1 Corinthians 11:26), which means not only that this precious remembrance will go on "till He come," but that we have in view His coming to put the top stone to the work, the foundation of which He laid at the cross (Revelation 21:1-8). The central feast was "the feast of weeks." That is figurative of Pentecost and speaks to us of the coming of the Holy Spirit to take up His abode in God’s house and in the hearts of God’s children. When we eat the Lord’s Supper the Holy Spirit carries our thoughts backward, leads us into the ever deepening apprehension of all that the work of Christ has secured for God and for us; and He

carries our minds forward to the coming day of glory. When He has His own way with us we cannot be "empty"; we shall give to the Lord of that which He has given to us; we will realize that it is a "feast" and our souls will rejoice. Surely all this is a great incentive for us to seek the place of the Lord’s choice, to know THE PLACE AND THE PURPOSE

We will now turn to the last book in the Old Testament(Malachi 3:16-17). A thousand years had elapsed between the time of the instructions which we have been considering and the period herein indicated. Alas! ruin had come in. The people who professed His Name had turned away from the Lord and so completely had they been lulled to sleep by the enemy that they were unconscious of their deplorable condition. It seemed as if all had gone and there was nothing left for God. Yet amid the darkness there is a glimmer of light. "Then" — with all the emphasis upon the "then" "Then they that feared the Lord spake often one to another." It is doubtful if the word "often" should be there; it is omitted in the Revised Version and also in the French Edition of the excellent translation by the late J. N. Darby. It would appear to have been characteristic of those that feared the Lord to speak one to another. They may have been very few, very likely they were feeble and probably they were despised, but they "feared the Lord," they "thought upon His Name" and so grateful was this to Him that He "hearkened." He stooped to listen — "and heard." He ordered a "book of remembrance" to be written and He said, "they shall be Mine."

Closely connected with this is Luke 2:25-38. Fifteen hundred years or thereabouts had rolled by since that of which we read in Deuteronomy. There had been from the day that Malachi wrote no intercourse between God and the mass of His people. The failure, to all outward appearance, was complete. Two are named in these verses. They were in "the place," and they revered "the Name" of the Lord. Had they been asked, "Why do you cling to the place?" would they not have replied, "Because it is the place which the Lord has chosen to place His Name there"? They "feared the Lord," they "thought upon His Name," nor were they without companions, for Anna "spake of Him to all them that looked for redemption in Jerusalem." "The secret of the Lord" was with them; they were waiting for the first coming of Christ and when He came they constituted the true worshippers. All this confirms the fact that God never leaves Himself without a witness. When we think of the present-day application of that which we have been considering, our thoughts turn to that very familiar but priceless word in Matthew 18:20 : "For where two or three are gathered together in [or unto] My Name, there am I in the midst of them."

Here we still have "the place" — "where" — and the Name "My Name." Whereas in that which we have been considering we have the place and the purpose, here we have THE PLACE, THE PERSON AND THE PURPOSE May not our blessed Lord have had in view a day of declension and departure such as the present when He uttered these words? They are equally true of two or three hundred, or two or three score, but He came down to the minimum when He said "two or three." Why do we see here and there two or three passing by grand religious edifices, not mingling with the crowds who resort thither, not invoking the aid of college-bred men, not adopting a form of service, but coming together in the simplest possible way? They may suffer in work, in business and in other ways. They may be lightly esteemed even by those who profess faith in Christ. What is the secret? Is it not that the Lord has attracted them to Himself, that His Name is the only Name that they seek to own, that they desire to respond to His gathering call, that they wish to give Him the joy that He seeks in this way and that they long to have the joy of His company.

Some person may say, "That sounds all very nice, but in the confusion that exists can we insist that there is a place?" There was in the olden times, when they came into the land with flying colours and all was well with them; there was in Malachi's day when the failure was great and the sky was black; there was in the day of Simeon and Anna when the night was at its darkest. There was also in the day of the assembly's pristine freshness and purity; there was in the day of failure at Corinth and, as we have already remarked, our Lord's word recorded in Matthew 18:20 lead us to expect that there will ever be a place where His Name shall be placed and where He Himself shall be found. Does some one ask — where? We venture to reply that if we are moved by the affection and actuated by the desire of the inquirer in the Song of Solomon, we shall learn where. "Tell me, O Thou whom my soul loveth, where Thou feedest, where Thou makest Thy flock to rest at noon" (Song of Solomon 1:7). When we find the Person we shall reach the place and we shall find Him not by our intellect, but as our feet follow our heart, the heart being set upon Him and Him alone. In closing we invite attention to the last book in the New Testament (Revelation 3:7-13). If we accept the review of the seven churches in Asia as being a survey of the entire church period from the day of Pentecost until the coming of the Lord, may we not assume that amid the corruption of Romanism (Thyatira), the deadness of Protestantism (Sardis), and the utter ruin of Christendom generally, (Laodicea), Philadelphia stands out as representing those who will be found just before the Lord's return, who fear Him, who think upon His Name, who speak of Him and who will be found watching when He returns? They are marked by "a little power," but the Lord takes account of them and He is able to say to them, "Thou ... hast kept My word, and hast not denied My Name" (verse 8). To them, Himself, His Name and His Word are everything and if despised and looked down upon here, He assures them that He will yet demonstrate that they are the objects of His love (verse 9). We may be sure such will not escape the notice of the enemy. If he can induce them to give up and to go with the majority, how glad will he be. If he can make the road seem rough, the night of Christ's absence long and the difficulties great, some may drop out by the way. To counteract this there comes the encouraging word of the Lord Himself: "I come quickly: hold fast what thou hast, that no one take thy crown" (verse 11, J.N.D. trans.). No need to say, "Behold." They are expecting Him, waiting and watching for Him. This hope it is that has separated them from the world in every shape and form and that has called them to the outside place in company with Himself.

Only a few more steps, only a little more roughing and then travelling days are done; He Himself shall be our Object, His Name our boast, His love our theme for ever and ever.

What then is the conclusion of the whole matter?

1. The Lord calls us to entire separation from the world and its religious systems.

2. He has chosen a place where He has placed His Name, where He seeks for Himself the joy of calling His own together around Himself.

3. His Name is to be the only rallying point, His Name is to be the bond, and His Word the only recognized authority.

4. His fear ever before them, love for His Name filling their heart, those who are attracted to Him will find delight in speaking of Him to one another.

5. No matter how dark the night, how difficult the path, or how small the number, such can at all times count upon His support.

6. The Holy Spirit is here to guide such into and maintain such in the path of His will.

7. The promise of His speedy return will encourage such to be true to His Word and loyal to His Name.

We are persuaded that in these closing moments of the church's history, nearly twenty centuries after its inception, the Lord would seek to revive this in the hearts of His own, so that there may be a real gathering out to Himself now. Surely we all desire to answer to His call, to have His approval here and His smile when we see Him face to face. May it be so for His Name's sake.

W. Bramwell Dick Musings on Genesis chapter 14 The first battle recorded in Scripture is but a picture of the last great battle, yet to come. Here in Genesis 14:1-24 some remarkable features come to light. We read of four kings, and four suggests what is universal (5: 1, 9). These make war with the five kings, and five is the number of human weakness (5: 2, 8, 9b). The kings represent the natural strength of man, boasted of universally, on the one hand,* and the real and underlying condition of weakness on the other. The battle is the issue of rebellion, a picture of the great rebellion of the future when men will be fighting against God and the Lamb (Revelation 17:12-14; Revelation 19:19). Then will Joel 3:2 be fulfilled "I will also gather all nations, and will bring them down into the valley of Jehoshaphat".

{*Although there is some uncertainty as to the meanings of many of the names, J. B. Jackson and C. A. Potts both give "Lion like" for Arioch.} In the picture of Genesis 14:1-24 lovely details emerge. "Most High God" occurs four times, God's Name in universal government (5: 18, 19, 20 & 22). In the exercise of His government we see Israel recovered from among the Nations, as seen in Lot, and Israel blessed by the Mediator of the New Covenant, as seen in Abram blessed by Melchizedek. Then Israel, recovered and blessed, are found responsive to their God, as seen in the tithes of the spoil given by Abram to Melchizedek (5: 20; Hebrews 7:8-10). What a picture! The Nations put down, Israel blessed and blessing their God! This is effected because Melchizedek has the memorials of sacrifice, bread and wine, the witness of a sacrifice already accomplished and by which righteousness has been upheld and vindicated. This work Christ accomplished at the cross. Righteousness ever precedes peace. "The work of righteousness shall be peace", and "Righteousness and peace have kissed each other" (Isaiah 32:17; Psalms 85:10). The One who is the King of righteousness becomes the King of peace, Priest of the Most High God (Hebrews 1:8-9; Hebrews 7:13). "He . . . shall sit and rule upon His throne; and He shall be a priest upon His throne" (Zechariah 6:13). As a royal Priest He will prevail for God before men. As a holy Priest He will prevail for men before God.

What a Man!

What a King!

What a Priest!

What a God we have!

Blessed be His Name!! In the section beginning at Hebrews 6:13 to the end of chapter 7, the name "Melchisedec" occurs seven times.* In the same section there are seven references to Christ as One who lives for ever.** How wonderful that we, the church, are in the light of the fact that Christ is Priest after the order of Melchisedec. In line with Leviticus 16:1-34, we know Him as the Priest that has gone in. Israel's blessing awaits His coming out. Meanwhile we get the benefit of His priestly function after the pattern of the Aaronic order.

A. Lindsay {*The references to Melchisedec in this section are in Heb. 6:20 and Heb. 7:1, 10, 11, 15, 17 and 21.}

{**He is "made an High Priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec" (Heb. 6:20). "Here men that die receive tithes; but there he receiveth them, of who it is witnessed that he liveth" (Heb. 7:8). "For that after the similitude of Melchisedec there ariseth another priest, who is made, not after the law of a carnal commandment, but after the power of an endless life'' (Heb. 7:15-16). "Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec" (Heb. 7:17 and 21). "But this man, because He continueth ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood" (Heb. 7:24). "He is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for them" (Heb. 7:25). "But the word of the oath, which was since the law, maketh the Son (High Priest), who is consecrated for evermore" (Heb. 7:28). This gives seven if we do not count the reference to Melchisedec, quoted above, in Hebrews 7:8. The word at the end of Hebrews 7:3 "abideth a priest continually" is "continuing uninterruptedness, more than there being no end, though it may so continue" (footnote to Hebrews 5:6 in the J. N. Darby translation).} The Life of David (3)

David and the Holy Spirit. 1 Samuel 16:11-13; 2 Samuel 23:1-2; 1 Chronicles 28:11-12; 1 Chronicles 28:19; Psalms 139:7-10; Psalms 143:10; Psalms 51:11-12.

David, the man of God, was a man with a vast experience of life. As a son, a brother, husband and father, he had plenty of family experience. In single combat and army warfare he knew what was involved in dangerous situations. When he became undisputed king of Israel he experienced the ups and downs of royal responsibilities. As a poet he has left a legacy of psalms, hymns and songs which have stood the test of time and have been a blessing to saints in Old Testament and New Testament times. This is not surprising; they were the product of the Holy Spirit's inspiration. The careful preparations that he made to provide materials for his son, Solomon, to build a temple for God, are perhaps the highlight of his amazing life. It is not surprising that in such a life there should be many references to the Holy Spirit. The power and inspiration of the Holy Spirit permeated his varied experiences and, indeed, was the secret of the success of this remarkable man of God. The Holy Spirit in his life is one of the outstanding features that make him an interesting type of his Greater son, the Lord Jesus Christ, the anointed of God. A close look at each reference to the Holy Spirit in the life of David will produce many helpful and important truths for the days in which we live. "He, being dead, yet speaketh". The Anointing. 1 Samuel 16:11-13

There cannot be any doubt that David's anointing with oil by Samuel, the judge and prophet of Israel, was a most important event in his life. Saul, the reigning king, was rejected, and by a process of elimination, David's brothers were rejected. David was manifested as God's choice and God directed Samuel to anoint him. David was the man of God's heart and purpose. By being anointed David was set apart as God's king to rule His people Israel. But more important than the symbolic anointing was the anointing of the Holy Spirit. The symbolic anointing gave him the royal

position. The Spirit coming upon him gave him the power to fulfil his very great responsibilities to God and Israel. The unfolding life of David shows how well he fulfilled his God appointed task in spite of many failures and determined opposition.

Anointing has an important place in the Old Testament and also in the New Testament. In the Old Testament kings were anointed for their office as were priests (1 Kings 1:39; Leviticus 8:12; Leviticus 8:30). The Tabernacle was anointed (Leviticus 8:10). Prophets were anointed (1 Kings 19:16). Cleansed lepers were anointed (Leviticus 14:28). The anointing indicated God's approval of these persons and the Tabernacle as His dwelling place. It was a beautiful type of the anointing of the Holy Spirit. In Acts 10:38 Peter showed the importance of the anointing with the Holy Spirit. When Jesus of Nazareth was anointed with the Spirit and with power He went about doing good. God was with him (Luke 14:18; Acts 4:27). All that Jesus did and said was in the power of the anointing of the Holy Spirit. His Name, Christ, means anointed as does the name Messiah. In l Corinthians 12:12, 13, the name Christ, the anointed, is connected with the believers in Corinth who are viewed as the body of Christ in that place. The Spirit baptized them into one body in Christ. The body of Christ was formed when the Holy Spirit came to indwell believers on the day of Pentecost and never requires to be repeated. Everyone who truly believes in the Lord Jesus for the forgiveness of their sins receives the gift of the Holy Spirit (John 7:37-39). They become members of the body of Christ (Romans 12:5). This is a corporate truth. In 2 Corinthians 1:21-22, Paul presents the same truth in its bearing to the individual Christian. Each believer is anointed with the Holy Spirit. The anointing with the Spirit enables a collective and an individual response to God and to Christ in worship and in testimony. The two references to the anointing with the Spirit in 1 John 2:20; 1 John 2:27, refer to the ability which the Spirit gives to know the truth of God. There are many other references to anointing in the New Testament which are not relevant to the subject in hand.

It is of the utmost importance to understand the truth of the anointing with the Holy Spirit. He is the indispensable power for every believer to enjoy all the privileges of the Christian position and to fulfil every obligation of the Christian testimony.

David spake by the Spirit. 2 Samuel 23:1-2.

It is no surprise to learn that a man of God like David was led to speak by the Holy Spirit. He said "The Spirit of the Lord spake by me, and His word was in my tongue." No doubt he is included in those referred to by Peter when he wrote "Holy men of God spake under the power of the Holy Ghost" (2 Peter 1:21). The proof of the Spirit's speaking through David is seen in the value of David's many compositions and utterances. We are still listening to David's Spirit inspired sayings when we read his Psalms. Many believers up to the time that Christ came would derive comfort and encouragement from David's writings. Since the Lord Jesus, the Son of God, died, rose from among the dead, and ascended to God's right hand, these same writings have an important part in the New Testament Scriptures, being often quoted there. While the Psalms of David are not strictly speaking Christian doctrine (the implicatory prayers in them are not Christian prayers) they are a means of blessing in many ways and provide much comfort. The versatility of David's speaking by the Spirit is seen in the way he is quoted by the Lord Jesus and the New Testament writers. In Matthew 22:43 and Mark 12:36 the Lord Jesus quotes from Psalms 110:1-7 which is a reference to His exaltation to God's right hand. In Acts 1:16-20 Peter quotes David's words in Psalms 69:25

and in Psalms 109:8 as a reference to the judgment on Judas Iscariot who lost his place as an apostle of the Lord Jesus. Peter, preaching on the day of Pentecost in the city of Jerusalem, quoted David's words from Psalms 16:8-11 concerning the life, death, resurrection and ascension to God's right hand of Jesus of Nazareth (Acts 2:25-32). At a prayer meeting in Jerusalem the believers in the Lord Jesus who were being persecuted by the leaders of Israel quoted Psalms 2:1-2. It referred to the confederacy of evil against the Lord's anointed (Acts 4:25-28). Paul explains how righteousness without works is obtained by quoting David's words in Psalms 32:1-2 (Romans 4:6-8). In Romans 11:9-10 Paul quotes David's words in Psalms 69:22-23 to show Israel's failure to obey God. Psalms 95:7-8 is quoted by Paul in Hebrews 4:7 to exhort Jewish believers to receive God's message in faith and not to harden their hearts. A careful study of these references shows the extent of the Holy Spirit's speaking through David. What a great honour and blessing to speak in the Spirit's power and inspiration. The New Testament writers were inspired by the Spirit to use precise words to convey spiritual truths. The gospel was preached effectively in the Spirit's power (1 Thessalonians 1:5; 1 Peter 1:12). Appropriate ministry for the benefit of local assemblies is to be given in the power of the Spirit (1 Corinthians 12:7). Worship pleasing to God must be in the Spirit's power and utterance (Php 3:3). The Spirit is always speaking to the assemblies (Revelation 2:1-29; Revelation 3:1-22). Praise God that in these last days of the Christian testimony the Holy Spirit is still speaking. He speaks principally through the Holy Scriptures. The Spirit gave David the pattern of the Temple.

1 Chronicles 28:11-19 The crowning act of David's eventful life was the giving of directions to his son Solomon, for the building of a Temple for God. These directions he received from the Spirit of God. When the Tabernacle was built God gave instructions to Moses about its construction. Nothing was left to man's imagination or ingenuity. It was God who initiated the matter. It was David who had the desire to have a permanent building for God, an excellent exercise. God, by giving a plan of the Temple to David by His Spirit, made sure that His will, not man's, would be expressed. The meticulous directions such as God gave to Moses in the book of Exodus for the construction of the Tabernacle, are not given in 1 Chronicles 28:1-21 for the building of the Temple. However, when Solomon built the temple it is evident that a plan was adhered to. That plan was given by the Spirit of God. Verses 11-19 catalogue all that was to be arranged for this great house for God. David said "the house that is to be built for Jehovah must be exceeding great in fame and in beauty in all lands" (1 Chronicles 22:5). David's directions from the Spirit of God regarding the Temple were obeyed in the day of Israel's glory and power. They were also followed in the day of recovery and restoration. Because of Israel's unfaithfulness the Temple had been destroyed and desecrated. Read the first ten chapters of Ezekiel, and Daniel's prayer in Daniel chapter nine. But God in His mercy began a movement of revival and the walls of Jerusalem and the temple were rebuilt. Read the books of Ezra and Nehemiah. In those days of recovery David's directions for the praise of Jehovah were remembered and put into function (Ezra 3:10-11). In Nehemiah 12:24; Nehemiah 12:45 we read of singers, doorkeepers and praise according to the commandments of David, the man of God, being established. Divine arrangements are good for days of prosperity and for days of weakness and recovery.

These are important lessons for Christians. It is a true saying that "God's principles never change". God's order for His presence and praise must be maintained. He delights in order and is not the author of disorder. When man thinks that he knows how to do things better than God, he creates

disorder. It might be asked "Does man think that he can do better than God? Is there any evidence of such a suggestion?" The answer is "yes, whenever the plain instructions of God are substituted by human arrangements, man is virtually saying I know how to do things better than God". God's directions for His people are for the duration of the dispensation, whether they find themselves in good days or bad days. The Holy Spirit spoke plainly and powerfully through the apostle Paul, particularly in relation to assembly order. In 1 Corinthians 3:16 Paul instructed the believers in that city that they constituted the Temple of God. The numerous instructions he gave to them are summed up in 1 Corinthians 14:37. They were the commandment of the Lord. How audacious of anyone to say that these instructions are only Paul's! The Spirit speaks expressly of the weakness and unfaithfulness that mark the latter times (1 Timothy 4:1-3). Timothy, and by extension ourselves, is exhorted to hold fast to the truths presented by Paul. If Paul the apostle could rejoice in seeing the order of the Colossian believers how much more does God rejoice in men and women who obey the pattern that He gives for assembly order (Colossians 2:5).

David recognizes the omnipresence of the Spirit.

Psalms 139:7

It is questionable whether David knew of such an expression as "the omnipresent Spirit". However his statement "Whither shall I go from Thy Spirit?" expresses that truth. David realized that there is no hiding place from God. His Spirit knew exactly where he was, what he was thinking, saying and doing. A most sobering consideration. David's sin with Bathsheba and other failures would never have occurred had he remembered the omnipresence of the Spirit of God. Needless to say the same applies to all believers in Christ. Does Scripture support David's assertion that it is impossible to be outside of the Spirit's cognizance? In Revelation 5:6 the Spirit of God is presented in the figure of seven spirits which are sent into ALL the earth. There is no place in this world where the Spirit cannot move or operate. The Spirit is omnipresent. The habitation of God in the Spirit refers to the dwelling place of God and this consists of all believers in Christ in every place upon earth at any given moment (Ephesians 2:22). It is another expression of the omnipresence of the Holy Spirit. When it is remembered that the Holy Spirit is a Divine Person, co-equal with the Father and the Son, it will be realized that He cannot be confined to a particular company or place. The Lord Jesus referred to Him in figure as wind "The wind blows where it will, and thou hearest its voice, but knowest not whence it comes and where it goes . . ." (John 3:8). The Lord Jesus Christ corporeally is at the right hand of God (Acts 2:33). It is obvious that, at the present time, He does not present Himself in His body to His own, as He did to His disciples before He ascended to the Father's right hand (Acts 1:3-4). When bodily on earth He could speak of Himself as "The Son of Man who is in heaven" (John 3:13). Though now bodily in heaven He is in Spirit in the midst of those who are gathered unto His Name (John 4:24; Matthew 18:20). On our side it is by the omnipresent Holy Spirit that the presence of the Lord Jesus is known. He is the Spirit of Jesus (Acts 16:7, J.N.D. trans.). The Spirit of Jesus Christ (Php 1:19). The Spirit of His Son (Galatians 4:6). Because of who He is the Holy Spirit enables believers in Christ to know and enjoy the presence and power of the Lord Jesus Christ. The Holy Spirit is with the Christians and in the Christians to the end of the dispensation. He may be grieved or quenched but He remains in His omnipresence to maintain what is due to God and to the Lord Jesus Christ (Ephesians 4:30; 1 Thessalonians 5:19).

David asks to be led by God’s Spirit.

Psalms 143:10 When David asked God to teach him to do His will, he immediately asked to be led by God’s good Spirit. He could not have asked for better guidance than that. To learn God’s will is one thing but to do it is quite another. David’s desires were important for him. They are important for every Christian anxious to please God. It means the setting aside of one’s own will, and by the Spirit’s help and guidance following the will of God. As always, the Lord Jesus is the perfect example. In Luke 4:1 the Spirit led Jesus, the Son of God, into the wilderness. The perfect Man was about to be subjected to intense temptation by Satan, but He overcame the evil wiles of His great adversary. He won the victory by dependence on God and repeatedly quoting His Word. That is the pattern for every follower of the Lord Jesus. Paul, the apostle to the Gentiles, always desired to do the will of God. It was his life and joy to serve the living God and his Master, the Lord Jesus Christ. On one occasion, while involved in service for the Lord, he was forbidden by the Spirit to speak in Asia. Thinking that it would be alright to go to Bithynia, he and his companions set off to go there. The Spirit of Jesus did not allow them (Acts 16:6-9). It wasn’t long before a vision appeared to Paul and he and his company set out for Macedonia and Greece. The Spirit was leading them as they sought to do the will of God. What was the result? Assemblies were formed at Philippi, Thessalonica, Corinth and Ephesus. The will of God and the Spirit’s leading produced positive results for the glory of God and for the blessing of many precious souls. Another great benefit of lasting profit from that leading of the Spirit are the letters that Paul wrote to these assemblies. There is help and comfort in modem times from past triumphant exercises.

It was according to the will of God that the Galatian believers should be delivered from this evil world (Galatians 1:4). But they were in grave danger of returning to the bondage of the law. Paul in his epistle to the Galatians, corrected their erroneous tendencies. In chapter five of his epistle, the great conflict between the flesh and the Spirit is dealt with. Paul specifically stated "if ye are led by the Spirit, ye are not under law" (Galatians 5:18). The law was given to a nation of men and women in the flesh, 1:e. with a fallen nature inherited from Adam’s fall, and incapable of pleasing God. The leading of the Spirit enables Christians to suppress the evil tendencies of the flesh, and to express the nine-fold fruit of the Spirit which is pleasing to God and honouring to Christ. In Romans 8:14-17 there is an exalted feature of the leading of the Spirit. It is sons of God who are led by Him. These sons, having the Spirit of sonship (adoption) are enabled of the Spirit to speak to their Father and say "Abba, Father" (Galatians 4:6). Exactly the words the Lord Jesus addressed to His Father in the Garden of Gethsemane (Mark 14:36). How wonderful! To be able to address our Father in the same way as His perfect unique Son. David’s desire to be led by God’s good Spirit is an integral part of Christian life and response to God.

David asks God not to take His Holy Spirit from him.

Psalms 51:11 When David’s sorrowful sin of adultery with Bathsheba was brought home to him by Nathan the prophet, he was smitten in his conscience and immediately repented of his evil deeds (2 Samuel 12:7). Not only did he repent but he left a record for all to read about the reality of his repentance toward God. Would anyone like to write about their failure in such an open way? Psalms 51:1-19 is a laying bare of the heart and conscience of a penitent man of God. It was against God that he had sinned. It was to God that he made his confession of guilt. The danger of losing the presence, help and power of the Holy Spirit was a very real one. King Saul, Israel’s first

king, had known the power of the Spirit in his life, but because of his failures the Spirit of God left him (1 Samuel 10:6; 1 Samuel 10:10; 1 Samuel 11:6; 1 Samuel 16:14). It was the remembrance of this that caused David to pray as he did. It is of interest to note that the Spirit of God wrought mightily in Samson, a judge of Israel (Judges 13:25; Judges 14:6; Judges 14:19; Judges 15:14). From the time that Samson betrayed his Nazarite vow to the cunning Delilah and lost his strength, there are no more references to the Spirit working in him (Judges 16:17). When devotion and reparation to God were slighted the Spirit's help was withdrawn.

It is important to keep in mind that David's prayer was in keeping with the day in which he lived. It was the day of obedience to the Mosaic law. It is not a valid prayer for a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ. Since the day of Pentecost, when the Lord Jesus received the Holy Spirit from the Father to give to His followers upon earth, the Holy Spirit has remained in the bodies of believers, these believers forming the Christian testimony on earth at any given moment (Acts 2:32-33). He will be with them forever. The Lord Jesus said so (John 14:16). The believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is sealed with the Holy Spirit UNTIL the day of redemption (Ephesians 1:14). That is the day when all believers in Christ, those who have died, and those alive at His coming, shall receive glorified bodies (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18; Php 3:20-21; 1 Corinthians 15:42-58). When God seals a believer with the Holy Spirit no power can destroy that seal, neither can unfaithfulness on the part of the believer cause the seal to be removed or broken (2 Corinthians 1:21-22). The seal of king Ahasuerus could not be reversed (Esther 8:8). The seal of God in giving the Holy Spirit to believers is yet more irreversible than the ancient king's seal. A seal has different aspects in Scripture. The Corinthian assembly was the authentic indication (seal) that Paul was an apostle (1 Corinthians 9:2). The seal in 2 Timothy 2:19 is a seal of possession. It indicates that God knows those that belong to Him. In Revelation 20:3, when the seal is placed on Satan's prison, he will be secure and restrained from evil for 1,000 years. The king's seal in Esther 8:8 was permanent. When these aspects are considered in connection with the seal of the Holy Spirit it will be seen what an important truth it is.

While the Holy Spirit will never be taken from a true believer (unbelievers are not sealed with the Spirit) that does not encourage careless living, far from it. The characteristic name of the Spirit in the New Testament is the Holy Spirit. For power in response to God and Christ in worship, and for power in any feature of Christian service, it is necessary and vital to have an ungrieved Spirit of God. It is easy in this modern age to become insensitive to evil in its many forms. The Holy Spirit will never countenance any unconfessed sin in the lives of Christians. True communion with the Father and the Son and true profitable service largely depend on our practical consistency with the indwelling Spirit of God. Great blessings demand a conduct that is worthy of them.

F. Wallace.

Hymn Lord Jesus, 'tis our joy to know Thy love The following hymn came from the pen of William Kelly. Written prior to 1894 it was used among the Lord's people until about 1928 but since then has not been included in any hymnal that Chapter Two is aware of. Although better remembered for his scholarship and as a prime gift to the church as a Bible teacher Mr. Kelly wrote several hymns all of which are characterised by clarity of thought, doctrinal precision and devotion to Christ. "In a hymn one looks for the elevated expression of communion rising from true and deep spirituality, or the charming simplicity in celebrating grace and truth, which is due in homage and

gratitude to God and His Son" (Bible Treasury volume 20, W. Kelly). An anthology of his hymns and poems is being prepared for publication. Chapter Two plan to issue this during the summer of 1993, if the Lord will. A new biography of William Kelly is also in preparation but the heavy workload has delayed this project considerably. The publication dates of these new titles will be in future issues of this magazine.

LORD Jesus, 'tis our joy to know Thy love, that rests upon us now, Is ours for evermore; Not this the manner of vain man- Thou lovest as God only can Ages on ages o'er.

Before a creature lived or died, Before God's sons rejoicing cried At sight of all things made, Man was the object of Thy heart, With him to take Thy destined part, By Satan undismayed.

O blessed Lord, Thy love did then Pass angels by for sons of men, For beings of the dust!

Thyself the Father's chief delight, Eternal Wisdom, Life, and Light.

How worthy of all trust!

Yet man, alas! a rebel turned And soon with every evil burned, The slave of Thy worst foe;

How wondrously this drew Thy love To reconcile with God above Our alien hearts, we know!

Lords, 'tis the virtue of Thy blood To wash us spotless for our God: Was ever love like this?

Yes, Thou would'st have us now enjoy The tidings glad without alloy, Waiting for heavenly bliss. But far, far more; Thy love that came So low to bear sin's doom and shame Has raised us to Thy height; For Thou hast made us one with Thee In heavenly glory all shall see When Thou dost come in might.

W. Kelly (1820-1906).

Book Review "The Assembly Of God" by H. L. Heijkoop. 141pp., paperback Available through Believers' Bookshelf (U.S.A. and Canada) or Chapter Two In the foreword the author mentions that the book is an adaptation and translation of addresses which he gave in Germany and Switzerland more than a decade ago. The book is divided into nine chapters and readily divides into two major parts, though this is not mentioned as such in the book. The first part presents God's counsel and how He has realized it in the course of time and will accomplish it to perfection. The second part underlines our responsibility as Christians to put God's thoughts into practice.

Chapter one shows how the assembly was formed as a result of the incarnation of the Eternal Son and on His death, resurrection and exaltation. The assembly of God is a company of called-out ones, just as Abraham was called out of an idolatrous system. These called ones belong to Christ, the Anointed Man of God who is now in the glory and they have Christ as their life. The Scriptures never use the word church (or assembly) to refer to anything either wider or narrower than this company of true believers. The second chapter speaks about the love of Christ for His assembly His bride, in the past, present and future. What a wonderful reality! The third chapter presents the body of Christ as His complement. Just as Eve made Adam "complete," so that together they are called "Adam," so in the counsels of God the assembly makes Christ "complete" and both together are called "the Christ." Here we see how the Father gave the risen and glorified Christ as Head to the assembly.*

{*I would add here a second thought, namely that the body is also the expression of the Head. Christ, the glorified Man in heaven, is expressed in the members of His body on this earth. I think both sides of the truth are equally important and the one should not be stressed at the expense of the other.}

Chapter four deals with the assembly as the house of God, again according to God's purpose; here the Holy Spirit comes into prominence. On the one hand the house is growing until the rapture and on the other it is a suitable dwelling place for God through the Spirit. The universal aspect of this house finds its expression locally and therefore in this chapter of the book man's responsibility with regard to the house of God is also discussed, with special emphasis on 1 Corinthians 3:1-23, 1 Timothy 3:15 and 2 Timothy 2:1-26. Here, actually, the second major part begins, with the focus on man's response to God's plans. Chapter five presents the greatness of the Head and our need to be refreshed and stimulated again and again in our affections towards Christ, who is the Head. Chapter six shows how Christ is building up, edifying the assembly in order to realize God's counsel. Chapters seven and eight explain how the many members form one body and how this truth is expressed in local assemblies. The last chapter challenges us to get involved in God's interests on this earth. He wants to have a dwelling place on earth on the basis of redemption and He wants to use you and me to realize this wonderful desire. All of us, brothers, sisters, young people, children, need to put God's thoughts into practice and prepare an habitation for him. The author refers to Exodus 35:1-35 where we have beautiful illustrations to help us to carry out God's thoughts with regard to His dwelling place on earth. We must begin to contribute in a positive way rather than to criticize. The Assembly of God is a book to read prayerfully and study, not merely to be used for reference material.

Alfred E. Bouter

Copies of "The Assembly Of God" by Mr. Heijkoop are available to subscribers free of charge on application to Chapter Two. This offer is limited to one copy per applicant, while stocks last.

News from the Field Republic of Malawi Area: 118,500 sq km Population: 8,000,000 (48% under 15 years old) Capital: Lilongwe (since 1975) Official languages: Chichewa and English. Tumbuku is spoken in the North and Yao in the South East.

Religion: Religious freedom but Russellites (J.W's) were banned in 1969. 68% claim to be Christian. The Yao are Muslim, 16%. The remainder are mainly animist African tribal religions. Christianity came through the famous work of David Livingstone in the last century.

REPORT OF A VISIT TO MALAWI

After some years of interesting correspondence with believers in Malawi it was felt by those engaged in the literature work that a visit might prove useful. With the encouragement of our colleagues in North America and Europe it was determined to go in mid October for two weeks. The Lord enabled brother Hilvert Wijnholds to join me for this trip. His considerable experience in Cameroon and elsewhere in Africa proved a significant additional asset. We left London on 10 October and arrived 12 hours later in Lilongwe. Two local Christians, Howard Ngwira and Stephen Nyrango, met us at the airport. The next leg of the journey was a 7 hour bus trip to the town of Mzuzu, which is towards the north. We arrived at Howard's simple house, safe but tired, at midnight. It has no electricity and no running water and it lies at a considerable distance from a

metalled road. We were made very welcome and as comfortable as possible by Howard and his wife Florence.

We spent the next day resting and talking about the Lord's interests in Malawi. Numerous local Christians also came and made themselves known. They had all left the religious systems of men to be identified with the company in Mzuzu. The next day we set off for Rumphi (Stephen's home). We arrived and found a group of believers awaiting us. Besides locals a few had come from nearby Mphompha. The meeting was followed by questions. The truths we enjoy are hardly known, but their desire to walk in the Lord's will is extremely cheering. On Wednesday we travelled to Karonga which is in the far north near Tanzania. Here a cotton farmer had built a nice meeting room. We could preach in the shade to a good sized congregation. After Hilvert and I had each given a word we could break off for a dish of tea and a hot meal. Some while through the meal a believer from Zimbabwe came in. He had heard of the "new doctrine" that was on everyone's lips and desired to know more. We will be writing to him in due course and praying the Lord will show him the truth. After the meeting we went to visit one of Howard's brothers who had been a few days in hospital. When we arrived we learnt the tragic news that his brother had died that morning of dysentery. We went to the family home to find a funeral meeting in progress with many mourners. A preacher for the CCAP was exhorting the hearers to be prepared for death by trusting Christ. We left Howard to attend the burial which would take place the next day. The next visit on our itinerary was to the Kaboko area which lies not far from Mzuzu. Here the local believers had built a mud meeting room with a guest room. There are a number of men here who are very keen to learn. We sensed however that their grasp of the gospel of the grace of God was very poor. Our stress was on presenting basic gospel truths and seeking that these might be embraced with saving faith. There is much to be done here in order to establish the believers in grace. Brother Mwenda seeks to gather the saints but lacks sufficient knowledge of the fundamental truths to be much help. He was, in spite of his strong personality, eager to receive adjustment from the Scriptures. Among the local Christians were a number of widows — one in particular, with nine children, has been very faithful in supporting the little testimony. The whole company received us very kindly and gave us a huge basket full of bananas. We really appreciated this as it was the first fruit we had eaten since arriving. We are quite sure the value of this gift was a sacrifice for them.

Friday, Saturday and Lord's Day were reserved for a three day conference. About 70 believers came together from all the places we had previously visited. Some had travelled long distances. One brother, Lucas Banda, had taken three days to come up from Monkey Bay. He had a good acquaintance with the Word of God and could bring to our conversations the appropriate text and reference on varied scriptural subjects. His quietness and keen interest in the truth of the assembly commended itself to us. In his area, he reported, there may be 15 meeting places where the Word is proclaimed and prayer made, but as yet no breaking of bread. The conference consisted of a study of Acts chapters l and 2. There were many questions of a practical nature which we sought to answer from the Word. Our overall impression was that these believers were very teachable and desired to learn the way of God more accurately. On the Lord's Day we observed them breaking bread. We refrained from expressing fellowship with them because of various matters that need to be dealt with. They had so far let anyone break bread so long as they desired to do so. The responsible brethren had not however considered the necessary moral conditions or spiritual state of the applicants for fellowship. Young children had also been admitted

to the Lord's supper, without them having any understanding of what it meant. A deeper consciousness of personal and corporate responsibility is needed in relation to the holiness of the Lord's table. It is also imperative that when new assemblies and groups desire fellowship a conscientious investigation is made to ensure the maintenance of an uncontaminated fellowship. In so short a visit we could not establish to what degree they had judged their former connections with the unfruitful works of darkness. The last meeting of the conference was with one or two older brothers of each meeting place. During this they sought counsel on various matters and help. On the day after the conference we flew to Blantyre and visited the Bible Society to arrange for discounts on Bible purchases which we intend making. If we buy more than 760 copies we can secure a 30% reduction in cost. The next day we went on towards Zomba, the old capital. On the way there is a small country meeting at Masuku, some 3/4 of a mile off the main road. Some of the people had come 200 kms. to be present for the meeting. Again we were constrained to present the foundation truths of the gospel of our salvation. One of the local brothers is a very energetic farmer and ekes out a livelihood from the parched land. He had built a decent sized mud meeting room with a thatched roof. One of the brothers labouring among these is Godfrey from Nyamlomso Village, Chikwawa. That evening we went to visit kinsfolk of brother Howard, where we learnt that his aged father of 80 was now suffering from dysentery. Hilvert and I gave him what medicines we had brought with us. The next day we went on to Ncheu where we visited a Dutch doctor — a real child of God of the reformed tradition. He was willing to take some of our books and showed interest in our visit. To get to him and his wife we passed the Mozambique border. The west side of the road was completely devoid of signs of life. Fine buildings had been destroyed. The contrast with the Malawi side of the road was great. For some miles there were large villages of Mozambique refugees dwelling in mud huts. Occasionally these people will cross the road to tend fields in Mozambique, but they will not venture far because of the terrible civil war still raging there. Here in the south there are many refugees swelling the ranks of hungry people needing help. The refugees are of the same tribe as the Malawian, but have Portuguese as a second language instead of English. It may be that literature in Portuguese could be distributed profitably. The brethren in Malawi certainly would like to receive small quantities to see what could be done. On our last day in Malawi we visited the Christian bookshop in the capital, and rested prior to our long homeward flight. We spent much of the time reflecting on what we had been privileged to see and hear. Our prayer is still that these lambs of Christ might be encouraged to walk and feed in His green pastures. Their needs are many and great, but He is sufficient for all.

H. Wijnholds and E. N. Cross

Vol 02 - Truth & Testimony Vol. 2, No. 10, 1994.

Truth & Testimony Vol. 2, No. 10, 1994. The Consequences of the Fall “And he died” (Genesis 5:5 ff.)

Such is the sad refrain repeated throughout this chapter: “And he died”. Because of his sin man is subject to death, although he received the breath of life from God. Can one think of any greater contrast than that between life and death? Reading the Bible, we find that life did not come into being just by itself or by mere chance, but that it originated from God. There is a divine Maker behind the things we see. He made everything with wisdom, and His eternal power and divinity can be seen both in great and small things, both in the enormous galaxies and in the secrets of the atom. The Bible tells us that since the creation of the world, God’s invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood through the things that are made (Romans 1:20). Any intelligent person cannot but conclude that creation originates from the hands of an almighty Creator. The living God is the Source of all life. One word of His was sufficient to call those things which did not exist as though they did. “For He spake, and it was done; He commanded, and it stood fast” (Psalms 33:9). He said, “Let there be light: and there was light” (Genesis 1:3).

How then was it possible that death could mar God’s beautiful creation? If God is the Source of life, then where does death come from? Or should we perhaps regard death as a natural thing which happens to be part of the cycle of life? Is death a friend rather than an enemy? These are all very important questions, and it is necessary to find the right answers to them. If we consider that death is the very opposite of life, it is obvious that God, the Source of life, cannot be the source of death at the same time. Death is something which is completely contrary to God’s nature as the Originator of life. This is a fundamental contrast, comparable with that between light and darkness, and between good and evil. Those who try to argue away these differences are deceiving themselves, as they turn away from reality in order to create a make-believe world where life is as meaningless as death. The Word of God, however, teaches us something different. Death is the domain of God’s great adversary, Satan, who “had the power of death” (Hebrews 2:14). Because the first man was deceived by his craftiness, death could enter our world: “Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin” (Romans 5:12). Death, one of the other apostles says, is the last link in the chain of evil that begins with the desires of our sinful hearts (James 1:13-15). And as not Adam and Eve only, but all their descendants were sinners, death spread to all men.

Now Satan does not have the last word, for Someone stronger than he has come. He has bound him and plundered his house. The coming of this mighty Man of valour had been announced by God immediately after man’s fall. Someone born of a woman was going to bruise the head of the serpent. Christ was the Seed who was to come, and to overcome the devil. But at the same time this meant the end of His life here on earth, for the serpent was to bruise His heel (Genesis 3:15). He is the counterpart of Adam, the divine answer to all the consequences of Adam’s sin, through whom death entered the world. Christ is the second Man and the last Adam, the Victor over Satan,

sin, and death (Romans 5:1-21 and 1 Corinthians 15:1-58). For this reason it is of the utmost importance to notice that the verse from Hebrews 2:1-18, already referred to, is written in the past tense! The devil had the power of death, but he was dethroned by Christ. He overcame the devil and annulled death and brought life and incorruptibility to light (2 Timothy 1:10). On the island that is called Patmos, John saw Him as the risen Lord: the One who had the keys, 1:e., the power of hades and of death (Revelation 1:18).

Christ rose again the third day, God having loosed the pains of death, because it was not possible that He should be held by its power (Acts 2:24). And as the risen Lord He is the Head of a new generation. He gives eternal life to all those who believe in Him. He has destroyed him who had the power of death and released those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage (Hebrews 2:14-15). Death cannot frighten them anymore. They know Christ as the Resurrection, and the Life, and they share His life (John 11:25).

Therefore the iron rule “and he died” does not apply to Christians. Even in Genesis 5:1-32 this is indicated by the only exception we find there, namely in the life of Enoch who walked with God and was taken away without seeing death (Genesis 5:24; Hebrews 11:5). This is also the Christian’s hope, as we wait for God’s Son from heaven. “We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.” At His coming the Lord Jesus Christ will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body. “The dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain, shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord”, in His Father’s house (John 14:1-3; 1 Corinthians 15:51; Php 1:23; Php 3:21; 1 Thessalonians 1:10; 1 Thessalonians 4:15-18). And when a Christian dies before the Lord’s return, he does not fear death as the last enemy. He considers death as his “servant”, to carry him into Paradise. To be there with Christ is far better than to remain in the flesh (Luke 23:43; Php 1:23-24). It is a place of unspeakable joy (2 Corinthians 12:4). But it is sure that the Lord Himself will come to call His own, dead or alive, and bring them to glory. To this end, however, it is absolutely necessary to hear His voice now, and to receive eternal life in Christ. Have you heard His voice? If you hearken to Him, then a new day will dawn for you. This is a reality even now, during this life here on earth. For Christ will be your Light. He will illuminate your way and lead you in the paths of righteousness.

If you are still unconverted, you should realise that you are a child of death, sunk down into a deep spiritual sleep. Or, as the Bible puts it, you are “dead in trespasses and sins” (Ephesians 2:1). You must wake up. Listen to Christ’s mighty voice! He once called Lazarus out of the grave, and He is the same today. He calls you from the “grave” of your sins and your guilt. So if you hear His voice, do not resist but rise and go to Him who wants to receive you with open arms. The one who comes to Him He will in no wise cast out (John 6:37). Do not forget that Christ is the Lord of both life and death. If you are not willing to accept Him as your Saviour now, you will meet Him someday as your Judge. All authority has been given to Him and He is ready to judge the living and the dead (1 Peter 4:5). Those who have been raised with Him to new life have nothing to fear, but those who remain in their spiritual sleep (the sleep of death) He will cast into the lake of fire, which is the second death (Revelation 20:11-15). From then on, the expression “and he died” will be an irrevocable reality as there is no escape from the second death. Therefore, take your refuge with Christ, the Originator and the Giver of life, before it is too late. Now is the accepted time, now is the

day of salvation.

Hugo Bouter.

Psalms 119:1-176 (8) (Continued from page 281) 5. HE — WINDOW The significance of this letter is not certain but many scholars think it means “Window” or “Lattice”. In any case it carries the meaning of “letting in the light”. Its numerical value is five. The number five suggests man’s weakness, because a man with only one hand, that is with only five fingers, cannot do much. But a further thought is of grace meeting this weakness. The letter “He” occurs twice in Jhwh (= Jehovah), and this helps us to understand that God in His grace is meeting, and has met, man’s utter inability and helplessness. In Arabic the letter “He” is used in asking a question: “Hal?”.

Verses 25-48. Strength for the Weary Section Five. Verses 33-40: “God’s Word Meets Our Weakness”

Here then is a desperate need! Only God can meet our need! But we must go to Him and trust Him implicitly, and let Him do the work that we cannot do. “For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly” (Romans 5:6).

1. My need: To be teachable Verse 33: HAYAHRANNI...“Teach me...”

Man is totally ignorant of his true and desperate condition as a sinner. That is why the Holy Spirit must convict of sin, and open our eyes so that we may see our need! The first thing required of a sinner is his total capitulation, his recognition that he is lost and helpless. The Holy Spirit insists upon the surrender of our self-will. The capacity to will, to make decisions, remains, but must from now on be under the control of the Holy Spirit.

Notice the five-fold prayer from a man who is conscious of his helplessness (Remember that the letter He is the fifth letter of the alphabet):

1. Verse 33 “Teach... and I shall keep it...”

2. Verse 34 “Give me understanding... and I shall keep...”

3. Verse 35 “Make me to go... I delight.”

4. Verse 36 “Incline my heart...”

5. Verse 38 “Stablish Thy word unto Thy servant...”

All these verses express his desire to be taught, to receive light and illumination from the Lord. Let us therefore not be wise in our own eyes, or think we know better than the Lord, but repeat with the Psalmist, “Teach me, O Lord, the way of Thy statutes...”

2. My need: A contrite spirit Verse 34: HA-BEENI...“Make me understand...” The desire to be teachable goes together with a contrite spirit! We should take a humble position before the Lord. Our intellect is certainly not to be set aside. The Holy Spirit’s activity is to renew our understanding and our mind (Romans 12:2). Even though our intellect must be engaged, yet we must realise that the heart must be involved first of all. In spiritual matters the Bible tells us that we think not with our brains (intellect), but with our heart as the centre of our total being. This is figurative language of course. So when our human, sanctified spirit is taught, our whole heart becomes engaged in the

observing. Putting teaching we have received into practice is a question of the heart and the will. And notice it is the whole heart that is engaged in this: “... yea, I shall observe it with my whole heart”. This emphasises concentration. The Holy Spirit is our divine Teacher: “But ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things”, “And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know Him that is true: and we are in Him that is true, even in His Son Jesus Christ” (1 John 2:20; 1 John 5:20).

3. My need: Concentration Verse 35: HA-DAREKNI...“Cause me...” The need for concentration has been noticed in the previous verse. Here this thought is continued: “Make me to go in the path...”. It is my duty to keep yielding myself to the teaching of the Spirit, and present my members as instruments of righteousness unto Him. We are not robots programmed to go through certain motions automatically. “For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure” (Php 2:13). There is always God’s side first but also most definitely man’s side and responsibility. If He is going to “Make me to go...”, I must make it my delight to do His bidding!

4. My need: A yielded heart Verse 36: HAT-LEBI...“Bow (or incline) my heart...” Are we really sincere and determined about following the Lord, doing His will, obeying His Word? By nature we are all rebels, only thinking of ourselves and doing our own will. That is the reason why he prays: “not to covetousness”. Now that we are born of God and have His Spirit dwelling within, we need to be re-schooled, 1:e. to be taught His will. Now we can see the need for this prayer: “Incline my heart...”

5. My need: A single eye Verse 37: HA-GAH-VAR...“Turn away...”

“The heart is often led astray by the eye”, is no understatement! If in verse 36 we have a positive request (“Incline my heart...”), in this verse we have a negative request: “Turn away mine eyes...”. How quickly we are defiled by a look! How quickly we are distracted by what our eyes observe, how quickly deviated from the Lord’s way for us: “...quicken Thou me in Thy way”. Here again, the Lord will not do for us what we must do for ourselves. The apostle Paul tells us: “... make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof” (Romans 13:14). Someone has said that it is the “second look” that is sin! He meant, that when you walk in the street and you see an unclean thing, a pornographic picture, you cannot help that. But when you stop, or turn to look again, that is deliberate! By turning, or stopping to look again, we are actually making provision for the flesh.

6. My need: Stability Verse 38: HA-KOOM...“Make rise... (or establish, confirm)”

There must be a fixity of purpose in our hearts. “For he that wavereth, is like a wave of the sea, driven with the wind and tossed” (James 1:6). “That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive...” (Ephesians 4:14). The more we are “rooted and grounded” in the Word of God the less vulnerable we shall be to deception. There is no excuse for ignorance of the Word. The Lord Jesus clearly said that we must “watch and pray” lest we be deceived. It is therefore the responsibility of every believer to read and study the Word, so that he might be well-grounded and well-established in the Word of God.

“Thy servant, who is devoted to Thy fear”, is the motivation for seeking to be established in the Word of God. We do not want to grieve the Lord, nor the Holy Spirit. And the fear of the Lord also means that if we disobey then we should certainly fear the discipline that must inevitably follow,

because we are children of our Father.

7. My need: To fear the Lord only Verse 39: HA-GAH-VAR...“Turn away...”

If we fear His Word, that is, respect it and obey it, we need not fear anyone or anything else. He will be with us. No doubt, those who do not fear God and deny even His existence, will ridicule us and mock us and reproach us! It is not easy nor pleasant for the believer to realise that if he wants to be faithful he may not be popular. There is definite reproach attached to being a disciple of Jesus Christ. This may be a healthy fear! It may be he asks here that he might not suffer reproach for adhering to the Word of God. But reproaches for righteousness sake are to be rejoiced in. The literal rendering from the Hebrew is: “Turn away my shame which I fear...”. The Psalmist may have thought of the possibility that he might commit some evil act, some unfaithfulness, that would bring shame upon the Name of the Lord as well as to himself, and so he beseeches the Lord to keep him from this. A similar thought is expressed by the apostle Paul in Php 1:20 : “According to my earnest expectation and my hope, that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but that with all boldness, as always, so now also, Christ shall be magnified in my body...”. What Paul feared was that because of the pressures put upon him by the enemies of the Lord, he might in some measure deny the Lord’s claims — dishonour the Lord. This is indeed a prayer we would do well to pray daily!

8. My need: To realise my nothingness Verse 40: HIN-NEH...“Behold...!” This whole section of eight verses has brought before us our own nothingness and helplessness. This should not be a temporary and emotional feeling, but our constant realisation! In this verse we have the sense of need expressed again: “...quicken me in Thy righteousness”. This is a confession of conscious weakness, and the need for being quickened and strengthened with might by His Spirit in our inner man. To have said: “I have longed after Thy promises...”, would be quite human, but he says: “I have longed after Thy precepts...”. We remember from the introduction that the significance of the word “precept” is: a charge given to us by God for which we are responsible. We must always remember that privileges are inseparable from responsibilities. We have committed unto us a charge from the Lord, like Timothy, to whom Paul says: “Hold fast the form of sound words, which thou hast heard of me, in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus. That good thing which was committed unto thee, keep by the Holy Ghost which dwelleth in us” (2 Timothy 1:13-14). It is the Holy Spirit who helps us in our weakness and helplessness, to strengthen us in order to walk in obedience to the Word of God.

C. Bruins.

Power, Yet Veiled In the Spirit of God is living energy and activity that produces marvellous results. This is seen magnificently in the first reference to Him in Scripture, “the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters. And God said, Let there be light. And there was light” (Genesis 1:2-3). Here is great power in sustained movement, for light must travel at a speed of 186,000 miles per second. And this is a picture of the working of the Spirit of God in bringing to repentance and faith one who has before been in the darkness of sin and unbelief. Light dawns upon his soul, with its living, vibrant energy of sustained movement. But the Spirit is not seen: it is the light that is seen, for light is both revealed and revealing. In the light everything is manifested as it really is. And natural light is beautifully symbolical of the Lord Jesus Christ, who said, “I am the light of the world: he that followeth Me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life” (John 8:12). Therefore, in Christ we see God revealed as He really is, and the light of His face fully

reveals us also. Such is the first great work of the Spirit of God with our souls, in the marvel of our being brought from darkness to light, from the power of Satan to the living God. This corresponds to John 3:8 : “The wind blows where it will, and thou hearest its voice, but knowest not whence it comes and where it goes: thus is every one that is born of the Spirit”. A mighty work has taken place by an unseen Person — one is born again by the Spirit of God, who remains the very energy of the new and eternal life implanted in the soul. This power is real, but the Spirit of God does not draw attention to His own work within the soul. Rather, His work is to attract souls to the blessed Person and work of the Lord Jesus, as He Himself told His disciples, “He shall glorify Me, for He shall receive of Mine and shall announce it to you” (John 16:14). His New Work in the Dispensation of Grace But as well as the great work of the Spirit in new birth and eternal life (which was taking place before our present dispensation), there is a work now in which He is engaged that was never known before the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:1-47). For now the Spirit of God Himself has come to indwell the church of God. The beginning of this is seen in Acts 2:1-47; and since the Spirit of God has come, He has remained in every believer individually, and in the entire church of God collectively. “Do ye not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit which is in you, which ye have of God; and ye are not your own?” (1 Corinthians 6:19). This was said even to the Corinthians, who were called “carnal” and “babes in Christ” and needed serious reproof (1 Corinthians 3:1). Each individual believer was indwelt by the Spirit, though he was not manifesting this properly. Also, they were asked, “Do ye not know that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?” (1 Corinthians 3:16). This is not individual but rather, unitedly, the church is the temple of God, and the Spirit dwells in the church. This reminder was urged upon the Corinthians, not to make them glory in the fact of their having the Spirit, but to stir their exercise of heart in building up the church of God. We are to act consistently with the Spirit’s working in the entire body of Christ, or as it is called here, “the temple of God”, the sphere where the glory of God is displayed in the world today. It is good, solid, vital work that the Spirit does, though He Himself is veiled as it were behind the scenes.

“Filled with the Spirit”: What Does it Mean?

If we are filled with the Holy Spirit, such concern for the eternal blessing of souls and for the building up of God’s church will deeply affect us. For though the Spirit of God dwells in the church, this does not mean that the church is “filled with the Spirit”. And though all believers have the Spirit of God dwelling within them, none can dare to say that they are always filled with the Spirit. If so, we should not need the exhortation, “be filled with the Spirit, speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and chanting with melody in your heart to the Lord” (Ephesians 5:18-19). Notice, we are told to be filled with the Spirit, not to claim to be. To be filled with the Spirit does not mean having more of the Spirit, for He is a living Person, not merely an influence. But it does mean to allow Him full control in every department of our lives, so that Christ Himself is the one precious Object set before our eyes, so delighting our hearts that all else is nothing in comparison.

John the Baptist (Luke 1:15), his mother Elizabeth (Luke 1:41), and his father Zacharias (Luke 1:67), are spoken of as being filled with the Spirit before the day of Pentecost: all of them speaking of Christ. And this same blessed testimony is true too when the expression is used in Acts 2:4. The disciples were with one accord in one place and when the Spirit of God came in His great power to introduce the new dispensation of the church of God, “they were all filled with the Holy

Spirit, and began to speak with other tongues as the Spirit gave to them to speak forth". The object of this was by no means their own personal enjoyment. In fact, those of many nationalities were present and heard them speak in their own tongues "the wonderful works of God". The disciples were given power to speak their own thoughts in bearing witness to the reality of the death and resurrection of Christ, but in a language they had never learned. They knew what they were saying, for they were witnesses. And they spoke that which was intended for the true, pure blessing of all who heard it.

Beware of Imitations

Many since then have sought to imitate this great miracle. But these disciples were not seeking any such thing as speaking in tongues. This was the spontaneous, real work of God by His Spirit and the speaking in tongues was a precious sign that the gospel of Christ was to be available for every nation under heaven, not only for Israel. It signifies that in the church there would now be a precious understanding brought about among believers of all nations, and it was therefore a sign to promote blessed unity.

If one claims this gift in such a way as to draw attention to oneself, this is false. If one speaks in a so-called tongue, not understanding what he is saying, this is a dangerous imitation, for it does not even edify himself, let alone edify others, which is the proper object of all gift. The Spirit of God does not work in a disorderly way. He does not give sensational experiences that tend to exalt men. He draws attention to the Person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ. This was true at Pentecost, and it is true now. When Stephen's face appeared like that of an angel (because he was certainly filled with the Spirit of God), he did not speak in another tongue, for it was Jews he addressed. But he spoke the precious, solid truth of God, focusing the attention of his hearers on the blessed Person of the Lord Jesus now at the right hand of God (Acts 6:15; Acts 7:1-56).

Peter, in Acts 4:8, filled with the Holy Spirit, faithfully spoke to the rulers of Israel of Christ crucified and risen (Acts 4:8-12). In the same chapter (verse 31) the disciples were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and spoke the Word of God with boldness. Paul (Acts 13:9-11), filled with the Holy Ghost, gave a solemn sentence of judgment to Elymas the sorcerer for his perverting the right ways of the Lord. Of all these occasions where the filling of the Spirit is mentioned, only one of them tells us of speaking in tongues (Acts 2:4), and that because it was an occasion of specially outstanding importance, which will never be repeated. But to be filled with the Spirit remains a precious privilege available to every believer, if he will willingly set Christ as the one absorbing Object before his soul. And this necessarily involves the honest self-judgment that does not allow the flesh to take any place of importance. How greatly blessed we shall be if we genuinely allow the Spirit of God to exalt the Lord Jesus Christ in personal and assembly life.

L. M. Grant.

"The Sermon on the Mount" (6) Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God (Matthew 5:8) The sixth of the so-called beatitudes shows very clearly that the "Sermon on the Mount" is not a social or political programme. Sad to say, within some parts of Christendom it is thus understood and explained. Neither does the Lord Jesus here address the multitudes following Him as if they were unbelievers, far from Himself. He does not call them to repentance and faith, even when He speaks to them apart from the disciples. They all belonged to Israel, the earthly people of God,

who were waiting for their Messiah, the King promised by God. In the first place, these principles of the Kingdom of heaven are intended for them. But they are also meant for the Lord's disciples at all times. "Disciple" really means "pupil, apprentice". A good pupil will always endeavour to learn as much as possible from his teacher, in order to put it into practice himself. At the same time he will willingly subject himself to his teacher and thus accept his authority. The followers of the Lord Jesus on earth were first called disciples (and not only the twelve apostles, see Luke 6:13). We frequently come across the word "disciples" in Acts too. It was obviously a common name for Christians in the beginning. In contrast to other names like "children of God", "saints" and "brethren", which occur very often in the epistles of the New Testament and emphasise our blessings, "disciple" rather expresses our subjection and our following after, 1:e. our responsibility. The word "disciple" is therefore a very suitable expression of the relationship of the believer with the Lord in the Kingdom of God. A merely outward or forced submission as "subjects" is not enough. Acknowledgement of the Lord and willing subjection to His authority must be coupled with faith and devotion. Even though little can be seen here below on earth of the acknowledgement of the dominion of Christ over man — rather the contrary seems the case — perhaps very soon the Kingdom of God will be visible for everyone. In the "Sermon on the Mount" the Lord now points out the characteristics that should mark His disciples, His pupils, His apprentices. But He also shows what immediate blessing as well as future reward is connected with this. When the Lord here speaks of those who are pure in heart He does not say how man's heart can be purified. The Word of God shows this in other passages, as for example in Acts 15:9 where Peter says that God purifies the hearts of men by faith (cf. Hebrews 10:22; James 4:8; 1 Peter 1:22). The Lord simply says, "Blessed are the pure in heart...". He thus speaks of those whose hearts have already been purified. In Scripture the heart is the centre of the thoughts, the affections and the will (Matthew 9:4; Matthew 12:34; Matthew 24:48), that is, the inner "switchboard" of man. This is why the writer of the Proverbs had already said, "Keep thy heart more than anything that is guarded; for out of it are the issues of life" (Proverbs 4:23). This is an important warning! By nature nobody possesses a pure heart, not even a child. God had already said in Genesis 8:21, "... for the thought of Man's heart is evil from his youth" (J.N.D. Trans.). In order that man may see God the wicked human heart must be completely purified.

Now the Lord Jesus says "blessed" to those who have purified their hearts by faith in Him and who keep them pure practically: "Blessed are the pure in heart". This is the first lesson of this verse. Just as a heart can only be purified before the Holy God by believing in the Lord Jesus and His work, there is practical pureness of heart only in His presence.

One might object, "But does not this deal with the fact that those whose hearts have been purified by faith in Christ's work of salvation will one day see God in glory? If only those will see God whose hearts are always pure practically, who could then hope to see God?". Thanks be to God that our hope is not based on our often weak and sinful behaviour, but only on God. But let us take care not to separate these two aspects. The fact that, with regard to eternity, we are once and for all perfectly purified must consequently create the practical desire in our daily life to have a pure heart permanently.

Some comments regarding this practical purification are appropriate. When the Lord Jesus was about to wash the feet of His disciples, Peter would not have Him do so. The Lord answers, "Unless I wash thee, thou hast not part with Me". Then Peter wanted to have his head and hands

washed as well. Again the Lord answers, “He that is washed all over needs not to wash save his feet, but is wholly clean; and ye are clean” (John 13:8-10). Here the Lord makes a clear distinction between the initial purification and the repeated one. He also clearly teaches that repeated washing of the feet is necessary!

Only in the presence of our Lord do the true motives of our hearts become obvious, and only here are we led to judge them if necessary. Only here is the desire created and sustained, “Create in me a clean heart, O God” (Psalms 51:10). How important therefore are the moments of quietness for our life of faith, the times when we are alone in the presence of God! This does not mean that we cannot have any fellowship with Him in our daily occupations. But for the examination and purification of our hearts we need to be alone in His presence. Only thus can we preserve the right relationship with Him and with our brothers and sisters. It is not by chance that Paul asks Timothy to seek fellowship with such believers who call upon the Lord out of a pure heart, and that Peter calls upon Christians to love one another with a pure heart fervently (or, incessantly, persistently. 2 Timothy 2:22; 1 Peter 1:22). A pure heart will therefore be a happy heart as well, desiring the glory of God and the well-being of fellow Christians. The Lord adds here a wonderful promise to His “blessed”: “...for they shall see God”. At the present time we live and walk by faith, not by sight. But very soon the moment will come when all whose hearts have been purified by faith will see God. 1 Timothy 6:16 does not contradict this, where it is said that God dwells in unapproachable light, and that no man has seen or is able to see Him. God in His nature is a spirit and invisible. This is clearly said in different passages of the Word of God (John 4:24; Colossians 1:15; 1 Timothy 1:17). But in Colossians 1:15 it is added that the eternal Son of God is the image of the invisible God. He is also the effulgence of His glory and the expression of His substance (Hebrews 1:3). He is the Word of God (John 1:1-18). These passages show that the Son, who Himself is God, is the perfect image of the triune God and His nature. When He became Man, God was manifested in flesh (1 Timothy 3:16). We shall see Him who is the Son of God, who became Man to manifest God, and in whom all the fulness of the Godhead dwells bodily. We shall see Him in perfect and undisturbed glory, and will worship Him eternally. We will not only be with Him eternally, but see Him as He is (1 John 3:2). The words, “... for they shall see God” have a special meaning for the Jews who in those days believed on the Lord Jesus, as well as for those who will soon see Him as their Messiah. In Psalms 24:3 the question was asked, “Who shall ascend into the mount of Jehovah? and who shall stand in His holy place?”. The answer is, “He that hath blameless hands and a pure heart...”. In Isaiah 33:14-16 similar questions are asked and also answered. But then verse 17 says, “Thine eyes shall see the King in His beauty; they shall behold the land that is far off”.

What moments they will be for all the different believers, to see the Son of God as their Saviour or Messiah for the first time and then to contemplate Him for ever!

Arend Remmers. From Our Archive The Scriptural Way of Gathering in the Present Day (1) (Being the substance of ministry at the Chicago Conference, November 22-24, 1951) The Lord Himself the Centre of Gathering.

1 Samuel 22:1-2; 1 Samuel 22:23 The Lord has promised His presence to those who gather out to Him alone: “For where two or three are gathered together in My Name, there am I in the midst of them” (Matthew 18:20). No matter how great the ruin and no matter how few they be who gather to

Him in the midst of this general ruin, His presence is with them. The verses we have read give us a beautiful illustration of this.

David was the man of God's choice to be head over all things to His people. The people were living in a time of departure from God's established order. They were following a man of their own choice while the one of God's choice was in a place of rejection outside of it all. We read of some who had a relationship with David that they valued more than other ties, so "they went down thither to Him". There were some also who were in distress, and they likewise went to him. Others were discontented; they had not found satisfaction under Saul, the man of the people's choice. All these "gathered themselves unto him," the man God had chosen to be the head over His people. They were only a small group in the midst of the general declension but they were gathered around him. He became their captain. He was everything to them. Their whole reason for being so gathered was David himself.

How could those with such varied past history and backgrounds ever get along in peace together? The answer is simple. They had one common object for their hearts and one common head or captain. Thus they were not only kept together, but many became mighty men under his leadership. So it is today when saints gather to the Lord alone, in obedience to His Word, and keep their eyes fixed upon Him, learning of Him, and walking under His orders. They are kept together, and under His leadership gifts are developed for the blessing of all. It is only when they get their eyes on one another and occupied with personalities instead of Him, that troubles come in.

There is much similarity today with David's time. Many of God's people are following the man, or order, of their choice. But Christ is still God's choice — the God-given Centre and Head around whom His people should gather. And those, however few they may be who find it in their heart to gather out to Him, will have the full blessing of His presence in their midst. And the Lord's Word to them is the same as David's of old to one who came out to him, "Abide thou with me, fear not... with me thou shalt be in safeguard".

What is a Sect and is there a Non-sectarian Ground of Gathering? The Greek word translated sect is derived from a root meaning to take for oneself, to choose or prefer. It is used to denote a body of men who have chosen for themselves a system of teaching or practice that differs from that course which is proper and correct. It bears with it a sting of reproach because it implies self-will and self-reliance in action, or at least ignorance. A course is chosen which deviates from, or is in opposition to, the true and Scriptural course.

Paul warned the Ephesian elders: "I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them" (Acts 20:29-30). And so it happened. That fair church that began with such a demonstration of unity and love was soon broken up into factions and sects, each contending for and seeking to build up their own party. The question then arises, why do we gather as we do? Have we Scripture for it or have we become sectarian, following traditions and human interpretations of the Scriptures? Is there a Scriptural way of gathering that would guard us from sectarianism?

We must have a Scriptural basis for our doctrines and practices if we are to be kept from sectarianism. It clearly would not be sectarian to gather in accordance with the truth of the Scriptures, in subjection to Christ as Lord over all things in His house.

It is clear from Scripture that the early church gathered as Christians. They were known everywhere as Christians and all the Christians were one body (1 Corinthians 12:13). Wherever they were they all belonged to that one company (1 Corinthians 1:2; Acts 11:26). If a Christian was identified with the Christians in one place, he or she was regarded as one with them everywhere, no matter where he or she might go. This we see from the above references and many others, such as Acts 15:1-41; Acts 16:4-5, etc.

There was no thought of any local gathering being a self-governed and self-contained group, gathering independently of others. If in the early church a local group had gathered as a self-contained unit claiming the right to legislate for itself alone, receiving into their midst or putting away with reference to themselves only, without respect to the one body, it would clearly have been a sect. They would then have been acting as an independent group or body, instead of acting in accordance with the truth that they were an integral part of the one body on earth. The truth is, there is only one body on earth, comprised of all believers, and wherever believers gathered as members of the one body, they were the church of God in that place; they represented locally the one body. Their action in reception and discipline was an act of the one body. If they should act as a self-contained unit with reference to themselves only, it would clearly be not acting as members of the one body and therefore would be sectarian. The same thing is true if two or more gatherings should associate themselves together, receiving those who come as into membership with themselves, as is done in the denominations today and in various groups of independent churches. They would then not be acting as members of the one body but as a party with members of its own. This would be sectarian. This should be clear to anyone acquainted with the New Testament. We do not have time to examine the many Scriptures bearing on this subject, but the above mentioned passages should be sufficient to show that the early church was regarded as a whole, and each local assembly formed an integral, or representative, part.

Paul was led by divine inspiration to write to the Corinthian assembly in order to set them right as to many things among them. But all through the epistle we see passages that prove the apostle never considered it an independent self-contained unit but a responsible and representative part of the whole church of God on earth. In chapter 1 verse 2 he addresses his epistle “Unto the church of God which is at Corinth... with all that in every place call upon the Name of Jesus Christ our Lord”. So that what is addressed to the church at Corinth is addressed to all Christians everywhere, and what concerns them locally concerns all. The same teaching, and the same principles of action that applied to them, applied to all. They were all viewed as one body. This we see also in chapter 4 verse 17, “I sent unto you Timotheus... who shall bring you into remembrance of my ways which be in Christ, as I teach every where in every church”. They were the same in every church. And in 7:17, “So ordain I in all churches”. Also in 11:16, “We have no such custom, neither the churches of God”. And in 14:33, “God is not the author of confusion, but of peace as in all churches of the saints”. What applies to one applies to all. The word “church” (or assembly, for the Greek word translated church in the A.V. means assembly) is sometimes used to embrace all the saints on earth as one body, and sometimes of the members of that one body gathered in a given locality. The above references show its local use and in Ephesians 1:22-23

where we read, “The church, Which is His body”, we see it used to embrace all the saints on earth viewed as one body. See also Ephesians 3:10; Ephesians 3:21; Ephesians 5:23; Ephesians 5:29; Ephesians 5:32; Colossians 1:18; Colossians 1:24, etc. The way in which the Spirit thus uses the word church or assembly, to embrace the whole body of saints on earth in some passages and in other passages to embrace the saints gathered in a given locality, goes to show that the local gatherings are looked at as an integral and representative part of the one body of Christ on earth. That is, the local gathering was viewed as the church of God in that place. They were the members of the one body on earth residing in that locality. This is clearly brought out in 1 Corinthians 12:12-26, “For by one Spirit are we all baptised into one body”, etc. There he is speaking of all the saints on earth but when in verse 27 he turns to the Corinthian saints viewed locally he says, “Now ye are the body of Christ”, or literally translated, “Ye are body of Christ”. Not “a body of Christ”, as though there were many other such bodies of Christ, nor yet “the body of Christ”, as though they only were the body of Christ, but “ye are body of Christ”. According to the Greek construction here the term “body of Christ” without the article is characteristic. They were viewed as having the same quality or relation as the whole of which they were a part; they were the representative part of the one body in that locality.

Every believer is a member of the body of Christ. “For by one Spirit are we all baptised into one body” (1 Corinthians 12:13). This body is not something that one can join at will or disassociate oneself from. The Spirit baptised us all — all believers — into this one body. He united us in a living union with Christ, the Head, and with one another as members of this body. When a soul was saved and gave evidence of that fact, he was recognised as a member of the body of Christ and so became publicly identified with the body wherever its members gathered together. He was not received into fellowship with a local assembly as forming part of a local group, but was recognised as a member of the one body, the body of Christ, of which they who gathered locally formed a part. This recognition or admission into fellowship by the local gathering was not a receiving of one into membership with themselves as a local gathering, but a simple recognition of the fact that God had by His Spirit placed him as a member in the body of Christ. This was the simple ground upon which the church met in the beginning. There was no other basis or ground of fellowship in the early church but membership in the body of Christ. This is illustrated by the case of Saul when he came to Jerusalem and assayed to associate himself with the disciples there. They knew his past and so “they were all afraid of him, and believed not that he was a disciple. But Barnabas took him, and brought him to the apostles, and declared unto them how he had seen the Lord in the way, and that He had spoken to him, and how he had preached boldly at Damascus in the Name of Jesus. And he was with them coming in and going out at Jerusalem” (Acts 9:26-29). It was no question of receiving him into membership with them, but simply, upon the evidence in his conduct that proved him to be a true disciple, he was recognised as such and had full liberty to come in and go out as one with the disciples. This is not sectarianism. It is God’s divine order for His church.

It is well to note here that it was in the breaking of bread together at the Lord’s table that expression was given to the fellowship of the one body. It was in the act of all partaking of that one bread that they symbolically set forth the fact that they were one in Christ. “The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ? For we, being many, are one bread, and one body; for we are all partakers of that one bread” (1 Corinthians 10:16-17). But as time went on we

read of “false brethren unawares brought in”, so that as a result the circle became larger than that of the true members of the body of Christ (Galatians 2:4; Jude 1:4). And then we read of evil breaking out within. One Christian at Corinth fell into fornication of the worst kind. How were these evils to be met? The Lord gave instruction through His apostle to “put away from among yourselves that wicked person” (1 Corinthians 5:4; 1 Corinthians 5:13). If any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner, they were not to keep company with such a one, no not to eat, no matter what claims he made of being a brother. In view of the evil that came in the emphasis is put now, not upon membership in the body of Christ, of being called a brother, as a basis for fellowship, but upon the Lordship of Christ. That is, His authority and rights as Lord in the midst of those gathered together in His Name, are now also insisted on and not only membership in His body.

It is well to note that this epistle, dealing as it does with the evil that had come in, puts the emphasis all the way through on the Lordship of Christ. His title as Lord is mentioned 69 times in it, and almost every time His name is mentioned His title as Lord is attached. Another thing to notice is that the church is not mentioned under the symbol of the body of Christ in the first part of this epistle where discipline is enjoined, but as the “temple of God”, in virtue of the indwelling Spirit of God (l Cor. 3:16). Holiness and subjection to authority become the house of God.

Just as Pharaoh, the supreme ruler, said to Joseph of old, “Thou shalt be over my house, and according to thy commandment shall all my people regulate themselves” (Genesis 41:40, J.N.D. Trans.), so God has made Christ Lord over all things in His house. Now the Lord commands by His apostle that those gathered to His Name put away from their midst a brother, even though he be a member of His body, who is living in sin contrary to His commandments. So we have now the fellowship of those gathered to the Lord’s Name limited by Christ our Lord to a smaller circle than that of His body. The practical fellowship of the house of God is limited, now that evil has come in, to those who recognise in a practical way the Lordship of Christ in their life and walk and associations. This is the second great principle of gathering to the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ in the early church. To knowingly embrace in our fellowship those whom the Lord in His Word demands be excluded would be sectarian, because it would be setting arbitrary limits of fellowship that are not the true and correct limits prescribed by the Lord Himself in His Word.

Thus we have these two important principles that governed the early church in its fellowship, and these are the only principles set forth in the Word of God. Anything else, therefore, would be sectarian.

Let us briefly state again these two principles:

Membership of the body of Christ accredited by sufficient evidence gave one recognition as a member of the body, and this was the basis of their fellowship. All such members of the body were recognised as being one with the members of the body everywhere, wherever they gathered together. There was no man-made organisation that they had to join or arbitrary conditions of fellowship prescribed that had to be bowed to anywhere.

After evil came into the church the second great principle restricting the limits of fellowship was practical submission to the Lordship of Christ (see 1 Corinthians 1:2; 2 Timothy 2:19-22). Any who showed practical insubjection to the Lord in their conduct, by continuing in sin, were by the

authority of the Lord to be excluded from their midst regardless of any claim to being a member of the body of Christ.

Failure to apply this last principle among the saints led to a more serious development of evil in the early church. As Paul had forewarned wolves came to scatter the flock and men from among the disciples rose up, teaching perverse things and drawing away disciples after them (see Acts 20:29-30). False professors were brought in in great numbers, and the professing church became like a great house, having a mixture of vessels to honour and to dishonour (see 1 Timothy 1:3; 1 Timothy 1:19-20; 2 Timothy 2:16-18, etc.). In the midst of the great confusion only God knew those who were His. Nevertheless the abiding responsibility of all who named the Name of the Lord was to “depart from iniquity” and “follow righteousness, faith, love, peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart”. Calling Him Lord, they were to mean Lord in their hearts, and acknowledge His Lordship in a whole-hearted and practical way (See 2 Timothy 2:19-22, J.N.D. Trans.). So here is an important principle that is a prerequisite to any church fellowship now that the professing church has become a mixed mass of vessels to honour and dishonour. Where necessary there is to be separation, by purging oneself out from what dishonours the Lord, and then a gathering to His Name alone with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart, following righteousness (submission to the Lord), faith (dependence upon Him alone), love (the activity of that characteristic trait of the divine nature, see 1 John 3:10-19; 1 John 4:7-8), and peace (the practical result of these three things). In other words those who separated themselves from what dishonours the Lord were to return to the two great principles that governed the fellowship of the church in the beginning. There is to be membership of the body of Christ, evidenced by divine life in activity, and a practical submission to the Lordship of Christ, in owning Him as Lord over all things that pertain to the house of God and over our own lives. Anything else would be sectarian with arbitrary conditions or limits imposed as a rule of fellowship. The Word of God does not reveal, and history does not give us any evidence, that this important prerequisite for church fellowship was ever carried out then. But that does not change its divine authority and abiding application as long as Christ leaves the members of His body on earth. A little over a century ago, however, many godly Christians saw this simple truth of the unity of the body of Christ. Through studying the Word of God they found that the many factions and denominations of Christendom were only sects that had built up each for themselves a system of tenets and practices that were often far removed from the simple truth of the Scriptures. And seeing also their responsibility to give the Lord His proper place in the midst of His own, they separated from these various sects of Christendom and gathered out to His Name alone. But alas, as is well known, failure has come in as it did also in the early church. We must accept the humbling fact that man is the same in this twentieth century as he was in the first century. He has shown himself a failure in whatever position he is placed. Yet this does not change the truth that God has formed by His Spirit here on earth one body, of which every believer who has received the Spirit is a member. Nor does it change the responsibility of all those who profess to be members of that one body to act accordingly. The truth of the one body and the Lordship of Christ that governed the church in the beginning will remain so long as the Lord leaves His own on earth. The failure that has come in should keep us humble and dependent upon God, but it should in no wise be made an excuse to give up God’s truth. Failure does not change the truth of God. As long as we profess to gather to the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ, we are responsible before God to gather on the ground of the one body. This involves subjection to the Lordship of Christ and a walk in separation from all

sectarian principles that would prescribe another ground or limits for our fellowship than what is set forth by the Lord Himself in His Word. Only as we do so can we avoid being sectarian.

(To be continued, if the Lord will) The Epistle to Philemon (1) This epistle may be ranked with the pastoral epistles, first so called in 1703 by the commentator D. N. Berdot. It could, perhaps, better be regarded as an appendix to the Colossian epistle. On no account however should it be considered inferior. The arrival of the letter with its bearer, Onesimus, must have quite startled the recipient at first, but it and the Colossian epistle were from Paul. Any qualms Philemon (and the assembly) might have had were soon settled as Paul's letters were read.

Onesimus had been an unfaithful bondslave and had run away. Now he returns, doubtless with some concern himself as to the reception he might receive. But he brings with him Paul's commendation now he is "a faithful and beloved brother, who is one of you" (Colossians 4:9). Tychicus accompanied Onesimus and had been an encouragement to him in returning after the domestic crisis and long absence. Of course, it would not only be a test for a returning runaway, but also for the household that had suffered some disruption. How did Philemon react to this letter when he first received it and contemplated its contents? This fine little book demonstrates the grace of Christ in daily life. Under the law of Moses one was not permitted to "deliver unto his master the servant which is escaped from his master". "He shall dwell with thee", and further, "thou shalt not oppress him" (Deuteronomy 23:15-16). Paul undoubtedly knew this law, but under grace we shall see righteousness and peace kissing each other (Psalms 85:10). The abundant reservoirs of the riches of God's grace are for us to draw on and use in the daily circumstances of life. The cross condemned sin in the flesh more deeply than ever the law was capable of doing. Yet the cross has brought God's grace to us in our wretched and low condition. God's grace has elevated us up on high. The grace of God that can work to reconcile a fugitive with his master has in a deeper way conciliated the lost sinner with God through the work of redemption in Christ Jesus.

Outline of Philemon 1. Introduction: 1-7 a) 1-3: Salutation b) 4-7: Thanksgiving 2. Request: 8-21 a) 8-14: Paul's personal interest in Onesimus b) 15-21: Paul's plea for Onesimus 3. Conclusion: 22-25 a) 22: Proposed visit b) 23-25: Greetings

Verse 1

Paul is a prisoner at Rome. He writes in this personal communication not as an apostle but as a captive. It was his being in the service of Christ that had led to this present imprisonment. This fact would lend strength to the appeal he was about to make. He had forfeited his liberty for Christ's sake and the gospel's. He is able to appeal not as one who knows nothing of sacrifice but as one fully familiar with the cost involved. In his pastoral work he is one whose own circumstances and history are relevant.

"Unto Philemon our dearly beloved." It is not unusual for Paul to write in such a warm way about his spiritual children. He had real affection for Philemon and he was not ashamed to express it.

"Our... fellow-labourer, And... our fellow-soldier" (verses 1 and 2)

Philemon was counted among Paul's co-workers, and Archippus as a fellow soldier. These terms are not used lightly. That would be unbecoming of the dignity of the apostle. Paul puts their

respective ministries alongside his own. They were united in common service for Christ. They had known toil and conflict in the same field, in the cause of Christ.

Sister Apphia (verse 2)

I assume this sister was the wife of Philemon. She would have much to do with the practical management of the home. She would be concerned more than her husband about keeping house. This was her God-given role and the Christian woman is not to be denied her service in this sphere. A runaway slave would certainly inconvenience the mistress of the household. She would have to be addressed and her concerns dealt with before Onesimus would enjoy restoration to the domestic scene. Archippus is mentioned in Colossians 4:17 where he is encouraged to fulfil a service now unknown to us. It seems to me that since his name appears here in the letter, we may regard him as a close relation of Philemon, and perhaps an elder son. Paul gives the three sincere tributes and so opens to our view what this little family meant to him personally.

“The assembly which is in thine house”

There are fourteen such assemblies referred to in the New Testament and nine of these references are outside the book of Acts. It would appear that the use of domestic buildings for assembly meetings persisted for a long time. Nowhere in the New Testament are special buildings for Christian worship called for. An apparently incidental remark in our second verse shows how much has changed in relation to the present testimony.

“Grace... and peace” (verse 3)

Paul again uses that grand Christian word, grace (karis). The root of the word means to cause joy. In the Septuagint this same Greek word translates a Hebrew word which denotes the favour and blessedness received from one greater than oneself. The word “peace” is evidently equivalent to “Shalom” of the Old Testament. This peace is the healthy condition of soul enjoyed by those who experience God’s grace. The source of these blessings is God. They are enjoyed by the believer as he has communion with the Father and the Son.

“My God... at my prayers” (verse 4)

Paul’s use of the word “my” discloses to us something of the character of the relationship he was privileged to enjoy in communion. The use of the possessive elsewhere in his letters shows clearly that Paul knew his God personally. For him prayer was not a formalised reading out of a book or committing to memory a few suited, well thought-up lines. Prayer was the vital experience of fellowship with his God and Saviour. The phrase “at my prayers” suggests a decided and definite and daily routine. They were not occasional requests uttered when a contingency arose. Paul like the other apostles gave himself up to prayer (Acts 6:4).

Verses 5-7 The news of Philemon’s continuance in love and faith was the cause of deep thanksgiving to God. How it encouraged the apostle when saints continued in divine things. We often see a bright start but then a fitful walk that leads to a discontinuation altogether. Paul owns with thanksgiving what God had done in Philemon’s life, but he also prays that Philemon’s faith might be manifested in practical power.

Verse 5

“Towards” occurs twice in this verse, both in the New Translation of J.N.D. and the A.V., but there is a difference in the original wording. A change of preposition occurs. The first is “pros”, towards, indicating an object. The second is “eis”, unto. The use of the two words emphasises the difference in relationship. Philemon’s response to Christ reaches out through Him to his fellow believers. It was not an ordinary love but it had its origin in faith in Christ. Of course Philemon had an enlarged heart — his affections went out to all saints.

Verse 6

Paul desires that the fellowship of faith might be manifested in the reality of the power of new creation. The good things in Philemon came not from the natural heart. We cannot and should not be occupied with “natural graces”. It is the power of the indwelling Spirit that makes good Christ in us.

“We have great thankfulness and encouragement through thy love” (verse 7) This is a splendid verse. We can learn much from it. Paul and Timothy are in prison, but joy and consolation are their portion because Philemon has shown them brotherly love. Philadelphian features are prominent in this man; he would keep Christ’s Word and not be inconsistent with His Name. How often we are discouraged and feel the need to be lifted up from surrounding circumstances. We see here that even the apostle Paul could be in the gain of much encouragement. Philemon had chosen the more excellent way (12:31; 1 Corinthians 13:13). It was this that gave such cheer to Paul. The display of love was practical, and it was refreshing. It was not mere benevolence, but a display of the Spirit’s fruit.

Today we give little thought to refreshing the affections. Instead we find the saints harangued for a variety of faults and failings, imagined or otherwise. We are all aliens here, in a wilderness. The saints need a ministry which refreshes and invigorates. A presentation of Christ will get us saying, “It was good we were at the meeting”. It is good for brethren to be occupied with Christ and not themselves. Philemon did not spend his time rebuking or correcting the saints. He loved them and showed it. He gave them what was best and good. The Shepherd of Psalms 23:1-6 leads His sheep beside still waters and into green pastures. Yet we see the sheep of His pasture at times treated like asses and brought to thermal springs (Genesis 36:24). Hot bubbling presentations are quite unsuitable for Christians. The beautiful flock of the Shepherd is now so scattered and famished. The hireling principle has been at work and done great injury. It is grievous in Christ’s eyes, and should it not be grievous in our eyes who love both Him and His flock? Let us learn to impart refreshment to those for whom Christ died — wherever they may be found1. I believe there is a distinctly attractive power in ministering Christ Jesus to those of His flock. The last word in verse 7 is not to be passed by: “Brother”. Here as elsewhere (cf. Acts 9:17) Scripture shows the dignity of using the term. Had not Christ said, “One is your Master, even Christ; and all ye are brethren”? (Matthew 23:8). Besides, He is not ashamed to call us brethren. I do not want to be misunderstood in what I now write, but want only to stress the elevated simplicity that attaches to this beautiful word. Since there will only be brethren in the Father’s house, let us be only brethren down here.

E. N. C.

(To be continued, if the Lord will) 1In what pit of Christendom will you not find a straying lamb of Christ's? The Life of David (9) David, Having Died, He Yet Speaks The words concerning Abel are borrowed to present the enormous influence of David which extended over many centuries after his death (Hebrews 11:4). When most men die their influence comes to an end. It remains for a few that their influence continues to succeeding generations. History abounds with such men in the realms of government, philosophy, the arts, war and education.

Apart from the divine and perfect influence of the Son of God, a benign and effectual influence which has brought blessing into the lives of millions of people in every corner of the world, two men in the Old Testament stand out above all others as continuing influences for good long after their death. They are Moses the lawgiver and David the warrior king of Israel. To them could be added the commanding personality in the New Testament, Paul, the apostle to the Gentiles. Our interest will be centred on David. After his death his name continues to occur both in the Old Testament and in the New Testament. An examination of most of these references will throw into bright relief the amazing variety of influences that his life, character, and writings had upon others. It will be impossible to write at length on every mention of David. Let it be said that the value of a good man's influence after his death is a tribute to the uprightness of his life and the evidence that God was with him and inspired his utterances. The Influence of a Father.

1 Chronicles 22:6-16; 1 Chronicles 28:9-10; 1 Chronicles 28:20-21; Proverbs 3:4-9

Before David died he showed great wisdom in seeking to guide his son, Solomon, into the right paths for God. A very important lesson for fathers who have sons. Hear the words of a man of God: "Keep the law of Jehovah thy God. Then shalt thou prosper, if thou takest heed to perform the statutes and ordinances which Jehovah commanded Moses for Israel" (1 Chronicles 22:12-13). "Serve Him (Jehovah) with a perfect heart and with a willing mind; for Jehovah searches all hearts, and discerns all the imaginations of the thoughts. If thou seek Him, He will be found of thee; but if thou forsake Him, He will cut thee off forever" (1 Chronicles 28:9). "He will not leave thee, neither forsake thee, until all the work for the service of the house of Jehovah is finished" (1 Chronicles 28:20). In simple language — be obedient to God's Word — God judges motives as well as acts — be valiant for God — God's righteous government accompanies sin — depend upon God for His lasting support in His work. These were wise, solemn and encouraging words from a father to a son. Did Solomon pay any attention to his father? Yes, he did. Listen to his words: "For I was a son unto my father, tender and an only one in the sight of my mother. And he (David) taught me, and said unto me, Let thy heart retain my words; keep my commandments and live. Get wisdom, get intelligence: forget it not" (Proverbs 4:3-5). In completing the building of the Temple Solomon adhered closely to his father's directions and God's glory filled the completed structure (1 Kings 8:11). Unfortunately, he didn't continue in his father's godly influence and example and incurred the wrath of God (1 Kings 11:9). The Influence of a Worshipper. 1 Chronicles 29:10-22

David was a reverential worshipper of the God whom he knew so well. He had proved his God through the varied experiences of life. His psalms were written under various trials and pressures and through them he learned a great deal about the majesty, greatness and loving-kindness of his God. His outburst of praise to God indicates how deeply he had imbibed a knowledge of God: "Thine, Jehovah, is the greatness, and the power, and the glory, and the splendour, and the

majesty; — Thou art exalted as Head above all; and riches and glory are of Thee, and Thou rulest over everything; and in Thy hand is power and might". When David had finished blessing God he exhorted the congregation to follow his example which they did willingly. How true the statement, "Example is better than precept". Like David, Christians can influence each other in the way they worship the Father and the Son. Not in imitating each other, but in reverence and sincerity. In our worship there should not be any platitudes that roll easily off the tongue but lack sincerity or depth. The knowledge of the Father and the Son in the Spirit's power is the real substance of worship. The knowledge is objective and can be gained from the Scriptures. It should also be subjective — what is learned of them in daily experience. The Restraining Influence of David. 2 Chronicles 8:11

What is described in 1 Kings 11:1-8 was contrary to the warning of Deuteronomy 17:14-17. Solomon was led astray after idols through the many Gentile women he married. Foremost among them was a princess of Egypt, a daughter of Pharaoh. His many marriages to women of other nations was wilful disobedience. God had said plainly, "Thou shalt make no marriage with them", 1:e. the nations (Deuteronomy 7:3). Also he had forgotten or ignored God's Word when He said, "Or the wife of thy bosom... entice thee secretly, saying, Let us go and serve other gods... thou shalt not consent" (Deuteronomy 13:6-9). Misplaced affections soon affect loyalty to God and His interests. Solomon built a house for the daughter of Pharaoh. There was nothing unusual about that. It was the normal responsibility of a husband towards his wife. But what was the motive behind building this particular house? Here we discover the influence of David. "My wife shall not dwell in the house of David king of Israel, because the places are holy to which the ark of Jehovah has come". Is Solomon virtually saying, "My father would not approve of an Egyptian, albeit a princess, in close proximity to the Ark of Jehovah". Had David told Solomon about the solemn story of Uzzah? (1 Chronicles 13:6-14). Solomon's conscience restrained him and no doubt it was the memory of his father's reverence for the Ark of Jehovah that was the restraining influence. A most important lesson here. Sons! Remember with affection the godly reverence and behaviour of your fathers. Let them be a guiding influence in your life. A conscience enlightened by truth is a safe guide. A conscience governed by self-seeking is like a ship without a rudder or compass.

David's Precise Arrangements Influence His Son Solomon. 2 Chronicles 8:14-16 When David made his great preparations for the building of the Temple by his son, Solomon, he also made precise arrangements for the people who would serve in the Temple. A magnificent structure was one thing. The response to God was quite another. In chapters 23 to 27 of 1 Chronicles a precise account of people, their names and service, is given. It is to Solomon's credit that he adhered to his father's instruction regarding the pattern of the Temple and also, to the people who would serve in relation to the Temple. In this at least Solomon could exhort others, "My son, observe thy father's commandment" (Proverbs 6:20). The Bible has numerous histories of sons who did not follow the example and influence of their fathers. At the dawn of history Cain ignored the example that God had shown to Adam his father. What sad consequences followed! The forgiveness of the father in receiving his returned lost son as portrayed in Luke 15:1-32 is in sharp contrast to the intransigence and boorishness of his self-righteous son. The example of Jesus is worthwhile to recount in this context: "I do always the things that are pleasing to Him" (the Father — John 8:29). May the legacy left by worthy fathers influence their sons to be of use for the Christian testimony.

They Walked in the Way of David and Solomon. 2 Chronicles 11:16-17 For three years a remnant of Israel came to God's centre, Jerusalem, to seek Jehovah and to sacrifice to Him. Three years!

Not a long time but it was something recovered out of the wreckage of a disastrous division. The period of three years was a time of strength to the kingdom of Judah where the throne of David was. David's influence was all around them. He captured the city from the Jebusites. The Temple was a standing witness to his affection for his God. His compositions would be sung in the Temple of worship. Such influences would greatly affect them in their behaviour and the testimony of Scripture is that they walked in the way of David. Division among believers is always a test of faithfulness to God. Where there is humility of spirit because of the disgrace brought on the Name of the Lord there will be some measure of recovery. Where there is arrogance and bitterness worse follows. Faithfulness in weakness brings blessing. Unfaithfulness and wilfulness breeds more strife and heart-break. As we read the Holy Scriptures we are confronted with the perfect walk of the Son of God and the walk of those who were faithful to Him. When we read the histories of the Christian testimony we are encouraged by the lives of noble men and women. In our life-time we have looked on the lives of devoted Christians. How does all this affect us? May it be said of us that we walked as Jesus walked, and we imitated the faith of those who spoke the Word of God to us (1 John 2:6; Hebrews 13:7).

F. Wallace.

(To be continued, if the Lord will).

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Circumcision Made Without Hands (Colossians 2:11) The first mention of circumcision in the Bible is in Genesis 17:10-14. After a silence of thirteen years God breaks in and makes a covenant with Abram when His servant is ninety-nine years old. Thirteen years previously Abram had listened to Sarai his wife and an attempt had been made to produce a seed through Hagar the bondmaid. This action resulted in the birth of Ishmael with all its subsequent disaster. It was a seed according to the flesh, not according to promise. This event may account for the thirteen years' silence before God in His goodness intervenes and renews His promise in the form of a covenant resting upon His "I will". The faith of Abram was further tested at this point. If his patience gave way at 86 years old what now? He is now 99 years old. The whole matter has become impossible as far as man and the flesh are concerned. The power of God must come in if the promise is to be fulfilled. Yet note how many times in Genesis 17:1-27 "I will" is mentioned. This is the statement of an unconditional covenant. All relies on God's unchangeable will and purpose.

Genesis 17:7 says, "And I will establish My covenant between Me and thee, and thy seed after thee, in their generations, for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee". Circumcision is said to "be a token of the covenant betwixt Me and you" (Verse 11), and this chapter tells us who was involved in the rite of circumcision and when it was to be carried out. It becomes evident that circumcision means that the flesh must be kept in the place of death. The flesh can contribute nothing towards the carrying out of the will of God. "He that is eight days old" was to be circumcised, and the eighth day is significant as referring to a new start entirely. Only a new life within can produce anything for the pleasure of God. So circumcision became the sign of a covenant relationship between the Israelite and God. What could be referred to as a surgical operation was to be performed on the male child at eight days old in all Jewish families. This began to be carried out very diligently throughout the nation, but its true meaning was soon lost. It became just an outward rite carrying very little inward reality. Its effect on manner of life was non-existent. It was never God's intention that an outward rite should be observed without inward reality. This gives no pleasure to Him.

Circumcised Lips In Exodus 6:1-30 we are given the words of the Lord to Moses when he was called to speak to Pharaoh: "And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, Go in, speak unto Pharaoh king of Egypt, that he let the children of Israel go out of his land" (Exodus 6:10-11). The response to this call is very revealing. Moses withdrew from this command, saying, "Behold, I am of uncircumcised lips, and how shall Pharaoh hearken unto me?" (5: 30).

It is obvious that Moses had grasped the true meaning of circumcision. It is not just an outward rite to be observed, but an inward reality affecting the use of the lips. Was it a feeling of his unworthiness to speak for God that caused Moses to draw back, or was it the fear of man? It is difficult to say. But whatever it was, the vital message for us is that he understood the real meaning of circumcision. What God requires is circumcised lips, that is, lips that speak for Him

apart from the activity of the flesh.

Circumcised Heart In the book of Deuteronomy circumcision is twice related to the heart. Israel turned out to be a rebellious and stiffnecked people. Following the awful sin of worshipping the molten calf at Horeb we read: “Only the LORD had a delight in thy fathers to love them, and He chose their seed after them, even you above all people, as it is this day. Circumcise therefore... your heart, and be no more stiffnecked” (Deuteronomy 10:15-16). The second passage in Deuteronomy is as follows: “And the LORD thy God will circumcise thine heart, and the heart of thy seed, to love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, that thou mayest live” (Deuteronomy 30:6). This verse looks on to the future. There has never really been a day when the promise of this passage has been fulfilled as far as Israel is concerned. The terms of the New Covenant come to mind here: “I will put My law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts” (Jeremiah 31:33). In that day Israel will be a nation born again, and true love for God will be produced. It will be true then that Israel will have a circumcised heart.

Circumcision to the Lord In considering the Prophets, Jeremiah has most to say on the subject of circumcision. Three times it is mentioned in this book.

“Circumcise yourselves to the LORD...” (Jeremiah 4:4).

Perhaps this is the most important reference because it is the objective which is before us. The real value of anything we do is seen when we do it to the Lord. There may have been the greatest care taken in carrying out the act of circumcision, but was it done to the Lord? This can be asked with regard to the many areas of service in which we are occupied. We need to question our motives. Is it really done to Him?

Circumcised Ears Jeremiah 6:10 gives us the second reference in this book:

“To whom shall I speak, and give warning, that they may hear? behold, their ear is uncircumcised, and they cannot hearken: behold, the word of the LORD is unto them a reproach; they have no delight in it.” This time it is the ear — a matter of obedience to the Word of the Lord. How solemn these words are: “... they have no delight in it”. It is of little value to submit to outward ordinances and yet have the ear closed to His Word. This was the case with Israel.

Earlier in the book, Jeremiah wrote: “Judah hath not turned unto Me with her whole heart, but feignedly, saith the LORD” (Jeremiah 3:10). These words were written during the revival under the godly king Josiah. It seems that the outward appearance looked well, but with many the heart and life were not affected.

Distinction of Circumcision (Separation) The third reference to circumcision is in Jeremiah 9:26 :

“Egypt, and Judah, and Edom, and the children of Ammon, and Moab,... for all these nations are uncircumcised, and all the house of Israel are uncircumcised in the heart.” The nation of Israel was called out of the surrounding nations to be a witness for God against the idolatry of the nations. They were to be a separate people. The prophet Balaam, false though he was, was made to utter the truth with regard to Israel, “... lo, the people shall dwell alone, and shall not be reckoned among the nations” (Numbers 23:9). Notice that in Jeremiah 9:26 Judah is placed between Egypt and Edom. No distinction is seen and hence there is no separation. The nations were literally uncircumcised. Israel, although having submitted to the outward rite, were equally uncircumcised

in heart. From these Old Testament passages concerning circumcision it is evident that our lips, hearts and ears are to be affected. We are to be a separate people and all is to be “to the Lord”. Outward submission to the ordinance of circumcision without the realisation of its true spiritual meaning did not affect practical living. The Circumcision of the Lord Jesus In following our theme of circumcision into the New Testament the striking fact of the circumcision of the Lord Jesus attracts our attention. In the Gospel of Luke, which brings to light His perfect life as a man, we are introduced to a godly company of Jews who were so different from the majority of the nation. It was among this remnant that the earthly parents of the Lord Jesus were found. It must be kept in mind however, that as conceived by the Holy Spirit His birth was altogether unique. What has been looked at so far regarding circumcision is in reference to the judgment of God upon the flesh. How careful we must be when our thoughts turn to Christ. There was nothing in Him that answered to the nature of the flesh; all was holy, perfect and blameless. As being brought up in a godly Jewish home, where the law was adhered to and loved, the child Jesus was circumcised on the eighth day. We are reminded of the words of the apostle Paul here: “... made of a woman, made under the law” (Galatians 4:4). How wonderful it is to consider the Son of God becoming so lowly, found in obscure circumstances, and submitting to the law as a godly Israelite. It must be so if redemption is to be found for Jew and Gentile alike.

It has often been said that the Lord Jesus was, in all His life, what man ought to have been for God. It is equally true to say that He was all that a godly Israelite should have been.

Consider again the five areas in which Israel as a nation had so dismally failed by being untrue to their circumcision:

Lips; Heart; “To the Lord”; Ears; Separation In Christ there was a true answer to His circumcision. Where Israel as a nation had failed, He triumphed.

Lips

Much has been written about the Lord’s words. The well loved passage in Psalms 45:1-17 comes readily to mind, “Thou art fairer than the children of men; grace is poured into Thy lips: therefore God hath blessed Thee for ever” (Psalms 45:2). How often we have connected this verse with Luke 4:22, “And all bear Him witness, and wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of His mouth”. Many Scriptures could be quoted referring to what He said while here on earth. His lips, tongue, voice and mouth are mentioned.

Heart The verse referred to previously in Deuteronomy 30:6 shows that the circumcised heart is related to loving God with all the heart. How blessedly this was seen in Christ. There are not many Scriptures which refer to His love to the Father, but there are two we will notice, one in the Old Testament and one in the New. “Because He hath set His love upon Me, therefore will I deliver Him: I will set Him on high, because He hath known My Name” (Psalms 91:14). These words express His Father’s appreciation of His love. “But that the world may know that I love the Father; and as the Father gave Me commandment, even so I do. Arise, let us go hence” (John 14:31). How wonderful is the intimacy between the Father and the Son seen in these verses. That fellowship which was always present before the worlds were made, unchanged while on earth as a man, is the same now. What an expression there was in Him of true circumcision of heart.

Circumcision to the Lord This aspect of circumcision brings in the matter of aim and objective. With the Lord Jesus this was always the honour of His Father. This is seen in a very obvious way in John's gospel. "I do always those things that please Him" (the Father — John 8:29). "Iseek not Mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent me" (John 5:30). "... but He that seeketh His glory that sent Him, the same is true, and no unrighteousness is in Him" (John 7:18). "I have not a devil; but I honour My Father, and ye do dishonour Me" (John 8:49). It was the Father's pleasure, will, glory, and honour that were ever His object. He had the single eye. All was "to the Lord".

Circumcised Ear

There are a number of references to the Lord's ear in the Scriptures. "Sacrifice and offering Thou didst not desire; Mine ears hast Thou opened: burnt offering and sin offering hast Thou not required" (Psalms 40:6). A footnote in the New Translation by J.N.D. reads "opened" as "digged or hollowed out". Christ was not in the place of subjection until He came into the world, but in becoming a man He became the obedient Servant. In the prophet Isaiah, who gives the words of Jehovah's Servant who was to come, the Lord says, "... He wakeneth Mine ear to hear as the instructed" (Isaiah 50:4, J.N.D. Trans.). It is striking to think of the Lord Jesus as a disciple. This position is suggested by the word "instructed". "Morning by morning" His ear was turned Godward for instructions. Never a word was spoken or a deed done apart from His Father.

Separation

There was a separation from the world evident in Christ, though not exactly from the world of mankind. He was the friend of publicans and sinners. But He stood apart from the world system in its hypocrisy and utter alienation from God and His righteousness. It was this that drew forth man's hatred and antagonism. It could also be said that the world through which He passed was neither the source nor the object of His life. The Father's word and those that the Father had given Him were His absorbing interest. Twice over in His prayer in John 17:1-26, speaking to His Father about His own, He says, "They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world" (John 17:14; John 17:16).

G. Bell.

(To be continued, if the Lord will) The True Sacrifice The LORD Will Provide (Genesis 22:14)

God takes care of man. He provides for all our needs, but in particular He provides for the most fundamental need man has known since the fall: the need for a sacrifice. Abraham must have understood this when he said to his son, whom he was to offer, "My son, God will provide Himself a lamb for a burnt offering" (Genesis 22:8). God was the only One who could provide the sacrificial lamb and it was primarily meant for God Himself: "God will provide Himself a lamb for a burnt offering". This lamb was, so to speak, God's own lamb, a figure of Christ as the appointed Lamb of God. And the offering of Isaac was a type of Christ's sacrifice — foreordained by God before the foundation of the world (cf. John 1:29; John 1:36; 1 Peter 1:19-20; Revelation 5:6 ff). This Lamb provides for the needs of the sinner who is totally unable to do so himself. But it also meets all God's holy demands. Indeed, by His sacrifice Christ glorified God in a unique way. The lamb that is brought to our attention here in Genesis 22:1-24 was a burnt offering, an offering made by fire, a sweet savour to the Lord (Genesis 8:21; Leviticus 1:9; Leviticus 1:13; Leviticus 1:17; Ephesians

5:2). No one else but God Himself could provide for the need, and from the above-mentioned verse in 1 Peter it appears that He had provided for it even before He called the world into existence.

How great is our God that He Himself provided this sacrificial lamb! Adam and Eve experienced this when they were clothed with garments of skin in the garden of Eden (Genesis 3:21). Not man but God was the first One to bring a sacrifice, and He clothed the first human couple with the skins of these animals in order to cover their nakedness (and also in a symbolical way their spiritual nakedness, that is, their sinful state before God).

Abraham also experienced this when the Lord provided for his needs and directed his eyes toward a substitute for his son (Genesis 22:13). In remembrance of this he called the name of that place, “The LORD will provide” (5: 14a), which is just one word in Hebrew, “Jehovah-jireh”. Abraham used a compound name of the Lord which indicates that it is one of His glorious attributes to act in this way and to provide Himself the lamb for a burnt offering. This wonderful name of God is the first one of a series of compound names that are revealed in the Old Testament:

1. The LORD will provide (Genesis 22:14).

2. The LORD that healeth thee (Exodus 15:26).

3. The LORD my banner (Exodus 17:15).

4. The LORD which sanctify you (Leviticus 20:8; Leviticus 21:8).

5. The LORD is peace (Judges 6:24).

6. The LORD is my shepherd (Psalms 23:1).

7. The LORD our righteousness (Jeremiah 23:6; Jeremiah 33:16).

8. The LORD is there (Ezekiel 48:35). The first name shows that God provides for the most essential need of sinful man, the need of a substitute. This is the basis on which God can reveal more of Himself and of the many aspects of His nature. The last name shows Him filling everything with His glorious presence: The Lord is there, and there is no room for sin any more, for God will be all in all.

Then we should also pay attention to the place where God revealed Himself in this way, where He made Himself known as the One providing the lamb for a burnt offering. He did so intheMount of the LORD (Genesis 22:14 b). This is an important expression. God revealed Himself on this mountain, the place where Abraham found himself on the level of His thoughts, rather than in the plain of Jordan which Lot chose (Genesis 13:10-11). God called Abraham, as it were, into His heavenly presence. The same thing happened to the disciples who received divine teaching from the Lord Jesus on a mountain (see Matthew 5:1 ff.). And it was also on “the holy mount” that they saw His glory and were eyewitnesses of His majesty (cf. 2 Peter 1:16-18).

Moreover, this mountain is described as “the Mount of the LORD”. We find the same expression in the book of Exodus where it always has to do with God’s revelation on Mount Sinai. Just as Moses led the flock of his father-in-law all the way through the desert to Horeb, the mountain of God, he also led the people of Israel through the wilderness to this mountain (Exodus 3:1; Exodus 18:5;

Exodus 24:13). It was the mountain where God sat enthroned. He` desired to reveal Himself to the people He delivered from slavery to be His special treasure. So we are on holy ground here and, like Moses, have to put off our shoes. Thus the people of Israel, too, and most of all the priests, had to sanctify themselves in order to be able to meet with God at the foot of the mountain (Exodus 19:1-25).

Yet this expression, the mountain of God, does not only refer to Mount Sinai. It is also used for Mount Zion, and for the Temple Mount, after the ark of the covenant (the visible sign of God's presence) found a resting place there (cf. Psalms 15:1, Psalms 24:3; Psalms 48:1-2). This is very striking indeed with regard to the Temple Mount, for there is a clear connection between Genesis 22:1-24, 1 Chronicles 21:1-30; 1 Chronicles 22:1-19 and 2 Chronicles 3:1-17. Abraham went to the land of Moriah to offer his son on one of the mountains of which God would tell him, while king David built his altar of burnt offering on Mount Moriah. This was the place where atonement was made for a sinful people, the place of the altar of burnt offering for Israel — which enabled God to dwell in the midst of His people. Mount Moriah, the place where Abraham sacrificed his son, was the place of the altar of burnt offering for God's people. This mountain therefore points to the place called Calvary, where God did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all. And in doing so He laid a just foundation for the future temple in the Spirit, that was to be built after Christ's resurrection from the dead!

Finally, it is remarkable that the Hebrew name of the upper altar in Ezekiel's temple is also "Har-El" or Mount of God (Ezekiel 43:15 — J.N.D. Trans.). Here too, the altar is the place where man will draw near to God in a coming age — on the same basis of a burnt offering, referring to Christ as the true sacrifice which God Himself provided and which fully pleased Him.

Hugo Bouter. The Life of David (9) David, Having Died, He Yet Speaks (Continued from page 320) The First Ways of David. 2 Chronicles 17:3 What were the first ways of David in which Jehoshaphat walked? His great confidence in the living God. David was never affected in any way by idolatry. His psalms breathe his deep knowledge and trust in God. This was evidenced too when he faced Goliath, the champion of the Philistines, and in his prayers to God when engaging God's enemies. His reverence for the Ark of the Covenant. David learned from his mistake in not ordering the Ark to be carried by the Kohathites. He remedied his mistake and the Ark was handled with the reverence that was due to it. His profound respect for the people of God, expressed in his communications with Jehovah (2 Samuel 7:23-24; 2 Samuel 24:17). His great courage in fighting God's battles with the help that God gave to him.

Jehoshaphat, in his life, expressed these same features of David his father: His confidence in God (2 Chronicles 20:5-12).

While Jehoshaphat is not mentioned in connection with the Ark of the Covenant he is intimately connected with the house of the Lord (2 Chronicles 19:8-11 — Levites and priests; 2 Chronicles 20:5; 2 Chronicles 20:18 — worship, 21 — praise). His respect for the people of God: "Thy people Israel" (2 Chronicles 20:7).

He derived his courage from belief in his God (2 Chronicles 20:6) and his belief of the prophet's message (2 Chronicles 20:14-17; 2 Chronicles 20:20).

There is a saying that “first impressions are right impressions”. Good for believers in God and Christ if they hold fast to the good teaching that they accepted and practised in their young and impressionable years. Sad to say, as believers grow older, sometimes other influences hinder the continuance in “first ways”. But God does not forget these “first ways” that glorified Him. “Iremember for thee the kindness of thy youth, the love of thine espousals, when thou wentest after Me in the wilderness, in a land not sown. Israel was holiness unto Jehovah, the first-fruits of His increase” (Jeremiah 2:2-3). “God is not unrighteous to forget your work, and the love which ye have shewn to His Name, having ministered to the saints, and still ministering” (Hebrews 6:10). The Saving Influence of God’s Covenant with David.

2 Chronicles 21:5-7

Jehoshaphat, good man that he was, made a fatal alliance with the house of Ahab (2 Chronicles 18:1). The marriage led him to join the army of Judah with the army of Israel. It nearly cost him his life and he deserved the stern rebuke of Jehu the seer, “Shouldest thou help the ungodly, and love them that hate Jehovah?” (2 Chronicles 19:2). His son, Jehoram, followed his father’s bad example and married Ahab’s daughter and did evil before Jehovah as Ahab his father-in-law did. But Jehovah would not exterminate the house of David. His covenant with David prevented His righteous wrath being executed on Judah. That covenant was a powerful influence for mercy in dark days of unbelief and evil. The influence of a godly man’s life and prayers is invaluable in any Christian gathering. Such a life helps to keep at bay the destructive influences of sin and worldliness. He can be assured of God’s support as he contends for what is right before God. The God of David. 2 Chronicles 21:12-15;

2 Kings 20:5-6

Two kings of Judah, Hezekiah and Jehoram: two prophets, Isaiah and Elijah: two references to the God of David. What lessons can be learned from these passages? They have certainly different characteristics. The prophet’s message to Hezekiah contains hope and blessing for him. The message to Jehoram is solemn and full of judgment. Perhaps it will be better to consider the dark picture first.

Jehoram, king of Judah, was incredibly cruel. In order to strengthen his position as king he slew all his own brothers and some of the princes of Israel (2 Chronicles 21:4). He lost valuable territory belonging to his kingdom (God was not with him because of his evil ways). The most serious failure was the encouragement of idolatry (2 Chronicles 21:11). His evil ways exhausted the patience of God with him, and Elijah, the prophet, was sent to him with a condemnatory message. No respite was to be given to the king for repentance. The judgment was righteous and irrevocable. But why the reference to “the God of David thy father”? By far the most of David’s life showed how God supported and cared for His servant in a variety of circumstances. On two occasions He had judged His servant because of his sins. First, in relation to his sin and evil lust with Bathsheba, with real consequences for David’s house. Secondly, because of David’s pride in numbering the people and the sorrow that it brought on Israel. At both of these sad blots on David’s honourable life for God David repented bitterly of his folly. David’s God was a righteous and holy God. Did Jehoram follow David’s example? It would not seem so from the narrative. There was no repentance and the threatened judgment followed. Jehoram lost all, his wives, his sons (except the youngest), his health, and eventually his life. No one mourned when he died.

What a difference when we consider Isaiah's message to king Hezekiah! Hezekiah had been told by Isaiah that the time had come for him to die. That upset the king. He prayed to God and wept much. He didn't want to die. God sent Isaiah back to the king with the good news that God would answer his prayers and tears. Isaiah was to preface his message with the words "Thus saith Jehovah, the God of David thy father". The message was a promise of longer life and deliverance from his enemies. But why the God of David thy father? Perhaps Psalms 18:1-50 provides the answer. The heading of the Psalm is as follows: "To the Chief Musician. A Psalm of David, the servant of Jehovah, who spoke to Jehovah the words of this song in the day that Jehovah had delivered him out of the hand of all his enemies and out of the hand of Saul". David knew that it was his God who had enabled him to triumph over his enemies. He, like Hezekiah, had been afraid of death. "The bands of death encompassed me" (Psalms 18:4). "The bands of Sheol surrounded me, the cords of death encountered me" (Psalms 18:5). David completed his psalm with a note of worship to his God, "Who hath delivered me from mine enemies... It is He who giveth great deliverances to His king, and sheweth loving-kindness to His anointed, to David, and to his seed for evermore" (Psalms 18:46-50). The God of David was to Hezekiah, David's seed, what He had been to David. The lessons to be learned from these passages are twofold. First, it is futile to seek for God's approval when our lives are contrary to His will. God is righteous and cannot, and will not, support self-will and flagrant disobedience. We reap what we sow. Secondly, where there is honest prayer and humble dependence on God, He delights to answer the prayers and tears of His own. "Tell it to God" is the best way to get guidance and help (More could be said about Hezekiah's failures in his life — but that is not the object here).

God describes Himself as the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. He also describes Himself as the God of David. God places His honoured servant beside the patriarchs, the depositories of His promises. Honour indeed for David. He was worthy of such honour. That God was God to many more of His servants is abundantly true, but these four, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and David, are spoken by God Himself as being blessed in this way. He was their God.

David's Legacy of Weapons. 2 Chronicles 23:9-10;

2 Kings 11:10 The future of David's seed hung by a slender thread. A wicked woman named Athaliah had attempted to exterminate the royal seed of Judah. She almost succeeded. One little baby boy was saved. Jehoshabeath, the daughter of Jehoram, a previous king of Judah, who was married to Jehoiada the priest, saved the boy from the cruel death that his brothers had experienced. The baby boy and his nurse were hid in the house of God for six years (2 Chronicles 22:10-12). But Joash was not yet seated firmly on David's throne. The wicked Athaliah was still alive. Jehoiada the priest took positive steps to deal with the problem. Gathering the important people of Judah into the house of God where the young boy, now seven years old, was, Jehoiada reminded them of Jehovah's pledge to David that his sons would sit on his throne. When the covenant was made to defend the boy king's right to the throne Jehoiada armed the men. They were no ordinary arms that were in the house of God. They were king David's spears, shields and targets, (large and small shields). It is remarkable that the weapons of warfare that had enabled David to mount the throne of Judah and Israel were now used to protect the helpless scion of his house, and enable him to reign. Athaliah was slain and better conditions were secured for the worship of God. Idolatry was overthrown and David's influence was further seen in his directions being followed in relation to the Levites and the service of song (2 Chronicles 23:16-21).

What an important lesson can be derived from this incident in Judah's history! We do not wage war in the same way that we find in the Old Testament. Paul states this clearly: "For walking in the flesh, we do not war according to flesh. For the arms of our warfare are not fleshly, but powerful according to God to the overthrow of strongholds; overthrowing reasonings and every high thing that lifts itself up against the knowledge of God, and leading captive every thought into the obedience of the Christ" (2 Corinthians 10:3-5). Without doubt the most potent weapon that the Christian possesses is the Word of God. The Lord Jesus used it to defeat Satan, the Pharisees, Sadducees and Herodians. Paul used it continually in his preaching. All the valiant servants of God who have done great things for Him have wielded the sword of the Spirit, the Word of God, to powerful effect. In the closing days of the church's testimony on earth may we hear an old soldier's voice ringing in our ears from a bygone day, "I commit you to God, and to the Word of His grace" (Acts 20:32). We may not be able to answer intellectual attacks on the Christian faith but we can stand four-square on the revealed Word of God and allow it to silence our adversaries. It is living and operative and is wiser than the most astute man. The Influence of David on Hezekiah.

2 Chronicles 29:1-36; 2 Kings 18:1-37; 2 Kings 19:1-37

Some 300 years after the death of David, his descendant Hezekiah walked in the faithful steps of David to Jehovah. In two outstanding features he resembled David: His love for the house of God. His implicit trust in the living God in the face of apparent overwhelming opposition.

Hezekiah came to the throne when the house of God had been closed and neglected and the holy vessels destroyed (2 Chronicles 28:24). With energy and wisdom Hezekiah in his love for God's house began the task of restoration. He got the doors opened and ordered that all the accumulated rubbish, the evidence of neglect, was to be immediately removed from the holy precincts of God's house. When that was accomplished all that was necessary for the worship of God was re-established. Note how David's influence pervaded the revival. We read of "the commandment of David" (Verse 25), "the instruments of David" (Verses 26-27), and the Levites were commanded to sing praise to Jehovah with "the words (Psalms) of David and of Asaph the seer" (Verse 30). The result of Hezekiah's work of restoration was worship (Verse 30), and also the service of the house of Jehovah was set in order. Hezekiah's example is worth following. In assemblies and in the lives of individual believers there can be closed doors to the Spirit's voice. Rubbish can accumulate easily after that. Sin, worldliness and fleshly activities can take over and predominate. These things must be judged and put away that true worship and godly order may prevail in the house of God. Judgment before blessing is a divine principle from Genesis to Revelation. When Sennacherib, the Assyrian king, came against Jerusalem with a great army, the doom of the city seemed certain. But Hezekiah was a true son of David and no doubt derived strength and courage from the example of his illustrious ancestor. As with Goliath, so with Sennacherib's army. The weak one was the victor, but through God. The parallels between David and Hezekiah are most interesting:

David The armies of the living God have been defied (1 Samuel 17:26; 1 Samuel 17:36-37).

Hezekiah The king of Assyria... has sent to reproach the living God (2 Kings 19:4).

David The battle is Jehovah's (1 Samuel 17:47).

Hezekiah But with us is Jehovah our God... to fight our battles (2 Chronicles 32:8).

David All the earth shall know that Israel has a God (1 Samuel 17:46).

Hezekiah Thou alone art the God of all the kingdoms of the earth (2 Kings 19:15).

Hezekiah's knowledge of God and his implicit confidence in Him secured the victory over the Assyrian host. He was a worthy son of his father David. The exploits of good and great men in the Bible and in the history of the Christian testimony are inspiring and encouraging. It cannot be emphasised enough that the reading of the biographies of men and women of God is essential reading for every Christian. It is sad if Christians do not take advantage of the rich material that is available for them, first of all in the Bible, and secondly in the vast amounts of godly literature describing the conflicts of faith in the centuries of Christian warfare. How can their example be followed in days of weakness and brokenness? By an increased appreciation of the greatness and power of God and all that is available through Christ at God's right hand, and by the power of the indwelling Spirit. If God be for us, who against us? (Romans 8:31). See also the reign of Josiah for similar features. He too was a true son of David his father (2 Kings 22:2; 2 Kings 23:3; 2 Kings 23:25; 2 Chronicles 34:1-33; 2 Chronicles 35:1-27).

F. Wallace.

"The Sermon on the Mount" (7) Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children (sons) of God (Matthew 5:9) Peace comes from God

Few thoughts move the minds of men as much as the desire for world peace. And yet, despite all the efforts to achieve peace, we constantly hear of war and of the threats and fears of men. But we know from the Bible that, perhaps soon, there will be world-wide peace. This peace will not be the result of human efforts, but will be introduced by God Himself at the beginning of the millennium. The Kingdom of God, under the visible rule of the Lord Jesus, will be a Kingdom of peace (Isaiah 9:6-7).

Those involved in politics are continually arguing with one another, while quarrels of other kinds are commonplace and are even found among believers. How difficult it is for us to live in peace with one another! According to God's thoughts peace should also reign in the relationships between the people in His Kingdom. "For the Kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit. For he that in these things serveth Christ is acceptable to God, and approved of men" (Romans 14:17-18). Thus peace characterises the Kingdom of God in every aspect, be it at present or in the future. But peace is not only the absence of war, quarrels or disagreements, but also a result of the presence of God in the life of man. He is the God of peace and His message is the gospel of peace (Romans 15:33; Ephesians 6:15). This peace comes from Golgotha, for it was there that the Lord Jesus made peace through the blood of His cross (Colossians 1:20). Thus He has become our peace, and then He came and preached peace to those who were afar off and to those who were nigh (Ephesians 2:14-17). Because of this, sinful men without peace are now able to obtain peace with God for their consciences and the peace of God for their hearts (Romans 5:1; Php 4:7). This personal peace is a gift of the grace of God for each one individually. It is also the prerequisite for true peace on earth. Yet peace among men, and among believers, is also dependent on the condition of our hearts and on our conduct. Therefore we are very often exhorted to follow or to strive after peace (Romans 14:19; 2 Timothy 2:22; Hebrews 12:14; 1 Peter 3:11). In the Greek text the same word is used every time, meaning

“to chase, run, follow”. In Ephesians 4:3 we are also told that diligence and zeal are necessary to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. If these exhortations were not necessary, God would not have had them written in His Word. Every believer is being addressed when the Lord Jesus says to His disciples, “... have peace one with another...” (Mark 9:50). The prophets of the Old Testament had already spoken much about peace on earth. The word peace (Hebrew: Shalom) means the whole salvation of God on earth as it will be realised under Messiah’s reign of peace. This salvation and this peace are not yet universally present. But they can already be found in the lives of the disciples of the Lord. In this present time believers can already display the characteristics of the Kingdom of Christ (cf. Romans 14:17), just as the believing remnant will do during the tribulation, before the Kingdom of God over all creation is established in power and glory.

Quarrels

Sadly, there is not peace among believers everywhere. Instead of being shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace one goes about in a spirit of criticism. Sometimes this is done under the pretence of zeal for the truth and the holiness of God. A fault with a brother then becomes an offence; an inaccurate expression becomes false doctrine. A number of these reproaches put together may result in a serious accusation against someone, who himself is not aware of any guilt and thinks he has to defend himself against these attacks. Here it is not a question of fundamental teaching, but of human imperfection and weakness. Who is able to make peace in such a situation, where everyone concerned thinks himself to be right? How good it is when a true peacemaker is found who can, with wisdom, patience, love, understanding for human weakness and waiting on the Lord, help the person attacked and dispel the doubts of the accuser.

Party spirit among believers is also a source of quarrelling. One may lack acceptance by brothers and sisters and suppose neglect by them. When human vanity is wounded in this way it can lead to someone withdrawing and gathering partisans around himself... and the result is strife. Who is then able and willing to reconcile the parties?

Quarrels can even occur in the service of the Lord, as is shown by the example of Euodias and Syntyche in Philippi. One could list many more reasons for quarrels among believers.

Peacemakers Our verse now speaks about those who not only seek and follow peace, but who make peace. There are many who are peaceable and love peace, but who are unable to make peace once a disagreement has arisen. Yes, a person who is a lover of peace by nature might be in danger of becoming unfaithful to the Lord, “for the sake of peace and quiet”. He may think the quarrel can be done away with by “sweeping the matter under the carpet”. But it is not possible to make true peace in this way. When the peace among brothers and sisters or in an assembly has been disturbed the grace of our Lord Jesus must become active to still the waves of human passion which then often come to light, before peace can be re-established. Much self-denial and waiting on the Lord is necessary for this, as the purpose is to reconcile opposite characters, emotions, convictions and interests, in a godly manner. Yet these loving efforts must never be at the expense of the holiness and righteousness of God. He who wants to be a peacemaker needs to have sound spiritual discernment. This means that he first has to examine himself in the light of God as to whether he has a pure heart, as in the previous beatitude. James writes that the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable (James 3:17). Truth as well as grace are necessary for

the right fulfilment of such a task. To make peace is therefore also a matter of prayer for clarity, neutrality, wisdom and love. Only then can mercy and truth, righteousness and peace meet in our lives practically. Time is often required in order that God may work in our consciences and hearts, since peace cannot be enforced.

Children (sons) of God The peacemakers are also called “blessed”. It is their reward to be called sons of God. Later the Lord Jesus mentions a similar title. “But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who insult you and persecute you; that ye may be the sons of your Father who is in the heavens; for He makes His sun rise on evil and good, and sends rain on just and unjust” (Matthew 5:44-45, J.N.D. Trans. Compare Luke 6:35). The expression “son” does not always have the same meaning in the Holy Scriptures. Here in the “sermon on the mount” where the believers are addressed as disciples in the Kingdom of God, the word has a practical, moral meaning. A son resembles the father when he acts in accordance with his will. In the family and house of God everyone who believes in the Lord Jesus is through grace forever a son positionally (cf. Ephesians 1:5; Romans 8:15-15; Galatians 4:5-6). In contrast, those disciples of the Lord who act according to God’s own example are here called sons of God. By acting according to His mind we become morally like Him, 1:e. we reveal His character and show it to the world. We are enabled to do this by means of the new birth. In addition, we have been led into His thoughts by the Holy Spirit. He is the great peacemaker, and as true disciples of the Lord we may also be peacemakers. The moment will come when the peacemakers are called the sons of God, 1:e. when they are openly recognised as such. Very often now, no appreciation of such efforts is to be seen. But one day our God and Father Himself will show His appreciation of them.

“Policy of peace”

It should be mentioned briefly that this verse must not be abused by Christians (although with good intentions) to take part in political actions like “peace initiatives”, “peace rallies”, etc. for the preservation or creation of world peace. It is true that we are in this world, (yet for how long?), but we no longer belong to it (John 17:11; John 17:14; John 17:16). The Lord Jesus may come at any moment. Our responsibility towards this world, which rejects our Lord and therefore heads towards destruction, is not political, but only of a spiritual character. This responsibility consists of:

Praying for all men that they will be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth (1 Timothy 2:1-4). Being a witness personally for our beloved Lord, to all men (1 Peter 3:15).

Living in peace with all men as much as lieth in us (Romans 12:18).

Arend Remmers The Epistle to Philemon (2) (Continued from page 316) Verses 8 & 9 The first word “wherefore” links this section of the epistle with the previous seven verses. They were not preliminary small talk before getting down to business. The plea Paul would make was based on what had gone before in the epistle. The vital link “in Christ” was enjoyed by both Paul and Philemon. Paul proceeds to delicately approach the primary object of his letter. His method could well be imitated. We need to be careful in approaching one another. An outstanding Christian shows us in this letter the trouble he takes to bring harmony into a situation fraught with difficulties.

He could “charge” (enjoin) Philemon to obey him as an apostle but the case was far too delicate. He is willing to put aside apostolic authority in order to obtain a full result which affection alone can

accomplish. We have considered how the bearers may have felt in bringing this epistle, but what thoughts exercised Paul's mind as he penned these words? Would Philemon be a faithful child of Paul? Would he be governed by the grace that had won his soul or would he fail in practical Christianity and grasp at his rights? Worldly feelings and practice, with social norms and family, would bring their pressures to bear upon Philemon. The choice was plain: conformity to the world or conformity to God's will (Romans 12:2). Hitherto Philemon had delighted Paul with practical grace. Paul is relying on the triumph of the Saviour's love. He does not give a command to be obeyed but as one who had grown old in Christ's service (Paul the aged) he makes a humble petition which calls for willing consent. My son Onesimus (verse 10) This phrase needs to be quietly contemplated. It is a rich jewel reflecting the power of God's grace. Paul had written: "There is not Greek and Jew,... bondman, freeman; but Christ is everything..." (Colossians 3:11). How often do we read this without further thought as to what it meant for the Pharisee of the Pharisees, the heir of Jewish exclusiveness, to speak thus of Gentiles? Here we have the former self-righteous Jew speaking of a runaway Roman slave in such an affectionate way. One from the very lowest dregs is called my son. The ignoble things of the world and the despised did God choose (1 Corinthians 1:27-29). And because of what God had done in electing grace he now gives expression to the warm bond that God had formed. It was no less a bond of love for Onesimus than for Timothy — nor was he less "my son". How Onesimus came to meet Paul in prison we are not told; perhaps he was imprisoned for some crime (1 Peter 4:15-16). Paul does not complain if he is left to languish in prison. This time had been fruitful.

Time past... but now (verse 11) The unconverted man has a past, but a converted man has "time(s) past" (Romans 11:30; Galatians 1:23; Ephesians 2:3). A radical change has occurred. Formerly, Onesimus had given grudging service. Now, instead of the feckless slave who gave eyeservice, he has learnt to give Christian service "in singleness of heart, fearing God". (Colossians 3:22-23). Most readers will know that Onesimus is a slaves name meaning "useful". Some slaves were just numbered 2, 3, 4 (Acts 20:4; Romans 16:22-23). But others had descriptions to help sell them in the market. In time past Onesimus could not be true to his name. He was useless; a waster. "But now" marks the change. He is a testimony to the power of the gospel of the grace of God which alone can bring such a conversion.

Verses 12-14

Paul discloses the purpose of his letter. It would cost him to send the runaway back. "Mine own bowels", tells us of the deep inner feelings that the wrench would cause. The apostle doesn't stop there but goes on to show how he would dearly have liked to retain Onesimus. His return was very costly to the lonely Roman prisoner but he is not retained. Philemon was not to be compelled to offer a service. The believer has a duty to serve but God does not want service given "grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver" (2 Corinthians 9:7). Paul knows that it is not just a matter of getting a wayward slave back to his legal master but of having a brother received and confidence established.

Verse 15

Paul's appeal goes on, and he suggests that the events connected with the slave absconding were used of God for His purposes. It appears Onesimus was led to Rome under providential circumstances. If we dwell only on the present situation we may well fail to see how the apparently

adverse circumstance is in reality being ordered by God. If Onesimus had never deserted his post then Philemon's gain would have been but transient. An unconverted man has no abiding link with a Christian. But because the voice of God had been heard and touched his conscience, the heathen bondslave had been converted to Christ. The reunion would be one that would never end; not even death could touch it.

Verses 16-17

Philemon had lost a slave but in return he receives more than a slave, he receives a brother in the Lord. Under the Law of restitution in Exodus 22:7 we read "let him pay double". "In the flesh" he is a transformed servant, "in the Lord" he is a beloved brother. In fact Philemon and his household will be better off all round. In Colossians 4:9 Onesimus is not described as a pardoned criminal but "the faithful and beloved brother, who is one of you". This is the wonder of Gods grace. Pardon for crimes of deepest dye; would that not have answered our great need? But grace does not give that alone and we are elevated to be brethren. He is not ashamed to call us brethren. The dignity of our place in the family of God will not cause pride when we remember our great deliverance from the worst lawlessness of Satan's domain. Everything we are we can only trace back to the heart of God. If Philemon is really a partner (of the great apostle Paul) then he will welcome Onesimus back as if he was welcoming Paul. Would he receive Paul as a slave?

Verses 18-19 The apostle does not ignore the past and neither does God, who requireth that which is past. Restitution must be made, the debtor has nothing with which to pay, but the apostle pledges with his own signature to restore what he did not take away. "I Paul... I will repay..." Paul wants to remove all obstacles for Philemon and his household. But Paul gently, graciously reminds Philemon of his own debt to Paul. In this way the accounts are skilfully contra'd and thus settled.

Verse 20-21

Paul now finalises his appeal. He too wants to be refreshed by Philemon, who had refreshed others, and the refreshment of heart would be in Christ. How fittingly he uses the word "brother" again as in verse 7. Paul yearned for a new display of Christ in Philemon. All he desired was in Christ.

Verse 22 The heart of Philemon would be deeply touched by Paul's appeal and it would not be neglected. The duty of hospitality, much exercised by this Colossian household, would also be called upon if their prayers were answered. Paul hoped to visit them. What a privilege to open our homes for the Lord's servants! The privilege of using our homes in the noble service of hospitality is one that is strongly enjoined on believers as may be observed from numerous Scriptures (Genesis 18:1-8; Romans 12:13; 1 Timothy 3:2; Titus 1:8; Hebrews 13:2; 1 Peter 4:9; 3 John 1:5-6). It may be necessary to say that some who are able are not willing. Comfortable circumstances are not always conducive to a spiritual atmosphere. It is evident that the expression of hospitality should be a part of regular Christian life. If it is absent then the reason may well be a poor sense of the grace that has brought us together as brethren.

Verse 23-25

Those named here are known to Philemon in a closer way. They knew both him and Onesimus, and their prayerful interest and their fraternal greetings would also carry weight. The final greeting

of the apostle to all is also a prayer. The Lord who gave Himself to redeem the saints in Colosse would also give grace to perform all that was asked and more. We need grace in order to give practical expression to true Christianity. Truth must be lived out in daily life and grace is the power that makes that possible.

E. N. C. From Our Archive The Scriptural Way of Gathering in the Present Day (2) (Being the substance of ministry at the Chicago Conference, November 22-24, 1951) (Continued from page 312) What is Meant by Ground of Gathering

We have heard the expression “ground of gathering” mentioned often in what has gone before and I thought it might be good just to clarify somewhat this expression. The question has often been raised as to what such an expression really means and also whether the “one body” is still the ground of gathering. By “ground of gathering” is meant the principle which governs the saints as the basis of their coming together. In plain language, “How are they gathered; they come together as what? — members of this church or that, or as members simply of this local gathering or that, or this mission or band, this evangelical society, or this independent little Bible church?” If such is the case, their ground of gathering is as members of their particular society or group, be it what it may. This is what is meant by “ground of gathering”. This would be a sectarian ground of gathering.

Now the question would arise, “What is the correct principle or ground of gathering?” For this we must go back to the beginning and get God’s thoughts for we find the thoughts of man to be conflicting. I ask a simple question, how were they gathered in the beginning? Was it as members of such and such a local group or was it simply as believers on the Lord Jesus Christ, as members of His body? It was as belonging to the only church known in Scripture, the body of Christ, surely. That is the ground God put them on in the beginning and His Word has never changed and it is just as true today as it ever was then. “There is one body, and one Spirit” (Ephesians 4:4). Ought we to own any other membership and gather on any other ground than that of the one body? Surely not.

Perhaps an illustration might help on this point. Suppose a certain regimental commander should put his regiment on a certain plot of ground to defend in face of the enemy and then retires from them for conference with other officers. Then after his departure, some, if not most, of the regiment think that another plot of ground is more advantageous and dissemble to it, leaving only a feeble few on the original ground. What then, are the few who are left the whole regiment? No, indeed, but are they not on the ground of the whole regiment and therefore the only true representatives of it? Would not the whole regiment be with them where they are if they had all retained their original ground or if after having left it they should renounce their self-chosen position and return to the original position assigned them by their commander? This is only an illustration, but it emphasises the point that even though it is not possible today for any company of Christians to say that they are the “church of God” for alas, many members of the body are scattered hither and yon throughout the multitudinous sects of Christendom, nevertheless, one can say by faith, that he is on the ground of the church of God when gathered simply as members of the body of Christ and owning no other membership. Every believer, having received the Spirit, is a member of the body of Christ and for any group to say that they are the “church” in any locality, they must have all the believers in the locality among them. For the local assembly is nothing more than the members of the body of Christ resident in that locality: “Ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular” (1

Corinthians 12:27). The Word speaks of “the” church at Corinth, “the” church at Jerusalem, “the” church at Ephesus, etc., and never “a” church, for it was the church in that locality, that is, the members of the body in that particular place. Suppose a letter were addressed today to the “church of God in Chicago” who would receive it? It would go to the dead-letter office.

Yet, notwithstanding these things, is all lost? No, indeed, but the answer is not to set up something else in addition to the vast numbers of Christian groups, even if it were with more light and godliness; nay, rather, it is for us to cleave to that which was from the beginning and, while owning the ruin and failure that has come in, to gather simply as members of the body of Christ recognising no other membership. On that ground we can act for the whole church, not as being the whole church, but as being on the ground of the church and therefore representative of the whole church. And I believe that God holds us responsible as such. Every local gathering ought to realise that being on the ground of the one body, it acts for the body, the whole church, in its action. Reception and discipline ought to be looked at in this light. That is, as being gathered as members of the one body and owning His authority in their midst, their action cannot be viewed as of themselves locally only, but is in reality an act of the church and for the church, the one body, irrespective of locality. In closing, let me say that though it is true that the basis of receiving is membership in the body of Christ, there is also the question of discipline, for we are responsible to exercise discipline. Does this mean that those who seek to gather on the true ground of the church are better than others? Far be the thought! But there is a difference between failure in the path and refusal to walk the path. Failure and wilfulness are not the same. For instance, I say to my two children, “Go and make up your beds this morning before going out to play.” The eldest, who is quite capable of doing the task, slips out the back way and goes out to play in plain defiance of the order. The younger makes a whole-hearted and honest attempt to make his bed, but due to his weakness is unable to do so properly. Now neither child actually performed the task assigned, but what father would deal with the two the same? Certainly the more culpable is the wilful one who refused to even attempt the duty, whereas an obedient attempt was made by the other. Have we failed? Yes, but let us not confuse failure with departure from the truth, which is wilfulness. Let us humble ourselves over our failure, but let us not be drawn into a path of wilful disobedience to the plain teaching of the Word of God as to principles of gathering. There has been thorough failure on the true ground of gathering, but may God preserve us from giving up that divine ground because there has been failure.

Reception to a Local Assembly Only? The question is often raised, should any be received as a Christian who are not regularly with us? Let us first say that the basis of reception, whether it be a Christian who is visiting or someone in the locality who desires to break bread regularly with us, is the same in both cases. The basis of reception is membership in the body of Christ. However, in view of the evil that has come in, practical fellowship is now restricted by divine authority to those members of the body who bow in a practical way to the Lordship of Christ over them in their life, walk and associations. See Matthew 18:15-18; 1 Corinthians 5:6-7; 1 Corinthians 5:13; 2 Timothy 2:19; 2 Timothy 2:22. If we are gathered as members of the body of Christ there would be no Scriptural grounds for refusing any godly and sincere Christians simply because they are not regularly with us or because they are ignorant of church truth. But when such are allowed to break bread, the conscience of the assembly must be satisfied that they are sincere and godly in each case, and the brother or brothers introducing them must be able to assure the assembly as to this.

We must bear in mind that we need discernment in all such cases as circumstances may vary greatly in each case. The point is to avoid sectarianism by refusing any sincere and godly members of the body of Christ on the one hand, or looseness in receiving those who are not walking in practical subjection to Him as Lord on the other hand. The truth to be held firmly and clearly is, that the basis for all reception to the breaking of bread is membership in the body of Christ, and that reception is therefore not to fellowship locally merely, but a recognition of one's membership in the body of Christ and one's title thereby to fellowship wherever saints are gathered as members of the one body.

It should be equally clear that all such received are under the godly care of the assembly. Everyone who breaks bread does so as a member of the body of Christ and not merely as a visitor. The assembly is therefore responsible for his conduct whether he be regularly breaking bread with them or not. The assembly is responsible for all who come into their midst, so those in the gathering have a responsibility to instruct such as to the true ground of gathering and separation from evil, as well as all truth pertaining to our individual and collective walk. Further, this godly care would cover warnings and rebuke when necessary, to any who might be going on wilfully with unscriptural ways and practices. In short, it is not only the privilege of the assembly to receive all who are of the body who are not Scripturally debarred, but it is its responsibility also to exercise godly care and discipline over all such received into their midst. Some emphasise the privilege to receive, but entirely overlook the solemn responsibility of instructing those received as to the error of church organisations, and in the precious truth of gathering to the Name of the Lord Jesus alone outside the camp.

If we are gathered on the ground of the one body in subjection to the Lordship of Christ in our midst, then we are truly outside of the religious systems set up by men. Do any then come to us on that ground? Then let them be instructed in that fact with all long-suffering, patience and grace. But if wilful insubjection to the truth of God's Word is manifested, then proper disciplinary action must be taken. If we avail ourselves of the privilege of reception, and surely we ought to, God holds us responsible also for the exercise of godly care and discipline.

It ought to be pointed out also that in receiving anyone as a member of the body of Christ we are not having fellowship with them as a member of such and such a church group, for we can Scripturally recognise no membership but that of the body of Christ. While individuals can be received as such, it should be clear that an assembly gathered as members of the body of Christ, owning the authority of the Lord in their midst, could have no intercommunion with any gathering or group not so gathered. This would be giving tacit approval to sectarianism which the Word of God condemns (1 Corinthians 1:10-13), and would encourage those who are in the sects to continue on such ground. This would not be faithfulness to the Lord nor love and honesty towards them.

Those gathered on the ground of the one body, owning the authority of the Lord in the midst of His gathered saints, can practice intercommunion. This is done in commending to and receiving from, only such assemblies as are known to be Scripturally gathered on the ground of the one body, and which keep themselves clear from the sectarian principle of independency of local gatherings or any other sectarian principles or practices. But all such assemblies known to be so gathered should have intercommunion in keeping with the truth of the one body and subjection to the

authority of the Lord.

Psalms 119:1-176 (9) (Continued from page 296) 6. VAU — A HOOK OR NAIL The shape of this letter in Hebrew is like that of a nail. The use of a nail is to join things together. This letter is therefore what is called a copulative conjunctive. The English equivalent would be the word “and” which always joins a series of ideas. The letter therefore connects things together. In the Old Testament this letter vau occurs more than 15000 times! The numerical value of vau is six, which in the Bible is the number of man, and it stresses man’s limitation in contrast with God’s infiniteness. We get the idea of what is individual. An interesting use of the letter is found in Daniel 5:25 : “MENE, MENE, TEKEL, UPHARSIN...”. Vau is the U in Upharsin. In the Hebrew this means literally: “...A Mina, a Mina, a Shekel and Half-Minas...”. The Chaldean “Upharsin” is translated into English by “...AND divided it” (or finished it).

It is interesting that in several verses in the Old Testament we have the “Nail” mentioned as a type of the Lord Jesus Christ and His work of redemption and salvation: “And I will fasten him as a nail in a sure place; and he shall be for a glorious throne to his father’s house. And they shall hang upon him all the glory of his father’s house... In that day, saith the LORD of hosts, shall the nail that is fastened in the sure place be removed, and be cut down, and fall; and the burden that was upon it shall be cut off: for the LORD hath spoken it” (Isaiah 22:23-25). Some commentators see Eliakim here foreshadowing Christ. “Out of him came forth the corner, out of him the nail, out of him the battle bow, out of him every oppressor together” (Zechariah 10:4). This verse speaks of the house of Judah. “Out of him”, would come He Who is the CORNER-stone, He Who is the NAIL on Whom all Hope hangs...

Verses 25-48. Strength for the Weary Section six. Verses 41-48: “The Word of God Leads to Victory”

A. The Prayer — verses 41-44:

1. For full salvation Verse 41: VA-BANI...“Let come to me...” In the previous section we saw the writer’s helplessness and nothingness and his desire for quickening. This section, through the significance of the letter vau as superscript, stresses the fact that Jesus, having identified Himself with helpless and needy man, is man’s only salvation. This is what the Psalmist realises: his constant need for mercies and salvation. It is the same for the Christian. We have been saved and we are being saved. We have experienced God’s grace and mercy, and we continue to need His mercies every day. The writer in these verses fears lest in any degree the Lord would withhold His favour from him. This is a needless fear for the true Christian. We may become unfaithful but He abides faithful, He cannot deny Himself. In salvation we have become identified with the Lord Jesus Christ, and as long as we realise our constant need of Him, and abide in Him, we shall experience victory over Satan and sin and self, “... according to Thy Word”. In 1 John 2:14 we see that the young men were able to overcome the wicked one by the fact that they were made strong through the Word that abode in them.

2. For victory over Satan Verse 42: VA-GAH-NAH...“And I will answer...”

Here we are told who it is the Psalmist wants to answer! “... him that reproacheth me...”. The verb reproach in the Hebrew has the sense of scorn, to carp, to reproach. We all know that Satan is described in the Bible as the accuser of the brethren (Revelation 12:10). Satan uses human

beings also to inflict scorn on their fellow-men. Unbelievers may scorn and mock the believer, or ask him “tricky” questions. The verse continues to tell us that it is only as “I trust in Thy Word” that the Psalmist is able “to answer”. Here then is another secret of victory over the enemy: “But sanctify the Lord God (J.N.D.: “the Lord the Christ”) in your hearts; and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear” (1 Peter 3:15).

3. For truth that overcomes Verse 43: VA-LA...“And not deliver...” His desire has been to be able to “give his testimony” even before those who oppose and scorn and ridicule him. He dreads the possibility that for some reason he would not have a word to answer: “... the word of truth... out of my mouth”. Only daily experience of fellowship with the Lord and study of His Word will prepare us to be His witnesses. Sin in the life would take away our testimony. Sometimes, even when out of fellowship with the Lord we may try to cover up and continue to testify, but there is no power, no conviction. Our opposers may even say: “Your actions speak so loud that I cannot hear what you say”.

4. That I may triumph only through Him Verse 44: VA-ASHAMARH...“And I shall keep...” The verse begins with a “vau” which may also be rendered “by way of explanation” or our “If... then...”. Here the Authorised Version has translated: “So...”. “Nothing more effectually binds a man to the way of the Lord than an experience of the truth of His Word, embodied in the form of mercies and deliverances. Not only does the Lord’s faithfulness open our mouths against His adversaries, but it also knits our hearts to His fear, and makes our union with Him more and more intense. God’s grace alone can enable us to keep His commandments without break and without end”. So, because He strengthens and quickens and enables us, we can “keep” His “law” in the form of Christ’s commandments for us today.

B. The Promises — verses 45-48:

1. Perfect freedom is to be His slave Verse 45: VA-ATHALACH...“And I will walk...”

Am I stating a contradiction? Is to be His slave really perfect liberty? Yes, indeed. Ask all those who have totally submitted to His blessed will. What joy! What perfect liberty not to do our own will, as before, but His will. Free at last to do His will. Free from the bondage of the will of the flesh, from self-will! “For I seek Thy precepts”. It is as we search the Scriptures that we shall find this secret of “perfect... liberty”. It is at the end of Romans chapter seven that we see a soul cry out in bitterness: “O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?” He is miserable because he is under the tyranny of sin and self. But he discovers the secret: “I thank God, through Jesus Christ our Lord”. Have we yielded to the Lordship of Christ yet?

2. My lips are His Verse 46: VA-ADABARAH...“And I will speak...”

Delivered from the bondage and tyranny of sin and self, now we can yield to our new Master, the Lord Jesus Christ! There was a time, in our unregenerate days, when Psalms 12:2-4 might have been applicable to any one of us: “... with flattering lips, and with a double heart, do they speak. The LORD shall cut off all flattering lips, and the tongue that speaketh proud things; Who have said, With our tongue will we prevail; our lips are our own: who is lord over us?” I hope that my reader can say: “my lips are His”. What do we use our mouths and our lips for now? Surely our verse helps us: “I will speak of Thy testimonies also before kings, and will not be ashamed”. Think

of the apostle Paul, how he stood before king Agrippa, before Festus and Felix, and gave a ringing testimony to his faith in the living God. (Acts 26:1-32 etc.).

3. My heart is His also Verse 47: VA-ASHTATGAG..."And I will delight myself..."

It is a very good habit to have our hearts and thoughts occupied with the Lord and His Word, from the moment we wake in the morning. Many believers know the joy of keeping a regular "quiet time" with the Lord and His Word. Do you? It is not easy to find time each day for this. Many believers have totally disorganised lives, and feel dissatisfied as they seem to accomplish nothing really positive. But you will always recognise a spiritual and fruitful believer — his life-style is an organised life-style. "My voice shalt Thou hear in the morning, O LORD; in the morning will I direct my prayer unto Thee, and will look up" (Psalms 5:3). Many men of God in the Bible got up early in the morning to do what the Lord required of them. Of the Lord Jesus we read that He got up "a great while before day", to pray. This is indeed the secret of the victorious life, a life of prayer and study of the Word of God.

4. My hands and my body are His Verse 48: VA-AHSAH..."...And I will lift up..."

It is entirely appropriate that this section of eight verses should end with hands lifted up to the Lord in total dependence, relying on Him for victory in daily life. Nothing less than total surrender of our will to the Lord Jesus and submission to Him as His "slaves", yielding our lips and our mouths and our hands to Him, is required so that we might realise His victory in our lives.

C. Bruins.

(To be continued, if the Lord will)

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Editorial

Many readers will be aware of the trends of the day, both in the world and among those that “nameth the Name of Christ”. It is a day of departure from God and from the Word of God. These trends tend to be invasive and can affect those who desire to be true to the Lord. Where convictions are not deep and grounded on Scripture, we may be drawn out of the path of faith. What can keep us in a day when lawlessness abounds in the world and in the church so many do that which is right in their own eyes? The truth of God does not change and the power of the truth known in the soul (the power of God by the Spirit) can keep those who are subject to it (1 Peter 1:5). Christ is the perfect expression of the truth and its presentation to us in Him is more than enough, “the mind and heart to fill”. While we wait for that “salvation, ready to be revealed in the last time”, may we be content to be marked by the obedience of faith and to bear the reproach of Christ. With the beginning of another year not far away it is necessary to remind existing subscribers and others who receive Truth & Testimony that subscriptions for 1995 are now due. There has been no increase in the charge for four years but there will be an increase for next year. The subscription will be £6.00 for those living in the UK and EU and £7.50 for those living elsewhere. Any who would like to receive the magazine but cannot afford the subscription charge should write indicating this. There is a subscription form on page 353a, which also gives details of discounts for those who receive more than one copy. Readers living in Canada and the USA should note that their subscriptions will be handled by Mr J. A. Pickering of Bourbonnais, Illinois, USA. They should use the subscription form on the opposite page (page 353b). The editors expect the bound volume of the 1993/4 issues to be available shortly. As for Volume 1 the cost will be £6.00, plus postage. We hope this time to have sufficient stocks to meet demand, but we recommend that intending purchasers order early to avoid the possibility of disappointment. There is an order form on page 384a.

We value prayer that the Lord’s help may be experienced in this work, and that this magazine may be used to “strengthen the things which remain” (Revelation 3:2). The Editors. From Our Archive: Justification How Can a Sinner be Justified? With men this is clearly impossible. Man, with all his boasted wisdom, could not devise any plan of effecting this. For instance, a prisoner stands at the bar, really guilty of the crime charged upon him; the judge may forgive, but can he say to that guilty man, you go away from this bar justified; from this time no person can lay anything to your charge? God alone can justify the guilty, and be righteous in doing it.

Romans chapters one to eight shows God’s wondrous plan of justifying the guilty. All are guilty, Jews or Gentiles, religious or profane. There is no difference, all have sinned. God says so. Conscience says so. You know and I know that it is so. Guilty! Guilty! “Yes”, you say, “that is what perplexes me. I know I am a sinner; how then can I be justified, so that no charge can be laid to me?”

Let us see first how this cannot be done, how you cannot be justified, and then see what God's only plan is of justifying the sinner. "By the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in His sight" (Romans 3:20). In the sight of men the believer is justified by works, as in James 2:24. But in the sight of God it is absolutely impossible to be justified by works of law. "Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified." "For if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain" (Galatians 2:16; Galatians 2:21). "For as many as are of the works of the law, are under the curse: for it is written, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them. But that no man is justified by the law... is evident", etc (Galatians 3:10-11). We have broken the law; it can only curse us. We cannot even have forgiveness by all our efforts to keep the law, much less be justified. Do you say, "We must do our best to love God and keep His commandments, and then hope He will forgive us and justify us"? Where does He say if we do our best? Or where is the man that does his best? No, on the doing plan no man shall be justified. God has said it, and it is hard to fight against God.

Let us now look at God's only way of justifying the ungodly. It is Christ that died! Oh, wondrous answer to all my sins! "Being justified freely by His grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in His blood", etc. "Who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification." "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." It is God that justifies (Romans 3:19-28; Romans 5:1; Romans 8:31-34). My reader, let your thoughts dwell on the cross of Christ. Blessed are the eyes that see and the ears that hear God's testimony about the death of Jesus, the propitiation for sin. "God commendeth His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, being now justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him" (Romans 5:8-9). What man could never do, God has done. He has laid our sins on Jesus; they are put away by His atoning blood. God has raised Him from the dead. He that believeth is justified from all things. And God thus not only is just in forgiving the believer, but is righteous in justifying the believer. Though once guilty, yet justified, so justified by the death of Jesus that not one charge can be laid to him that believeth. Oh, think of it my fellow-believer! God has so justified you by the blood of Jesus, that nothing can be laid to your charge — all, all has been borne by Jesus. Is not this enough to give you peace? Yea, the peace of God is yours. Yes, yours for ever.

How Does the Believer Know that He is Justified?

Certainly not by looking at his feelings. His feelings are as changeable as the wind. Nor yet by looking at his prayers, or his good works: all that he does is mixed with sin. If he looks at himself in any way, he can find nothing that will afford a sure ground of certainty that he is justified; that is, that he is so clear of sin that nothing can be laid to his charge for ever. Can you, my reader, say that you are clear of all sin, so clear that nothing can be laid to your charge? Are you not ready to say, "How can any sinful man in this world know that he is thus clear of all sin?" You will be astonished at the believer's simple, yet certain answer. It is this — Christ is risen. But you will ask, "What has that to do with a believer's justification?" It has everything to do with it. "If Christ be not raised,... ye are yet in your sins" (1 Corinthians 15:17). A saved sinner knows and believes the love of God in sending Jesus to be his surety and representative. His eyes have been opened to see Jesus, bearing his sins in His own body on the tree. He knows that the blood of Jesus, his

surety, has met every claim of Divine holiness to the uttermost. What love and mercy to lost sinners! Now the believer can say, “As surely as Jesus was condemned for me, was delivered to death for my offences; as certainly as God dealt with Him on the cross as my surety for my sins, so assuredly did God raise Him from the prison-house of death for my justification”. Now if a surety is cast into prison for the person’s debt he is bound for, when that surety comes out of prison, having paid the full demand, is not the person for whom he paid it as clear of the debt as the very person who was his surety, and paid it? And he knows he is clear of every claim. Why? Because his surety is now out of prison. Just in the same way does the believer look outside himself to Christ, his adorable surety. Oh, ponder this well: it was an awful engagement, when Jesus became the surety of all who through grace should believe on Him. Look how He felt in the garden; and then on the cross, when all our sins and guilt were upon Him. Yet still He trusted God. He knew that God would justify Him from all these sins and guilt, as He says, “Thou wilt not leave My soul in hell; neither wilt Thou suffer Thine holy One to see corruption” (Psalms 16:10). He did not leave His soul in hell; He raised Him from the dead, completely cleared from all our sins, no more to be forsaken, but to be received up to the highest glory. Now Christ had no sin to die for of His own, therefore His death was entirely for us. Just so He had no sin to be justified from of His own, therefore His resurrection also was entirely for us: He died as our surety, He rose from the dead as our representative, so that whatever God did to Christ on the cross is reckoned unto the believer: and whatever God did to Christ at His resurrection, He did to us in Him as our representative. Christ is risen. Is He perfectly and for ever clear of all sin? Even so does God justify every believer (see Romans 8:29-34; Hebrews 10:14; 1 John 4:17). It is God that justifies. My reader, if you are looking at yourself in any way, you are far from knowing that you are justified. If the Holy Spirit shall give you faith in Jesus, looking entirely away from yourself at Christ, you will not ask for anything to make you more certain that you are justified from all sin, than this one triumphant answer — Christ is risen, who is even at the right hand of God.

C.S.

How to Draw Near to God “So They Saw God”, (Exodus 24:11) A people brought to God On Mount Sinai God manifested Himself in majesty to His people. He had delivered them from the land of Egypt by His mighty arm and had borne them on eagles’ wings to Himself (Exodus 19:4). The appearance of the glory of the Lord was accompanied by thunderings and lightnings, the sound of a trumpet, and by smoke and devouring fire (Exodus 19:16-20; Exodus 20:18; Exodus 24:17). The Israelites could not come near to God. They did not dare to at all, and they had been forbidden to climb the mountain. Trembling with fear, they stood far away at the foot of the mountain (Exodus 19:12 ff; Exodus 20:18; Exodus 24:2). The people had been delivered and brought to God in an outward and national sense, but they could only take a position of nearness to God in a very limited way. Although 2 Corinthians 3:1-18 teaches us that the ministry of the law had a certain glory, it was nevertheless a ministry of death and condemnation. The people of Israel, who at Mount Sinai placed themselves under the law by committing themselves to doing everything the Lord had commanded, also put themselves under the curse of the law. So we see that under the old covenant man was unable to approach God freely, as the way to God had not yet been made manifest (Hebrews 9:8).

God dwelt in darkness, hidden in the sanctuary. The Father’s heart remained unknown until the coming of His Son, who declared the Father in the fulness of His grace, love and truth (John 1:14;

John 1:18). Only Christ's coming and His finished work on the cross of Calvary could make it possible for man to draw near to God with a true heart in full assurance of faith. Therefore the hour has now come to worship the Father in spirit and truth, and to have boldness to enter the Holiest by a new and living way, through the veil (John 4:23-24; Hebrews 10:19 ff). The people stood afar off

Although it was in God's heart to bless the Israelites and to have them in His presence as a kingdom of priests and a holy nation, they were largely unable to take up this position since the people as a whole stood afar off (Exodus 20:18; Exodus 20:21).

Some of them could come closer to God than the others, for there was a separate class of priests who drew near to God. But in Exodus 19:1-25 even they were not allowed to come up to the LORD on Mount Sinai. An exception was made, however, for Aaron and Moses (Exodus 19:24). In Exodus 24:1-18 we find others who could approach God: seventy of the elders of Israel and also Nadab and Abihu, the two sons of Aaron, who were killed later when they offered strange (profane) fire before the Lord (Leviticus 10:1-20). Together with Moses and Aaron they were allowed to come up to the Lord (Exodus 24:1; Exodus 24:9). But according to the instructions given to them they had to worship Him afar off (5: 1). The position of the mediator

Moses was really the only one who could draw near to God. He went up into the mountain, accompanied by his assistant Joshua (Exodus 24:13; cf. Exodus 32:17). But Moses alone went up higher to meet God and to speak with Him (Exodus 24:2; Exodus 24:12 ff). We even read that after six days of waiting, Moses went into the midst of the cloud in which God dwelt (Exodus 24:18). It is striking that in the New Testament he occupies the same position, for when Jesus was transfigured on the mount, Moses and Elijah also entered the cloud (Luke 9:34).

Moses alone was allowed to come very close to God and to be in His presence. This remained true even after Israel's sin with the golden calf. When Moses entered the tent (tabernacle) of meeting he had pitched outside the camp, the pillar of cloud descended and stood at the door of the tent. So the Lord spoke to Moses face to face, as a man speaks to his friend (Exodus 33:11). This was also the case later on. The cloud of the Divine presence rested upon the tabernacle and as soon as Moses entered it to speak with God, he heard the voice of One speaking to him from above the mercy seat (Numbers 7:89; Numbers 12:5 ff). Therefore we also have in Moses a beautiful type of our own position as Christians. Through the finished work of the Lord Jesus we have really been brought to God (1 Peter 3:18). God has called us into His marvellous light and He speaks to us through His Word by the Holy Spirit. We can come before Him as a holy priesthood (1 Peter 2:5; 1 Peter 2:9). We can reflect the glory of God, which has now been fully revealed "in the face of Jesus Christ", in a greater measure than it could be seen in the shining face of Moses (Exodus 34:29 ff, 2 Corinthians 3:12 ff; 2 Corinthians 4:6).

Three characteristic positions

Exodus 24:1-18 shows us three different levels on which man can be in relationship with God, three distinctive positions:

1. The people stood at a distance from God, at the foot of the mountain where the covenant was sealed with blood (5: 4ff.). This position is typical of Israel as being under law. As such they were under the curse of the law, 1:e. the judgment of death, and they came to know God as a

consuming fire (5: 17; cf. Hebrews 12:29).

2. A select company of the children of Israel went up to God (5:9). Having arrived on a somewhat higher level, they saw the God of Israel on His throne (cf. Ezekiel 1:26) and had a meal in His presence. This position could only be taken by a chosen company of representatives of the Nation, who knew God mainly as the righteous King.

3. Moses went up to God even higher, together with his servant Joshua. But Moses was the only one to enter the cloud of God's presence on the top of the mountain (vv. 12ff). So only the mediator of the people obtained more intimate knowledge of God. Our position as Christians This third position comes close to our position under grace, although the general contrast of Exodus 24:1-18 with our position as Christians is quite obvious. The believer no longer stands at a greater or smaller distance from God, for he has been made nigh by the blood of Christ. He does not just know Him as God Most High, seated on His throne, but has access to Him as Father and rests in the Father's heart (Ephesians 1:3 ff; Ephesians 2:13 ff; cf. Luke 15:20).

However, the events in this chapter still show some types of our privileges as Christians. In the first place we see that God entered into a relationship with His people. He made His thoughts known to them and made a covenant with them affirmed by blood. Similarly, we have been brought to God by the death of Christ, by the blood of the new covenant (Luke 22:20). This does not bring us under law, for the blood of Christ is the basis of entirely new relations with God. When we partake of the Lord's supper (the centre of Christian worship) we are always reminded of this (1 Corinthians 11:23-26). Our worship as Christians

Here in Exodus 24:1-18 we also see a service taking place at the foot of the mountain around an altar with twelve pillars for the twelve tribes of Israel. Here burnt offerings and peace offerings were sacrificed to the Lord (vv. 4-5). The parallel with our worship is clear:

We, too, have an "altar" which is the centre for all God's people, namely the Person of Christ; By Him we offer spiritual sacrifices, namely sacrifices of praise to God (Hebrews 13:10; Hebrews 13:15). The similarity becomes even more obvious in verses 10-11, where we read that the nobles of the children of Israel saw God and ate and drank in His presence. This can surely be linked with the Lord's supper, as it is our privilege then to draw near to God and to eat and drink in His presence. It is a great privilege indeed to approach God and to have a meal of mutual fellowship with Him and His people. Just as the elders of Israel, we should draw near with reverence and holy fear. They saw God and yet they lived. They had fellowship with Him in peace and quiet. They ate and drank, presumably of the meat of the peace or fellowship offerings (5: 5) and of the wine of the accompanying drink offerings.

What a beautiful picture this is of the Lord's supper, when we eat and drink in the presence of our God and Father and our Lord and Saviour! Gathered around the Lord's table we have the symbols of His dying love before us. The bread and the wine remind us of His body and His blood. We think of the preciousness of His Person and His sacrifice. It is a meal of fellowship with an exalted character. We are the guests at a meal prepared by our heavenly Host and He makes Himself known to us. We rest in His presence and worship at His feet. Is it not a special privilege "to eat bread... before God" in this way (Exodus 18:12)? I refer to this verse because it points to a similar situation, where the flesh of peace offerings was eaten in God's presence. During the meal

mentioned in Exodus 24:1-18 the elders of the people saw the God of Israel. Similarly, in our worship we meet God and see His glory in the face of our Lord Jesus Christ.

God fully revealed in Christ The elders saw God on His throne. In fact, they did not see much more than the foundation of the throne. For we read that there was under His feet as it were a paved work of (blue) sapphire stone, and it was like the very heavens in its clarity (5:10). Ezekiel goes much further and describes something of the appearance of the One who was seated on the throne (Ezekiel 1:26 ff). In short, the elders of Israel saw God as the God of heaven in its clarity and purity. This reminds us of the words of the apostle John: “God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all” (1 John 1:5). The elders of the children of Israel had to do with God in His holiness and righteousness; they knew Him as the righteous Ruler over Israel. Of course, they also proved God’s mercy and infinite goodness in His ways with His people but they did not know His love. The words “God is love” remained hidden from them (1 John 4:8; 1 John 4:16). God’s love could only be revealed in the Son of His love and His atoning death, but it is our privilege as Christians to know this deep and divine love as it has been fully revealed now in Christ. We have come face to face with the glory of God as it shines in the face, in the Person, of our Lord Jesus Christ (2 Corinthians 3:18; 2 Corinthians 4:6). But Moses could come closer to God than the elders of the people. He went into the midst of the cloud and was allowed to speak with God face to face. As Numbers 12:8 puts it: “With him will I speak mouth to mouth, even apparently, and not in dark speeches; and the similitude of the LORD shall he behold”. But in spite of this very privileged position, God remained hidden in the sanctuary and to some extent He was still an “unknown God” even to Moses. Although he saw the form (or similitude) of God, this did not imply full knowledge of God. This is obvious from the well known passage in Exodus 33:1-23, where Moses asked to see God’s glory. The Divine answer was: “Thou canst not see My face; for there shall no man see Me, and live” (5: 20). When God’s glory passed by, Moses was put in the cleft of the rock and covered with God’s own hand. Then he was allowed to see Him from behind, after He had passed by. God can be known and seen only insofar as He is pleased to reveal Himself. But we know that He has revealed Himself fully in His Son. God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself. In Christ He revealed the fulness of His glory and now it is our privilege to behold the glory of the Lord with unveiled face. We see it exclusively in Christ Jesus, for in Him dwells all the fulness of the Godhead bodily (Colossians 1:19; Colossians 2:9). “But we see Jesus... crowned with glory and honour” (Hebrews 2:9). This marks our position and indicates our privilege as Christians. The Lord Jesus came full of grace and truth and in Him we have seen the Father (John 1:18; John 14:6 ff). When we partake of the Lord’s supper we see Him in a special way. We are in His presence, and He is in our midst. It is the risen Christ whom we meet on the first day of the week, but He reminds us of His sufferings, just as He showed His pierced hands and His wounded side to His disciples. And we too are glad and rejoice when we see the Lord (John 20:20). Through Him we have access by one Spirit to the Father (Ephesians 2:18; Ephesians 3:12). We have boldness to enter the Holiest and to draw near to God in full assurance of faith (Hebrews 10:19; Hebrews 10:22).

Hugo Bouter.

Circumcision Made Without Hands (Colossians 2:11) Continued from page 326 The Teaching of Circumcision in Paul’s Epistles

Turning now to the epistles, further light is given on this subject. The main passages, all from the pen of the apostle Paul, are Romans 2:28-29, Colossians 2:11-12 and Php 3:3.

Wherever we look, Old Testament or New, it is evident that God looks for “truth in the inward parts”. “But he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God” (Romans 2:29). In the Epistle to the Colossians the words, “circumcision made without hands” are interesting. Here, in the light of Christianity, we turn away completely from what is physical and tangible to what is spiritual. Looking again at verse 11, the part we need to understand is: “the circumcision of Christ”. To what does this refer? In the previous part of this article a little was said about the circumcision of the Lord Jesus at eight days old. In no way do the words in Colossians 2:11 refer to those in Luke 2:21. The expression, “circumcision of Christ” could also be rendered, “cutting off of Christ”; words which remind us of familiar verses found in Old Testament prophecy. “For He was cut off out of the land of the living: for the transgression of my people was He stricken” (Isaiah 53:8). “And after the sixty-two weeks shall Messiah be cut off, and shall have nothing” (Daniel 9:26, J.N.D. Trans.). Considering these two Scriptures it becomes clear that the words of Paul, “circumcision of Christ”, point to the Lord’s death on the cross — the place of judgment, where He was cut off. Careful attention is needed in reading this verse. I quote it in full as it reads in Mr. Darby’s Translation: “in whom also ye have been circumcised with circumcision not done by hand, in the putting off of the body of the flesh, in the circumcision of the Christ” (Colossians 2:11). The cross of Christ is not only the means by which our guilt has been dealt with and our sins forgiven, but it is also the means by which the flesh has been judged fully. In referring to the teaching of circumcision as we have it here, let us never forget the cost to Him that it might be so. This then is the real circumcision, reckoned to the believer from the moment of faith when he is united to Christ where He now is. This has been described as a positional circumcision which is true of every Christian. In verse 12 of Colossians 2:1-23 the apostle speaks of the believer being “Buried with Him” and being “risen with Him”. Later on in the chapter, verse 20, it says “dead with Christ”. The thought may occur to us that we have never been buried, or been raised actually, neither have we died, but He has! What is true of Christ is put to our account. These things will never be grasped by any intellectual capacity, but only by faith. The closing portion of Colossians 2:12 says: “through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised Him from the dead”. The teaching of positional circumcision is also found in Php 3:3 : “For we are the circumcision, who worship by the Spirit of God, and boast in Christ Jesus, and do not trust in flesh” (J.N.D. Trans.). As this chapter goes on it is evident that Paul had learned in his experience to have no confidence in the flesh. He concludes that only Christ is gain. In Colossians chapter 3 we have a clear outline of practical circumcision; for example, “Put to death” (5: 5 — J.N.D. Trans.), and “put off” (5: 8 — J.N.D. Trans.). These words are reminiscent of Joshua 5:2-3 : “Make thee sharp knives, and circumcise again the children of Israel the second time”. Having crossed over Jordan, this new generation of Israelites was to be circumcised and this was to be carried out at Gilgal in view of the conquest of Canaan. It is interesting that after each victory gained there was to be a return to Gilgal. While it is true that these expressions, “put to death” and “put off”, are viewed as actions having been done, there is always the need of exercise and renewal. This brings to light an aspect of Christian responsibility often forgotten. The flesh is ever ready to rear up its ugly head and needs to be kept in the place of death. The Lord’s words in the Gospels are very clear: “And if thy right hand offend thee, cut it off, and cast it from thee” (Matthew 5:30 etc.). How severe they sound. No one would think that He

was referring to the literal hand, but His words illustrate the self-judgment so often needed in our lives. This is practical circumcision. Here in Colossians 3:5 it is clearly described, “Put to death therefore your members which are upon the earth, fornication, uncleanness, vile passions, evil lust, and unbridled desire, which is idolatry” (J.N.D. Trans.). In Colossians believers are seen in possession of a new life. Other Scriptures assure us of the presence and power of the Holy Spirit, enabling us to live in a godly way. Along with this “putting to death” there is the happier exercise of “putting on”: “Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of compassion, kindness, lowliness, meekness, longsuffering; forbearing one another” (Colossians 3:12, J.N.D. Trans.). This is the character of Christ, seen in us. His life was the subject of our meditations in the first part of this article and we considered His lips, heart, how in His life everything was “to the Lord”, His ears, and His separate walk when here. These features are now to be seen in us who are the true circumcision. Perusing this third chapter of Colossians these five features are in evidence.

Circumcised Lips

“Lie not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds” (Colossians 3:9). “Teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord” (Colossians 3:16). In both of these verses fellowship is the object. Lying and deceit are marks of the old man. In verse 9 the Christian has put off the old man with his deeds and therefore honesty in our dealings with one another makes for brotherly confidence. The second verse is to do with teaching one another, in a spirit of joyfulness and thanksgiving to the Lord. This does not point to public teaching, but rather to that happy intercourse together where all have as their object suitable worship to the Giver of all.

Circumcised Heart

“And above all these things put on charity (love), which is the bond of perfectness” (Colossians 3:14). Love is the feature that binds all together. The writer, having considered those beautiful features of Christ in verses 12 and 13 which we are to put on, concludes that love is over all. The verse previously alluded to in Deuteronomy 30:6 connected the circumcised heart with whole-hearted love to God. With ourselves today our love to one another will be according to our love to God. The flesh has no part in this. If love binds together, the activity of the flesh does the opposite: it will bring in difficulties but love removes them.

Circumcised to the Lord

“And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men” (Colossians 3:23). These words were written to those who, in Paul’s day, were slaves. A slave’s life in those days could be hard, depending on the disposition of the master. Whatever the case was, they were exhorted to work heartily. Although they had an earthly master they were to look above to their Master in heaven. They were to please Him. A remarkable dignity was put upon these slaves when Paul writes, “for... ye serve the Lord Christ”. Although slavery, as known in Paul’s day, may no longer exist, there is still an obligation on the part of the Christian employee to render service heartily as to the Lord.

Circumcised Ears

“Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom” (Colossians 3:16). The ear is to be opened to the Word; from this springs obedience. When the Word dwells in the believer it is no burden to obey it. There are similar words used about the young men in 1 John 2:14, “I have written unto you, young men, because ye are strong, and the Word of God abideth in you, and ye have overcome the wicked one”. We overcome in conflict by the Word, and hearkening to it. There is commitment involved here, for the parallel passage in Ephesians is, “be filled with the Spirit” (Ephesians 5:18). This also brings in the power available for overcoming. Quoting again from Jeremiah 6:10, “their ear is uncircumcised, and they cannot hearken”. In our passage in Colossians there is envisaged the circumcised ear and consequent obedience.

Separation

“In the which ye also walked some time, when ye lived in them” (Colossians 3:7). This is a striking verse, showing the distinct change that had come into the lives of the Colossian believers since conversion. The characteristics described in verse 5 were at one time their manner of life, but they were finished with them now. Those around them, no doubt, still lived in this way, but for them there was a separation; they lived differently. In conclusion, turning to Paul’s Epistle to the Galatians, we learn of the attempts made by false teachers to put the Gentile believers under the law, saying that they should be circumcised. We are all aware of the vehemence of the apostle in dealing with the matter. “Behold, I Paul say unto you, that if ye be circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing. For I testify again to every man that is circumcised, that he is a debtor to do the whole law” (Galatians 5:2-3). The rite of circumcision had become tied-up with the law of Moses and the Galatians were in serious danger of becoming entangled in a yoke of bondage. They had started well but were being hindered. The law would only rob them of their liberty and draw their attention away from the source of their freedom, the Son of God, who loved them and had given Himself for them. Twice in Galatians and once in 1 Corinthians a very similar expression is used by the apostle. I quote from Galatians 5:6 : “For in Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision; but faith which worketh by love”. How vital this is. The two other references are in Galatians 6:15 and 1 Corinthians 7:19. The conclusions formed from these Scriptures are outlined as follows:

Galatians 6:15 : “but new creation” (J.N.D. Trans.);

1 Corinthians 7:19 : “but the keeping of the commandments of God”; and, Galatians 5:6 : “but faith which worketh by love”.

These three telling statements give us the features vital to the Christian, that is, to the “true circumcision”. Needless to say, the commandments in 1 Corinthians 7:19 are not those of Sinai, but represent the manner of life springing from the new nature.

G. Bell.

“The Sermon on the Mount” (8)

Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness’ sake: for their’s is the kingdom of heaven (Matthew 5:10) In this eighth beatitude the Lord Jesus gives the same promise as in the first one: “theirs is the kingdom of the heavens” (J.N.D. Trans.). Righteousness had also been referred to previously, in the fourth beatitude, but while the subject there is hungering and thirsting

after righteousness, the Lord speaks here of those who are persecuted on account of righteousness.

Rejection

There is one distinguishing feature about this verse compared with the seven previous beatitudes. They deal with the characteristics and conduct of true disciples of the Lord Jesus, whereas here the Lord speaks about the consequences of their righteous behaviour. As long as He does not reign as King of righteousness, those living according to God's principles and thoughts will be persecuted and suffer. This shows that from the very beginning the Lord had His rejection by Israel before His eyes, as well as the contrast between those who would receive His own in the time of His rejection and the world in its hostile attitude towards Him and them. The fact that people hunger and thirst after righteousness proves that unrighteousness still reigns in this world. This is one of the lessons of the sixth verse. Here we are one step further on. Those who want to live righteously have to expect that they will be persecuted. Peter, one of the twelve disciples who listened to these words of the Lord, later used similar words in his first epistle which speaks so much about the sufferings of the children of God. "But if also ye should suffer for righteousness sake, blessed are ye" (1 Peter 3:14, J.N.D. Trans.).

Righteousness The practical righteousness which is mentioned here is a feature of the new nature of the believer. The Word of God had already said of Noah that he was just and perfect and walked with God (Genesis 6:9). Practical righteousness, 1:e. owning and maintaining the authority and all the rights of Christ as King, is therefore also a pre-condition for entering the kingdom of heaven (Matthew 5:20). This was the mark of all true disciples of the Lord then, and will be their mark in the future time of tribulation. He, the perfectly righteous One, also wants to instruct us today, that, "denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world" (1 Peter 3:18; Titus 2:12). This righteousness does not only mean that we give everyone what is due to them. Practical righteousness means to live according to the Word of God and His principles. Love of the truth, honesty, faithfulness and respect towards other people are features which are appreciated in the world too. For this reason men like Joseph and Daniel in the Old Testament, and the first Christians in the New Testament era, found favour with their contemporaries. Even an unbelieving employer is normally pleased when he has a faithful and honest employee that he can rely on. But suppose he asked his Christian employee to hush up the truth in a situation that was awkward for the employer, and instead to tell a lie or co-operate in a fraudulent transaction. What will happen when the employee now says: "I can't do this because it is inconsistent with the Word of God"? When his own honour or money are at stake, the previous friendliness of the employer can easily turn to anger. Many a believer has lost his job because he was unwilling to take part in the unrighteousness of this world.

PERSECUTION

If we own the rights of our Lord over every area of our lives, obey Him in all things and do His will, in our families, at work, in our leisure time and in all situations of our lives, we won't always be accepted by the world. Our experience may not be exactly that of others, such as the Christian trainee nurse threatened with dismissal without notice because she refused to assist at an abortion (cf. Genesis 9:6; Exodus 20:13). Or like the young sister who is mocked by her fellow pupils because, in contrast to the "uniform of emancipation" worn by others — jeans and short hair

— she wears a skirt and has long hair. (This mockery is also a form of persecution. The Old Testament says of Ishmael, the son of Hagar, that he mocked or laughed, but the New Testament says that he persecuted Isaac — Genesis 21:9; Galatians 4:29). But take what form it may, we will come to know persecution if we own the Lord's rights over us.

BLESSED

How good it is in such situations not to look at the persecutors and mockers, but to Him for whose sake we experience these things. He has said to His disciples, "The bondman is not greater than his Master. If they have persecuted Me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept My word, they will keep also yours" (John 15:20, J.N.D. Trans.). When we too have to suffer on account of righteousness, let us remember whose rights and honour are being attacked. Then we will not be filled with disappointment and discouragement but with the consciousness of this "Blessed" which He Himself has promised. The words, "through sufferings to glory", apply to our Lord and also to ourselves (1 Peter 1:11; 1 Peter 4:13; 1 Peter 5:1). Paul encouraged the Thessalonians who were suffering persecution, by saying that the persecutions and tribulations they were experiencing were proof that they had been counted worthy of the kingdom of God. When the Lord Jesus comes again with His saints, God will make known His righteousness by recompensing tribulation to those who troubled them when they were on earth, and giving rest to those who had been troubled (2 Thessalonians 1:4-10).

Arend Remmers.

Psalms 119:1-176 (10) (Continued from page 352) 7. ZAIN — WEAPON This letter in the Syriac language means "weapon". The root idea of the letter is from "zakar", meaning "to remember" (compare the name Zachariah, in which Zachar means "remembered" and iah means "of Jehovah"). The Hebrew letter "tsaddi" is very close in pronunciation and is the first letter in the word for rock ("zur") in Exodus 17:6. There it has the meaning of sharpness, like the weapon we are discussing in connection with the letter zain.

It is interesting that in Numbers 20:8 the word for rock in Hebrew is "sehlag" and this comes from the root meaning "elevation" (or "height"). In Numbers 20:1-29 it is typical of Christ as raised from among the dead and exalted. The numerical value of this letter is seven. What then does this letter suggest to us? That we must remember our immense spiritual riches!

Verses 49-56: "The Word of God shows us our Spiritual Possessions"

Precious promises!

Verse 49: ZA-KAR..."Remember (this)..."

It is the Psalmist who asks the Lord to remember His Word! The Lord has given precious promises. Some one has tried to count all the promises given in the Bible and has found more than 30,000 of them!

We have this interesting word in Isaiah 62:6, "... ye that put Jehovah in remembrance, keep not silence..." (J.N.D. Trans.). The best basis for prayer is the solid promises of God. Remind God of what He has said! "The gifts and calling of God are without repentance" (Romans 11:29). "According as His divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness,

through the knowledge of Him that hath called us to glory and virtue: Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises; that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature..." (2 Peter 1:3-4). The Psalmist is saying in effect, "This is the word and these are the promises upon which Thou hast caused me to hope...". How wonderful that the Bible gives us hope in afflictions (5: 49), and comfort (5: 50), even in troubles (5:51-53), and it gives joy (5: 54-56). God is always faithful to His promises!

Possessing our possessions Verse 50: ZA-AT..."This...(is my comfort)" The question is whether we have appropriated and do appropriate these exceeding great and precious promises! This appropriating is by faith: we thank the Lord for every promise the Holy Spirit brings before us in our daily reading. We see something similar in Romans 6:11 where Paul says, "Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead...". It is not the reckoning that makes the fact, but I am to reckon in view of the fact. I appropriate in view of the fact that every spiritual blessing in the heavenlies in Christ is put to my account by the Father. It is therefore in the appropriating that we experience the "... comfort in my affliction...". It is when we thank the Lord for His promises that we experience what the Psalmist affirms: "... for Thy Word hath quickened me". Notice, there is no prayer for deliverance from the affliction! But although the affliction remains, the comfort is there so that we may be able to bear it, and be victorious in it. No promises for the proud Verse 51: ZEHDEM..."The proud..." By the proud are meant the unbelievers! They cannot understand the quiet confidence of the believer and ridicule him. Ridicule is often a powerful weapon Satan uses against believers to make them doubt the promises of God. But we should not be surprised by this ridicule. The apostle Paul tells us: "Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution" (2 Timothy 3:12). The natural man receiveth not, cannot understand, the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him (1 Corinthians 2:14). So let us arm ourselves! If the enemy seeks to make us doubt the promises of God, let us not give him one inch! It is the purpose of the enemy to decline us "... from Thy law (the Word of God), but with the Lord's help his efforts will only strengthen us, and make us more determined to trust the Lord and realise His promises.

Remember!

Verse 52: ZA-KARATI..."I remember..."

We forget so quickly! It is like saying: "Let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom..." (Colossians 3:16). There is no victory possible without that Word abiding in us. We must constantly use the "sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God" (Ephesians 6:17).

We should learn practical lessons from Jehovah's "...judgments of old...", when He dealt with His people Israel. "Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come" (1 Corinthians 10:11). In Romans 15:4 we read: "For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope". This then is the comfort we read of in our verse!

Pity the perishing without promises Verse 53: ZALGAHPAH..."Hot zeal (Horror)..." No true believer can remain unmoved when he sees the crowds in the streets and cities of this world, "... having no hope, and without God in the world..." (Ephesians 2:12). Can we be so indulgent with our own safety and the blessings we have received that we remain indifferent to the end of those who

deliberately “... forsake Thy law...”? The word for “horror” is better translated “hot zeal”. As Christians should we not be marked by “hot zeal” of compassion for these lost souls?

Believers have reason to sing Verse 54: ZAHMERT...“...songs...”

We do not have to wait till we get to heaven in order to sing! This verse speaks of our pilgrimage. He has put a new song into our mouths, even praise unto our God (Psalms 40:3). We have indeed many reasons to be joyful and to sing on the way to the Father’s House.

Happy the heart that finds its joy in the “statutes” of God. Remember that “statute” means a divine direction given for our obedience. What joy there is in obeying Him!

Blessed insomnia!

Verse 55: ZA-KARATI...“I remembered...”

We have probably all known periods in our spiritual experience which are comparable to “nights”, when things are dark and we are restless and long for the “morning” to dawn. Whether they are literal nights and we suffer from real insomnia, or other kinds of “nights”, let us remember the Lord’s Name. The Name stands for the Person! How many wonderful Names does our Father have, and our blessed Lord and Master Jesus Christ! Books have been written about the significance of these Names! And every Name brings comfort and encouragement. “And they that know Thy Name will put their trust in Thee” (Psalms 9:10). “The Name of the Lord is a strong tower; the righteous runneth into it, and is safe” (Proverbs 18:10). So the pilgrim is enabled by the Holy Spirit to sing in his pilgrim path day by day, and even in the night he can sing when he remembers what the Lord is to him.

Let us not lose what we have:

Verse 56: ZA-AT...“This...”. The literal translation is: “This was done to me because”. What he had was no doubt the comfort he had spoken of in the previous verses. Is he looking back now and saying: “I had this once, but now...”!! Is he speaking of a past experience? “This I had, because I kept Thy precepts”! But here is a warning for us. Let us not lose what we have. We can have this sense of His presence daily, this comfort of His companionship in our pilgrim pathway, this joy in Him and in obeying Him. Let us not grieve the Lord or the Holy Spirit, but seek His fellowship. Then we shall discover our immense spiritual possessions!

Cor Bruins. The Life of David (9) David, Having Died, He Yet Speaks (Continued from page 335) David’s Influence in Days of Revival.

Ezra 3:10-11; Ezra 8:20; Nehemiah 7:39-46 (See1Chronicles chapters 23-26) When Jerusalem was destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar, as allowed by God in His governmental ways, and Zedekiah, the last representative of the house of David to sit upon his throne, was blinded, it appeared as if the lamp of David had been finally extinguished (Daniel 1:1-2; 2 Chronicles 21:7 — the lamp of David). The royal seed was taken captive into Babylon (Daniel 1:3). No one of the house of David reigned in Jerusalem. After the seventy year period of chastisement on Judah and Benjamin had expired, God instigated the return of a remnant to Jerusalem. He used the Gentile kings Cyrus and Artaxerxes to accomplish His will in relation to the remnant1. The remnant got busy on their return. They repaired the broken down walls and rebuilt the temple. The prophecies of Zechariah, Haggai

and Malachi are interesting in connection with this recovery. When it began it would have been easy for the remnant to have said, “Let’s make some new arrangements. The old ones did not bring us any blessing”. But they didn’t. The real cause of their captivity in Babylon was their disobedience to God’s commandments.

1Daniel 9:1-27 should be read in this context to see that the return of the remnant to Jerusalem had in view the entry of Jesus, the Son of David, the Messiah of Israel, into Jerusalem. The Lord Jesus was refused and crucified, but the day is not far distant when the holy city will again see the Messiah, this time not riding upon an ass, but riding upon a white horse. Read Zechariah 12:1-14; Zechariah 13:1-9; Zechariah 14:1-21 and Revelation 19:11-16.

Ezra confessed this and Nehemiah too (Ezra 9:5-15; Nehemiah 9:32-38). It was when the temple was being built that David’s influence began to be felt again. No new arrangements were made. The instructions of David, the man of God, were followed accurately and the two great features of praise and service were secured as a consequence. The foundations of the house of God were laid with praises and thanksgiving according to the “old paths” and the service of the house was maintained by observing the wise arrangements of David (Compare Ezra 8:20 and Nehemiah 7:39-46 with 1 Chronicles 23:1-32; 1 Chronicles 24:1-31; 1 Chronicles 25:1-31; 1 Chronicles 26:1-32). When there are conditions of weakness they are not improved by innovation. The basic cause of all failure is disobedience to God’s revealed will and consequently a lack of devotion and exercise. When believers adjust themselves to the will of God the testimony is strengthened. The Word of God is suitable for all circumstances and ages. It is never out-of-date and it is always in opposition to new ideas which promise much but give nothing but froth and bubble which quickly disappear. The Psalms of David. An Undying Influence for All Time The inspired writings of David enshrined for ever in his Psalms have been, and always will be, a source of encouragement and blessing for those who read them. Although they are not strictly speaking Christian in their teaching (they contain imprecatory statements. Jesus said, “Love your enemies... pray for those who insult you and persecute you...”; Matthew 5:44), they are calculated to meet the varied needs of Christians as they pass through trying circumstances. They can also be used by Christians to express their praise and thanksgiving to God. David’s Psalms were of great value in his own day and after he died. They are still of value today and will be for the persecuted and triumphant remnant of Israel in a future day. Who can possibly assess the value of Psalms 23:1-6? In times of trial, bereavement and difficulty it has brought peace and calm to unnumbered people. Then there are the Maschil Psalms, thirteen of them, and six were written by David (Psalms 32:1-11; Psalms 52:1-9; Psalms 53:1-6; Psalms 54:1-7; Psalms 55:1-23; Psalms 142:1-7). These Psalms are psalms of instruction and what a wealth of godly and lasting influence is found in them. Psalms 32:1-11 — an instruction for sinners to freely confess their guilt and realise the joy of forgiveness from God. David’s own failure with Bathsheba is turned to good account in giving instruction for others. Psalms 52:1-9 — an instruction for enemies of God. They will not prosper. The righteous shall eventually triumph. Psalms 53:1-6 — an instruction for those who mock God’s people who are in adversity. Their foolishness will be manifest when God delivers His beloved people. Psalms 54:1-7 — an instruction to help those who are apparently about to be defeated. God is their helper. Psalms 55:1-23 — an instruction for those in deep despair. They are to cast their burden upon the Lord. Psalms 142:1-7 — an instruction for those who feel alone and deserted. God is their refuge. These instructions were not theoretical compositions. They were the fruit of David’s own varied

experience. That is why they are so powerful in their application to others (See 2 Corinthians 1:4).

It is in the Messianic Psalms that David reaches heights of glory and majesty. These refer to the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of David, Son of God, Son of Man. It would require volumes to expound them. However, the references in the New Testament will suffice to indicate the tremendous influence they have as used by the Holy Spirit in relation to Jesus.

Psalms 2:1-12 John 1:49. Referred to by Nathaniel — Son of God, King of Israel.

Acts 4:25. Quoted in the prayer of the disciples — Why have the nations raged etc.

Acts 13:33. Quoted by Paul in his preaching — Thou art My Son, this day have I begotten Thee.

Hebrews 1:5; Hebrews 5:5. Quoted by Paul — Thou art My Son, this day have I begotten Thee.

Psalms 8:1-9 Matthew 21:16. Quoted by the Lord Jesus — Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings etc.

1 Corinthians 15:27. Quoted by Paul — all things under his feet.

Ephesians 1:22. Quoted by Paul — all things under his feet.

Hebrews 2:6-8. Quoted by Paul — What is man etc.

Psalms 16:1-11

Acts 2:25-28. Quoted by Peter in his preaching on the day of Pentecost — The life, death and resurrection of Jesus.

Acts 13:35. Quoted by Paul in his preaching — Thou shalt not suffer Thine Holy One to see corruption — the resurrection of Jesus.

Psalms 18:1-50

Romans 15:9. Quoted by Paul — confession among the nations and singing to Thy name — The blessing of the Gentile nations.

Psalms 22:1-31

Matthew 27:46; Mark 15:34. The cry of Jesus when He was the sin-bearer — My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?

John 19:24. Quoted by John the Gospel writer — They parted My garments etc.

Hebrews 2:12. Quoted by Paul — I will declare Thy Name unto My brethren.

Psalms 40:1-17 Hebrews 10:5-9. The words of the Lord Jesus, the Son of God — Lo, I come... to do Thy will, O God.

Psalms 110:1-7

Matthew 22:44; Mark 12:36; Luke 20:42; Acts 2:34; Hebrews 1:13. Sit Thou at My right hand, until I make Thine enemies Thy footstool — The exaltation of Jesus, the Son of Man. The references to Jesus at the right hand of God are many and must be studied in their context to ascertain what is

the Spirit's mind when they are quoted. For a fruitful study the other references to the right hand are given here: Matthew 26:64; Mark 16:19-20; Luke 22:69; Acts 5:31; Acts 7:55; Romans 8:34; Ephesians 1:20; Hebrews 1:13; Hebrews 8:1; Hebrews 10:12-13; Hebrews 12:2; 1 Peter 3:22.

There is a tremendous scope of truth in relation to God and to Christ in David's Messianic Psalms as quoted in the New Testament. Briefly, they are as follows — Son of God and King of Israel — the confederacy of evil against God and His Anointed — Jesus praised by young children — All things made subject to Christ, the Son of Man — the life, death and resurrection of Jesus — Gentiles thanking God and confessing His Name — Christ forsaken by God — Christ's garments parted among the soldiers when they had crucified Him — Christ praising God in the midst of His brethren — Christ coming into the world to do the will of God — judgment upon Judas Iscariot and God's enemies — Christ bearing reproach — Christ's ascension to the right hand of God. Was it these Psalms that the Lord Jesus quoted and to which He gave impact when as the risen Saviour He appeared to the disciples? (Luke 24:44). It seems likely that it was. David's Greater Son was able to use the Psalms which David had written to great effect and no doubt His exposition of them was carried forward in the apostles' teaching when the church was formed on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:42). The prophetic content of David's Messianic Psalms has been accurately fulfilled in the Person and work of the Lord Jesus. This is one of the proofs that David was inspired by the Spirit to write his Psalms and is an internal proof of the inspiration of Scripture.

David's influence through his Psalms has a prominent place in New Testament teaching. Prior to the day of Pentecost they were read with anticipation and hope. From Pentecost to the present time they are read with a sense of their (at the present time sometimes partial) realisation in Christ, and with wonder and awe. What a man David was and what influence he continues to have! The Root of Jesse. Isaiah 11:1-16; Romans 15:8-12

There cannot be any doubt that the root of Jesse referred to in Isaiah 11:1-16 is none other than Jesus, the Son of David. The words of the Lord Jesus are sufficient to confirm this. "I am the root... of David" (Revelation 22:16). David calls himself the son of Jesse (2 Samuel 23:1). Amasai calls him the son of Jesse in 1 Chronicles 12:18, as does Paul in Acts 13:22. However, it is not David that is referred to in Isaiah 11:1-16, but his illustrious son, Jesus the Son of God. As David's influence after his death is our consideration, it is no surprise to find that features which were prominent in David's rule are seen in perfection, power and glory in the government of the Lord Jesus Christ.

(1) Just as David was helped by the Spirit to gain the throne of Israel, and while on it to rule with wisdom and power, so the Messiah (the Anointed) of Israel, the Lord Jesus Christ, will rule in the Spirit's wisdom and power (Isaiah 61:1-3).

(2) David was in no doubt that a ruler was responsible to rule in the fear of God (2 Samuel 23:3). To fear God is to reverence Him and to do His will. David did this in spite of his mistakes (Acts 13:36). The Lord Jesus will do the will of God in perfection in the world to come, the thousand years reign (Matthew 12:17-21).

(3) David united Judah and Israel and reigned over the whole Nation (2 Samuel 5:1; 2 Samuel 8:15; 1 Chronicles 29:26). The hostility and brokenness was put right under his astute leadership. His Greater Son will gather the scattered ones of Israel and bring Judah and Israel together as

one, never to be disunited again (Isaiah 11:11-13).

(4) When David the warrior king subdued all Israel's enemies he secured peace and prosperity for the Nation. 1 Kings 4:20; 1 Kings 4:24-25, gives a beautiful picture of the kingdom that David had passed on to Solomon, his son. Regrettably that peace and prosperity, like the unity of the Nation, was lost because of unfaithfulness. But the peace and prosperity of the coming kingdom of David's son, the Messiah, will never, never be lost. Many glowing prophecies in the Old Testament portray that future glory of Jesus (In this connection read Psalms 72:1-20. See also Jeremiah 23:5-8; Jeremiah 30:7-11; Jeremiah 33:14-18). In Romans 15:12 Paul uses the quotation from Isaiah 11:1-16 to show that God has the Gentile nations in mind for blessing. This is abundantly evident at the moment and will be so in a future day. Consider the following Scriptures in relation to the present expression of this: Acts 15:7-19 — a people from among the Gentiles; Romans 11:15 — the fulness of the Gentiles. As to the future expression, see Revelation 7:9-17 — out of every nation etc. The Sure Mercies of David. Isaiah 55:3; Acts 13:34

What are the sure mercies of David? Perhaps Psalms 89:3-4 provides the answer. God is speaking: "I have made a covenant with Mine elect, I have sworn unto David My servant: Thy seed will I establish for ever, and build up thy throne from generation to generation. Selah". God's promise to David was that his seed would continue and his rule in His Name would also continue. The prophet Isaiah's appeal to Israel invited the Nation to turn away from unfruitful pursuits and partake of the rich bounty of God's grace. God said, "come unto Me; hear, and your soul shall live; and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, the sure mercies of David". When God sought to impress His people with the offer of stable and satisfying blessing He reminds them of His irrevocable covenant with David. Well might the Nation revere the memory of David.

How is the statement in Isaiah 55:3 verified in Paul's statement in Acts 13:34? Jesus, the Son of God, the Son of David, died on the cross at Golgotha. He was placed in a tomb and the tomb was sealed. If it had been possible for Jesus to have lain in the tomb without being raised from it, God's promise to David would never have been implemented. But it was impossible that death could hold the Son of God (Acts 2:24). God raised Him from among the dead. The promise made to David will be fulfilled in the Son of God in the future reign of righteousness. The resurrection of Jesus was necessary for the covenant made with David. Paul perhaps had this in mind when he wrote to Timothy with these words, "Remember Jesus Christ raised from among the dead, of the seed of David" (2 Timothy 2:8). In this context the covenant made by God with David was a guarantee that Jesus could not be kept in the tomb in which He was laid. There are many other reasons for the resurrection of the Son of God but this is an interesting one as it brings into focus the importance of God's covenant with David. The Christian position is not based on the covenant made with David. All believers in Christ Jesus, the glorified Man at God's right hand, and indwelt by the Holy Spirit, are in a position of unutterable blessing. The Second Man is the guarantee of their present and eternal blessing.

F. Wallace.

(To be continued, if the Lord will) News from the Field

Israel Area 28,250 sq. km inc. occupied territories.

Population 5,438,000. 82% Jews, 16% Arab, 2% other.

Official languages Hebrew, Arabic.

Israel and its neighbours are at the heart of the narrative in the Scriptures. The first Christian assembly was at Jerusalem and the testimony soon spread through Judaea and Samaria. The decline of the testimony from its pristine condition brought with it ritualism and a formal religion quite unlike apostolic times. Consequently all assembly character was lost. In the last century the Spirit of God worked to bring in a recovery of New Testament principles and hope. The Middle East also saw this blessing. An American Presbyterian Missionary B F Pinkerton saw that his religious associations were all wrong and began work in simple dependence upon the Lord. The influence of his work spread to Syria and Egypt but only after long endurance in difficult circumstances. Today there are testimonies to the Lord's assembly in most of the countries in the region where brother Pinkerton worked. Others who laboured with him were Ludwig Schlotthauer and Otto Blaedel from Germany. An Egyptian brother, Moussa Saleh, was also much used of the Lord. These brethren contributed much in oral and written ministry from the 1870's onwards. Brother Schlottauer lived for a time at Ramleh not far from Jerusalem. In the 1940's Matta Behnam visited Haifa and other places, his magazine, "Green Pastures", having a wide circulation in Israel. Assemblies existed then in Ramleh Acre, Lydda and after troubled years at Kfar Yasif and Kfar Sumeia. The following letter has been received from two Dutch brothers, Karel Rouw and Hilvert Wijnholds, following their visit to the brethren in Israel:

It is always a special joy to meet God's children in another country and to study the Word of God with them. During our 12 day visit to Israel we enjoyed the fellowship of the saints and their great hospitality. Since 1949 the Lord has been using brother Novel (82 years old) from Kfar Yasif both in the ministry of the gospel and in the ministry of the assembly (Colossians 1:23; Colossians 1:25), so that the brethren now gather together unto the Name of the Lord, according to the Scriptures, in four places. In Haifa this struck us where two verses were on the walls of the meeting room. One verse relates to the ministry of the gospel, "Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Matthew 11:28). The other one has to do with the ministry of the assembly, "holiness becometh Thine house" (Psalms 93:5). Brother Nofel is still active and rejoices in the activities of other (younger) brothers who distribute tracts and pamphlets in Arabic and Hebrew at market places and in the streets. There are also brothers who teach the Word of God in Bible study groups in nearby villages, one of these being Nazareth. We also had the opportunity to preach the Word of God and visit the homes in the four localities where brethren gather together to the Name of the Lord Jesus. On our arrival brother Elia Nofel picked us up at Tel Aviv and we were brought to brother Raja Giryes in Kfar Yasif. After having spent several days in the pleasant apartment above the meeting hall there, brother Nasser Shawky from Kfar Sumeia took us to Reini near Nazareth from where we drove to Kfar Sumeia. Two days later we used a bus that was hired by the brethren to go to Haifa to attend a three day conference. The conference began on the Thursday evening and continued until Lord's day afternoon and took place in a Christian hotel on mount Carmel. At the suggestion of the brethren we studied the Epistle to the Colossians in the mornings and the Second Epistle of Peter in the evenings. The Lord directed our minds to the glory of "the mystery of God" (Colossians 2:2) as well as to the decline at the "close of the days" (2 Peter 3:3). With reference to Colossians 3:1-25 the emphasis was laid on the connection between a good family life and a good assembly life. In personal conversations we talked about this connection more and we discovered how important this is irrespective of country

or culture. It was quite an experience to preach the Word together with several Arabic brothers and to experience the fellowship in this with them. On the Lord's day evening we partook in the breaking of bread in Haifa and the next day we left together with brother Makram Mesherky for Kfar Yasif. In the afternoon brother Samis Giryes who lives there drove with us to Capernaum and the sea of Tiberias so that we could visit some of Galilee. The brothers and sisters we have met greet you affectionately in the Lord, Karel Rouw Hilvert Wijnholds

Book Reviews In the Beginning, by Hugo Bouter, published by Chapter Two, price £2.95. An instructive commentary on the first eleven chapters of Genesis dealing with the Creation, the Fall of Man leading to judgment and mercy, Cain and Abel, the lines of Cain and Seth, the Flood and the Ark, Noah's failure, the curse on Canaan (not Ham), Nimrod and the Tower of Babel.

There are appendices outlining the dispensational applications of Genesis chapter one, and the New Testament references to Genesis 1:1-31; Genesis 2:1-25; Genesis 3:1-24; Genesis 4:1-26; Genesis 5:1-32; Genesis 6:1-22; Genesis 7:1-24; Genesis 8:1-22; Genesis 9:1-29; Genesis 10:1-32; Genesis 11:1-32; a surprisingly large number.

W. R. Dronsfield.

Modern Mystical Teaching and the Word of God, by F. B. Hole, price £1.50. This very useful work has been republished by Chapter Two. It is an exposure of a system which developed in a certain section of the "Brethren Movement", by an author whose acute discernment enabled him to compare and contrast these doctrines with Scripture. Although many of the errors dealt with are subtle, F. B. Hole has demonstrated their nature clearly so that the average reader can easily grasp the issues involved. The book is a timely warning in the present day, so that all can recognise such tendencies when or if they occur. Also it will help those who have been forced out of this system by its later excesses, to discern the root of the matter, and consequently judge and separate from every remnant of it.

W. R. Dronsfield.

Unity and Authority, by W. R. Dronsfield, published by Chapter Two, price £1.30. This booklet is a short, concise and yet comprehensive account of the principles of Unity and Authority of Scripture; simple truths stated clearly, the value of which should become apparent to every reader. The booklet is only 24 pages and can easily be read in one go or over two or three coffee breaks. The booklet is encouraging and even when touching upon a couple of sad events in the Christian testimony during the past two hundred years, does not dwell on the sad details as found in more weighty tomes. It is divided into a number of sections as follows:

(1). The Holy Spirit Gathers; outlines the work of the Holy Spirit in awakening an interest in the Authority of Scripture as the sole guide for believers.

(2). The Enemy Scatters; provides a simple synopsis of the rise of independency amongst the gatherings in the last century. This was one of the early attacks of Satan against the truths of Unity and the Authority of Scripture.

(3). The Body of Christ and the Unity of the Spirit; outlines the truth of the assembly as the body of Christ; that Christ is the head of the One body and that all living saints are members of that One body. Our responsibility is to live and act according to that truth as we gather together locally. The

unity of the body is maintained by the Holy Spirit (the Spirit of Truth and Holiness) and our part is to keep what is established.

(4). Authority in the assembly; covers the issues of apostles, their delegates, the fact that it is the Holy Spirit who appoints elders and the establishment of elders today. Appointment is not by man!

(5). The house of God; covers its scope, the believer's position and the resultant implication for a holy walk.

(6). Ecclesiasticism Develops; covers the rise of this error during the late 1800's amongst some brethren, but clearly differentiates from valid individual or collective exercise which endeavours to serve and not lord over the saints of God.

(7). Conclusion; reminds saints of the current outward weakness; our responsibility to gather with those that hold the principles found in Scripture — not where we can necessarily have a good and easy time, to be found obedient even when the going gets tough and to value the privilege of meeting to remember our Lord week by week. This booklet is certainly a challenge to everyone who seeks to be true to the Lord.

D. P. Pulman.

Vol 02 - Truth & Testimony Vol. 2, No. 2, 1993.

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Psalms 119:1-176

INTRODUCTION This is the longest of all the 150 Psalms and perhaps for that reason the 176 verses are seldom or never read completely, either in public or in private study. This is a great loss. Although the name of the author and the date of this unique Psalm are not given, God is breathing throughout each precious verse, which regrettably to many only seem repetitions. This Psalm shows us the various virtues and aspects of the Word of God and that it can meet our every need and situation.

SOME PRELIMINARY REMARKS In some translations a letter of the Hebrew alphabet is printed at the head of each section of eight verses: “Aleph” (verses 1-8); “Beth” (verses 9-16); “Gimel” (verses 17-24); “Daleth” (verses25-32), etc. The eight verses of each section all begin with the letter that is set at the head of the section. For instance, verses 1-8 all begin with the letter Aleph; verses 9-16 all begin with the letter Beth; verses 17-24 all begin with the letter Gimel and verses 25-32 all begin with the letter Daleth. Furthermore, the meaning of the letter at the head of each section is often the dominant theme of that section. For instance, the section from verse 1 to verse 8 with the letter Aleph at its head, which signifies an ox in the service of man, gives us a type of the perfect Servant, Christ. The section from verse 9 to verse 16 with the letter Beth at its head, which means a house with foundations, suggests that which is fundamental for the Christian’s life. The section from verse 17 to verse 24 with the letter Gimel at its head, which means Camel, suggests a wilderness scene through which the camel passes, though having sufficient resources for its journey. It portrays believers as they pass through this wilderness world, having adequate resources in the Word of God. The section from verse 25 to verse 32 with the letter Daleth at its head, which means a door, suggests the theme “The entrance of Thy words giveth light”, etc. (Psalms 119:130). The composition of this Psalm is therefore in the form of a perfect and regular alphabetic acrostic of 22 sections, corresponding to the 22 letters of the Hebrew alphabet. Each section is of eight verses. There are eight other acrostic Psalms: a. Psalms 9:1-20; Psalms 10:1-18. The alphabet runs through the two Psalms. Psalms 9:1-20 has the first half of the letters and Psalms 10:1-18 gives the remaining letters but with some omissions. The acrostic is therefore incomplete. b. Psalms 25:1-22. The twenty-two verses begin with the twenty-two letters of the Hebrew alphabet, but not in order. c. Psalms 34:1-22. This is a complete acrostic but for one letter only (verse 22). d. Psalms 37:1-40. This is a complete acrostic. e. Psalms 111:1-10; Psalms 112:1-10. These are complete acrostics. f. Psalms 145:1-21. This is a complete acrostic but for one letter only.

There are two more examples of the acrostic device, apart from the Psalms. In the book of Proverbs, chapter 31, the twenty-two verses describing the virtuous woman all begin respectively with the letters of the Hebrew alphabet (verses 10-31). Lastly, in the book of Lamentations the arrangement is similar to that of Psalms 119:1-176.

Perhaps the acrostic device was intended to help the memory. No doubt the reader will find it so. It may be asked, “Why 22 sections of 8 verses precisely?” Here I quote from W.G.Scroggie: “The word EIGHT, in the Hebrew, is sh’moneh, from shaman which means ’to make fat’, ’to super abound’. SEVEN is enough, but EIGHT is more than enough, 7 plus 1; it goes beyond seven and is the beginning of a new series, era, or order. EIGHT is the first ’cubic’ number and is more than a square, which is represented by four. It is the number of resurrection. Christ rose from the dead on ’the first day of the week’, which was the EIGHTH day, Saturday being the SEVENTH of the Jewish week. The ’superabundance beyond completion’ is shown in Psalms 119:1-176 in respect of the Law of the Lord, the Word of God, in twenty-two stanzas of EIGHT verses each; each verse a couplet, so that, as to lines, each stanza is EIGHT multiplied by two. Nothing could more perfectly display the fertility, fatness and fulness of the Word and will of God”

INTERESTING FEATURES As a diamond has different FACETS reflecting the light striking upon it in different colours, so bringing out its beauty, this Psalm also shows different facets of the Word of the Law of God. One can distinguish 9 of these facets here:

1. Verse 1: TOH-RAH = Law. The root meaning of the word is to teach or instruct. It occurs 25 times in the Psalm and is always in the singular (never “laws”). See verses 1, 18, 29, 34, 44, 51, 53, 55, 61, 70, 72, 77, 85, 92, 97, 109, 113, 126, 136, 142, 150, 153, 163, 165 and 174. It has the meaning of teaching, guiding, directing, instructing. It is a divine instruction with regard to conduct and character.

2. Verse 2: EDUTH = Testimonies. It is a revelation or a revealed psalm. It occurs 9 times in verses 14, 31, 36, 88, 99, 111, 129, 144 and 157, in the singular. The word EDAH = Precept and occurs 14 times in verses 2, 22, 24, 46, 59, 79, 95, 119, 125, 138, 146, 152, 167 and 168, in the plural. It means a testimony, or a reiteration, an attestation or witness, a constant witness to Jehovah’s will.

3. Verse 4: PIK-KOO-DEEM = Precepts (or Commandments). It occurs 21 times in verses 4, 15, 27, 40, 45, 56, 63, 69, 78, 87, 93, 94, 100, 104, 110, 128, 134, 141, 159, 168 and 173 (always in the plural). It means a charge given to us by God for which we are responsible, “to place in trust”, or “to take oversight”.

4. Verse 5: CHUQQIM = Statute. This is sometimes translated a “portion” (as for the priests in Genesis 47:22) and on one occasion “task” (Exodus 5:14). The word occurs 22 times in verses 5, 8, 12, 16, 23, 26, 33, 48, 54, 64, 68, 71, 80, 83, 112, 117, 118, 124, 135, 145, 155 and 171. It comes from the root to cut into, to hack, and hence to engrave, to carve. See Job 13:27 that might be translated “around the roots of my feet hast Thou dug up (the ground)”, or “hast made a trench, so that I cannot go on”, 1:e. “hast stopped up my way”. Thou hast marked out to my feet how far they shall go. It has the idea of that which is established, or definite; an appointed portion of food, or task; a definite limit, as in Job 26:10, Proverbs 8:29; an appointed law, statute or ordinance. It is therefore a divine direction for my obedience, or to arrest disobedience. It stimulates obedience. It is the Law as a permanent record of God’s will.

5. Verse 6: MITZ-VAH = Commandments (plural). It occurs 22 times. See verses 6, 10, 19, 21, 32, 35, 47, 48, 60, 66, 73, 86, 96, 98, 115, 127, 131, 143, 151, 166, 172 and 176. It comes from the root to command and has the idea of prohibit too. It is a divine imperative decree. Examples of this

are that God forbade Adam from eating of the tree and told Noah to build the ark. It is a command imposed by God's absolute authority. It shows us the requirement of His will.

6. Verse 7: MISH-PAHT = Judgment. The word occurs 23 times in verses 7, 13, 20, 30, 39, 43, 52, 62, 75, 84, 91, 102, 106, 108, 120, 121, 132, 137, 149, 156, 160, 164 and 175. It means the sentence of a judge and is especially used of a sentence by which a penalty is inflicted. It is therefore a judicial sentence, a decision the Lord makes.

7. Verse 9: DAH-VAHR = a Word ("debir"). This word occurs 24 times in verses 9, 16, 17, 25, 28, 42 (twice), 43, 49, 57, 65, 74, 81, 89, 101, 105, 107, 114, 130, 139, 147, 160, 161 and 169. It is similar in meaning to the Greek word "LOGOS". It means the "articulation of God's will to men". It is the spoken word, like the "oracles of God" in 1 Peter 4:10-11. See also Genesis 44:18. Some say it is derived from the word "Dabar" that means "to arrange in a row" or "to set forth in speech". The Ten Commandments are also called the "TEN WORDS" or "DECA-LOGUE". It is therefore a communicating medium of the revealed will of God.

8. Verse 11: IMRAH = a Saying (Arabic:"AMR"= a thing). It is a word, a speech, or else a sacred hymn or poem (Psalms 17:6). It is also something communicated orally. The words by which a revelation is imparted. It occurs 19 times in verses 11, 38, 41, 50, 58, 67, 76, 82, 103, 116, 123, 133, 140, 148, 154, 158, 162, 170 and 172.

9. Verse 1: DEREK = the Way. It has the meaning of walking, of going and hence a journey that any one takes; a way, a path in which one goes (Arabic: Tariq or Sabil), a mode or course. It is also "a road as trodden", a mode of life, a course of action marked out by God's Law. It occurs 13 times in verses 1, 3, 5, 14, 26, 27, 29, 30, 32, 33, 37, 59 and 168.

It is interesting that in only three verses is there no direct reference to the Law or any of its synonyms: these verses are 90, 122 and 132. Another interesting fact is that the Name Jehovah occurs 22 times, though not necessarily in each of the 22 sections (Some expositors count 24 times). The Psalmist refers to himself 325 times. We might almost say that this Psalm is too individualistic simply to represent the nation of Israel. To this I shall refer later. One expositor has counted 70 prayer requests in this Psalm and encourages the reader to list them. Every verse in section five is a prayer.

WHAT OTHERS SAY ABOUT Psalms 119:1-176

All who want themes for soul or service can find them here; for it may be said that every verse embodies a seed-thought.

It is a divine alphabet of love.

It is a paradise of all doctrine.

It is the school of the truth.

It is the ABC of the Christian's praise.

It seems not to need an expositor, but only a reader and listener. The Psalm rehearses the various virtues of the Word of God and the saints' delight and profit therein. Any believer may generally use it as the breathing of his own soul; but in its full prophetic character, it would seem that it will

be the language of the true Israel on their return to God and His long neglected oracles (J.G.B.).

Psalms 119:1-176 is the expression of the effect of the law written in the heart of Israel, when they had long erred from God's ways and were sorrowing under the effects of it. We see thus that the "form" of this Psalm cannot apply to the Christian. But from the general principle we may learn much, as that which is wrought in the heart as regards its moral disposition (J.N.D.).

Purity of "heart" is not so much in question as purity of "walk". That is, there is everywhere present the evidence of a faith which, when the grace of God is known in truth, purifies the heart of the believer; but the soul has not yet had revealed to it an object to which it can look in peaceful forgetfulness of itself. The darkness still continues, and the true light is wished for rather than enjoyed. It is very manifestly the expression of one who discerned in his inner man the excellent perfection of the law, and whose whole heart, therefore, was set on its attempted fulfilment. The zeal of Jehovah, as that which marks distinctively the spiritual man, is plainly visible through every expression of human weakness and stress with which the Psalm abounds (A.Pridham). That this great Psalm has its many blessed thoughts and exhortations for the individual believer is indeed very true. The 176 verses are all precious gems and many find an echo in the heart of a true believer (A.C.Gaebelein).

C.Bruins.

(To be continued, if the Lord will). A Welcome Judgment

Judgment is inescapable. God's Word declares with absolute decision "We must all be manifested before the judgment seat of the Christ, that each may receive the things done in the body, according to those he has done, whether it be good or evil" (2 Corinthians 5:10). Some may not believe this, but their unbelief will not exempt them. In the case of unbelievers the judgment seat of Christ will be the great white throne (Revelation 20:11-15). The Christ they refuse will be their judge. They may think death is the end, but "all that are in the graves shall hear His voice, and shall come forth" (John 5:28-29). Their bodies raised, they will receive their judgment in their bodies, for what they have done in their bodies. The very fact of standing before the Son of God will fill people with terror and the results will fill them with horror. Since they will be judged according to their works they will be consigned to the lake of fire to suffer torment day and night for ever and ever. How dreadfully unwelcome, yet inescapable a judgment for those who have refused the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ! For the believer, how infinitely different! Through trusting Christ as His Saviour he has been saved by the pure grace of God and personally is promised that he will not come into judgment, but is passed from death to life (John 5:24). Yet he too will be manifested at the judgment seat of Christ. For the believer the judgment seat will be in heaven, however. Though he may die, which means that his spirit and soul will leave his body, the body possibly completely decaying, yet at the coming of the Lord Jesus (the Rapture) his body will be reunited with his spirit and soul, and he will be raised and caught up to be with the Lord. Php 3:21 tells us that at that time He will "transform our body of humiliation into conformity to His body of glory". All the effects of sin will be totally done away and we will be manifested at the judgment seat of Christ in bodies like His. Will that judgment be welcome? Absolutely so! For it will not be the judgment of our persons. It will rather be a manifestation of everything concerning us, a review of our entire lives. Certainly it will be most serious, for the Lord cannot carelessly pass over anything. Though we will not be judged, our works will be. In this the Lord will certainly be

absolutely fair and impartial. Would we want Him to be otherwise? Our acceptance in Him has already been perfectly settled before this takes place and there is no reason for the believer to have the least fear of this solemn event. In fact, when it takes place we shall be thankful for it to the depths of our souls.

What will it involve? 1 Corinthians 3:11-15 tells us, “For other foundation can no man lay besides that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now if any one build upon this foundation, gold, silver, precious stones, wood, grass, straw, the work of each shall be made manifest; for the day shall declare it, because it is revealed in fire; and the fire shall try the work of each what it is. If the work of anyone which he has built upon the foundation shall abide, he shall receive a reward. If the work of anyone shall be consumed, he shall suffer loss, but he shall be saved, but so as through the fire”.

Believers build on the true foundation, but their work in building is to be tried. Gold, silver, precious stones, will endure the fire, in fact will be enabled by the fire to shine in clearer lustre. The gold speaks of the glory of God. What has been done for His glory will receive a reward. Silver speaks of the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. What has been done out of appreciation for His sacrifice will receive a reward. Precious stones speak of the fruit of the spirit reflected in the believer and this too will receive a reward. It is therefore actually the work of God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit that accomplishes in the believer the works that are precious to God; yet the believer receives the reward for them! For God delights to see a ready response in His people to the reality of His divine workmanship. The work itself will be rewarded, the Lord discerning in perfection the motives that have been active in every detail of these things. This is a matter that should deeply exercise us now, that we should keep our hearts with all diligence, being careful to have our motives honourable and honest as before the eyes of a holy God. If we live daily as manifested to God, we shall not fear to have our motives challenged or exposed. We know that too often our motives are mixed, but if we desire to be self-judged, then we shall be most thankful at the judgment seat of Christ to have everything exposed as it really is and those things that were not actually of value burned up. In regard to wood, grass and straw, it is not a matter of their being wicked, but of their inability to endure the fire. In other words, they represent things that were not positively for the Lord, however lawful in themselves they might have been.

Many have questioned as to whether this will be public for all believers, or whether the judgment will be of a private character between the Lord and themselves. The Lord’s dealings with Peter furnish us with clear instruction as to this matter. What was personally between Himself and Peter He dealt with personally on the day of His resurrection, when we are told, “The Lord is risen indeed, and hath appeared to Simon” (Luke 24:34). No one else heard a word of this interview. Yet before the disciples too the Lord spoke to Peter, for they were involved in measure in this matter and the Lord’s words were intended to re-establish confidence among them (John 21:15-22).

Therefore, what has been private will certainly be dealt with privately: what has been public will require public dealing; and as we know well, all will be done in a perfectly gracious and wise way, such a way as will encourage the deepest respect for His own great love and grace, as well as confirming the bonds of pure love and fellowship among the saints of God. We will heartily join with Him in judging that in ourselves that was not truly for Him; and none will have the least judgmental attitude toward another.

Though it will be solemn to think of our unprofitable works being burned up, we shall be thankful to see the end of them. Then the Lord will have the deepest joy in rewarding every work that has been truly for Himself. Whatever form the rewards will take, we shall be more than satisfied with this, but will it not mean most to us to simply hear the words from His own lips, “Well done, good and faithful servant?”. His own approval is surely the sweetest reward we could desire. Envy will be totally absent at that time. We shall all rejoice in seeing other believers rewarded just as fully as we shall rejoice in whatever reward the Lord may be able to give to us. Certainly we shall feel the fact of our own shortcomings and failures, just as John “wept much” when no man was found worthy to open the book of judgment; but as John’s tears were stopped by the sight of the lamb in the midst of the throne, so our regrets will be far overshadowed by the contemplation of Him (Revelation 5:4). To myself it appears that the superlative thing about the judgment seat of Christ for the believer is that it will serve to bring out in the fullest, most precious way the marvellous wonder of the grace of God. Then we shall see as never before how that pure grace has ordered all our pathway on earth, how it has borne with our many weaknesses, failures and sins, how it has led us eventually to repentance and faith in the Lord Jesus, how it has kept and preserved us from innumerable evils, how it has moulded us in a way that we had never expected, how it has provided for our every need and finally how it has dealt so gently and faithfully in summing up our history at that coming day. Is not this wonderfully welcome? Let every believer anticipate the judgment seat of Christ with glad expectation and in the meantime live with this in view, as manifested to God and in lowly self judgment learning of and responding to the grace of His beloved Son.

L.M.Grant Eternal Punishment

What does Scripture say concerning the nature of eternal punishment? Christians who take the Bible seriously believe in the everlasting nature of eternal punishment. However awful it may sound, punishment in hell is without end. The Bible also clearly outlines the characteristics of eternal punishment. Those who advocate the doctrine of Universalism detract from the meaning of eternal punishment as regards both its length and content. They state, for example: “It is not literal punishment about which Scripture teaches. Rather it describes hell simply in a metaphorical sense, since it uses words such as fire, worm and darkness, which are only images and should not be taken literally. Where there is fire, there cannot be darkness at the same time”. Nevertheless, Scripture speaks of three things to bring the nature of eternal punishment before us: unquenchable fire, the worm that does not die and outer darkness . We will consider each of these characteristics in turn.

Everlasting Fire

There are several names used for this: “the furnace of fire” (Matthew 13:42; Matthew 13:50; cf.Rev.9:2), “everlasting fire” (Matthew 18:8), “hell,..the fire unquenchable” (Mark 9:43). The everlasting fire of hell (Gehenna), the lake of fire, is prepared for the devil and his angels (Matthew 25:41; cf. Revelation 20:10). The fact that it will not only be angels but also people who will be cast into this unquenchable fire — eternally in the company of the fallen prince of angels — will be because, during their life here on earth, they didn’t turn away from the prince and god of this age who blinded their minds (2 Corinthians 4:4). This first picture describes how the godless will be tortured by the everlasting fire of judgment. Fire is a symbol of the wrath of God, who is called “a

consuming fire" and the "everlasting burnings" (Deuteronomy 4:24; Deuteronomy 9:3; Isaiah 33:14; Hebrews 12:29). It is questionable, though, whether we should be thinking here of the personal attribute of God, rather than its outward expression that will strike the godless through all eternity. Indeed, are we able to imagine the "lake of fire"? This is also called "the lake of fire and brimstone", which perhaps suggests that this picture is partially derived from the judgment of Sodom and Gomorrah, when God rained down brimstone and fire out of the heavens (Genesis 19:24 ff.; cf. also the word "furnace" in verse 28).

Although it is right to say that Scripture uses figurative language to describe the reality of heaven and hell, this does not in any way alter the fact that we are dealing with the literal existence of real places and things. These pictures are borrowed from our earthly reality in order to give us some understanding of another, supernatural, reality. For example, the name Gehenna (hell) was derived from the valley of the son of Hinnom, (InHebrew "Ge-Hinnom"), near Jerusalem, where children were burned as sacrifices to Molech and where, after Josiah's reforms, all sorts of rubbish was collected and burned (2 Kings 23:10; 2 Chronicles 28:3; 2 Chronicles 33:6; Jeremiah 32:35). The Place Where The Worm Dieth Not

Hell is also the place where the worm does not die. A comparison with Isaiah 66:24 and Acts 12:23 shows that this indicates the decomposition process of a corpse in the grave. This process started with Herod even when he was still alive, being a judgment of God because of his pride. He was eaten by worms and died. Whereas the decomposition process in the grave normally comes to an end, this is not the case in the second death. In hell their worm (singular!) does not die and the fire is not quenched(Mark 9:48). This is often given a spiritual meaning, being connected with the never ending remorse of the lost. The gnawing of the worm would then refer to their being consumed by remorse and, or, fear, in the agonies suffered. Since the expression "their worm" is in the singular, it would be easy to identify the worm with the individual conscience. Although this is a very plausible explanation, one might object that it seems to ignore the "consuming" of the body. If we consider that after the end of the reign of Christ the lost will be raised and judged and then cast into the second death with spirit, soul and body (Revelation 20:5; Revelation 20:11 ff.), this suggests that even the body will be subject there to an endless destruction, to a never ending "decomposition process". The lost themselves are referred to as "the dead", and will be assigned to the realm that is called "the second death". Here everything is marked by death; death has power over the "dead". According to Revelation 20:1-15, this second and ultimate death is "the lake of fire". The realm of death, where the worm does not die, is therefore a place of torment in a physical sense too. This idea is confirmed by the words of the Lord Himself, "And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear Him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell"(Matthew 10:28). The Outer Darkness The third picture given is that of the outer darkness, where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth (Matthew 8:12; Matthew 22:13; Matthew 25:30; 2 Peter 2:17; Jude 1:13). This picture too is taken from the earthly reality. Inside the banquet hall there is joy and light, but outside it is night and those who are there do not share in the joy of those inside. This picture depicts the sharp contrast with the atmosphere of joy and light in the house of the Lord, in His kingdom. For this is the banquet hall where the wedding feast is held and where fellowship with God is enjoyed, who is light and in whom is no darkness at all (1 John 1:5). The unbelievers have been removed from this realm of light and love. Just like the foolish virgins, they are out in the darkness, faced by a closed door (Matthew 25:10 ff.), and just

like Judas, they have gone out into the night (John 13:30). They are separated from God forever and live on in darkness, far from His kindly face. In this place of outer darkness there is not even one ray of light to be seen and there is neither hope nor expectation anymore. There is only an impenetrable darkness. It is a place of weeping, of eternal grief. There is also gnashing of teeth. This may refer not only to remorse, but also to anger; an eternal rebellion against God. Weeping and gnashing of teeth are certainly characteristics both of the outer darkness and of the furnace of fire (Matthew 13:42; Matthew 13:50). This clearly indicates that the two pictures, that of the fire as well as that of the darkness, are about the same terrifying reality.

Though shocking, it is beneficial to ponder these things, since it helps us to realise to some degree how much the Lord is to be feared (2 Corinthians 5:11), and this awareness prompts us to persuade others. As has already been mentioned, this third picture of eternal punishment raises the question of how the outer darkness can be combined with the unquenchable fire of the first picture. Fire spreads light and where fire burns it cannot be pitch dark. However, we are not to draw any conclusions from the physical reality around us and apply them to supernatural realities that lie beyond our understanding. On the other hand we should certainly take the concepts indicated by these pictures seriously, for example, not limiting darkness to something like “moral darkness”. Scripture clearly uses these seemingly contradictory pictures in order to give us an impression, from different points of view, of the seriousness of eternal punishment.

Luke 16:1-31

Luke 16:1-31 speaks of the state of those who have died, from the time that they die until the resurrection. When the rich man is in torment in Hades he says “I am tormented in this flame” (verse24). He was in the fire, but we don’t read anything here about darkness or the outer darkness. The torment he was suffering didn’t impair his sight, for he looked up and saw Abraham afar off and Lazarus in his bosom (verse 23). Thus he was even allowed to catch a glimpse of the place where the blessed were: Abraham’s bosom, 1:e., the place of the father of all believers and therefore also the place of his “children”. This refutes the theory that this story is merely about the difference between the rich and the poor. It really portrays the difference between believers and unbelievers, as well as the consequences of that difference. Of course, we are told that Lazarus was poor and the other was rich. A person such as Lazarus who is a real “child”, a follower of the believing Abraham, will inherit the heavenly blessing that is granted to him on the basis of faith (cf. Romans 4:1-25). Since the death of Christ the place to which deceased believers depart is called paradise (Luke 23:43). The focus moves from Abraham to Christ Himself: “Today shalt thou be with Me in paradise”. For there, of course, He is the central figure for all those who belong to Him, whom He has bought at the price of His precious blood.

Although the rich man was separated from God for ever, he was still able to see. What was the nature of this “sight”? Did he simply see the brilliance of the heavenly reality from out of his surrounding darkness? This may be a point of difference between the interim state (the state of the deceased between death and resurrection) and the eternal state, as well as with the difference between Hades (the underworld) and Gehenna (hell). Gehenna, the ultimate place of torment, is without doubt the place of outer darkness. From there, any communication with the heavenly reality, a glorious reality of light and life, will be impossible.

Another possible answer to our question is that the rich man was allowed a glimpse of “Abraham’s bosom” as an exception. Luke 16:1-31 does not mention the “darkness” that reigns in the place of ultimate torment, but this does not necessarily mean that there is no darkness in Hades at all. It seems quite improbable that it is a normal privilege of the dead to communicate with the heavenly reality. Indeed, what would be the purpose of this? Might this communication have been allowed in order to confront the lost still on earth with the seriousness of their position as seen against the background of the joy in heaven? Perhaps we cannot say anything with certainty about this, though we can consider these things in the light of Scripture and compare Scripture with Scripture. We should, however, be careful about drawing human conclusions solely on the basis of Luke 16:1-31. The most important thing, in any case, is the warning nature of this story for those who are still living on earth and whose eternal destiny might not yet have been decided. Our state after death is described here in such a way that we can take these things to heart in time and obey the call of God coming to us through His Word. For the rich man’s family this was “Moses and the prophets”, whereas we now have access to the completed Word of God. In the verses in Matthew’s Gospel that speak about both the outer darkness and the furnace of fire (chapters 13 and 25), we find that the lost will be cast there immediately after the establishment of the Kingdom. However, in Revelation 20:1-15 we read that they will be cast into the lake of fire only after the completion of the Millennium and the last judgment before the great white throne. Here no difference is made between the interim state and the eternal state, at least with respect to the severity and the nature of the agony in both states being equal (just as the heavenly joy of the interim state will not differ in nature from that of the eternal state: immediately after his decease the Christian is with Christ, and that is what determines his joy).

What a blessing it is to know that true Christians have already been transferred spiritually from the realm of death and darkness into the Kingdom of the Son of God’s love. They are able to live and walk in the light that will shine upon them through all eternity. With the second coming of Christ they will enjoy the fullness of salvation; then their bodies will also be snatched from the power of death. At the same time it remains a solemn matter for those who do not yet believe and who have not responded to God’s call, to seriously consider the realities of heaven and hell and of eternal punishment. As a poem puts it, “Where, for eternity, will you stay? — Serious question of our day”.

H. Bouter Jr. From Our Archive A Gospel Preaching (Delivered at Pembroke Street Hall, London, on Lord’s Day September 8th, 1880).

“The burden of Dumah. He calleth to me out of Seir, Watchman, what of the night? Watchman, what of the night? The watchman said, The morning cometh, and also the night: if ye will inquire, inquire ye: return, come” (Isaiah 21:11-12).

There is a solemn future, beloved friends, before every individual present here this evening. Were it not for that future and all that hangs upon it, there would be no need for the preaching of the gospel and there would be less need for earnest and affectionate entreaties and appeals. But when I look abroad upon this congregation, I see and feel too, that there is a solemn, individual future, for everyone that is here tonight. There is the morning and the night. There is the morning of joy and the night of grief. The question may be asked scornfully, or it may be asked seriously, “Watchman, what of the night?”. But the brief and pregnant reply is “The morning cometh”; a morning of peculiar brightness, but also a night of deep darkness, a night of terrible darkness.

Well, dearly beloved friends, in plain language, is it, should it ever be, a question of any difficulty as to decision on this point? Do you hesitate to decide? Do you hesitate to make up your mind as to which your future is to be, a morning of joy, or a night of weeping? It must be the one or the other. There is no middle place, no middle condition. Both are absolutely perfect in character. It will be perfect blessedness and, in that sense, perfect misery. Now tell me, do you hesitate for a moment?

I think there is something so inviting in all we read of, in all that we can think of and contemplate in a morning of peculiar joy, a morning of unusual brightness, a morning without clouds, clouds being the symbol of trouble. But it will be a morning without clouds, all shadows shall have fled away for ever. There will be no shadows that morning and the Sun in its full brightness will never be overshadowed with a cloud. O beloved friends, what a morning that will be. It will be like “clear shining after rain”, all so sweet, all so fragrant: I mean as to the moral atmosphere. The atmosphere we now breathe, both physically and morally, is polluted. We have no pure thoughts, no pure feelings, because of the impure atmosphere which we breathe, but there the atmosphere will be so pure, so unsullied, that there will be no foolish thoughts, no vain desires, no wandering minds, no vagrant hearts. O no, and I think there is something in this that is peculiarly charming to one’s mind as to that morning of joy. You sometimes sit down and perhaps your purpose is to meditate most closely on the things of God; perhaps something connected with your standing in Christ or that state which should suit that standing. But in a moment, suddenly you find yourself on the mountains of vanity, your thoughts all wandering and that is a great trouble, a distress to one’s mind. There will be no such wanderings there, no such “comings and goings”. O no, not only will everything connected with our own state and everything as to our enjoyment be perfect, but the moral atmosphere we breathe will be absolutely pure and wholly unsullied as to the presence of God in which we will be. That is the morning that is coming for every believer. This is the believer’s expectation. He is living, if he is in a right state of mind, in the daily expectation of this. He feeds upon it as he goes along. Hence, “patience and longsuffering” are to be “with joyfulness”. Why? As the apostle says, “Strengthened with all might, according to His glorious power, unto all patience and longsuffering” — with what? “With joyfulness”. Why? Because when you are going through your trial you are sustained with the bright hope of a glorious future and you rejoice in trial. But nothing else would make a person rejoice in these and, hence, the apostle’s word would be inconsistent if we do not know this to be speaking to persons in deep affliction. He says, but ye are “Strengthened with all might, according to His glorious power”, or, according to the power of the Man in the glory, “unto all patience and longsuffering with joyfulness”. Why? Because you are looking on to that bright morning. O beloved, it will be a morning not only of celestial brightness in itself; not only will the moral atmosphere be pure and unsullied, but whom shall we see there? We shall see then that Blessed One whom we read of now. What, see the very face of Jesus? You would like to see His very face, would you not? That countenance transcendent, not then as it was seen on earth in the days of His humiliation, so marred more than any man. What will that radiant smile, what will the beams of that countenance transcendent, be when you first fix your eyes on that Blessed One to whom you have looked for so many years with faith. We see Jesus now, but we see Him through a glass darkly. The dim glass will then be removed and we shall see Him face to face. But what will His smile be? A recompense for all that we have passed through. The eye once resting on Jesus will rest on Him forever and the heart will be ravished with love. We shall see Jesus, beloved, on that bright, bright, morning. That will be the brightest part of that bright

scene; the happiest and the central blessing of all that region of glory clustering round the Person of the Lord. What will it then be? That is the morning of coming joy. You will see Jesus. Who else will you see? You will see all the ransomed of the Lord. What a thought. You will see His blood bought ones of every age, of every tongue, of every country. Ah yes and what will that be to see that myriad host who have been made perfect through His one sacrifice; and everyone reflecting His bright image; everyone radiant in His glory; everyone shining in His excellence; and yet, each one retaining their perfect identity. Sometimes it grieves me that I forget your names. Sometimes it grieves me that I forget where I last saw you. Many know me more distinctly than I know them. This is natural enough, but I sometimes say I shall make no mistakes in Heaven. I shall be at no loss to identify you. My dearly beloved, I shall be at no loss to remember you. All will be perfect; nothing imperfect in any shape or way but all absolute perfection and perfection for ever and ever. But that perfection will tend, you see, to the purest happiness of that happy land. You would like to go to that happy land, would you not? You would like to pass through those golden gates, would you not? Once pass through the golden gates, once enter the fields of glory, and there will be no more going out. Then it will be farewell to pain, and farewell to all that is now so inconvenient. It will all have passed away in the full revelation of God in Christ. Ah yes, the morning cometh, the bright morning of cloudless joy. Yes, you will see Jesus and you will see all the ransomed of the Lord. You will see those too, beloved friends, that you knew here and many that you loved here. Yes, and many with whom you had to part here. But there will be no more parting for ever. Beloved friends, when hand once clasps hand there it is joined for ever and ever. When friend embraces friend there, it is an embrace for ever. The thought of separation will never disturb one single bosom in that place of unmingled blessedness, but hand will join hand, every eye being fixed on Jesus. But that, beloved friends, will not hinder us from seeing, and delighting too in seeing, those we once loved here and whose place in the heart never was and never could be filled. But it is filled now, it is quieted now. Then, beloved, the praise will only be linked. The note of praise and thanksgiving will only swell louder and louder as we meet those whose identity we have no difficulty in recognising. But there is such a change. Not the pallid cheek now; no, all is changed. They are in the very image of Christ, and yet, beloved friends, though radiant in His glory they are perfectly themselves. You will not be me and I will not be you. Each one will be identical in their own special identity, and in their own measure of glory. Ah beloved, we will be all alike, with the exception that there will be just the difference that there is now, though under another form. We have borne the image of the earthly and we are all like the first Adam. So the redeemed will be like the second Adam. Dearly beloved, who can tell how near that morning of joy may be. But there is another part of my text that says “The morning cometh, and also the night”. Ah yes, dearly beloved, the night cometh, and what a night. A night that will never be succeeded by the dawn of a fresh day. Its gloom will never be cheered by the twinkle of one solitary star. Its eternal darkness will never, never, be visited by one silver beam of the moon travelling through the heavens. No moon, no star, no ray of light will ever penetrate the terrible darkness of that night, that night which will have no relief whatever, that night which will have no hope of a morning coming. No, it is night, night, night; always only dark, dreary, terrible and swarming with unhappy souls, and O, what will it be to be there?

How long will this last? For ever and ever. Now tell me, for a few years of your own natural indulgences, whatever they may be, a few years of indecision, a little more of the world, a little more of your own way, a little more of your own pleasures, beloved friends, would you risk an

eternity of unmingled misery? Ah, beloved, what would the world be for that? What would its fashions be as a comfort to recollect? What would its pleasures be to think of then? Only to give vehemence to the flames and vitality to the worm that never dies. That is all. It will have no other effect: “These were my snares and delusions which Satan used to put me under, to keep me from being decided for Christ. I thought of trusting Him; I intended to trust Him; I intended to come to Him over and over again, but something said no, not tonight, not tonight”. Beloved friends, the Word of God says, and the bright morning and the dark night that are coming say, to-night, or never. To-morrow may never come for you and hell’s gates may be flung wide open, rolling back on their infernal hinges, to make way for those who may this very night be rejecting Christ in their hearts, saying, “I am not quite prepared yet to surrender all, dress, fashion, friends, associations, engagements. A thousand things now engage me, but by and by I shall be more free and by and by I shall break these off one by one and then I will trust the Lord”. Ah, beloved, it is tonight or never. You know not what to-morrow may bring. What do you or I know of to-morrow? There are no to-morrows in the gospel. Tell me now whether there is anything worthy of a single thought compared with being decided for Christ?

What are you to do tonight? Just what I am always telling you to do. Surely, beloved, I would not like that any who are hearing me tonight should ever find themselves in that night of impenetrable, endless, darkness. God forbid. Well, what are you to do? Christ has died in the stead of sinners. He has shed His blood to wash their sins away. He has finished the whole work of redemption. He has risen from the dead. He has gone up on high as the mighty Workman and taken His seat there. There is nothing more to be done. No, beloved friends, and there is not a finger in the universe to touch the work of Christ and there is not a tongue in the universe to add to its value. “It is finished”. Well, what then? What is finished? The work that saves you and me. But then how am I saved by that work that was finished more than eighteen hundred years ago? Why, simply by believing that it is finished. There is no other way. If you believe where you sit that the blessed Lord Jesus in the greatness of His love came down and saw our lost condition and died in our stead and shed His precious blood to wash our sins away; if we believe that He so loved us to do this and trust not to any of our own doings, but trust to that finished work, we are saved on the spot. Ah yes, dearly beloved, there is no other way of being saved.

How long does it take to light the gas? You merely turn on the gas and apply the light. It is done in a moment. It is not a gradual work. One candle may light a hundred candles and be nothing the worse for it. It does not lose its own light because it communicates light to others. And so, beloved friends, with the gospel. The gospel is never impaired and there is never any change in the reality of these things. The gospel is always absolutely perfect and absolutely suited to every sinner and suited at every moment. Which will you have? I do not doubt for a moment that if I asked you which you would like to be looking forward to, the morning of joy or the night of weeping, you would say “O, It is the morning of joy”. Then I say, “now tell me, whether you will have Christ or the world tonight?” I believe that if I were to ask many persons in London tonight, now, whether you would rather remain in this world, or go to heaven tonight, they would say “I would rather remain in this world”. That shows where their heart is.

But, beloved friends, ask those who are full of the expectation of the bright morning and how they would answer in a different way. They are just waiting to hear the voice which says, “Come up hither”. There is no other preparation. It is a great and wondrous future, full of richest and deepest

blessings, but there is no other preparation than this. It is not a preparation, you see, by your own doings in any way whatever. Prayer is a good thing, but prayer will never save you. Reading your Bible is a good thing, but reading the Bible will never save you. But the moment you go to Jesus, the moment you look to Jesus, the moment your heart is turned to Jesus the Saviour, saying, “Now I see I am lost and ruined and I will be in the darkness of that terrible night unless I come to Christ; unless Christ saves my soul I will be in the night of darkness for ever and ever”, He will save you.

Well then, you come to Him. But you come to Him as one that cannot do without Him. You come to Him as one that will be lost in hell for ever without Him. You come to Him as one that is in despair without Him and hence, beloved friends, the moment you come to Him you are saved on the spot. Why? Because the work that saves you is done and all that you need is to believe it. All that you need is to put your trust in Him. That is the whole thing. There is no other thing. You cannot do anything. But then, of course, if you believe this work and come to Christ, not only are you saved, but you are born again. You have eternal life, and this life manifests itself in all the desires and instincts of this new life. “As newborn babes”, the apostle says, you “desire the sincere milk of the Word”, that you “may grow thereby”. You are new creatures in Christ Jesus. What then? Your desires, your instincts, your aspirations, are all different. Why? Because you have got eternal life and the Holy Spirit, and that is what makes the difference. But the first thing is, and that which gives salvation to the soul is, simply looking to Jesus. It is “Look unto Me”. It is not “Turn over a new leaf in your history”; it is “Look unto Me”. It is not “Go to your closet and pray”; it is “Look unto Me”. Then what? “And be ye saved”. Hence you will see, beloved friends, it is where you sit this very night, and just as you are at this very moment, that you can be saved. In what condition do you think Christ died for you? Why, Christ died for you just as you are. Christ did not die for people in a certain state of soul. He died for those that are lost. Who are lost? Why, beloved friends, there are no degrees in being lost. There are degrees in sins, degrees in wickedness, but there are no degrees in being lost. “You hath He quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins”. There are no degrees in death. No, beloved friends, and there it is if you will only believe.

It is very, I was going to say strange and even peculiar, that Sunday night after Sunday night you have got some kind of excuse. I ask are you happy and you answer “Well, I cannot say that I am, but I think I believe”. But If you believe you must be happy. Everyone that believes is happy. The question is, what do you believe? “Well, I believe in Jesus”. Well, what do you believe in Jesus? “Oh, I believe He died for us”. Well, I want something more, what more do you believe? Do you believe that Jesus died for you? Do you believe that Jesus died for your sins on the cross? Do you believe that Jesus has put all your sins away by His own precious blood? Do you believe that? Unless you believe that you believe nothing to the point. It is no good saying “I believe in Jesus” and “I believe He died on the cross and that He died for us all”. Do you believe He died for you individually and personally; you, as if you were the only sinner in the vast universe. This is to make it a personal thing to us. Do you believe that Jesus died on the cross for you? Do you believe that Jesus by His blood put all your sins away; beloved friends, not that He will put them away, but that He has put them away? The blood of Jesus Christ God’s Son cleanseth us from all sin.

Now you will see that that is just where the heart through Satan’s subtlety is probably timid. They are afraid to confess faith in Christ less they may not speak the truth. They say “Oh, I do not doubt Jesus, but I doubt myself”. Well, you may well doubt yourself. There is no good in yourself. You

are as bad as you can be. “In me, (that is, in my flesh), dwelleth no good thing”, says the apostle Paul. Why should you doubt yourself? There is not one good thing in poor fallen human nature. From the day that Satan dropped the poison of unbelief into the hearts of Adam and Eve there has not been a good thing in the human heart, I mean God-ward. From the day that Adam and Eve were poisoned by the Serpent there has not been a good thing in your heart or mine. Well then, why do you doubt your heart? There is no good in doubting it, is there? Do you doubt Christ? No? Well, what do you doubt?

O then, beloved friends, be firm, be decided, do not waver. O, but then there is an eye, perhaps, that is looking back over the shoulder to the world. There is an eye that is throwing a sideways glance to some association: “I cannot break with that friend. I know he does not like me to be decided for Christ. He is not decided himself and he does not like me to be decided and he does not like to hear me speak so much about the gospel”. Ah, there it is. But, dearly beloved friends, what is all this, or what are the present associations of men and women in the world, compared with an eternity in hell? It is either eternity in the brightest heavens, or an eternity in the blackest hell. I do not believe that there will be a blacker corner in hell than the corner that those who reject the gospel so preached will be hurled into. It is a rejection of a clear, full, simple gospel. A rejection of a light that makes manifest to the most simple understanding what then will be. Are you decided tonight? Which is it to be, the morning of cloudless joy, or the night of eternal darkness? I know what you would say, of course, but say it to the Lord now. “O Lord Jesus that died for me, the chief of sinners, save me now”. Ah yes, beloved, say it believing and you will please Him well. Who ministered the sweetest cordial to the blessed Jesus in His last hour of heaviest sorrow? It was the poor thief that repented on the cross, and turned to the Lord and said “Lord, remember me when Thou comest into Thy Kingdom”. That was the cordial that refreshed the heart of Jesus. That was the wine that softened His lips. parched in death. Who was it that provided the feast for Jesus in the house of Simon? Was it the princely Pharisee? No, it was the poor fallen one from the street that ventured in in faith, and bathed His feet with her tears and wiped them with the hairs of her head. She was the one that provided the feast and on those tears and those kisses the Saviour found His full repast. Nothing more is said about Simon’s dinner.

O, beloved friends, how delightful to think that you will please Him well tonight. Young man, come snap the very last link that binds thee to this world in any shape or form. O, young man, break away from every snare that would fetter thy soul and bind thee to Satan’s chariot wheel, for, surely, he will drag thee down through the mire and down to his own den of woe. That is what he will do. I call Christianity the noblest thing that a young man can embrace. It gives companionship with the living God. It gives acquaintance with the truth through faith, which knows a thousand times more than all the philosophers of the world. While philosophers are puzzling their heads as to creation, the poor humble believer can say by faith that “the worlds were framed by the Word of God”. Why should you puzzle your mind about this atom, where it has come from and who made the first atom? It is the poor unlettered Christian whose faith can say, “I can tell you all about creation. The worlds were framed by the Word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear. It was God that did it all”. Faith rests in the Living God while men of science are struggling and striving in the dark, and perplexing themselves to discover the root and the cause of things. Hence, there is nothing so noble as Christianity, because it elevates and purifies the soul, lifting it above the grovelling things of time and sense. Hence you will see,

beloved friends, it would be very invidious in me to single out what men of science and men of high position and education in this worlds esteem stoop to. No, beloved, but it is the soul that knows Jesus that is one with Christ and walks in companionship with Him. Hence you will see too, that which I want of you in view of this future which is before each one of us. O what a blessed thing, beloved friends, to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ now.

A. Miller (1810-1883).

(To be continued, if the Lord will). The Old in the New Explained Isaiah 9:1-2; Matthew 4:15-16

“The land of Zebulon, and the land of Nephthalim, by the way of the sea, beyond Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles; The people which sat in darkness saw great light: and to them which sat in the region and shadow of death, light is sprung up”. When the Lord Jesus Christ had completed His public ministry the prince (ruler) of this world came, but had nothing in Him (John 14:30). So it had been in the beginning, just before He entered upon His ministry. In the wilderness the devil had used his weaponry, but against the sinless, holy, Son of God all had been unavailing. “And the devil, having completed every temptation, departed from Him for a time” (Luke 4:13). In the parable the strong man is the tempter, but the Lord Jesus was a stronger than he (Luke 11:21-22. cf.Matt.12:29 and Mark 3:27). He bound him by overcoming him in the time of testing, and having done so would spoil his goods. The imprisonment of John marked the beginning of the Lord’s public ministry (Matthew 4:12; Matthew 4:17). The light of the candle1 was to give place to the light of the world (John 5:35; John 8:12; John 9:5). Where was this light to shine? Old Testament Scripture had answered the question long before. It was to shine among those despised by the Jews2 as a people who lived where Gentiles lived and where spiritual darkness and death prevailed (Matthew 4:15-16). As an example of this we may note that demon possession was commonplace in this region (See Mark 1:29-34; Mark 6:7; Mark 6:12-13; Luke 8:1-3. Mary Magdalene was of Magdala, a town near the west coast of the Sea of Galilee). The first recorded instance of a case in the New Testament was in the very synagogue at Capernaum (Mark 1:21-28; Luke 4:33-37). Yet it is striking that in each place where the parable of the strong man is referred to the Scripture speaks of the Lord casting out demons3 (Matthew 12:22-29; Mark 3:22-27; Luke 11:14-22). The power of darkness was there but in Christ the greater power of the Kingdom of God was also present (Colossians 1:13; Matthew 12:28). In order that the Kingdom might be introduced in that form so often described in the Old Testament the repentance of the people was necessary. This the Lord Jesus called for, as John the Baptist had before Him (Matthew 4:17; Matthew 3:2). This repentance involved a turning from darkness to light and from the power of Satan unto God4. In Isaiah 9:1-21 reference is made to the affliction of this northern part of Israel by the Assyrian5 (Isaiah 9:1; Isaiah 7:1-9; 2 Kings 15:22-30). Although previously humbled in this way, Galilee was to be honoured by the shining there of great light6. Matthew 4:1-25 shows that this was fulfilled by the manifestation and ministry of Messiah. In verse 3 the prophet passes from Messiah’s first advent to His second, without noticing His rejection by the Nation or events occurring in that period. At the time of His second coming the larger part of the Nation will again be given up to the power of darkness. Demon possession will once more be commonplace (Isaiah 8:19-22; Matthew 12:43-45; Luke 11:24-26).

Nevertheless there will be a small but faithful remnant (Isaiah 8:11-18; Isaiah 8:20). When Messiah appears among them this remnant will triumph over their enemies (Malachi 3:1 b; Isaiah

59:20; Joel 3:16; Zechariah 14:1-5; Zechariah 14:14). Isaiah 9:1-21 verse 4 likens them to the few who were with Gideon who overcame the host of Midian (Judges 6:33; Judges 7:19-22). These judgments will introduce the millennial reign of Christ. Isaiah 9:1-21 verses 6 and 7 celebrate His glorious Person and government. As Christians we are privileged to live in the light of the glory of Christ and to submit to His rule in the present time, while He is still rejected by the Nation.

R.F.W.

1In the King James translation the first word for light in John 5:35 is elsewhere translated candle. cf. Matthew 5:15.

2That is, those of Jerusalem and Judaea.

3It is a solemn thing that while the Gospels record no case of demon possession in Jerusalem or Judaea, it was there that the monstrous charge was made that the Lord was demon possessed (John 7:14-20; John 8:48-59; John 10:19-23).

4See Acts 26:17-18 where Paul's preaching among the Gentiles is referred to.

5The Assyrian is one of the prominent subjects in the section of Isaiah from chapter 7:1 to chapter 9:7. See Ch.7:16-25; 8:3-8 and 9:1.

6Mr. W. Kelly translates the passage "For the gloom is not to be to her that was in anguish. At first He degraded the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali; but later He honoured, the way of the sea, beyond Jordan, Galilee of the nations. The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light: they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them the light hath shone". A number of translators are in broad agreement with this rendering. This seems more easily understood than the King James or J.N.D. translations, though the author of this article has no knowledge of the original Hebrew. The Life of David (4) David a man of integrity Psalms 26:1-12; Psalms 78:70-72 :1 Kings 9:4 David the Shepherd

David, the youngest son in the family of Jesse the Bethlehemite, was a shepherd. His father had given him a charge to look after a flock of sheep. David's integrity, his uprightness, is manifested by the way in which he met his responsibilities as a youth. He was feeding the sheep when Samuel told Jesse to send for him (1 Samuel 16:11). His father's statement showed the confidence he had in David. After David was anointed king of Israel he returned to his shepherd duties. He was called from them to attend upon Saul, the rejected king of Israel (1 Samuel 16:14-23). When Saul was engaged in fighting the Philistines, three sons of Jesse followed Saul to the battle. David returned to attend to his fathers' sheep (1 Samuel 17:15). He was conscientious in fulfilling his responsibilities. When day after day Goliath laid down his challenge to the armies of Israel, David was commanded by his father to take provisions to his brethren. His care and concern for the sheep were expressed by making sure that the sheep had a keeper to look after them. His alacrity in rising early to do this and to obey his father was ample evidence of his upright and honest character. When eventually he offered to fight Goliath, Saul compared the young man David with the warrior. David answered Saul by telling the king of his courage in defending a lamb from the rapacity of a lion and a bear. He had been willing to risk his life to prevent the lamb from being devoured. His charge was performed with conscientious care, concern and courage. As a youth David was marked by integrity. No doubt his early training as a shepherd prepared him for

greater responsibility in leading Israel, the flock of God. His example is worth remembering. Our youthful days are the formative ones. Lessons learned in youth abide through life. Faithfulness and integrity in youth prepare for greater responsibilities.

How would you feel if you had a strong exercise to serve God in a particular way and He said “no” and indicated that someone else would do the job that you wanted to do? The flesh in us would rebel and express bitter disappointment. Perhaps we would say “if I can’t serve in the way I desire I won’t serve at all”. David wasn’t a man like that. He was honest with God and marked by integrity of thought. He happily accepted God’s will. His exercise was a noble one. He wanted to build a house for God. No doubt the tabernacle was getting the worse for wear after so many years of use. David felt that a solid and substantial house was more fitting for God than the deteriorating tabernacle. We wouldn’t fault his earnest exercise. Nevertheless God had other thoughts. David had been a man of war and his hands were stained with the blood of his enemies (1 Chronicles 22:7-10). His son, Solomon, a man of peace ruling over a kingdom at rest, was chosen to build God’s house. It is to David’s credit and an evidence of his integrity that he accepted God’s will without demur or protest. The large quantity of materials that he accumulated for his son to enable Solomon to build the temple was proof of his integrity. It didn’t matter to David who built the temple as long as it was built. His exercise didn’t stop because he wasn’t the instrument God used. His integrity of purpose was seen in his acceptance of God’s will. What a lesson we have here in David! Are we only interested in what we are doing? Do we stop praying for an exercise because we have not been chosen to take a leading part in it? Do we rejoice when others are being blessed by the Lord in services we would like to have been involved in? If not chosen to serve do we refuse to support by prayer, presence and purse? These are challenging questions. When God chooses His servants He knows what He is doing. A careful study of the Acts of the Apostles will show how servants are chosen and the reasons why they are chosen (Acts 1:23-26; Acts 6:3-6; Acts 9:15-16; Acts 13:1-3).

Integrity in Confession When Adam and Eve sinned in the garden of Eden they made aprons of fig leaves to cover their nakedness. Their eyes were opened to see their naked condition and they tried in vain to hide it. Nothing escapes the eye of God. Since then man, whether saved or unsaved, would rather make excuses or blame someone else than confess the evil and disobedience. With such attitudes God can have nothing to do. He will not tolerate any attempt to “cover up”

David, great man of God though he was, succumbed to an evil desire. That desire led him to commit adultery, to act in deceit and to seek the death of an upright soldier in his army (2 Samuel 11:1-27; 2 Samuel 12:1-31). Perhaps he thought that because he was the king of Israel his fault would be condoned. He reckoned without God. “But the thing that David had done was evil in the sight of Jehovah” (2 Samuel 11:27). David was not allowed to live with the secret of his evil unjudged. God sent Nathan the prophet to David with God’s condemnation of his evil. It is to David’s credit that he did not seek to justify his evil conduct or tell lies about it. He said “I have sinned against Jehovah” (2 Samuel 12:13). He kept short accounts with God.

David wrote two Psalms in which his innermost feelings are expressed, Psalms 32:1-11 and Psalms 51:1-19. Psalms 32:1-11 seems to express David’s joy in being forgiven. His conscience had been deeply stirred (verse 3 and 4). When he decided to keep silence no longer and to

confess his sins without any cover up he rejoiced in God's forgiveness. This Psalm expresses David's relief. In Psalms 51:1-19 there is a much deeper exercise. David is thinking about his sin in relation to God. It wasn't how his sin affected himself or what others thought about his sin. He was deeply concerned that he had sinned against God. "Against Thee, Thee only, have I sinned, and done what is evil in Thy sight" (verse 4). The sin of adultery with Bathsheba; the sin of arranging Uriah's death; the sin of deceit arranged with Joab; all these sins were sins against Jehovah. David, a man of integrity, confessed his sins without any attempt to hide or excuse them. Integrity is honesty and uprightness. Integrity operating where there has been failure leads to forthright and honest confession. When self is paramount evasion and excuses will take over. When God is before the conscience honest confession will be the result. While David had to suffer the consequences of his sin in his household he personally knew the joy of forgiveness. "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, Thou wilt not despise" (verse17). It is a bad example to hide sin and evade confession. It is worse to treat sin as if it doesn't matter to God or to the public testimony. God grant that we may maintain short accounts with Him and have tender consciences.

Integrity in Accepting that One's Usefulness has Come to an End. 2 Samuel 21:15-17.

David was a man of war and a very valiant and successful warrior. His many conquests proved his encourage, boldness and heroism. No one, having read of the many battles in which he was involved, could doubt that David was a redoubtable man of war. But age takes its toll and there came a time when David's strength gave out. He was exhausted and was in great danger of being slain by the enemy. However, help was at hand and his life was spared. That experience brought David's exploits as a warrior to an end. His fighting days were over.

We don't read of David protesting against the decision of his men. Apparently he knew that their decision was a correct one. His honesty and uprightness in integrity enabled him to assess his position and to agree that his fighting days had come to an end. There was no disgrace in David's feeling the weight of his years. The long years of hardship, worry and battle, had taken their toll. He would retire with honour.

Moses, another man of God, had to make way for Joshua, according to God's ordering. Elijah gives place to Elisha and Paul, after his prodigious service, is happy to relinquish his service in the knowledge that Timothy was well endowed to continue the testimony that Paul had rendered.

It is a fatal mistake for believers to retain a service when it is obvious to all concerned that their ability to serve has ended. Old age often brings diminished ability to discern and to act with spiritual intelligence. Honesty and uprightness would make way for those who have ability and energy and are faithful Integrity in Stewardship

David prepared enormous amounts of gold, silver, brass and iron and other materials for the building of the temple. Not only did he gather this from his victories in war and from many in Israel but he gave generously from his own resources (1 Chronicles 29:3). Without doubt David in his integrity exercised honest and upright stewardship. In his preparations there was no thought of personal gain. No one would be able to say that David became rich through gathering materials together for the building of the temple. His integrity preserved him as he walked in it before God and men. The Bible shows how the greed for money led to many sad failures. No wonder Paul

said that “the love of money is the root of every evil” (1 Timothy 6:10). No such charge of greed could be laid at the door of Moses, Nehemiah or Paul (Numbers 16:15; Nehemiah 5:14-19; Acts 20:33-35). They served God for the honour of such a privilege. Their ministry could not be faulted because of any greed, gluttony or selfishness on their part. They kept themselves pure. The Lord Jesus said “Ye cannot serve God and mammon” Also, “If therefore ye have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the true riches” (Luke 16:11-13). Integrity in stewardship, whether in ones own affairs, in business or in relation to assembly funds, is a most important matter. The Lord looks over more than one treasury.

Integrity in Shepherd Service. Psalms 78:70-72

David the shepherd boy who served his father in faithful integrity became the shepherd king of Israel who served God in relation to His people. His natural love for sheep was transferred to God’s people and in integrity of heart he fed them and led them with skill and faithfulness. The dark background of the failure of Israel’s shepherds, as presented in Ezekiel 34:1-31, will serve to throw into bright focus the care of David for Israel, the flock of God. The evil shepherds fed themselves but didn’t feed the flock. They didn’t strengthen the weak or care for the sick and those who were injured were not treated. The scattered ones were not gathered, the lost were not sought and the sheep were handled with harshness and rigour. This was a sad condition indeed. No such charge could be brought against David. He was prepared to venture his life in battle with Goliath and by defeating him he liberated God’s people from fear (1 Samuel 17:45-47). He was a gathering point for the distressed and discontented in Israel (1 Samuel 22:1-2). He provided safety for those fleeing from Saul. With David there was no fear of the enemy succeeding (1 Samuel 22:23). David recovered all (1 Samuel 30:18). He delivered the captives of Israel out of the hands of the Amalekites and gave a portion from the spoil to those who had been too exhausted to follow David. He fed the weak and recovered the lost. He brought the lame Mephibosheth to his table and fed him royally (2 Samuel 9:1-13). On a day of rejoicing he fed Israel and blessed them (2 Samuel 6:18-19). He avenged the insult given to some of Israel’s sheep (2 Samuel 10:4-19). David was prepared to suffer from the hand of God because of his pride in numbering the people. He had the heart of a shepherd. To feed is to satisfy, to maintain, to protect and to provide. David did all these things for Israel. He unified Israel and Judah. He conquered Israel’s enemies. He secured peace which made Israel prosperous and strong. By any standards David was a great man. The Christian assembly requires great hearted shepherds. John 21:15-17 tells us how Peter the apostle was commissioned to be a shepherd of Christ’s flock. Not the shepherd but one among many. Peter in turn exhorts believers to shepherd the flock of God (1 Peter 5:1-2). Paul, an outstanding shepherd himself, exhorted the Ephesian elders to shepherd the assembly of God (Acts 20:28). This is a most important and necessary function among believers. A shepherd requires love for the flock, skill in attending to its needs and patience to keep up the work.

F. Wallace (Further articles in this series are to follow, as the Lord provides) News from the Field THE REPUBLIC OF PERU Area 1,285,000 sq. km. Population 20,000,000.

Capital: Lima, population 5,750,000. Official Languages: Spanish and Quechua. In all there are 86 languages.

Bible Translations: 1 Bible, 19 N T’s and 24 Scripture Portions.

After a number of years in Colombia, Mr and Mrs William J. Poehner settled in Peru in 1955 where they found the door wide open for preaching the glad tidings. A brother from Germany, Franz Skambraks, who had spent many years near Trujillo on a plantation, was used in blessing to many believers in Peru. There are over 20 localities where saints gather to the Lord's Name. Christian literature in Spanish and in particular the Good Seed calendar has been much used and blessed.

Between 23 October and 10 November last year three brothers visited Peru, two from Argentina and one from Switzerland, Jean Marc Andre, who writes: This year it was with Pierre Chevalley from Buenos Aires and Jorge Arakelian from Monte Grande (Buenos Aires) that we travelled to Peru. It is a country much ruined by guerrilla warfare and touched by many difficulties. A chronic drought has also affected a large part of the country. In spite of adversities and privations we were encouraged to meet brethren who were occupied with the Lord. Their dependence upon Him and thankful spirit for His care was a real lesson for us. My two travelling companions stayed for the first three days in Lima to visit and encourage the saints in the assembly there. I went directly to Trujillo — a town situated 600km. to the north of Lima. In this area there are six gatherings and the new meeting hall in the town centre already needs to be enlarged! In El Porvenir de Gran Chimu there are about 100 souls and it is now impossible to continue meeting in a brother's house. If the Lord permit they would like to build a suitable hall on some ground they have bought. In Chiclayo we met for the annual conference. Around 80 brothers representing nearly all the different meetings were present. During the four days of study we were occupied with subjects such as the doctrine of the Trinity, the liberty of the Spirit, discipline in the assembly and admission to the Lord's table. The evenings were devoted to presenting various aspects of the Christian life in a more precise way. On the Lord's day, after the breaking of bread, the gospel was also preached.

There are always new people being introduced and one is surprised by the diligent attention of the hearers. This year four Indian brothers came from the Amazonian forest. They have a deep desire to know more about the Word of God and the precious privileges of gathering only to the Name of the Lord Jesus. These brothers left the conference with a heavy load of Bibles, calendars, books and tracts in Spanish. (In their own tongue they possess only the New Testament). After a journey by lorry our friends had a walk of several days through the jungle. Upon their return they intended to gather the believers from the different villages and tell what they had seen and heard at the Chiclayo conference. Our brother Tarrilla has with some other brothers visited these children of God on two previous occasions. The burden of the Peruvian brethren is to visit them again and serve these Indian believers with as they call it "the holy doctrine".

There were also 3 days of meetings in El Porvenir de Aramango in Amazonia, about 400 km. from the coast. We also stayed for meetings in Bagua and El Muyo. The brothers and sisters are particularly grateful for the help from abroad in the form of printed ministry and other help for present urgent necessities. Our brother Jean Marc is engaged in full time Spanish literature ministry from Switzerland from where he sends to all the Hispanic lands. Spanish must be rated as the most widely spoken language after English. A full inventory of Spanish books published by our brother is kept by the Chapter Two foreign language department. A catalogue listing over 40 languages is available on request.

Other pictures used are those of an abyss and a prison (Luke 8:31; Romans 10:7; 1 Peter 3:19-20; Revelation 9:1-2; Revelation 9:11; Revelation 11:7; Revelation 17:8; Revelation 20:1; Revelation

20:3 cf. verse 7. The Greek words are abyssus and phulakee (1 Peter 3:19). The word in 2 Peter 2:4 translated “hell” in the King James translation and “the deepest pit of gloom” in the J.N.D.translation is the Greek word tartarus. This is the only place where it occurs in the New Testament. It is a term used by heathen writers for the “deepest abyss of the infernal regions”. However, these are mainly references to the punishment in an interim state; of the deceased unbelievers, of angels who have sinned and are kept until the judgment of the great day, and of Satan himself during the millennium. According to Vine’s Expository Dictionary the abyss (abyssus) or “bottomless pit” is a description of an immeasurable depth, the underworld, the depths of sheol. In Romans 10:6-7 the abyss is contrasted with heaven, the present dwelling place of the exalted Christ. The Greek name Gehenna occurs twelve times in the New Testament (Matthew 5:22; Matthew 5:29-30; Matthew 10:28; Matthew 18:9; Matthew 23:15; Matthew 23:33; Mark 9:43; Mark 9:45; Mark 9:47; Luke 12:5; James 3:6). It is translated “hell” on each occasion in both the King James and J.N.D. translations. The Greek word hades occurs ten times in the New Testament (Matthew 11:23; Matthew 16:18; Luke 10:15; Luke 16:23; Acts 2:27; Acts 2:31; Revelation 1:18; Revelation 6:8; Revelation 20:13-14). In the King James translation it is rendered “hell” on each occasion and the J.N.D. translation gives “hades” throughout. Some manuscripts have “hades” in 1 Corinthians 15:55 “Ograve, where is thy victory”(K.J. translation).

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Vol 02 - Truth & Testimony Vol. 2, No. 3, 1993.

Truth & Testimony Vol. 2, No. 3, 1993. The following article is the first part of an address that was given some years ago on the book of Job. The attention of one of the editors was drawn to it and we gladly reproduce it here with our brother's kind permission. It has only been necessary to edit the material lightly.

Job (1) (Job 1:1; Job 1:6-22; Job 2:1-13; Job 19:23-27; Job 42:1-6).

"Ye have heard of the patience of Job, and have seen the end of the Lord; that the Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy." (James 5:11) The theme I have before me is the lesson, I think this one great lesson, of the book of Job, and it is epitamised in these two phrases from James chapter five: the patience of Job and the end of the Lord. I am convinced that the saints should frequently return again to pour over this unique book which deals in the most fundamental way with the sufferings of the saints. It doesn't by any means tell the whole story. It doesn't say anything at all about the wonderful change that the coming of the Saviour and His death and resurrection has made. The principles of godliness never change. There is nothing dispensational inherently about the principles of godliness. The book of Psalms is a great textbook of godliness, and the suffering of the saints is a very important aspect of godliness. There is suffering connected with our possessions. There are all kinds of disappointments which might be disappointments that are really in the line of godliness. Disappointments relative to our progress in earthly things, or our plans in earthly things in which we have sought the guidance and the blessing of God. When these are suddenly cut off there is a disappointment and there are many who are feeling sorrow of this kind relative to earthly things. There is the sorrow of bereavement and amongst the saints there will be those who have recently experienced bereavement and some who years and years afterwards haven't lost the pain that came to them when their loved one or loved ones were suddenly taken away. There is the suffering of bodily pain. There are many believers who are living day by day with pain. Pain is something that is never very far from us. Now the message of God regarding the suffering of the saints is something which is the same for every kind of pain. These are exactly the things that Job suffered and we can easily see the divine wisdom that selected these three things to be representative of the whole range of human suffering. Firstly, the sudden loss of all his possessions. Then the total loss of his family and then there was the terrible bodily pain that he suffered.

Job was a saint who must have lived somewhere in the patriarchal times, because of the length of his life perhaps towards the end of the patriarchal times. In the first chapter of the book we find that he was a man "perfect and upright, and one that feared God, and eschewed evil" (Job 1:1). We may say that none of us is perfect but it isn't just that kind of perfection that the Holy Scripture means when it talks about a man being perfect, even in the Old Testament. It means a man of integrity. When a believer's path is set in the way of obedience to God, that is an integrity. When a man of godly integrity sins it doesn't destroy his integrity because he goes to God in confession and self judgment as David did, who in spite of his sins was a man after God's heart. Job was a

man of integrity in that sense of the word. There are other indications that Job was a saint in another sense, because he was a man of faith. When his trial began to be bitterly felt and expressed by him he said “Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him” (Job 13:15). He was a man who in spite of his suffering was entirely in subjection to the will of God. He complained that he didn’t understand, he complained that he wanted to know the reason, he even thought that God was unjust to him, but he didn’t give up his integrity, his devotion to God. Perhaps the clearest pointer to his being a saint is his confession in chapter nineteen when he says with the words driven out of him by his sufferings “Oh that my words were now written! Oh that they were printed in a book! That they were graven with an iron pen and lead in the rock for ever! For I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that He shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: And though, after my skin, worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God: Whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another; though my reins be consumed within me” (Job 19:23-27). The only way to knowledge in a matter like this is faith in the testimony of God. We have no idea how the testimony of these truths came to Job, but they did come to him and he believed them. When he said “I know that my Redeemer liveth” it was a rudimentary statement about his knowledge of the Saviour who was then to come, but it is a very wonderful one. He might have said “the Redeemer liveth” but in this difficult passage there is nothing more certain than the personal pronoun “my”. We can see that there was not the slightest question of a doubt regarding his future. It was the present that was Job’s trouble and it might be like that with us. We are quite certain of our future but O how sufferings can distress us at the present time. Job knew of his own link with his Redeemer by the use of the pronoun “my”. Job knew that he himself was going to see Him. There has been a great deal of learned argument and discussion about the very difficult question of the text and translation at this point. I sometimes think that perhaps the translators always make out a sentence to be a perfectly grammatical whole and wonder why we cannot see here a succession of sobs. “My Redeemer liveth.....He shall stand at last upon the earth.....after my skin.....destroy this body.....in my flesh I shall see God”. Though you miss out the intervening words the certainty is as clear as ever. Job is going to see God in resurrection and this has been the hope of the righteous from the dawn of history. We may rejoice that although our knowledge of the Saviour is so much fuller than Job’s was and there has been brought to us the fulness of the truth that surrounds Him where He is at the right hand of God in heavenly glory, yet in the end Job’s faith was such that he was brought through to a true prosperity. In coming back to read the book of Job there are two things that have struck me very strongly. The first is that right to the very end of the book Job never knew about that interview between God and Satan that began it all. Job wanted to understand and in the end he was given the understanding that was necessary, “....now mine eye seeth Thee. Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes” (Job 42:5-6). The real origin of the calamities that came upon him he never knew. Neither is there any promise that we shall know the origins of the distresses that come upon us. The purpose of them we might know but when you read the story it is a staggering fact that Job never knew that it was all started by God when Satan came into His presence among the sons of God. The other very striking thing is when, in the end, all the cloud of words had died away and Jehovah answers Job out of the whirlwind. What will He say? How will He explain the things that Job’s friends have failed to explain? How will He complete the explanations that were begun by Elihu? He didn’t do it! Not one word of explanation of Himself did God utter. Not one word to answer the questions that Job had asked. His words were entirely concerned with the things of this earth and nature. The Lord spoke

of the inanimate things, the sea and the earth and the storm, and then the animate things, the beasts and the birds. Then, right at the end, He speaks about Leviathan. There was not one word of a spiritual kind but the presence of God was in the word and it brought Job to know himself. That was the end of the Lord, to bring Job through to true prosperity by realising the presence of the Lord. The real problem for Job had been that although he was a saint, although he could say “I know that my Redeemer liveth” he was not really habituated to the effect of the presence of God. Think of statements made in Old Testament days by those who realised the presence of God. Isaiah: “....Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts” (Isaiah 6:5). Think of Elijah and the still small voice and the voice that said to him “What doest thou here, Elijah?” (1 Kings 19:13). In the presence of God he realised that he had to condemn himself and get back to the work that God had given him to do. We have so many examples and Job is one of the clearest.

There is a great desire amongst us to read the works of the brethren and I am fully in support of this, but there is one almost ceaselessly mentioned matter in those writings and that is self judgment. Earlier writers knew self judgment, to take every sentence of the Word of God as it comes to us and to use it to judge ourselves. Think of what the Lord Jesus Christ said to those who had come to be His disciples, “....let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me” (Matthew 16:24; Mark 8:34). It is not simply confessing that I have done wrong. It is judging self. It is only when we’ve come to do that that we’ve come to respond as we ought to respond to the high and deep truth that has come to us. Only in doing this will we be kept by the Word of God in those paths of humility, righteousness and response to Him that are pleasing to God.

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(To be continued, if the Lord will).

Divine Care (1) God’s Care. 1 Peter 5:7 In this article and those that are to follow, God willing, I would like to look into this wonderful subject. In this issue of the magazine God’s care is considered, while in future issues, space permitting, we may consider the care of the Father (Matthew 6:19-34), the care of the Son and the Holy Spirit (Luke 10:30-37), the care of an apostle (2 Corinthians 11:16-28), the care of Timothy (Php 2:19-21), and the mutual care that the members of the body of Christ should have for one another (1 Corinthians 12:25).

We know that the believers to whom Peter was writing were suffering. The word suffering is used in connection with them ten times in the epistle1 and because of these many trials they were in heaviness and distress (1 Peter 1:6). In chapter four we read of the fire of persecution that had come upon them (1 Peter 4:12). They were being persecuted by their Jewish brethren according to the flesh and by the unbelieving Gentiles. They were being persecuted by the power of Rome and it would seem from 1 Peter 2:18-20 that some were being persecuted by harsh and unreasonable employers. We can understand, therefore, how many cares they would be carrying. The first word for care in 1 Peter 5:7 signifies anxious, distracting, care. In his “Expository Dictionary of Bible Words” W.E.Vine says that it is probably connected with a word that means to draw in different directions. Who has not known something of this kind of care, this kind of anxiety? It is care that robs of quietness and sleep. The divine direction is that this care, not in part but the whole, is to be cast upon God. The reason for our doing so is then given “..for He careth for you” and here a

different word for care is used. This is care of forethought and interest. It is demonstrated throughout the epistle and a consideration of some of the references to God will show this.

We can understand why they were the objects of this care. Firstly, by the work of Christ upon the cross, these believers had been brought to God (1 Peter 3:18). They, and not their unbelieving Jewish brethren, were the true people of God (1 Peter 2:10). They were the servants of God and as such could be sure of His care for them (1 Peter 2:16; 1 Corinthians 9:9-10).

1 1 Peter 2:19-20; 1 Peter 3:14; 1 Peter 3:17; 1 Peter 4:1; 1 Peter 4:13; 1 Peter 4:15; 1 Peter 4:19; 1 Peter 5:9-10. In the King James translation the word suffering appears in 1 Peter 4:16 in italics but doesn't appear in the underlying Greek text. The word translated affliction in 1 Peter 5:9 is translated suffering on each of the other occassions where it occurs in the epistle. There are seven references to the sufferings of Christ in the epistle — 1 Peter 1:11; 1 Peter 2:21; 1 Peter 2:23; 1 Peter 3:18; 1 Peter 4:1; 1 Peter 4:13;1 Peter 5:1. This care was shown in other ways too. The Christianity into which they had been brought and in which they stood was the "true grace of God" (1 Peter 5:12). If there was the hostility of the world there was also the unchanging favour of the "God of all grace" (1 Peter 5:10). He was a faithful creator to whom they could commit themselves with confidence, whatever the extremity of their difficulties (1 Peter 4:19). He was a God who was altogether for them and they were kept by His power (1 Peter 1:5). This power had already been seen in the raising of Christ from among the dead, Christ who had died for them and for their sins (1 Peter 1:21; 1 Peter 2:21; 1 Peter 2:24; 1 Peter 3:18; 1 Peter 4:1). The resurrection of Christ and His appearing and kingdom are referred to repeatedly in the epistle2 in order that faith and hope might be stimulated.

How real and wonderful is this care. May we have an abiding sense of it in our souls till the Lord comes and everything that would give rise to anxious care is left behind.

R.F.W.

(To be continued, if the Lord will).

2In connection with the resurrection see 1 Peter 1:3; 1 Peter 1:21; 1 Peter 3:18; 1 Peter 3:22. In connection with the appearing and kingdom see 1 Peter 1:4; 1 Peter 1:7; 1 Peter 1:13; 1 Peter 4:13; 1 Peter 5:1; 1 Peter 5:4. The Life of David (5) David's Failures To write about the failures of a man of God would appear to be an unseemly and unprofitable occupation. Especially when one is very conscious of one's own many failures. However, David in his Psalms does not hide his failures. He exposes his soul to God and in so doing exposes it to his readers. David was not a hypocrite. Psalms 32:1-11; Psalms 51:1-19 are outstanding examples of David's confessions to God. There are many other Psalms which contain his expressions of regret for his failures. There can never be open confession to men before there has been sincere confession to God. In looking at David's failures as recorded in Holy Scripture we are reminded that, great man of God that he was, he was only a man of God. Therefore his experiences are valuable lessons for lesser mortals than he. If David's temptations and failures help us to recognise temptation we may be enabled to be vigilant and avoid the pitfalls that David fell into. The Failure of Faith. 1 Samuel 20:3; 1 Samuel 27:1 When God rejected Saul as king of Israel and instructed Samuel to anoint David to be king in Saul's stead it was obvious that God had a great purpose for David. But the path to the throne was not an easy one and David, after his victory over Goliath and the praise that followed the victory,

was made to feel the bitterness of opposition and hatred. After a very trying period of insult and hatred from Saul David felt that Saul would one day conquer him and kill him. No doubt he had many reasons for believing this. But were his fears faith? Had he forgotten his anointing? Had he forgotten Jonathan's belief that one day David would become king? Had he forgotten how God had enabled him to overcome the giant warrior Goliath? It would appear that he had forgotten the many testimonies to God's power and God's purpose for him. When circumstances are difficult and trials seem to be insurmountable it is easy to be discouraged, lose heart and allow faith to lapse. John the Baptist fell into this snare when he was in prison. In bright days he gave a wonderful testimony to Jesus, the on of God (John 3:27-34). But in prison he doubted (Matthew 11:2-6). Regrettably, David's failure in faith led him into circumstances that were far beneath his dignity as the Lord's anointed. To link himself to the Philistines, Israel's enemies, was a sad and degrading episode in David's career (1 Samuel 27:1-12; 1 Samuel 28:1-25; 1 Samuel 29:1-11; 1 Samuel 30:1-31). As a result he was in danger of stoning from his own people (1 Samuel 30:6). After this he strengthened himself in God and recovered his faith, courage and energy. David's faith failed but it didn't expire. The failure and recovery of the Man of God provides hope and blessing for tried believers today.

David Strengthened Himself in Jehovah His God David Enquired of Jehovah David Pursued-David Recovered All-David had Great Spoil. 1 Samuel 30:6-20 Is this story familiar to us? To most exercised Christians it will be. The initial experience of God's favour in Christ in conversion and forgiveness can suddenly end. The new nature is soon in conflict with all that the old nature delights in. The world, sin and the flesh arise as enemies to be combated and the battle experience is not pleasant. Indeed, at the outset, it seems too difficult and faith begins to fail. Help is not found in better circumstances. Help is found when the believer is made to feel his utter helplessness and turns in faith and complete dependence to God. Then there is renewed energy for the battle.

These are lessons learned from David's failure:

We are not to forget God's purpose. The enemy of our souls cannot defeat that. It is secure in Christ at God's right hand. The enjoyment of God's purpose should have a corresponding behaviour in faith. Read Romans 4:19-21.

We ought never to take a place in the world that is beneath the dignity of being a Christian.

We should remember the words of the Lord Jesus to Peter in Luke 22:31-32 "Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat: But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren." The Failure of Impetuous Anger. 1 Samuel 25:1-38

David was angry. He was furious. He and his men had been insulted by a hard and selfish man called Nabal. David and his men had protected Nabal's flocks and servants over a period of time. When David requested some help from Nabal he had shown base ingratitude for all the help and protection his interests had been given by David and his men. Nabal dismissed David's men with utter contempt. David's reaction was understandable. He ordered his men to gird on their swords and follow him. He determined to teach Nabal a salutary lesson. It was well that Nabal had a wise wife. When one of Nabal's servants told Abigail, Nabal's wife, what had happened, and that David

was on the warpath, Abigail took immediate steps to remedy the situation. To refer the matter to Nabal would have been a waste of time. Without referring to her husband she prepared a substantial supply of good food for David and his men and went to meet him before David could avenge himself on her husband. Abigail was wise. Her attitude to David was in stark contrast to her husband's behaviour. She was humble. She didn't take the credit for what she was doing. She attributed it to Jehovah. It was He who had restrained David and prevented him from shedding Nabal's blood in revenge. David had been in grave danger of violating a commandment of Jehovah, "Thou shalt not avenge thyself, nor bear any grudge against the children of thy people, but thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself" (Leviticus 19:18). David, she said, had been chosen to fight the enemies of Israel; to fight the battles of Jehovah. By this statement she had rightly inferred that he was wasting valuable time in seeking to avenge himself because of an insult from one of his own people. The Lord in His mercy had prevented David from staining his hands with the blood of an Israelite. David readily acknowledged that what he had intended doing was wrong and blessed God for His intervention through Abigail. The story ends with God's judgment against selfish and obdurate Nabal. Jehovah smote him. God's ways are always best.

There are lessons to be learned from this incident in David's life: The Bible says:

"Be not hasty in thy spirit to be vexed (angry); for vexation (anger) resteth in the bosom of fools" (Ecclesiastes 7:9).

"Fury is cruel, and anger is outrageous" (Proverbs 27:4).

"He that is soon angry dealeth foolishly" (Proverbs 14:17).

"He that is slow to anger appeaseth strife" (Proverbs 15:18).

"He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty" (Proverbs 16:32).

"The discretion of a man maketh him slow to anger" (Proverbs 19:11). The Lord Jesus said "But I say unto you, that every one that is lightly angry with his brother shall be subject to the judgment" (Matthew 5:22).

Paul said "Be angry, and do not sin; let not the sun set upon your wrath, neither give room for the devil" (Ephesians 4:26-27) and also "Let all bitterness, and heat of passion, and wrath, and clamour, and injurious language, be removed from you, with all malice; and be to one another kind, compassionate, forgiving one another, so as God also in Christ has forgiven you" (Ephesians 4:31-32. See also Colossians 3:8).

Paul's exhortation in Romans 12:19 is relevant to David's anger "Not avenging yourselves, beloved, but give place to wrath; for it is written, Vengence belongs to Me, I will recompense, saith the Lord."

It is easy to quote at length many Scriptures which warn against the sin of anger. But the flesh in David which caused his anger is the same fallen nature that all Christians possess. They can, and do, fall into the same snare. This is very sad and a dishonour to the Lord and His interests. Christians are better equipped to deal with anger than David was. They have eternal life in the Son of God and have the Holy Spirit indwelling them. He is the power which enables believers in Christ to express the new life. What hinders the new life being expressed? The flesh. It cannot bear to be

insulted or thwarted in any way. It cannot humble itself or be subject to God.

Moses was righteously angry. Not because he was insulted and offended, but because Pharaoh was obstinate in refusing God's claims upon him (Exodus 11:8). The Lord Jesus was angry, not because of opposition to Him but because of hard hearted religionists (Mark 3:5). May the Lord help us to ignore personal attacks of any kind and reserve our anger and resentment for attacks on the Person and interests of Christ. The Failure of Overlooking God's Word

It was a sad day in Israel's history when the Ark of God was captured by the Philistines. The uncircumcised enemies of Israel and God were allowed by God to defeat Israel in battle and lay their unhallowed hands on the Ark. Israel's moral condition before God was bad. The glory had departed from Israel (1 Samuel 4:1-22). But God was not defeated. The Ark had been placed in the house of Dagon, the fish god. God would not tolerate His throne (Jehovah sitteth between the cherubim — Psalms 99:1) to be placed beside an idol so He destroyed the image and brought disease and trouble among the Philistines. They were glad to be rid of the cause of their sorrow. A new cart was made and a tresspass offering of golden objects placed on it beside the Ark. Two milch kine were harnessed to the cart and it was sent into the fields of Beth-shemesh where it was received with joy. The joy turned to sorrow when some men of Beth-shemesh were slain because they looked into the Ark. Typically, we are reminded of the danger of peering into the inscrutable mystery of the Person of Christ. No one knows the Son but the Father (Matthew 11:27).

After some years elapse the Philistines, the inveterate enemies of Israel, are defeated by David, the warrior king (2 Samuel 6:1-23). David desired to have the Ark of God removed from the house of Abinadab and brought to Jerusalem. How was it to be moved? They made a new cart (2 Samuel 6:3). It is understandable that they would say "We don't want a Philistine cart, but it was a good idea and we will make a new one ourselves." The Philistine cart had been used for a burnt offering to Jehovah (1 Samuel 6:14-15). There is another possibility, not often noted, which may have had an influence upon the Israelites making a cart. In Numbers 7:1-8 the princes of Israel gave to the Levites six waggons and oxen to help the Gershonites and the Merarites in their work in relation to the Tabernacle. Notice that in verse 9 it specifically mentions the way in which the Kohathites were to carry their burdens on their shoulders. That was the due order for carrying the Ark. The Hebrew word which is translated cart and waggon is the same in each case.

Whether David was influenced by the Philistines or by the princes of Israel is immaterial. His good intentions came to ruin. Uzzah lost his life and it was evident that God was displeased with the whole affair. Was David willfully wrong? That doesn't fit in with his known character as a man after God's heart. It is just possible that he was ignorant of the due order. For a long time Israel's spiritual condition had been at a low ebb. It was beginning to emerge from the darkness and defeat of many years. And it wasn't that David was apathetic. Far from it. He wanted the Ark to be in Jerusalem for the good of the nation, not just in a private home. It is to David's credit that eventually he discovered his mistake and took steps to rectify it. David ordered the Levites to carry the Ark as God had commanded (Numbers 4:1-6; Numbers 7:9). The due order was discovered and followed. God helped those who carried the Ark. God honours those who are faithful to His Word. When the Ark was carried according to the due order worship, praise and blessing followed (1 Chronicles 15:1-29 and 1 Chronicles 16:1-43. See also Psalms 132:1-18).

What lessons can we learn from this story?

We should not be ignorant of God's Word and especially when it relates to the Person of the Son. The notions of the world (the Philistine cart) should have no place in the service of God. "For what amongst men is highly thought of is an abomination before God" (Luke 16:15). What pertains to one form of service for God (the wagons for Gershon and Merari) is not necessarily suitable for other service (the Kohathites. See Galatians 6:4; 1 Corinthians 12:5). The revealed will of God, the due order, should be followed at all cost. God is a God of order and not of confusion (1 Corinthians 14:33). God is wiser than man.

Any deviation from God's order produces confusion and spiritual death. Where God's order is followed in sincerity there will be a suitable response to God and blessing for His people.

God, by His wrath, showed to the Philistines, the men of Beth-shemesh and to David through Uzzah's death, that the Ark of the Covenant was to be revered. Typically, this reminds us of God's Centre, Christ. Where Christ is the Centre of the saints, not theoretically but sincerely and in spiritual exercise, there will be a time of response to God and blessing among the saints.

David's Serious Moral Failure. 2 Samuel 11:1-27; 2 Samuel 12:1-31

David's grievous failure in his adulterous association with Bathsheba, followed by his shameful and treacherous behaviour towards her husband Uriah, present the blackest spot in David's life. His fall was the fall of Eve in the Garden of Eden. She saw; she coveted; she took. David saw the beautiful woman; he coveted her; he invited her into his house and seduced her. When Bathsheba eventually confided to David that she was pregnant he acted in the most despicable manner towards Uriah. He arranged for Uriah to come home hoping that his love for his wife would result in David's child being attributed to Uriah. This failed because Uriah was an upright and loyal soldier. David tried to get Uriah drunk that Uriah might go to Bathsheba. That failed too. David decided on extreme measures. When Uriah returned to the battle that was being waged, Joab, David's general, was ordered to place him where the fighting was most dangerous. Joab obeyed and as David hoped and anticipated Uriah was slain. David was an accessory to murder. David, when he received news of Uriah's death, took Bathsheba for his wife after her period of mourning for her husband had been completed. All was well. Uriah was dead and Bathsheba was David's wife. But was all well? David had cunningly and heartlessly achieved his evil purposes but he had forgotten one important consideration — God! What David had done was evil in the sight of Jehovah.

Nathan the prophet was sent by God to David and by telling him a simple story of selfishness and unfeeling greed he was able to convict David of his sinful behaviour. "Thou art the man"struck right into the heart of David's conscience. David immediately confessed his awful guilt. Nathan was able to tell David that God had forgiven him but governmental consequences would result because of his gross failure. David had despised Jehovah and the enemies of Jehovah had been given an opportunity to blaspheme Him. David was to feel God's government in his own house and the child that would be born to Bathsheba would die. The sins were forgiven, but the consequences of them would follow nevertheless. This is a sordid story and has many grave lessons to teach:

Wherever we go and whatever we do Hebrews 4:13 is a good guideline "And there is not a creature unapparent before Him; but all things are naked and laid bare to His eyes, with whom we have to do." A man of God is not immune from temptation. Vigilance is necessary at all times. The lust of the eye is a feature of Satan's world (1 John 2:16). In this connection Job's statement is

important “I made a covenant with mine eyes; and how should I fix my regard upon a maid?” (Job 31:1).

Laziness in the Lord’s interests can lead to activity in sin.

Deceit, lies and hypocrisy add to sin when they are used to cover up any failure.

Such serious sin by the head of a house can have dire effects upon his family.

Failure in Discernment

David made a promise to his covenant friend Jonathan that he would endeavour to show kindness to Jonathan’s relatives (1 Samuel 20:15-17). The time came when David was able to fulfil his promise. After Saul, the king of Israel and his son Jonathan were slain on mount Gilboa it was obvious that David, God’s anointed, would become king over Israel. Jonathan had a son named Mephibosheth. He was five years old when the news came to Mephibosheth’s nurse that Saul and Jonathan had been killed. She presumed that David would avenge himself on Saul’s relatives. In her haste to protect the young boy she let him fall as she hurried away to safety. Mephibosheth became a permanent cripple because of the injuries to his legs (2 Samuel 4:4). After a few years David became the undisputed ruler over all Israel and it was laid upon his heart to fulfil his promise to Jonathan. David made enquiries to see if any of Saul’s family were alive. A relative of Saul’s, Ziba by name, informed David about Mephibosheth. David sent for him, allayed his fears and gave instructions to Ziba that all the property belonging to Saul was to be given to Mephibosheth, and Ziba and his family were to serve Mephibosheth. Ziba declared his obedience to the king’s command. Mephibosheth was given a place of honour at the king’s table where he was to eat continually. He was in fellowship with the king. We might say “so far, so good” but “uneasy lies the head that wears the crown” and David entered into a painful and humiliating experience. His son, Absalom, rebelled against him (would David remember Nathan’s message from God?) and David fled from Jerusalem. The crafty Ziba took David’s discomfiture as an opportunity to ingratiate himself with David. He took a substantial amount of food to David and misrepresented Mephibosheth to the king. He told lies about Mephibosheth. David accepted Ziba’s story and never made any enquiries as to its truth or otherwise.

David’s troubles were overcome and he was restored to his rightful place in Jerusalem. When Mephibosheth went to meet David he was in a neglected condition. He had deliberately neglected his person and clothing as a sign of mourning for the absence of the rightful king. He told David that Ziba had lied to him as well as to the king. David curtly dismissed Mephibosheth’s explanation and answered that he and Ziba should share all. David failed in enquiry and discernment and showed no appreciation of faithful Mephibosheth (2 Samuel 19:24-30). It is to David’s credit that later he spared Mephibosheth’s life (2 Samuel 21:7).

What lessons can be learned from David’s failure in this case?

If someone slanders another believer do we have the courage to say to the slanderer that we will contact the slandered person to ascertain the truth? David didn’t follow the commandment of Deuteronomy 19:15 “One witness shall not rise up against a man for any iniquity, and for any sin, in any sin that he sinneth: at the mouth of two witnesses, or at the mouth of three witnesses, shall a matter be established.” See Matthew 18:16.

Lies are destructive. They accomplish Satan's work (Titus 2:3. The word translated "false accusers" in the King James translation and "slanderers" in the J.N.D. translation is the Greek word diabolos, usually translated "devil"). Lies are usually to destroy someone that another may be exalted. "Put off falsehood" wrote Paul (Ephesians 4:25). Not only speaking lies but acting lies, which is hypocrisy. May the Lord give us a discerning spirit so that we may detect error and avoid making hasty decisions which cause sorrow and damage to souls. The Failure of Pride When God gave instructions for the numbering of the children of Israel in Exodus 30:11-16 it was for a specific purpose. It was to obtain silver for the construction of the Tabernacle. Each man from 20 years old and upward had to give a half shekel of silver. This was a heave offering to Jehovah. The rich could not give more; the poor could not give less. All the silver collected was for the service of the Tabernacle and was to be a memorial of the children of Israel before Jehovah. According to Exodus 38:25-28 the silver that was accumulated was sufficient to provide the bases for the boards of the Tabernacle, the bases for the pillars which supported the veil between the Holy Place and the Most Holy Place and the hooks and connecting rods of the pillars that surrounded the court of the Tabernacle. The numbering of the people in Exodus 30:11-16 created an exercise which provided the silver, an essential metal for the construction of God's House. The offering the children of Israel gave was acceptable to God and was an atonement for their souls. When David's desire to number the people of Israel is considered there is no motive given which indicated he was thinking about God or His interests. The fact is he was thinking about himself. His pride was active. He wanted to know the extent of his army. Joab, his general, realized David's motive and tried to persuade his king not to proceed with the numbering. David was adamant and Joab had to obey. David didn't consider Joab's objection. Sometimes when objections are raised about a wrong purpose the objections stregthen the resolve of the wrong doer. It is to David's credit that he soon saw that he was wrong and confessed it to God. But self will, although confessed and forgiven, has sad consequences. The greater the man, the more serious the sin. It is a sad story when a leader's failure creates havoc amongst the people of God. There may have been moral reasons why God used Satan to tempt David. Compare 2 Samuel 24:1 and 1 Chronicles 21:1. But David was the instigator of the failure that brought sorrow and death upon Israel. God hates pride and those who sow discord amongst brethren (Proverbs 6:16-19). David requested God to punish him for his failure but it was too late. The angel of God in devastating judgment chastised the people. Eventually the judgment was finished and blessing was secured. Burnt offerings and peace offerings were made to God and later Solomon, David's son by Bathsheba, erected the Temple on the threshing floor of Ornan the Jebusite (2 Chronicles 3:1. Typically, the judgment had to fall upon Christ before the church could be built. See Matthew 16:18; Matthew 16:21). Can we glean helpful warnings and lessons from this failure?

We should not ignore the considered advice of experienced believers.

We should examine carefully the motives that govern our actions.

We should consider carefully how others might be affected by our actions.

We should ask the question "Am I acting for God's glory or to glorify myself?"

We do well to remember Nebuchadnezzar's testimony and experience that "Those that walk in pride He is able to abase" (Daniel 4:37).

“God sets Himself against the proud” (James 4:6).

“A man’s pride bringeth him low; but the humble in spirit shall obtain honour” (Proverbs 29:23).

It is questionable if God intended there should be further numberings of the people as described in Exodus 30:11-16. In Numbers 1:1-4 there is a numbering of males for warfare but there is no reference there to a half shekel of silver being levied.

These notes are not a denegration of David. Indeed, they bring out a character that every Christian would do well to follow, that is, David’s readiness to admit his failures and to rectify them.

F. Wallace.

(Further articles in this series are to follow, if the Lord will).

Why Israel?

Why? Because God has chosen Israel as a great object lesson for all the nations. He has seen fit to display her as a sample of mankind. She is no better and no worse than all others, for she comes from the same root as we all do. If one should desire to test the water in a newly dug well it is necessary only to draw up a bucket of the water and test this. If this should prove to be bad one can expect no succeeding bucket to be any different. Israel is the sample bucket of water. Her history proves precisely what is the character of all the nations.

God’s divine wisdom chose and fitted Abraham, a man of outstanding faith, to be the father of this favoured nation. Stephen, in his masterful address to the Jewish council recorded in Acts chapter seven, reminds them of this great beginning of their distinctive history: “The God of glory appeared unto our father Abraham” (Acts 7:2). Here was a great man, separated from his own family, brought into a different land but having no possession in it, yet promised that it would be given to the nation that came from him. Then when one hundred years of age he received the son through whom this promise was to be fulfilled (Genesis 21:5). This and other succeeding events in Israel’s history illustrate the sovereign and miraculous power of God in conclusive proof of His choice of that nation for His own wise purpose.

Then Isaac had two sons, but God set aside the older and designated Jacob as His choice to be the immediate father of the nation Israel, and gave him the name Israel. Twelve sons were born to Jacob and these were destined to be the heads of the twelve tribes of which the nation was formed. Did these twelve men prove to be the most exemplary and upright people? Far from it! As early as this in Israel’s history we see indications of what great evils would later take place. “And the patriarchs, moved with envy, sold Joseph into Egypt” (Acts 7:9). This cruel rejection of their own brother tells us that from the beginning that nation was no better than any others. Just as the fathers of the nation cast out their brother because of envy, so has the nation cast out their promised Messiah when He came in grace, they too being moved by envy and hatred.

Then when Joseph was exalted in Egypt the brothers were virtually forced by circumstances to meet him there, unaware of who he was at first, but he revealing himself in unexpected kindness and grace. The family of Jacob, moving to Egypt, then grew into a great nation, not by any means being assimilated into the Egyptian nation, as would be expected, but maintaining a marked distinction, and subjected to slavery by the Egyptians for centuries. Here is another great mark of

God's sovereign working in that nation. Now too, since the crucifixion of their Messiah, Israel has for all these centuries maintained its distinct identity, though having been scattered among many nations and been virtual servants to those nations.

Again, God's sovereign power was seen in His raising up Moses at a time that was most unlikely, for Egypt had decreed the death of every boy born to the Israelites. Yet God had ordered matters so that this future leader was brought up in the palace of Egypt's king (Acts 7:19-22). However, his heart was with his own people and the time came when he went out to defend them against the oppression of the Egyptians. The next day he sought to be a peacemaker between two quarrelling Israelites. This only incurred the enmity of the aggressor, who demanded "Who made thee a ruler and a judge over us?" (Acts 7:23-28). Here again is the same character that Joseph's brothers manifested against him. When one is sent from God who can truly help them they show only hostility and resentment. Yet Moses was the one by whom God later delivered Israel. The blessed Lord Jesus Christ too, who has been thrust away by His own people, will yet be their great Deliverer. In view of all Israel's history can the Jews sustain the boast that they are better than the nations? They have said concerning Christ "His blood be on us, and on our children", and their suffering this self imposed sentence has been dreadful for centuries (Matthew 27:25). God has brought them down to a place of deep shame and reproach, where there can be no boasting. Can the Gentiles boast that they are better than the Jews? Not in the slightest. For as we have seen their history is only a sample history of all mankind. Given the same circumstances we would prove just the same. In Israel's deep failure we see our own failure. Israel's law was given, not only to stop the mouths of Jews, but "that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God" (Romans 3:19). In spite of this guilt Israel will yet be restored and blessed marvellously by the pure mercy of God when they, in broken repentance, receive Jesus as their Messiah at the time of His coming in power and glory (See Zechariah 12:10-14; Romans 11:26-29). Those Gentiles who learn from Israel's history that they themselves are also sinners, who need the grace of this same blessed and holy Lord of glory, will even now be received on the basis of His precious sacrifice at Calvary.

Some today who claim to be Christians have adopted the teaching that Israel's sin is so great that the nation can never be restored. However, these have not learned the most important lesson of Israel's history. For if Israel cannot be restored then guilty sinners of the Gentiles can never be saved. Nor could backsliding Christians ever be restored. Nevertheless, the same great power and grace of God that will be required to restore Israel is the same power and grace that is necessary in the salvation of every sinful soul and necessary in the restoring of Christians whose lives have been sadly marred by failure and disobedience.

"For God hath concluded them all in unbelief, that He might have mercy upon all" (Romans 11:32). This humbling, yet becoming conclusion of the ways of God in regard to Israel causes the apostle Paul to exclaim from an adoring heart "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past finding out!" (Romans 11:33).

L.M.Grant. The Olive Tree, Fig Tree, Vine and Bramble In the book of Judges we read an interesting story told by Jotham, Gideon's son. As far as I know it is the first "parable" in the Bible. He spoke of the trees choosing a king and in his story four trees in succession were asked to

become king; the olive, fig tree, vine and bramble (Judges 9:8-15). It was the bramble who accepted the position, but on his terms. It was a picture of the wilful Abimelech, who seized the power and came to a bad end. The Olive Tree The first tree, the olive tree, is mentioned many times in the Bible. You remember no doubt how the dove returned to Noah in the ark with an olive leaf in her mouth. Even in the last book of the Bible, Revelation, we find the two witnesses referred to as “the two olive trees” (Revelation 11:4). We usually think of oil when we hear of olives and indeed this was very important in Bible times. Kings and priests were anointed with oil and one tree can give as much as fifteen gallons. When the Bible speaks of medicine, or ointment, the word used is “olive oil” since this was the base of most healing balms. The berries were good to eat and the Jews made butter of the oil as well as using it for light. Jotham spoke of the olive’s fatness being used to honour God and man, which we can understand to refer to royal and priestly anointings. Besides this, pure olive oil was used for the lamps in the Holy Place of both the tabernacle and the temple. It is interesting to see that in the temple of Solomon there were not only doors of olive wood, but even very large cherubim of the same material, facing outwards from the sanctuary.

Zechariah saw a vision of a lamp stand with an olive tree on either side, from which pipes supplied the oil to keep the lamps burning. The divine explanation for this was “Not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit, saith the Lord of hosts” (Zechariah 4:6). Those that trust in the Lord Jesus receive an anointing, as John calls it, that is the indwelling of the Holy Spirit of God. Butter, ointment, candles and soap are some of the products of the olive tree. So the Holy Spirit is the source of our spiritual nourishment, since He uses the Christian’s daily Bible reading to his profit and growth in grace. He constantly intercedes for the believer and restores him when bruised by the enemy. He is the source of light and maintains the Christian’s witness, as in the case of the lamps seen by Zechariah. He applies the Word of God to keep us clean and to remove the defilement of the world that may cling to us. In Paul’s epistle to the Romans he likens Israel to a true olive tree, while the Gentiles are compared to a branch of a wild olive that has been grafted into the original tree. The history of Israel is a solemn warning to all and Paul warns us not to be boastful of the place that we have as a result of God’s grace. Let us rather take up David’s words “But I am like a green olive tree in the house of God: I trust in the mercy of God for ever and ever” (Psalms 52:8). The Fig Tree The second tree in Jotham’s parable was the fig tree. When asked to reign over the trees the fig tree said “Should I forsake my sweetness, and my good fruit, and go to be promoted over the trees?” (Judges 9:11). Again we may go back to the beginning of the Bible to read of this tree. When our first parents had disobeyed God’s commandment, they sewed fig leaves together to hide their nakedness. We know that this could not cover them adequately and the Lord God, we read, clothed them with the skins of animals for this purpose. Perhaps figs were among the fruits that Cain brought for an offering to the Lord, but this again was not acceptable. Abel had learned the lesson: another had to die to enable him to approach God. Of course these events were but shadows of the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ, who would give His life as a ransom for all that would trust in Him. When Moses was describing the land to which the children of Israel were journeying, he described it as a land of “vines, and fig trees, and pomegranates”, that is, very fruitful (Deuteronomy 8:8). No wonder that the fig tree is often used in the Bible as a picture of the nation of Israel. Hosea says that God “saw your fathers as the firstripe in the fig tree at her first time” (Hosea 9:10). But Israel failed to bring forth fruit for God. The fig tree in the land of Israel brings forth fruit three times each year and it is said that the early ripe spring figs are the greatest

delicacy. Perhaps that is what our Lord was looking for when He was near Jerusalem and found that the tree bore nothing but leaves. He cursed it and it was quickly withered up. This was, no doubt, a warning to the nation that had been so highly favoured and yet was about to crucify the very Son of God. In His parable of the fig tree in Luke 13:1-35 the Lord Jesus spoke of the care that He had taken of His people and yet, after all, there was no fruit. It is easy for us to go along with Christian people and use the right language, sing the hymns and quote texts, and yet not to be sincere. We are told to beware of hypocrisy. In another parable the Lord Jesus told His disciples to “Behold the fig tree, and all the trees” (Luke 21:29). He drew their, and our, attention to the revival of the nation (which we have been able to see in recent years), and to know that the day of grace is coming to an end, to usher in a day of terrible judgment. In Revelation 6:13 we read of those coming events, when the very stars of heaven will fall to earth as “a fig tree casteth her untimely figs, when she is shaken of a mighty wind”. We need to remind ourselves that “now is the day of salvation” (2 Corinthians 6:2).

Some of the prophets foretold a time of peace and prosperity when “they shall sit every man under his vine and under his fig tree” (Micah 4:4). When they kept their feast of tabernacles the people of Israel looked on to this time, which will really come to pass after the judgments of which we have spoken. One man who seemed to be anticipating this was Nathanael who, we read, was under the fig tree when Philip called him and brought him to the Lord Jesus (John 1:48). He was recognised by the Lord Jesus as a sincere, godly man and he was numbered among His followers. Perhaps he could say, like Habakkuk “Although the fig tree shall not blossom,....Yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation” (Habakkuk 3:17-18). The Vine In Jotham’s parable, when the fig tree had refused to be king over the trees, they asked the vine. The answer of this tree is remarkable “Should I leave my wine, which cheereth God and man, and go to be promoted over the trees?” (Judges 9:13). In Psalms 104:1-35 we read of “wine that maketh glad the heart of man”, but surely God does not need to be cheered by the fruit of the vine! (Psalms 104:15). But if we read the various references to the vine we see again that the creator, who found everything “very good” that He had made, also took pleasure in the nation that He had chosen because of Abraham’s trust in Him. Again and again He refers to Israel as His vine, which He had taken out of Egypt, which should be to His praise and glory among the nations. Sadly He had to remind them that a vine was worthless if it did not bear fruit (Ezekiel 15:1-8). It was only fit to burn.

Even the vine comes into the early chapters of the Bible. Noah planted a vineyard after the flood and became drunk with the wine that came from it. Lot, too, was guilty of drunkenness, with disastrous results, not only for himself but for his descendants for centuries to come. The book of Proverbs is full of good advice on this subject and ought to be read by all young people and older ones too. In the butler’s dream there was a vine and he pressed ripe grapes into Pharaoh’s cup.

Anyone in Israel who took a vow as a Nazarite was not to drink anything that came from the vine. His will was subject to the Lord and his own appetites and pleasures were not to be indulged. This is true of the believer, who has been bought with a price and is no longer to please himself but the one who has redeemed him. Most striking are the words in Ephesians 5:18 “be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit”. The Lord Jesus said to His disciples, just before He went to the cross, “I am the true Vine” and “I am the Vine, ye are the branches” (John 15:1; John 15:5). Although Israel as a nation had failed, the blessed Son of God glorified His Father in all that He did, even in laying down His life and shedding His precious blood. It is fitting

that He gave to His own the simple emblems of bread and wine to remind their hearts, while waiting for His return, of His love, even unto death. Wonderful too were His words to the disciples in the upper room, when He was giving them this precious symbol “But I say unto you, I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new with you in My Father’s kingdom” (Matthew 26:29; Mark 14:25). Then, I take it, the words of Jotham will be fulfilled and the Lord Himself will be made glad when He sees the fruit of the travail of His soul. The Bramble The last of the trees in Jotham’s parable was the bramble. This seems to have been a specially thorny tree and by some is thought to have been the sort of tree from which the crown of thorns was made. If this is so, the spikes would have been long and terribly sharp. This tree is pictured as saying “come and put your trust in my shadow; and if not, let fire come out of the bramble, and devour the cedars of Lebanon” (Judges 9:15). We remember that thorns and thistles came into the world as a result of Adam’s sin. God drove him out of the beautiful garden of Eden and the ground would be cursed for his sake and would bring forth thorns and thistles. Many times in the Bible thorns are used to picture wicked people and, just as thorns are burned in the fire, so the prophets spoke of the wicked being punished by a righteous God. The Lord Jesus said to His disciples “every tree is known by his own fruit: for of thorns men do not gather figs, nor of a bramble bush gather they grapes” (Luke 6:44). On another occasion He told them that “by their fruits ye shall know them” (Matthew 7:20). If we foster wrong and unkind thoughts sooner or later they will become wrong and unkind words and deeds. If, on the other hand, we treasure the words and teaching of our blessed Lord, we shall speak kind words and act in kindness and love as He did. The men of Israel were called on to make a choice. In their case it was Jotham or Abimelech. Centuries later it was Jesus or Barabbas. Today, too, we must choose. Are we going to serve the Lord Jesus or Satan? “Choose you this day whom ye will serve” (Joshua 24:15).

R.E.A.R.

Psalms 119:1-176 (2) (Continued from page 37) PROPHETIC ANTICIPATION The Law could not produce in men the obedience that it required. Only the cross, if looked at and believed in, shows the complete condemnation of sin and hence deliverance from it. Now, by the new birth and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, the very principle of obedience is implanted in us. In Psalms 118:1-29 Israel acknowledge the mercy of Jehovah and Him as their Messiah. This is still in the future. The day is to come when the Law will be written on their hearts according to the promise of the New Covenant (Jeremiah 31:31-34). Here in Psalms 119:1-176 we have an EIGHTFOLD alphabet. The number eight signifies what is NEW in contrast to what is OLD. We have therefore throughout this Psalm too a continual allusion to the NEW COVENANT. Every letter of man’s language is now taken up to express the praise of that which was but an intolerable yoke and burden before.

PERSONAL APPLICATION

“For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God, sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit” (Romans 8:3-4). It is with this sure knowledge that real Christians, those who have been born again and have the Holy Spirit dwelling in them, can now, on earth, taste and enjoy NEW COVENANT blessings. The book of Psalms is not about the church but mainly expresses the thoughts and feelings of a persecuted JEWISH REMNANT. The position, hopes and future of the church are not found in the Psalms

though there is very much in them that is for our INSTRUCTION and comfort.

ANALYSIS OF Psalms 119:1-176 A. Verses 1-24: Plentiful resources for the pilgrim.

1. Aleph Verses 1-8. ALL blessedness comes through Christ.

2. Beth Verses 9-16. God’s Word gives power for a holy life.

3. Gimel Verses 17-24. God’s Word provides resources for trial along the way.

B. Verses 25-48: Strength for the weary.

4. Daleth Verses 25-32. God’s Word quickens and restores.

5. He Verses 33-40. God’s Word meets our weakness.

6. Vau Verses 41-48. God’s Word leads to victory.

C. Verses 49-72: Our immense spiritual riches.

7. Zain Verses 49-56. God’s Word reveals our spiritual assets.

8. Cheth Verses 57-64. God’s Word transforms into His image.

9. Teth Verses 65-72. God’s Word strengthens in adversity.

D. Verses 73-96: Spiritual maturity through daily meditation.

10. Yod Verses 73-80. God’s Word shows us our responsibility.

11. Kaph Verses 81-88. God’s Word for our security.

12. Lamed Verses 89-96. God’s Word helps us mature spiritually.

E. Verses 97-120: The importance of daily Bible study.

13. Mem Verses 97-104. God’s Word is living water.

14. Nun Verses 105-112. God’s Word directs us.

15. Samech Verses 113-120. God’s Word for our support.

F. Verses 121-144: In the school of God.

16. Ain Verses 121-128. God’s Word is a well of refreshment.

17. Pe Verses 129-136. God’s Word gives power for testimony.

18. Tsaddi Verses 137-144. God’s Word brings us near to Him.

G. Verses 145-168: The need for spiritual renewal.

19. Qoph Verses 145-152. God’s Word is the basis for prayer.

20. Resh Verses 153-160. God’s Word teaches us His Lordship.

21. Sin/Shin Verses 161-168. God’s Word for power and peace in persecution.

H. Verses 169-176: Continuous revival.

22. Tau Verses 169-176. Appendix. This eighth section divides into four plus four. The first four verses speak of perseverance and the last four of prayer or a plea for salvation. In the first place this “appendix” speaks prophetically of Israel in the tribulation of the last days. This will be the time of her birth as a nation for Jehovah, when they come into the New Covenant (the 8th). Christians already taste its blessings now!

I have studied this Psalm with the aim of gleaning from it such help as it may yield for the Christian. I would heartily encourage the readers of this magazine to study it with me and to get the blessing that comes from doing so. I am leaving aside comments with reference to Israel but hope to point out the essential difference between the author of Psalms 119:1-176 and the way he sees things, and the view point of the Christian.

Cor Bruins.

(To be continued, if the Lord will).

Correction In the January/February issue of the magazine, at page 26, a mistake was made in the printing of W.Kelly’s hymn. The first line of the fifth verse should be “Lord, ’tis the virtue of Thy blood,” and not “Lords, ’tis the...”. When the proofs were returned by the printers there was a page and a half still to fill and the introduction and hymn were included. Because of the publishing deadline there was no opportunity to call for proofs of the hymn and the transpositional error crept in. As a matter of interest that particular issue of the magazine, excluding the cover, contained 59322 characters. We very much value the prayers of the magazine’s readers that in the future we will get them in the correct order, with no additions or omissions! From Our Archive A Gospel Preaching (2) (Delivered at Pembroke Street Hall, London, on Lord’s Day September 8th, 1880)

“The burden of Dumah. He calleth to me out of Seir, Watchman, what of the night? Watchman, what of the night? The watchman said, The morning cometh, and also the night: if ye will inquire, inquire ye: return, come” (Isaiah 21:11-12) (Continued from page 55)

Rest assured there is not a soul here tonight, not an eye that twinkles or a heart that throbs, but must spend an eternity either in the bright regions of bliss or in the dark regions of woe. Should you hesitate for a moment? What then are you to say of Him? “Blessed Lord Jesus, Precious Lord Jesus, He died for me, the chief of sinners.” O yes, dearly beloved, He died for me, the chief of sinners. By His blood my sins are washed away — not will be. There would be no good in that, but by His blood my sins are washed away. That blood makes the soul purer than the unsullied light of heaven. This is faith in Christ. It is not faith to become a little more religious and to be a little more discrete in your ways, a little more attentive to your duties. This is all very good as to this life but what saves a soul is to come straight to Christ. No matter who or what the person may have been, no matter what their past history, their immediate privilege, their present privilege, is just to come as and where they are, to come at once and not to say “I hope”. Do not come, beloved friends, with a trembling step. Come with all the authority of the Word of God. How did that poor woman venture into the house of Simon? She is a poor thing off the street, known to be a bad character and she goes into the house of one of the very chiefs of Israel. How could she go in there? Because the Lord Jesus says “Come unto Me”. It does not matter where I am, you come to Me wherever I am. If I am in the house of Simon, come to Me. If I am in the midst of the columns of the

Temple, come to Me. If I am on the throne of My Father in Heaven, come to Me. He says “Come to Me”.

O what a fearful thought darkness is — not to see the light. Of course, very little of that would put us out of our minds. We would soon lose our senses if we were to be shut up in such a scene of perfect darkness. What an existence, and you can never die there. It is not eternal life either. Eternal life is only promised to those that believe. But there is such a thing as eternal existence. Eternal life is peculiar to them that believe and to them only. The angels have not eternal life. They have an eternal existence in happiness, but eternal life is the peculiar privilege of those that believe in Christ. Here you will see, beloved friends, the grace of the Lord even in this Idumaean haughty enquiry. The answer to this haughty Idumaean is, “if ye will inquire, inquire ye: return, come”. How beautiful this is. There is a morning of joy, there is a night of weeping, but the door is open. The door is open for the haughty Idumaean, the scornful sceptic. No matter who he is, the door is wide open. If thou wilt enquire, enquire now. If thou wilt come, come now. But it is “come now”. The night has not yet set in, the morning has not yet dawned. The door of repentance is wide open. Come now, come now. Now is it not beautiful to see the grace that accompanies these solemn warnings because, this my text tonight, is a most solemn warning, a solemn though brief expostulation. It is a solemn expostulation by the watchman to a kind of scornful or sceptical enquiry and O the grace that shines. “Enquire”, look into it and you will find that what I say is true and if you will come, come now. Hence you will see, beloved friends, that you have here in this gracious invitation all the beauty of those charming words in the New Testament “Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest". Come, come now. If thou wilt return, return thou. Return from your ways of distance from the Lord. So there is no excuse for not coming even in this Old Testament reference to these things. Not that we understand the prophecies of Isaiah. I do not profess to do so, but still this is all very beautiful. There is a kind of scornful cry, as I suppose it is, on the part of the Idumaean to the watchman on Dumah’s walls. “Well, what of the night, what is to come now?” The watchman says, “The morning cometh”. There will be a bright morning of joy, but there will also be a night as well. Nevertheless the door of repentance is open, the door for thy faith is open and you have only to come and to come now. This you see, dearly beloved, is the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ to those that hear Him and this is the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ to everyone that is here tonight without exception.

I think that if anything would induce you to come it would be the dreadfulness, the terribleness, the awfulness, of being lost, of being forever shut out from that scene of wondrous happiness. I believe those in hell will know perfectly well what they have lost. They will know perfectly well the reason and ground of having lost it. There will be no stupidity there, no misapprehension there. No, beloved friends, because Satan’s snare will be gone. The mask will have been torn off. Satan will take no pains then to conceal the truth. I declare honestly, beloved friends, how astonishing I find it that any of you can sit there tonight and not be decided seeing that you have nothing but the most glorious Person to look to and nothing but the most glorious work to trust in and nothing but the most delightful happiness to look forward to. It is all immediate and perfect blessedness and you may have it before you rise from your seat. The work will not be more perfect tomorrow than at this moment and hence it is that where you sit I want you to look the Lord Jesus straight in the face and praise Him, bless Him, love Him, adore Him and worship Him. What for? He came down to die on the cross for you and He shed His blood that your sins might be washed away. Well then, love

Him, adore Him, praise Him, bless Him and worship Him. This is the way to make even Christ rejoice. Why, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth. Did you ever hear the like of that? Why should those myriad hosts on high be so interested in the salvation of those who believe, it may be of some poor, neglected one here? How often one has seen such come into a meeting and being converted on the spot. Perhaps no person ever prayed or cared for them but they came, they heard the Word of God, and by the blessing of God they received Him into the chambers of their heart and they went away rejoicing. This has been often the case and often within these walls. Now I want to press decision. I have been speaking to you a good many times through the Lord's great mercy, more than I ever expected to do in this life, but I want to see more positive fruit of the preaching. I want to see more of that real true and proper decision of the heart for Christ. God has not left Himself without witness as to the power and truth of the preaching yet with a grieved and a broken heart I say that there are those here tonight, that there must be those here tonight, who have heard the gospel over and over again and yet know that if they were to die in their present condition they would be lost forever. Well, what a thought that is. None of us can tell what may happen next and what I want you to do now is to look Christ steadily in the face. It may be you are a prodigal. A young man came in here some time ago, induced by one of the young men standing outside, and he said that he had not been in a place of worship for about seven years. Well, supposing such a one as that has been running a prodigal's race most thoroughly for these seven years, let that one only look to the Lord Jesus and every sin that he has committed, the darkest sin under the cloud of night, the darkest blot on his soul, every sin, every blot, every stain, are all gone and gone forever in virtue of the precious blood of Christ. If that young man is here tonight why not be decided? He professed to be interested, he professed to be anxious, but why not be decided through the plain preaching and teaching of the gospel with reference to Christ. There is no other way. Supposing that young man had not been seven years but seventy years in that state it would have been all the same as to the efficacy of the blood of Christ. I once visited a poor old person that was in great distress about her soul and I asked her as she was now on her death bed what her hope was, what her expectation was. She said that she had been a poor hard working woman all her life but that she had nothing to do now and was in bed night and day. She did not sleep much but she prayed a good deal and she believed that she would be saved. I asked her what she thought would save her. "Well", she said, "I am praying constantly by day and I am praying a great deal during the night". I asked her if she thought her prayers would save her and she said "I trust the Lord has pardoned a great many of my sins already. If I am spared to go on praying I trust He will pardon them all". I asked her how many sins she thought she had and she replied that she could not tell. I asked how old she was and she said she was seventy. I could not question much more but brought her straight before the face of the gospel, straight before the face of Christ. What struck her most was that she had nothing to do. "What, have I nothing to do?" I told her she had only to believe, and read several passages to her and marked them in a Testament which she had and which she wanted to read herself. She had been seventy years a careless woman, seventy years of sins for, as she said, she had never attended any meetings. I told her that was no matter for even if it were seventy times seventy the moment you look to the Lord Jesus your sins are all forgiven and your soul is saved. Then you are to praise Him. Prayer may come in but her chief work would be praise. She looked again and said "But have I nothing to do?". O the difficulty in getting persons to see that they have nothing to do. This was the last thing she said to me as my hand was on the handle of the door to go out. She

looked round with much anxiety but God, I was sure, was working in her soul. He had convinced her of her sin but still the anxious cry, the last echo that fell on my ear from those lips, was “And have I nothing to do?”. Her friend visited her afterwards and in a day or two she passed away, but passed away rejoicing in the truth. “Jesus has done it all, Jesus has done it all. I have nothing to do, I have nothing to do.” She kept repeating this until the scene closed and she opened her eyes on that scene of celestial brightness above. What a change for a poor old charwoman. Many such have I seen pass out of this scene, many sojourners in the wilderness. May God help you to decide tonight. May I never see one of you on the left hand of the Judge, but may I see you through the Lords grace to your souls tonight as a happy, joyous company in those bright, bright scenes above. May God bless you all. Do not put it off another hour, another moment. While you sit there give your hearts to Christ and believe on Him that died for you and shed His blood to wash your sins away. Then you will go from this place rejoicing saying “Jesus died for me and His precious blood has washed all my sins away and now my bright hope and prospect is to be in that land of unmingled blessedness for ever and ever”.

A. Miller (1810-1883).

News from the Field

We are continually thankful for the prayers of our brothers and sisters, especially during my visit to Zaire with brother Nick and brother Laügt. We all experienced the Lord’s grace. Both my wife and I realised that the particular strength He gave us during my absence was an answer to your prayers.

We solicit your prayers for continued direction as we serve the Lord. We realise more and more that the enemy is trying to harm this service by attacking a normal Christian family life. We need your prayers, especially for my wife when she is alone at home. Lord willing I’ll visit Cameroon and Equatorial Guinea from April 24th to May 26th.

During the last few months I have received some letters from brothers in Cameroon and Malawi and I would like to share some items of prayer with you.

Cameroon: A young brother, Zeh Daniel, who married last year, has written that he is very thankful to the Lord for his happy marriage. He attends the meetings of the assembly in the village of Mebanga at a distance of a four hours walk from his own village! He recently took the decision to talk with local brothers of Mebanga about his desire to announce the death of the Lord. I was very glad to read this in his letter, because he could be very useful for the Lord in the little and feeble assembly at Mebanga. Please pray for this faithful young brother and his wife, who is expecting their child later in the year. Our brother Akom Daudet, headmaster in Nko’emvon, asks for continued prayers for him and his family. The problems he has met with in Nko’emvon have not ceased.

One of the teachers, brother Onana Blaise, wrote to me about the blessed preaching of the gospel in schools and told his concern about the fact that we have no good opportunities to maintain contact with the pupils who leave our schools in order to attend secondary schools.

Brother Onguene Dieudonné at Ebolowa recently wrote to me that his local assembly continually pray that the Lord will help them in realising His presence in their midst and in obeying His Word. The weekly meditation of 1 Peter encourages the brothers and sisters in following the Lord, even

in difficult circumstances.

Malawi:

It will be remembered that brother Edwin Cross and I visited this country last year. In the last few months political problems have disturbed the public peace in this country. Please pray for the brothers and sisters we met in the town of Mzuzu and other places.

Brother Howard Ngira from Mzuzu wrote saying that he was thankful for the birth of his first son. His letter proves a sense of responsibility for both the work at Mzuzu and in neighbouring places. He is looking forward to another visit to Malawi and we would value your prayers in order to know the Lord’s will.

Brother Lucas Banda, living at Monkey Bay, continues his visits to many groups of believers in his area. The conditions of life are very difficult in this poor African country

Thank you for your interest in the Lord’s work. In His strength we like to go on praying and working and leaving the results in the hands of the Lord whose life was marked by prayer and work.

Yours affectionately in the Lord, Hilvert Winjholds.

Vol 02 - Truth & Testimony Vol. 2, No. 4, 1993.

Truth & Testimony Vol. 2, No. 4, 1993. The Second Epistle of John This short epistle may only have taken a few minutes to pen but its message and importance are of abiding value. As with 3 John, it insists on the truth as being of paramount importance. The difference of emphasis between these two is that the 2nd warns the faithful against the reception of those who do not bring the truth, whereas the 3rd encourages believers to receive and help on those who teach it. For John, truth mattered. Doctrinal rectitude was not regarded as an unimportant theological triviality. To John it was vital. Vital issues were at stake and he desired that the recipient might not scruple to maintain what was due to the Lord.

“The elder” (Verse 1)

John is not writing as one of the apostles, although they were the highest authority on earth in the assembly. By describing himself thus he suggests the moral features of elders. Paul had previously written about the importance of speaking things that become sound doctrine, that the aged men be sober, grave, temperate, sound in faith, in charity, in patience (Titus 2:1-2).

John had grown old in Christ’s service and his life was consistent with being Christ’s servant. He would write with due respect to a mother. Discretion is shown in not naming her,1 especially as the contents of this letter were destined to become public. John expresses his holy affection along with that of all who rejoice in the truth. His love for her and her children was regulated by truth.

1Unlike the 3rd, this epistle has no personal names, which to my mind is in keeping with the one whom it addresses.

“The elect lady” (Verse 1) This is an individual Christian. If it were an assembly, as some have suggested, we would expect a precise parallel in the last verse, a greeting from church to church. We should not imagine that the recipient of this letter was called Electa or Kyria. There is no indication in the New Testament that anyone bore these names. Election under the dispensation of grace is directed to individuals, not to companies. Election is personal: we are not chosen in bundles.

“For the truth’s sake, which dwelleth in us, and shall be with us for ever” (Verse 2) The Spirit of truth will abide in us for ever. His truth is not subject to the vagaries of time. It is unchangeable and unalterable. There is no development. It is not subject to an evolutionary process. The truth is “the faith which was once delivered unto the saints” (Jude 1:3 b). This indwelling truth within the believer is the great preservative against error.

“Grace be with you, mercy, and peace” (Verse 3) The source of grace, mercy2 and peace is God alone. The Father and His Son are brought before us. This relationship is made known to us for our blessing, enjoyment and adoration. The Son is the One in whom the truth displays all its glory. The enjoyment of the love of God rests on the revelation of the Son of His love.

2The inclusion of mercy in the greeting is consistent with the Spirit's usage in Paul's writings and suggests again that the letter was to an individual and not to an assembly.

Verses 4-6

John was much encouraged to see some of the sister's children walking in truth, though sadly not all her offspring walked thus. Their pathway was regulated by God's Word: "as we have received a commandment from the Father". In his 1st epistle he gives us what this was: "And this is His commandment, That we should believe on the Name of His Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, as He gave us commandment" (1 John 3:23). Paul touches on this in Colossians 2:6 : "As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in Him". The writer urges the elect lady to continue in what was original. The apostles had enjoyed Christ from the beginning. Continuance in Divine truth was essential for a walk that pleased God. Some Christians consider that a commandment must necessarily involve what is legal. It would be well if such thoughts were discarded as a mistake. The Lord Jesus speaks of commandments and it is He who gives them a character wholly distinct from the law. May we be given grace to walk in ways pleasing to God.

Verse 7 To walk in the truth is imperative, in the face of the multitude of deceivers who traverse the world. They do not confess Jesus Christ who came in flesh. It was not just a matter of whether there was incarnation. The point John makes is in relation to all the truth concerning Christ's Person. The work of these deceivers was a moral falsity — a deceit that was also a substitute for the Truth: an abstract idol. Would they tolerate a true or a false Christ?

Verses 8-11 The sister and her children are addressed here in verse 8. They were to exercise unwavering firmness about all the truth concerning Christ's Person. John wanted his converts to "stand fast in the Lord". As the Philippians were Paul's joy and crown, so he did not want to lose his reward3 (Php 4:1). There is a reward and a crown of glory for the labourers. These were the fruits of his service. Present service rendered among the saints as unto Christ will have a reward in the "world to come". Are we currently labouring in the light of the judgment seat of Christ?

3Some editors render 2 John 1:8 "...that ye lose not...which ye have wrought", etc. The "we" may embrace his correspondents.

Verse 9 The transgression referred to in verse 9 is really turning aside from, or going beyond, what God has revealed. There is no development of the truth as to Christ's Person. We are bidden with the first recipients of this letter to continue in "that which we had from the beginning", but the deceivers did not abide in the doctrine of Christ. They had new ideas, but Christians have been instructed otherwise (Ephesians 4:20). We live in a tolerant world, but God's Word is plain and uncompromising. "To the law and to the testimony: If they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them" (Isaiah 8:20): here in 2 John we read, "...hath not God". But the one who abides in the doctrine of Christ has a wonderful privilege: "he hath both the Father and the Son"4.

4The enjoyment of rest is based on the knowledge of this blessed relationship. See Matthew 11:27-29.

Verses 12-13

Verses 10-11 The likelihood of a deceiver arriving at the sister's house was anticipated by John. The test of fellowship was the doctrine of Christ. It is the same today. The great touchstone is Christ, His Person and His work. The message that the false teachers of today bring, like that of their counterparts of old, is always short of vital truth in relation to God and the revelation of His Son. The important thing was that they brought "this doctrine". There was really no room for neutrality as to Christ's Person. They had to come with sound doctrine.

"Receive him not"

These are unattractive words to the carnal man. The Ephesians were to have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness (Ephesians 5:11). It may have been a distressing duty but she, and we, must show unwavering firmness regarding all the truth of Christ. The perilous character of the last days enhanced the imperative. The silly women referred to in 2 Timothy 3:1-7 stand as a salutary warning. This elect lady would doubtless heed the elder's instruction. Her home, the sphere of her responsibility and service, would not be defiled with what was contrary to Christ. "...neither bid him God speed": even the briefest encounter could help on the deceit of Satan.

It appears that John was impressed with the urgency of the situation. The need for this brief epistle was evidently occasioned by the expected imminent arrival of a deceiver. The other matters would wait for a hoped-for visit. The joy of mutual fellowship with like-minded souls going on in the truth is not only the privilege of an apostle in the first century. We too may still know something of this wonderful fellowship in our own day. In conclusion we should observe the following salient features of the epistle: The false doctrine was denial of the truth of Christ come in flesh. John, however, writes in a general way (verse 9). Satan was even then undermining the truth. A Christian woman having the Word of God — this letter — was capable of judging the doctrine of one coming to her house. She was responsible to do so. Inexorable rigour was to be maintained if the doctrine concerning Christ's blessed Person was touched. The door was to be firmly shut on whoever falsified the truth. The semblance of love which does not maintain the truth but accommodates itself to that which is not truth, is not love according to God. The true test of love is maintenance of truth. The Holy Spirit, who sheds God's love abroad in our hearts, is the Spirit of truth. Truth and obedience are essential factors in the expression of true love. The foundation of Christianity is Christ Himself; I must have Him. My faith must cling to Him alone. I may not be able to refute the false teachers, but my faith cleaves to the Lord with purpose of heart. E.N.C. The following bibliography lists titles in my library which have been helpful and formative: W. Kelly — Exposition of the Epistles of John, F. E. Race, 1905;

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J. R. W. Stott — The Epistles of John, IVP, 1983;

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Walvoord & Zuck — The Bible Knowledge Commentary New Testament, Victory Books, 1983 (1989 printing).

“The Sermon on the Mount” (1) Poor in spirit (Matthew 5:3)

Matthew 5:1-48; Matthew 6:1-34; Matthew 7:1-29 is generally known as “the sermon on the mount” (see Matthew 8:1). At the beginning of the first part there are the so-called beatitudes. They contain very practical and important lessons for all those who are in the kingdom of heaven. These beatitudes have a threefold bearing: firstly, for the disciples at the time of the rejection of the Lord Jesus; secondly, for believers in the present time during the absence of the Lord; thirdly, for the future faithful remnant of the Jews during the great tribulation, before the Lord Jesus will appear as King. The characteristics which the Lord names in the beatitudes are not those of a natural person; the new birth is necessary in order that they may be present. The Lord Jesus said to Nicodemus, “Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God”, and these characteristics can only be manifested in the life of a person who has received new and eternal life by believing on Him, and who is taught and formed by Him (John 3:3). The expression “blessed” appears 50 times in the New Testament. It means more than being emotionally happy, because certain circumstances may produce such happiness. To be blessed is more than that. It is the state the Lord Himself gives to those who put His word into practice in their lives.

Poverty in spirit is the inward counterpart of outward poverty. This is not, as sometimes suggested, a lack of spiritual abilities or intelligence. There are other passages where the Bible talks in a very comforting way about infants and children, but here the meaning is completely different. A believer who does not think much of himself, who sees himself in the light of God and who therefore is humble — he is poor in spirit. This attitude of mind is described in the Old Testament with the expressions “contrite spirit” and “a broken and a contrite heart” (Psalms 34:18; Psalms 51:17). In Isaiah 57:15 the following promise is connected with it: “I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones”.

If we consider ourselves honestly in the presence and in the light of God, we will be poor in spirit, as human honour and greatness cannot continue to exist when He looks at us. Examples of such an attitude of mind are Abraham (Genesis 18:27), Job (Job 42:5-6), Isaiah (Isaiah 6:1-5), the publican in the temple (Luke 18:13) and Simon Peter (Luke 5:8). As long as we measure ourselves with ourselves or compare ourselves with other Christians, we will always find some reason for self-satisfaction. In the world and, sad to say, among Christians too, what mostly counts is outward success, high position and prestige. The consequence is arrogance, overestimation of one’s abilities and conceit. Only in the presence of God do we become and remain poor in spirit. The Lord Jesus was in the full meaning of the expression poor in spirit. He did not seek to do His own will, neither did He seek His own honour, but only the glorification of His Father. Yet there is a great difference between Him and us. It is the difference between humility and humiliation. The Lord Jesus was perfectly meek and lowly in heart (Matthew 11:29). He knew no arrogance and therefore did not need to humble Himself, as is so often the need with ourselves. Our true blessing consists not only in emulating the character of our Lord, but in being and remaining near Him.

Arend Remmers.

(Other articles in this series are to follow, if the Lord will).

Job (2) (Job 1:1; Job 1:6-22; Job 2:1-13; Job 19:23-27; Job 42:1-6) (Continued from page 68)

“Ye have heard of the patience of Job, and have seen the end of the Lord; that the Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy.” (James 5:11) The greater part of the book of Job concerns the three men comforting Job, without comforting him. When they had finished a true interpreter came along, and afterwards the voice of God was heard, and we have the end of the story in Job 42:1-17. The last chapter sees Job for the first time in the presence of the Lord. A large part of the book is taken up with long speeches and I am convinced that when the Lord in the end asked the question “Who is this that darkeneth counsel by words without knowledge?” He was saying there are a tremendous number of words to no purpose at all. There are views of interest and of truth, but they contribute nothing to the vindication of God or the comfort of Job, or the true representation of God. There are some interesting things. You get “Acquaint now thyself with Him, and be at peace: thereby good shall come unto thee” (Job 22:21). There is a verse that tells us that God gives His own “songs in the night” (Job 35:10). There are other very interesting things that have made the book of Job on everybody’s lips without even knowing that they are quoting from it. When we use the expression “Job’s comforters” we mean someone who pretends to comfort but is no comfort at all. Perhaps the expression which is most familiar to us is from chapter nineteen, verse twenty, where Job says “I am escaped with the skin of my teeth”. The verse is sometimes used to express a “close shave” but what Job really meant was that he was covered with boils from head to foot and the only place where there were no boils, because there was no skin, was his teeth. Another point of interest that I must mention is this. The very last part of God’s address to Job from out of the whirlwind deals with a creature called Leviathan. There is a great deal of discussion about what creature the Leviathan can be and almost all the authorities, including the margin of some of our Bibles, say that it is a crocodile. When you read that he is the king of beasts and that he is absolutely unassailable in his pride, it can hardly be held to be a crocodile. I take it to be a dinosaur. If you think of that skeleton in the Natural History Museum in London, seventy feet long, one third neck, one third body and one third tail, and having a most savage display of teeth, it is not surprising when God says “Behold, the hope of him is in vain: shall not one be cast down even at the sight of him? None is so fierce that dare stir him up”. I want you to keep this in mind. When God comes to speak in the end He speaks of Leviathan and says some very remarkable things about him.

I have spoken a little already about the sufferings of Job and I want to return to them. We can easily see that it is divine wisdom that selected these three things to be representative of the total range of human suffering. First there was the sudden loss of all his possessions, the seven thousand sheep, the three thousand camels and so on. Then the total loss of his family, which was bereavement. Then there was terrible pain. It is very difficult to imagine the painful condition that he describes, with ulcers covering him from head to foot and no relief from pain day or night. There is a remarkable passage that describes Job’s night: “When I lie down, I say, When shall I arise, and the night be gone? and I am full of tossings to and fro unto the dawning of the day”; and when the day comes it is just the same thing over again (Job 7:4-6). Job’s sufferings were of a kind very well known to us. Of course, when we consider the problem of human suffering, this is but a partial picture. Nevertheless it is very important to us because the principles of godliness never change and the lesson that Job had to learn is a lesson that we are bound to learn if we are going to live in a way that is pleasing to God. It is a lesson difficult to learn because we are so ready to take the easy and happy side of Christian life and fellowship and forget the sword of self judgment that we should apply. I will not attempt to say any more about the discourses of those so-called “friends of

Job".

Elihu seems to call himself the interpreter that Job asked for. He speaks about the fact that a daysman, an interpreter, would bring about the solution that Job sought. "If there be a messenger with Him, an interpreter, one among a thousand, to shew unto man His uprightness; Then He is gracious unto him, and saith, Deliver him from going down to the pit; I have found a ransom. His flesh shall be fresher than a child's: he shall return to the days of his youth", and so on (Job 33:23-25). Elihu says that the only complete answer to this is going to be when the full results of the coming of the interpreter have come to us. The Lord begins to speak in Job 38:1-41 and we read that He spoke out of the whirlwind. I have already referred to the fact that there is nothing in what the Lord says there that is outside of the life of men and of animals and of the creation as we know it. Some see something typical in them but I do not believe there is the slightest justification for this. The Lord was taking up something that Elihu referred to. He was displaying the immense greatness of God. If Job could not ask one tenth of the ten thousand questions that arise about nature how could he possibly understand God? God speaks first about the inanimate things, the earth, sea, clouds, hail and rain. He shows three things about them. Firstly that He designed them; secondly that He created them; and thirdly that He controls them. Consider the whole range of inanimate things that make up the world and the whole range of living creatures, and God commands them all. It says "Doth the eagle mount up at Thy command, and make her nest on high?" (Job 39:27). All the eagles on the earth, all moving to execute the demands of God. We cannot understand those movements and we cannot conceive in our minds the Being that could embrace the whole of them. The lesson for Job was that it was altogether too great for him to try to get to the bottom of things and seek for explanations. God in His counsels and actions is altogether too big for us. Then when the Lord comes to the end He speaks about Leviathan. We may feel like asking "what has all this explanation got to do with Job?", but the presence of God was in the Word. If one of God's creatures terrifies the man who sets his eyes upon him how wrong it was of Job to persist and persist in questioning God. Job did maintain his righteousness and we are told that Job was an upright man, but Job also charged God with injustice in what He had done. God didn't exactly reprove Job for this. Elihu did, but God did not. God was altogether in His Words out of the whirlwind, showing that it was quite impossible for Job to cope with questions that arise about God. God gives no account of Himself in these things, His counsels and His designs, that lie behind the things that are done. We cannot expect God to give account, and this is only in earthly things! The presence of God was mediated in the things that Job heard and saw. Job's patience was manifested when he didn't curse God when his wife said "curse God, and die" (Job 2:9). His patience was manifested when he said "Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither: the Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord " (Job 1:21). That was Job's patience, but the end of the Lord was reached when Job said "Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes" (Job 42:6). After this he sailed into prosperity, though what is spoken about at the end was prosperity of an earthly kind. The principles of godliness apply to us, though our horizon takes in greater things than Job's did. I want to explain briefly the difference that the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the descent of the Holy Spirit from Christ where He is in glory, has made to us. There is no change in the principles, as those examples of suffering saints in the New Testament demonstrate. The apostle Paul spoke about the fact that he was caught up to the third heaven and heard things which were unutterable. Then he says there was given him a thorn in the flesh in order that he might not be lifted up above

measure. That is a clear example of suffering in the New Testament. There is no indication at all of the origin of this in the thoughts of God, but the end of it, the purpose of it, was plain: to keep Paul humble. Paul was indeed driven by it to an ever fuller experience of the Lord Jesus when he says “Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me”(2 Corinthians 12:9). “My strength”, said the Lord, “is made perfect in weakness”. I often think of a kind of mechanical example of this. Think of the power in a certain gear wheel and another construction which would acquire that power, but the gear wheels don’t fit. When it says “My strength is made perfect in weakness” it means that the power of Christ is not geared to our strength, but to our weakness. This felt weakness is an aspect of “I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes”. It is only in felt and confessed weakness that the power of Christ is geared to us and that the will of God will be done through us. Stephen, in Acts chapter seven, is a wonderful epitome of the purpose of suffering. Stephen was stoned and his suffering was really to the glory of God. There are two things that I would like you to note there. The first is what he saw and the second is what he said: his vision and his witness. “But he”, the suffering saint, “being full of the Holy Spirit, looked up steadfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God” (Acts 7:55). He was serving God’s purpose in the terrible suffering that came upon him and he was immediately ushered into the comfort and light and perfect joy of being with the Lord Jesus Christ. The Scripture says that he saw Jesus standing at the right hand of God and that is the real heart and culmination of Christian truth, being what is centred upon the Lord Jesus at the right hand of God.

Evangelical Christendom and its piety is largely centred upon the earthly life of the Lord Jesus. True Christianity has its centre where the Lord Jesus is at the right hand of God. The suffering saints can see there the real end and conclusion of all that has happened to them. He looked up into heaven, saw the glory of God and Jesus, and immediately continued to the last breath of his body to witness to the reality of the Saviour. A principal lesson of the story of Job, if not the principal lesson, is his realising the presence of God in such a way that he abhorred self. This is not by any means a popular department of truth, because we don’t react sympathetically to the idea that self has to be denied. Why is there so much spinelessness about our Christianity today? It is because we have forgotten such words as those of the Saviour: “if thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee.....if thy right hand offend thee, cut it off, and cast it from thee” (Matthew 5:29-30). There is to be ruthless self judgment. What do you do when you read: “laying aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil speakings”? (1 Peter 2:1). Does the Spirit of God bring to your mind personal feeling against someone? Malice, guile, hypocrisies, envies and evil speakings are to be laid aside, they’re not to be passed over. The Word of God will reveal, and so bring us into the presence of God, as we abhor ourselves, as we judge ourselves, in the light of the cross. Then the Holy Spirit is not grieved and His power is made good to us. Unless there is this application of the cross we are turning our backs upon an enormous portion of the New Testament. Why does it say in Colossians, mortify, put to death, kill your members which are upon the earth? (Colossians 3:5). It is a job to be done. Am I doing it? Are you doing it? As we read Holy Scripture are we allowing it to search us? Are we allowing it to go into the inner parts of our hearts, and as we see ourselves as God does are we doing what God has done, judging ourselves and turning away from ourselves? Then the way is open for an ungrieved Spirit to fill us with the real vision of Christ where He is and the freedom that comes from walking in the truth. It is a negative thing but it is because we have given so little attention to the

need of dealing with self that there is so little of the other side: being full of the Spirit and with boldness witnessing, and at the same time entering into the reality of the heavenly side of the truth. In 1 Corinthians 11:1-34, when it talks about women having their heads covered, it is “because of the angels” (1 Corinthians 11:10). That is a plain indication that there are things behind the directions that God gives us that are hidden from us. They belong to the heavenly sphere and we are not told very much about them. It is clear enough in Ephesians 6:1-24 that there are principalities and powers in heavenly places that set themselves against every movement that we make to enter into our true Canaan. There are things behind the struggle we have that are never explained to us, but what is open to us is to remember those words “let a man examine himself” (1 Corinthians 11:28). That is not introspection. It is cutting, it is killing, it is sword work. “...if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged” (1 Corinthians 11:31). “I have heard of Thee by the hearing of the ear: but now mine eye seeth Thee. Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes”. So Job sailed into prosperity, and there is spiritual prosperity ahead of us if we learn this basic lesson that came to Job.

J.S.Blackburn.

Divine Care (2) The Father’s Care. Matthew 6:19-34 In the previous article we considered the circumstances of those to whom Peter wrote and the anxious care which would naturally arise from those circumstances. They were directed to cast all their care upon God, who cared for them. In Matthew 6:1-34 the things that may give rise to this anxious care are much more general. They are not wants that arise only in exceptional circumstances, but everyday needs that all of us have. In particular the Lord speaks of food and drink for the sustaining of our lives, and clothing for our bodies. Perhaps most of the readers of this magazine, like the writer, have become accustomed to an abundance of these things. Some may be able to remember times when there was a shortage and the anxiety that was then felt. Many believers in the world today are in straightened circumstances and their concern about their needs, and those of their families, is understandable. Nevertheless three times in this passage the Lord instructs his hearers not to be careful, or anxious, about these matters1. It is in connection with them that He brings home the care of the Father and the provision made by Him. In verse 8 He says “your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask Him”. Further down we are reminded of the feeding of the birds and the clothing of the lilies. They make no provision for themselves, and they are certainly not anxious about the meeting of their needs, but these are provided for.

Why is it that there is such emphasis upon our being without care? It is certainly not that we may settle down in comfortable self ease. In the parable of the sower some of the seed sown fell among thorns. The thorns sprang up and the seed was choked. In His explanation the Lord said the thorns are the cares of this world, the deceitfulness of riches, the lusts of other things and the pleasures of this life (Matthew 13:1-9; Matthew 13:18-23; Mark 4:1-9; Mark 4:13-20; Luke 8:4-8; Luke 8:11-15). The cares of this world are first mentioned in each of the places where the parable occurs. The parable deals primarily with the initial reception of God’s Word into the heart and the things that hinder this. However, what hinders this initial reception of God’s Word will also hinder the fruitfulness of those who have truly received it. If we desire to live lives that are fruitful for God it is essential that the cares of this world are not allowed to displace His claims and interests. This is emphasised in Matthew 6:1-34 too. “But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you”. As His interests are sought, as they

are actively pursued, so we will find that our necessities are provided for. May we have grace to follow a course in line with these clear directions of Scripture.

1 Matthew 6:25; Matthew 6:31; Matthew 6:34 a. In the King James translation this being careful or anxious is translated “take thought.” It is the verb of the same word translated care in 1 Peter 5:7 a. It also occurs in verses 27, 28 and 34b.

R.F.W.

(To be continued, if the Lord will). The Life of David (6) David and Goliath. 1 Samuel 17:1-54

What an exciting story this is to tell children! The giant champion from Philistia slain by a shepherd lad of Israel. The taunter slain by the truster. The underdog defeats the champion. The weakling vanquishes the strong man. How many times has this story been told and retold? Is it a story only for children? No, it is a story replete with instruction and has many applications.

(1) It is a story which describes the indomitable courage of a young man. It is history, and because it is history it is interesting, although not all history is interesting or instructive.

(2) It is illustrative of the eventual triumph of the remnant of Israel over their Gentile enemies.

(3) It provides valuable instruction for Christians which enables them to overcome the apparently insurmountable problems which they have to face in a hostile world.

(4) Most importantly, it provides a type of our Lord Jesus Christ and His great victory over the power of Satan.

(1) How Courage Conquered the Champion As an example of courage few stories can equal this one. The incident takes place against the background of war. Two opposing armies were face to face. Between the armies the giant champion of the Philistines marched backward and forward, and taunted the ranks of Israel to send a warrior to fight with him. The outcome of the single combat would determine the war. It would decide who were masters and who were slaves. For forty days the ranting boaster bellowed out his challenge. Saul, the king of Israel, was head and shoulders above the rest of the men of Israel (1 Samuel 9:2). He was the most likely Israelite to face Goliath as far as stature was concerned. He didn’t accept the challenge. Eliab, the eldest son of Jesse, and David’s brother, attracted Samuel the prophet by his countenance and stature (1 Samuel 16:6-7). He didn’t come forward to engage the champion. Where was Jonathan? He was a brave man and had distinguished himself by his courage in fighting against the Philistines (1 Samuel 14:11-15). No, Jonathan wasn’t prepared to fight this formidable warrior. David, the shepherd teenager, took up the challenge and indicated that he was prepared to fight the tormentor of Israel. Was David presumptious in challenging Goliath? His brother Eliab thought he was and so did king Saul. David was not discouraged by their arguments. One said that he was proud, the other that he was uninstructed in the art of war. David was resolute. He had resources of power to draw from that the others knew nothing about. He trusted in the living God. He had experienced the secret help of God. When the predatory lion and bear stole from the flock he was guarding God enabled him to rescue the lambs and also to destroy the powerful animals. Victory in the ordinary pursuit of his daily calling prepared David for his extraordinary achievement in overcoming the Philistine champion. The assurance of his faith in God made David, the teenager, bold, as he prepared to face the challenger of Israel. God’s armies had been defied. The

uncircumcised Philistine would now learn that there was a God who was infinitely more powerful than the gods of Goliath by which he cursed David. Saul, the king, offered David the use of his armour. It was no use to David. Saul's armour would have been a cumbersome hindrance to the lad. He refused the kind offer but relied on his well proven sling and stones. He carefully selected five smooth stones from a brook, put them in his shepherd's pouch, and ran to meet Goliath. The conflict was about to begin. Goliath, trusting in his gods and in his great strength, moved forward to meet David with boastings and curses. David was trusting in the living God. It was God's battle. The outcome was a foregone conclusion. It wasn't really a conflict between Goliath and David. It was a contest between Goliath and God. David carefully took one stone from his pouch, placed it in his sling, and slang it with all his strength. The stone sped through the air (would it be appropriate to call it a God-guided missile?) and lodged in the giant's forehead. He dropped down dead. What an ignominious end for the boaster! Killed by a stone slung from the sling of a shepherd lad. David wasn't finished. He took Goliath's sword from its scabbard and used it to cut off Goliath's head. He was killed completely. He wasn't merely stunned. He was dead beyond all doubt and the victory was secured. Israel was freed from its fear and the Philistines fled. David took the head of Goliath to Jerusalem. What a victory! Perhaps his great triumph is referred to in Hebrews 11:34 were we read "out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens".

Well done David! Your courage was celebrated in song (1 Samuel 18:6-7). It enabled Jonathan to speak favourably of you to Saul and the great event was known to Ahimelech the priest (1 Samuel 19:5; 1 Samuel 21:9). People, prince and priest were affected by your courage and your confident trust in God. Your courage will remain an inspiration and influence for others as long as the Bible is read.

(2) How the Remnant is Relieved The Bible teaches that in the last days, prior to the establishing of the thousand year kingdom of Christ, there will be a pitiful and small remnant of godly Israelites who will face an awesome assemblage of Gentile armies. But for the intervention of God through the Lord Jesus Christ, His Son, the remnant would be destroyed. The story of David and Goliath illustrates this future conflict. That David should conquer Goliath appeared hopeless. But he did, not in his own strength, but in the power of God. Malachi 3:16 and Malachi 4:2 are verses that describe a remnant that fears God. While they come at the end of the Old Testament, prior to the incarnation of the Son of God, it will also be true of some who await the coming of Messiah as Deliverer. Daniel 9:27 is another verse that describes that time in the last days just prior to the coming of Christ as King. The head of the revived Roman empire will make a covenant with the many, 1:e. the many of unbelieving apostate Israel. See Isaiah 28:14-18 : "a covenant with death". The remnant will be the few who do not subscribe to the covenant. Zechariah 13:8-9 also refers to a little weak remnant in Jerusalem which is delivered by divine intervention. See also Matthew 24:21-22 and Romans 9:27-29. The trinity of evil constitute some of the formidable enemies of the remnant of Israel. Satan: the energiser of all the evil. The first beast of Revelation 13:1-10 : the head of the revived Roman empire, the political power. The second beast referred to in Revelation 13:1-18, from verse 11: the false prophet, the antichrist, the religious power. See Revelation 16:12-16. Added to these are the kings of the east and the Assyrian, the king of the north (Revelation 16:12; Daniel 11:40-45). It is obvious that the overwhelming might of the nations under Satan's power would present a seemingly impossible situation for the feeble remnant. Note the

references to “all the nations” (Psalms 2:1-3; Zechariah 12:2; Zechariah 12:9; Zechariah 14:2; Zechariah 14:12; Revelation 16:14; Revelation 19:19). The language of the remnant is graphically expressed in Psalms 46:6-7 : “The nations raged, the kingdoms were moved; He uttered His voice, the earth melted. Jehovah of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our high fortress. Selah”. The deliverance for the remnant is described in Revelation 19:11-16. Who is able to confront the trinity of evil and the other enemies of the remnant? A little Lamb!1 The little Lamb is none other than the “Lord of lords, and King of kings” (Revelation 17:14). Riding upon a white horse, the emblem of victory, and followed by the armies of heaven, He executes the righteous wrath of God upon the impious and rebellious nations. The little Lamb, by divine power, has triumphed over the assembled Gentile powers and the little remnant has been delivered.

1There is a footnote to Revelation 5:6 in some editions of J.N.Darby’s translation which reads “Arnion: a diminutive, used throughout Revelation: as John 21:15”. The reference in John is “Feed My lambs”.

(3) How Opposition can be Overcome

Having considered the story of David and Goliath in its historical setting and also in a future application, it can be used to illustrate the conflict of the Christian with the powers that are against him. The New Testament teaches plainly that these powers are formidable and extensive. They are as follows- Satan, the ruler of the world and the adversary of the people of God (1 Peter 5:8). The unseen world of spiritual, organized, evil (Ephesians 6:10-13). The world, a system energised by its ruler, Satan, and in complete opposition to Christians (John 15:17-20). The flesh, our sinful fallen nature which is incapable of pleasing God but always manifests sin (Romans 8:6-8; Galatians 5:17-21).

These powers can be described as infernal, external and internal foes. No one is capable of overcoming these implacable foes without divine help. No Christian should despair about failure to overcome any of the opposers. There is divine resource readily available. It is to our shame if we don’t use what God in His mercy has provided.

It was a most important decision David made when he indicated that he was willing to fight Goliath. No doubt many in Israel would have liked to have fought Goliath and to be the winner. No one came forward but David. This is a crucial principle. Are we sufficiently aware of the binding power of our foes? Are we alive to the fact that bondage to them is the cause of the defeat in our lives? The bondage that stifles godly exercise and response to God in worship and testimony can be overcome, provided that we are willing to be engaged in spiritual conflict.

Soldiers of Christ, arise, and put your armour on, Strong in the strength which God supplies through His eternal Son:

Strong in the Lord of Hosts, and in His mighty power, Who in the strength of Jesus trusts, is more than conqueror.

C.Wesley, 1707-88.

It didn’t take David long to know that Saul’s heavy armour was unsuitable for him. Saul is a type of man after the flesh, 1:e. a man controlled by fallen nature. The armour of such a man is of no use in fighting the battles of the Lord. Human resources will be found wanting in a time of need, a most

important lesson for every believer in the Lord Jesus Christ. Paul said, “For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds; Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ” (2 Corinthians 10:4-5). Human reasonings, arrogance, independency, compromise and self-confidence constitute some of the armoury of the natural man away from God. Obedience to the Word of God, humility, dependence upon God, faithfulness and a sense of one’s weakness are good weapons of warfare for the Christian. Holy lives that the Holy Spirit can use are essential in combating Satan and his allies.

David was unmoved by the arrogant boasting of Goliath. Although he was confronted by a massive opponent his confidence was in the living God. Christians should have a correct estimate of the powers that are arrayed against them, but they should not be over-awed or afraid because of them. The lesson of 2 Kings 6:14-17 is a valuable one. When Elisha’s servant was afraid because of the enemies that surrounded them he cried, “Alas, my master! how shall we do?” Elisha answered him, “Fear not; for they that be with us are more than they that be with them”. In New Testament language that means all the resources of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Paul writes, “If God be for us, who can be against us?” (Romans 8:31). John writes, “Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God” (1 John 5:5). Again John writes, “Ye are of God, children, and have overcome them (the power of antichrist), because greater is He (the Holy Spirit) that is in you than he (Satan) that is in the world” (1 John 4:4). James writes, “Resist the devil, and he will flee from you” (James 4:7). Peter writes, “the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour: Whom resist, steadfast in the faith” (1 Peter 5:8-9). Divine resources, laid hold of with faith and courage, are more than a match for the formidable powers of Satan. Only the Father, Son and Holy Spirit are omnipotent, omniscient and omnipresent. Their great power can be operative in weak vessels who in their weakness depend upon Them. David himself sums up the matter in 2 Samuel 22:18-19 “He delivered me from my strong enemy, From them that hated me; For they were mightier than I. They encountered me in the day of my calamity; But Jehovah was my stay”. As David looked at the giant Goliath he could have been excused if he had turned away from him and run for his life. He didn’t do that. He had a resource greater than Goliath with his armour and weapons. He confronted Goliath in the Name of Jehovah of hosts, the living God. In the Bible a name is generally descriptive of the person who bears it. When David invoked the Name of Jehovah he was depending on all that God is in illimitable power. Goliath was doomed from the moment David invoked the Name of Jehovah. The importance of the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ for the Christian cannot be over emphasised. It is the only Name in which salvation is to be found (Acts 4:12). Baptism is performed in His Name (Acts 8:12; Acts 8:16; Acts 10:48; Acts 19:5). Prayer to the Father and the Son is in His powerful Name (John 14:13-14; John 15:16; John 16:23; John 16:26). Works of miraculous power were done by the apostles in His Name (Acts 3:6; Acts 3:16; Acts 4:30; Acts 16:18). If sin raised its ugly head in the Corinthian assembly it was judged in the power of the Lord’s Name (1 Corinthians 5:4). The authority for judging evil is not in casting votes but in being true to the Name of the Lord. There may be opposition from relatives or friends but the resource of the faithful lies in the Name of the Lord Jesus. The effects and power of sin were overcome in the Lord’s Name (1 Corinthians 6:11). The day is not far distant when every knee will be compelled to bow to the Name of Jesus. That Name is above every name (Php 2:9-10). The graphic picture of Jesus coming in power and glory as described in Revelation 19:11-16 demonstrates the greatness of His Name and His great

triumph over evil powers. He has a Name that no one bears but Himself. His Name is called the Word of God and He is the King of kings and Lord of lords. It is no wonder that Paul could state with triumph in a Roman prison “I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me” (Php 4:13). Paul’s Saviour and Lord is ours. Have we Paul’s faith and experience?

David’s desire to slay Goliath was not to acquire any glory for himself. It was to demonstrate to all the earth that Israel had a God, a living God, who could express His power through a weak, young, shepherd lad. The battle was the Lord’s, not David’s. David was only an instrument in God’s hands. Paul wrote, “God hath chosen the weak things of the world, to confound the things which are mighty” (1 Corinthians 1:27). A Christian may desire to obtain victory over Satan and his wiles for relief. There is nothing wrong with an exercise of that kind, though all victories over evil powers should lead to glory and praise to God. When Israel was safe on the other side of the Red Sea, and Pharaoh and his host had been swallowed up in divine judgment, Israel celebrated its deliverance in a song of praise to the God of their salvation (Exodus 15:1-19). Blessing should always lead to praise and worship. It was a remarkable feature of the outpourings of the Spirit’s power in revivals in past days that many beautiful hymns of praise and worship were composed. The Bible teaches that heartfelt thanksgiving follows deliverance (Romans 7:24-25; Colossians 1:12-13). It is God who gives the victory. It is God who deserves the praise. We enjoy the blessing.

(4) How the Power of Death was Defeated The most important lesson to learn from the story of David and Goliath is that of the victory of the Lord Jesus over Satan. Why were the soldiers of Israel afraid of Goliath? The answer is simple: he wielded the power of death. When were they delivered from that fear? When they saw David take Goliath’s sword, his instrument of death, and cut off the giant’s head. The threat of death was removed completely. In Hebrews 2:14-15 we read: “Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, He also Himself likewise took part of the same; that through death He might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; And deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage”. The Lord Jesus, the Son of God, became a man in order to die, to accomplish God’s plan of redemption (Hebrews 2:9-10). When He died He was placed in a tomb, but after three days He arose from among the dead. Death was overcome by Him (Revelation 1:17-18; Romans 6:9). The power of death that Satan wielded to keep people in bondage was broken. The Son of God entered into Satan’s domain and conquered it and annulled the enemy’s power. How wonderful to live in the day of the glad tidings of God’s grace and triumph. “....our Saviour Jesus Christ, who hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality (incorruptibility) to light through the gospel” (2 Timothy 1:10). When the Lord Jesus comes for His church the bodies of the sleeping saints will be raised from their graves and the bodies of the living saints will be changed. Then will be heard the triumphant shout “Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?” (1 Corinthians 15:54-55). The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death (1 Corinthians 15:26; Revelation 20:14). In the eternal day of God death will not exist for the blessed (Revelation 21:4).

He Satan’s power laid low;

Made sin, He sin o’erthrew;

Bowed to the grave, destroyed it so, And death by dying slew.

Bless, bless the Conqueror slain, Slain in His victory; Who lived, who died, who lives again- For thee, His church, for thee!

S.W.Gandy, d.1851.

F. Wallace.

(Further articles in this series are to follow, if the Lord will).

Five Little Pebbles (1 Samuel 17:40) Five little pebbles lay in a brook, Five little pebbles hid in a nook.

“What are we good for?” said one to the other.

“Little or nothing, I’m thinking, my brother.”

Wearing away, day after day, It seemed that for ever those pebbles might stay.

If they were flowers, ever so gay, Doubtless someone would take them away; Or if they were big stones that builders could use Perhaps then some builder those five stones would choose.

Wait little pebbles, rounded and clean, Long in your loneliness, lying unseen, God has a future awaiting for you, Five little pebbles sturdy and true.

Five little pebbles hid in a brook, David came down and gave them a look, Picked them up carefully out of the sand;

Five little pebbles in his great hand.

“Hark!” there is shouting, there is fighting today, Boldly these pebbles are borne to the fray;

One of them chosen and put in a sling — Could we have thought that a stone could thus wing?

Onward it sped with a might not its own, Onward it sped by the shepherd-boy thrown;

Swift as an arrow, straight as a dart, For the whole nation that stone played its part, Striking the giant’s great terrible head, Laying him low, a mighty man dead.

Five little pebbles lay in a brook, Mentioned with honour in God’s Holy Book. Be thou a pebble, contented and low, Ever kept clean by His mercy’s pure flow, Hidden and ready till Jesus shall look, And choose you, and use you, a stone from the brook.

S. J. B. Carter (1858-1938). From Our Archive In issue number 4 of the first volume of this magazine we included an article by a brother, then in his 99th year, who was subsequently called home on 6 August 1991. The following article was written by the same author, some 55 years earlier. It appeared in the 1935 issue of “Edification”. The editors believe it will be of interest to Truth & Testimony’s readers.

Christian Conversation The apostle Peter frequently uses the word “conversation” in his two epistles. We must not understand it as being merely the talk of the lips: it is a word of much larger meaning, covering all our lives and behaviour. What Peter says to us is doubtless the outcome of the memorable words of the Lord to him, as recorded in John 21:1-25. What is the practical result of the conversation of the saints? If we were all thoroughly set for God, what an effect would be

produced and what testimony for Christ!

First, he reminds us that we have been brought clean out of the old “vain conversation”: all connected with the old system of religion which suits the first man. We have been redeemed to God with the precious blood of Christ (1 Peter 1:14-18). The first thing the soul gets hold of is that we are out of the old state and delivered from that vain conversation. So we need to shake ourselves clear of everything of a religious nature which does not suit God.

Next comes the “honest conversation” that should adorn us as strangers and pilgrims (1 Peter 2:11-12). What is a stranger? A stranger is a person who is away from home. Where is our home? It is not here. He is up there and we are strangers here. We are not at home. A pilgrim is a man going a journey, and the point of our pilgrimage is home — HEAVEN. The apostle Paul was a pilgrim, as his words in Acts 20:22-24 reveal. We are away from home, but we are going home. Does your heart say “yes” to this? Then travelling home to Him we must have our conversation honest.

You know we live surrounded by much dishonesty. God says to you and me, “See that you are honest: see that you have a heart and a conscience that are answering to the truth and light of God”.

Then we find “chaste conversation” (1 Peter 3:1-4). He is here addressing Christian women, whose path may be very difficult. Cases are before his mind where the wife is converted and the husband unconverted. The husband might be won by the chaste conversation of his wife. That stresses the importance of the inside — the home life.

Then comes a “good conversation” (1 Peter 3:8-17). This is to be outside in the world, for a Christian is a person who is blessed, and is sent out to be a blesser. You bless even the person that is opposed to you. Thus you may reproduce something of Christ in the world out of which He has been cast. Do you want to see good days, if the Lord tarry? Refrain your tongue from evil. Here we come to the actual talk of the lips and what a good effect is produced on ourselves as well as on others. The blessed Lord sees and hears all, “For the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and His ears are open unto their prayers”. But the face of the Lord is against His own children if they are doing evil, as it is against the children of the world. But on the other hand “who is he that will harm you, if ye be followers of that which is good”?

Notice the good things — good days follow that which is good; a good conscience and good conversation. So if we are doing good, following good and feeding on good, we shall see good days and have a good conscience and all around you will have to admit that yours is a good conversation. More than that, God will yet so work that they may be ashamed that falsely accuse your good conversation in Christ. In the second epistle we read of that which must necessarily pain us, for God will and must judge. But before He did it in Sodom He “delivered just Lot, vexed with the filthy conversation of the wicked” (2 Peter 2:4-9). If Lot had only had a little spiritual sense and devotedness to God, he would have kept close to his old-fashioned uncle, Abraham. But like many young men he thought he would get on in this world, and where did he go? He first “pitched his tent toward Sodom” and then got inside and “dwelt in Sodom” (Genesis 13:12; Genesis 14:12). God gave him soon after a solemn warning, for he was taken prisoner with all his belongings by Chedorlaomer and his confederates. His old-fashioned uncle came again on the scene and set

him free. But heedless of this warning, back he went straight to Sodom. Perhaps he thought he could improve that godless city, like many Christians today who seek in vain to whitewash this present evil world. God had to drag Lot out of Sodom. But while in it he only got his soul vexed with the filthy conversation of the wicked.

There is a way of preventing the conversation of the wicked from getting into your soul and vexing it. Get preoccupied. If you are preoccupied with Christ there will be no room for this to get in. There is plenty of moral filth all round about. Be occupied with Christ and with the good, then you will have the honest and chaste conversation and all the filthy conversation round you will not affect you. If you do this you may meet with persecution, but you will find in the long run that the world will not trouble you much. If you take your stand for Christ you will very soon find the world shaking you off. You will never get your soul really vexed with the filthy conversation of the wicked unless you get “unequally yoked” with them.

Lastly, in speaking of the appearing of the Lord, Peter says “what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness” (2 Peter 3:8-14). That is beautiful. The saint, born of God and filled with the Holy Spirit, is to walk in an atmosphere of holy love and go through the world with holy conversation. He lives in a holy atmosphere and carries it with him. That is, he is one separated to God, with whom he walks. So he radiates the grace resulting from God’s presence. We cannot seek anything better than that. While wending our way to the glory and the day of manifestation and reward, our souls might know what it is to go forward in the power of the Spirit of God. So let us take heed to Peter’s words, “Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of Him in peace, without spot, and blameless”.

We belong to heaven, so what befits us is “honest conversation”, “chaste conversation”, “good conversation”, and “holy conversation”. May we be really set to follow the Lord. Let us seek with ever increasing earnestness the blessing of others, since we are so fully blessed ourselves.

Thomas Gray.

Psalms 119:1-176 (3) (Continued from page 90) Breakdown of the Acrostic Arrangement of Psalms 119:1-176 To give the reader an idea of what the acrostic arrangement of this Psalm looks like in the Hebrew language I give here a breakdown of all the verses. The Hebrew letters are shown in phonetic script. The meaning of the letters at the beginning of each section of eight verses will be given in subsequent articles, if the Lord will.

Verses 1-8. ALEPH Verse 1. ASH-REY “Blessed...”

Verse 2 ASH-REY “Happy and abundantly blessed...”

Verse 3 APH “Also they do no iniquity...”

Verse 4 ATA “Thou hast commanded us...”

Verse 5 AH-GHALEY “Oh that! (Would that!)...”

Verse 6 AHZ “THEN...then shall I not be...”

Verse 7 AHDAK “I will thank THEE...”

Verse 8 ASHAMAR “I will keep...”

Verses 9-16. BETH Verse 9 BMEH “With what..?”

Verse 10 B-KOL “With all...with my whole heart...”

Verse 11 B-LEHVI “...in my heart...”

Verse 12 BA-RACH “Blessed...”

Verse 13 B-SAHPHATI “With my lips...”

Verse 14 B-DEH-RECH “...in the way (of)...”

Verse 15 B-PIK-KOO-DEEMAK “...in Thy precepts...”

Verse 16 B-GHOOK-KAHTAK “...in Thy statutes...”

Verses 17-24. GIMEL Verse 17 GAH-MAL “Deal bountifully...”

Verse 18 GAH-LAH “Open! (Reveal!)...”

Verse 19 GEHR “A stranger (I am)...”

Verse 20 GAH-RAS “(My soul) breaketh for (is crushed)...”

Verse 21 GAH-GART “Thou hast rebuked...”

Verse 22 GAH-LAL “Remove (or roll away)...”

Verse 23 GAM “Also (Princes did sit)...”

Verse 24 GAM “Also (Thy testimonies)...”

Verses 25-32. DALETH Verse 25 DAH-VAK “...clings...”

Verse 26 DEH-RECHI “...my way...”

Verse 27 DEH-RECH “...the way of (Thy precepts)...”

Verse 28 DAH-LAPH “...drops (melteth)...”

Verse 29 DEH-RECH “...the way (of lying)...”

Verse 30 DEH-RECH “...the way (of Thy truth)...”

Verse 31 DAH-VAKT “I have clung...”

Verse 32 DEH-RECH “...the way (of Thy commands)...”

Verses 33-40. HE Verse 33 HAYAHRANNI “Teach me...”

Verse 34 HA-BEENI “Make me understand...”

Verse 35 HA-DAREKNI “Cause me...”

Verse 36 HAT-LEBI “Bow (incline) my heart...”

Verse 37 HA-GAH-VAR “Turn away...”

Verse 38 HA-KOOM “Make rise...”

Verse 39 HA-GAH-VAR “Turn away...”

Verse 40 HIN-NEH “Behold...”

Verses 41-48. VAV Verse 41 VA-BANI “Let come to me...”

Verse 42 VA-GAH-NAH “And I will answer...”

Verse 43 VA-LA “And not deliver...”

Verse 44 VA-ASHAMARH “And I shall keep...”

Verse 45 VA-ATHALACH “And I will walk...”

Verse 46 VA-ADABARAH “And I will speak...”

Verse 47 VA-ASHTATGAG “And I will delight myself...”

Verse 48 VA-AHSAH “And I will lift up...”

Verses 49-56. ZAIN Verse 49 ZA-KAR “Remember (this)...”

Verse 50 ZA-AT “This...”

Verse 51 ZEHDEM “The proud...”

Verse 52 ZA-KARAT “I remember...”

Verse 53 ZALGAHPAH “Hot zeal (horror)...”

Verse 54 ZAHMERT “...songs...”

Verse 55 ZA-KARAT “I remembered...”

Verse 56 ZA-AT “This...”

Verses 57-64. CHETH Verse 57 GHEHLEKI “My portion (is)...”

Verse 58 GHAHLAT “I intreated...”

Verse 59 GHAHSHAVT “I thought (mused) on...”

Verse 60 GHOOSHT “I hurried (made haste)...”

Verse 61 GHEHVEL “The cords (of sorrows)...”

Verse 62 GHEHTZE “At midnight (at dividing half)...”

Verse 63 GHEHDER “A companion I am...”

Verse 64 GHEH-SEDK “...Thy mercy (or favour)...”

Verses 65-72. TETH Verse 65 TOHV “...good, goodness, kindness of God...”

Verse 66 TOHV “...good...”

Verse 67 TEHREM “Before...”

Verse 68 TOHV ATA “Thou art good...”

Verse 69 TAH-PHALI “...have forged (against me)...”

Verse 70 TAH-PHASH “...without feeling (fat as grease)...”

Verse 71 TOHV-LI “...for my good...”

Verse 72 TOHV-LI “...better to me...”

Verses 73-80. YOD Verse 73 YAH-DAK “Thy hand...”

Verse 74 YAHREHK “They who fear Thee (reverence)...”

Verse 75 YAHDAGT “I know (perceive, am aware)...”

Verse 76 YAHINI “Let be...”

Verse 77 YABOHNI “Let come to me...”

Verse 78 YABOHSHU “Let be ashamed...”

Verse 79 YESHEEVLI “Let turn to me...”

Verse 80 YAHI “Let!!...”

Verses 81-88. KAPH Verse 81 KAH-LATAH “...(is) being consumed (spent)...”

Verse 82 KAH-LAU “...fail (1:e. my eyes)...”

Verse 83 KEE “For...”

Verse 84 KAH-MEH “As what...”

Verse 85 KAH-RAHLI “...they have dug for me...”

Verse 86 KOL “All...”

Verse 87 KAM-GAT “...in a little while...”

Verse 88 KA-GHEHSEDAK “...by Thy mercy...”

Verses 89-96. LAMED Verse 89 LA-GOH-LAHM “For ever...”

Verse 90 LA-DOHR “...to generation...”

Verse 91 LA-MISH-PAHTAK “...according to Thy judgments...”

Verse 92 LO-LEH-Y “Except...”

Verse 93 LA-GOH-LAHM “...for ever...”

Verse 94 LAKA-ATA “To Thee I am...”

Verse 95 LO-KAH-VAH “...for me waited...”

Verse 96 LA-KOHL “...to all...”

Verses 97-104. MEM Verse 97 ME-H “O how...!”

Verse 98 ME-AH-YAVI “...than mine enemies...”

Verse 99 ME-KOHL “...than all...”

Verse 100 ME-ZAH-KEHNUM “...than the ancients...”

Verse 101 ME-KOHL “...from every...”

Verse 102 ME-MISH-PAHTK “...from Thy judgments...”

Verse 103 ME-H “How...!”

Verse 104 ME-PIK-KOO-DEEMAK “Through Thy precepts...”

Verses 105-112. NUN Verse 105 NOOR (or NEER) “...a light (lamp)...”

Verse 106 NASAVAT “I have sworn...”

Verse 107 NAGAHNAHT “I am afflicted...”

Verse 108 NADAHVAT “...free offering (my mouth’s)...”

Verse 109 NAFASHI “My life (soul)...”

Verse 110 NAHTHANU “(The wicked) have given...”

Verse 111 NAHGHALT “...I have inherited...”

Verse 112 NAHTAHT “I have bowed...”

Verses 113-120. SAMECH Verse 113 SEH-GAPHEEM “...vain thoughts (half hearted)...”

Verse 114 SITH-RI “...my covert...”

Verse 115 SOOROO “Turn away (O evildoers)...”

Verse 116 SAH-MACHNI “Uphold me (sustain)...”

Verse 117 SAH-GADNI “Hold me up...”.

Verse 118 SAH-LAHT “Thou hast trampled...”

Verse 119 SEEGUM “...(like) dross...”

Verse 120 SAH-MAR “(My flesh) has shivered...”

Verses 121-128. AIN Verse 121 GAH-SAHT “I have done...”

Verse 122 GAH-RAV “Be surety...”

Verse 123 GAHI-YINI “My eyes...”

Verse 124 GAH-SAH “Deal (with)...”

Verse 125 GEH-VEDK “...Thy servant...”

Verse 126 GEHTH “It is (time for)...”

Verse 127 GAL-KEN “Therefore...”

Verse 128 GAL-KEN “So...”

Verses 129-136. PE Verse 129 PEH-LEHUT “...(are) wonderful...”

Verse 130 PEH-THAGH “The entrance of...”

Verse 131 PEHI “...my mouth...”

Verse 132 PAH-NAH “Turn (to)...”

Verse 133 PAH-GAMI “...my steps...”

Verse 134 PAH-DAH-NI “Redeem me...”

Verse 135 PAH-NAK “...Thy face...”

Verse 136 PEH-LEG “Rivers (of)...”

Verses 137-144. TSADDI Verse 137 TZAD-DEEK “Righteous...”.

Verse 138 TZAH-VAHT “...Thou hast enjoined (commanded)...”

Verse 139 TZAH-MATTHANI “...has eaten me up...”

Verse 140 TZAH-RAPH “...pure (is)...”

Verse 141 TZAH-GEER “...small...”

Verse 142 TZAD-DEKTAK “Thy righteousness...”

Verse 143 TZAHR “Distress...”

Verse 144 TZAH-DAK “The righteousness...”

Verses 145-152. QOPH Verse 145 KAH-RAHT “I cried...”

Verse 146 KAH-RAHTOOK “I cried to Thee...”

Verse 147 KAH-DAMT “I go before...”

Verse 148 KAH-DAM “...go before...”

Verse 149 KOHLI “...my voice (saying)...”

Verse 150 KAH-RAVU “(They) draw near...”

Verse 151 KAH-ROV “Thou art near...”

Verse 152 KEH-DEM “...of old...”

Verses 153-160. RESH Verse 153 RAH “Look on...”

Verse 154 REEVH “Contend (for my cause)...”

Verse 155 RAH-GHOHK “...far off (is)...”

Verse 156 RAH-GHAMEEMK “...Thy tender mercies...”

Verse 157 RAVEEM “Many (are)...”

Verse 158 RAH-AHT “I saw...”

Verse 159 RAH (KEN) “See (how)...”

Verse 160 ROHSH “The sum of (head of)...”

Verses 161-168. SIN/SHIN Verse 161 SHEREEM “Princes...”

Verse 162 SHOO-SHAN “(I) rejoice...”

Verse 163 SHEH-KER “...lying...”.

Verse 164 SHEH-VAG “Seven (times)...”

Verse 165 SHAH-LOHM “...peace...”.

Verse 166 SHAH-VART “...I have hoped...”

Verse 167 SHAH-MARH “My soul has kept...”

Verse 168 SHAH-MART “I have kept...”

Verses 169-176. TAV Verse 169 TAKAH-REHV “Let come near...”

Verse 170 TA-BOH “Let (my prayer) come...”

Verse 171 TABAGNA “...shall pour forth (belch out)...”

Verse 172 TAGANA “...shall answer...”

Verse 173 TAH-YADOK “Let (Thy hand)...”

Verse 174 TAH-AVIT “I have longed...”

Verse 175 TAH-NAPHSHI “Let (my soul)...”

Verse 176 TAH-GAHT “I have gone astray...”

Cor Bruins.

(To be continued, if the Lord will).

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God's Consideration of Humiliation. In the following article we will consider four kings of Judah and Israel who are said to have humbled themselves: Rehoboam, Ahab, Hezekiah and Manasseh. Their circumstances were very different, but we will see that in each case God took account of their humiliation, whatever the depth of it. This fact provides a practical lesson for us. The Humiliation of Rehoboam. 2 Chronicles 12:5-8 The hardness and pride of Rehoboam, king Solomon's son, had been the direct cause of the division of the kingdom of Israel, though elsewhere the divine decree had announced it as a judgment on the behaviour of Solomon.

After the convulsions which had marked the beginning of his reign and a period of three years which seemed to be a promising start, Rehoboam "forsook the law of Jehovah, and all Israel with him" (2 Chronicles 11:17; 2 Chronicles 12:1). God then sent the king of one of the great powers of the era, Egypt, against them, with an immense army. The fortified cities of Judah were taken. Rehoboam and his chiefs took refuge in the city of Jerusalem, and there the prophet Shemaiah came to find him. He gave him this brief and solemn analysis of the situation: "Thus saith Jehovah: Ye have forsaken Me, and therefore have I also left you in the hand of Shishak" (2 Chronicles 12:5).

What is remarkable is that Rehoboam did not harden himself. He did not silence the prophet, as many others would have done, but, "the princes of Israel and the king humbled themselves; and they said, Jehovah is righteous" (2 Chronicles 12:6). It is not easy to say, "Jehovah is righteous", when one is under the judgment of God. Our tendency is rather to attempt to justify ourselves.

Although failure does not escape the eye of God, neither does any right action. "When Jehovah saw that they humbled themselves...", He said, "I will not destroy them, but I will grant them a little deliverance; and My wrath shall not be poured out upon Jerusalem by the hand of Shishak. Nevertheless they shall be his servants" (2 Chronicles 12:7-8).

We may think that the repentance of Rehoboam was not very profound, since the history of his life finishes with this sad conclusion: "And he did evil, for he applied not his heart to seek Jehovah" (2 Chronicles 12:14). Nevertheless, there was humiliation, and God took account of it. The judgment was attenuated: "I will grant them a little deliverance". The Humiliation of Ahab. 1 Kings 21:27-29

"Surely there was none like to Ahab, who did sell himself to do evil in the sight of Jehovah, Jezebel his wife urging him on" (1 Kings 21:25). The story of Ahab is a sad one, as presented to us in 1 Kings chapters 16 to 22. It is initially mixed with that of the prophet Elijah, whom God had raised up in those times of darkness and apostasy, to seek to bring the heart of the people of Israel back to Him. More than once Ahab heard God's warnings and saw the unfolding of His power and grace, but his heart was hardened. In chapter 21 we read how he seized the vineyard of Naboth, after Naboth had been stoned on Jezebel's orders. An iniquitous trial had condemned the just man and made it appear as if the corrupt king had defended the interests of God. At the moment when

Ahab came to take possession of the land which he had coveted and seized, Elijah met him and delivered a severe message on behalf of God: “In the place where the dogs licked the blood of Naboth shall the dogs lick thy blood, even thine”, and, “Behold, I will bring evil upon thee, and will take away thy posterity, and will cut off from Ahab every male...Him that dieth of Ahab in the city shall the dogs eat, and him that dieth in the field shall the fowl of the heavens eat” (1 Kings 21:19; 1 Kings 21:21; 1 Kings 21:24).

Unexpectedly, this man bowed before the announcement of divine judgment: “And it came to pass when Ahab heard these words, that he rent his garments, and put sackcloth upon his flesh, and fasted, and lay in sackcloth, and went softly” (1 Kings 21:27). Would this good action be followed up? Would there be an attitude which showed repentance? Alas, we must note that there was not. In chapter 22 it was he again who hated and persecuted the prophet of Jehovah, and God made him perish by an arrow fired at random, which pierced him through a weak point in his armour. The fear of judgment seemed for a moment to have brought about the conversion of this man, but Satan managed to ensnare his prey and erase the effect of the Word of God. He died a reprobate. But what is most striking in this story is that God, who knows the end from the beginning, was not indifferent to the humiliation of Ahab. The humiliation was only momentary and superficial, but God, as far as is righteous, took account of it. Elijah was, perhaps, not inclined to think much of it, but whatever the case may be, God pointed it out to him: “Seest thou how Ahab humbleth himself before Me?” (1 Kings 21:29). God delayed the execution of judgment till a later date: “Because he humbleth himself before me, I will not bring the evil in his days: in his son’s days will I bring the evil upon his house” (1 Kings 21:29). How much the grace of God surpasses our thoughts! The Humiliation of Hezekiah.

2 Chronicles 32:24-26 The Scriptures relate only one failure of this faithful king. Towards the end of a life marked by devotion to Jehovah and confidence in Him throughout the greatest of trials, Hezekiah had to learn what was in his own heart. “God left him, to try him” (2 Chronicles 32:31). During the visit of the ambassadors of Babylon, he was flattered by being honoured by the important people of this world, and sought to put himself on their level by showing them all his treasures. God sums up Hezekiah’s attitude by these few words: “his heart was lifted up” (2 Chronicles 32:25). Such words are especially serious for a man who spent all his life with God. Everything that the grace of God had produced in his heart during his life gave him a greater responsibility. For this reason God sent the prophet Isaiah to him to open his eyes to the true character of his behaviour, and announced to him that all the treasures which he was proud of would soon be taken away to the palace of Babylon, along with some of his descendants. The second book of Kings and the book of the prophet Isaiah recount Hezekiah’s reaction: “Good is the Word of Jehovah which thou hast spoken” (2 Kings 20:19; Isaiah 39:8). If we only had these two books we might have some doubts about the meaning of this reply, as Hezekiah added “there shall be peace and truth in my days”. However, the book of Chronicles clearly says: “Hezekiah humbled himself for the pride of his heart, he and the inhabitants of Jerusalem” (2 Chronicles 32:26). This defines the character of his declaration, “Good is the Word of Jehovah which thou hast spoken”. The heart which had been lifted up was brought down and bowed under the discipline of God. It is no small thing to consider as “good” the word of judgment pronounced against us! The book of Chronicles links the humiliation of Hezekiah with the fact that divine judgment was deferred: “the wrath of Jehovah came not upon them in the days of Hezekiah” (2

Chronicles 32:26). The king was not alone. His court and his people had been united with him in pride and worldliness, and then united with him in humiliation. God took account of this. The judgment that He pronounced would be carried out, but later. Nearly a century would pass before its accomplishment through Nebuchadnezzar. The Humiliation of Manasseh.

2 Chronicles 33:10-13 The account which opens chapter 33 of 2 Chronicles is terrifying. How could such a pious king as Hezekiah have a son like Manasseh? “He wrought evil beyond measure in the sight of Jehovah, to provoke Him to anger” (2 Chronicles 33:6). “And Manasseh led Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem astray, to do more evil than the nations that Jehovah had destroyed from before the children of Israel” (2 Chronicles 33:9). In His patience God spoke to Manasseh and to His people, to endeavour to bring them back to Himself, but they paid no attention.

Then sudden judgment fell on the impious king. Jehovah caused the chiefs of the king of Assyria to come against him, and Manasseh was bound in chains and taken away to Babylon. We would tend to say: “he got what he deserved, it is over for him and so much the better!” But God has resources which we can scarcely imagine. In prison, in distress, Manasseh came to himself and besought Jehovah. It is written that he “humbled himself greatly before the God of his fathers” (2 Chronicles 33:12). God “was intreated of him and heard his supplication, and brought him again to Jerusalem” (2 Chronicles 33:13). What marvellous grace of God, which infinitely surpasses or thoughts!

Re-established in his position, Manasseh produced what John the Baptist later called “fruits worthy of repentance” (Luke 3:8). He demolished the idols which he had erected, and the altars which were consecrated to them, and sought to bring the people back from the wrong way in which he had driven them; a difficult work and necessarily incomplete!

Practical Consequences for Us

Firstly, the four accounts which we have considered are a genuine encouragement to humiliation. “Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God” (1 Peter 5:6). “But to this man will I look: to the afflicted and contrite in spirit, and who trembleth at My Word” (Isaiah 66:2). In considering our poor state and our failures, surely we have cause to deeply humble ourselves? God shows us through His Word that He will never be indifferent to our repentance. In grace He will appreciate, in a just measure, the reality of the judgment which we are inclined to apply to our own ways. May a deeper knowledge of this bring us more to His feet, with a broken spirit! “A broken and a contrite heart, O God, Thou wilt not despise” (Psalms 51:17).

Secondly, these accounts give us instruction as to our collective life, in relation to the failures of our brethren. According to the New Testament, we must stand firm considering those who have fallen or who walk in a disorderly way. But the Scriptures show us that we must — as far as the Spirit of God enables us to discern — take account of the smallest sign of return, as the story of Ahab in particular shows us.

J. A. Monard.

Psalms 119:1-176 (4) (Continued from page 128) 1. ALEPH (1000) — OX The first letter of the Hebrew alphabet is aleph, which means “ox” or “cow”. This name is derived from its figure in the

most ancient alphabet, which represents the rude outlines of the head of an ox. It is still found in the remains of Phoenicean inscriptions, and is taken from the ancient sign of the “constellation” taurus (bull). “Eleph”, which is very similar, means “elephant”. The words “aleph” and “eleph” come from the root meaning, “to learn”, or “to accustom oneself”. Thus, the elephant is the largest animal that has ever been “tamed” by man (or has been “accustomed” to man). God delights in “reconciling” man to Himself, in blessing man, so that he may be “accustomed” to God, and to other men, living in peace with all men, as Romans 12:18 exhorts. This living in peace with one another is what Jehovah wanted for the “thousands of Israel” (Numbers 10:36). In the letter “aleph” we have the thought also of an ox tamed and accustomed to man and in service to man. Lastly, the word for lion in Hebrew is “ari”, which also starts with the letter “aleph”. As a numeral it stands for one, but when there are two dots above it the value is one thousand. The first and second letters of the Greek alphabet are “alpha” and “beta”, from which we get our word alphabet. These two Greek letters have no meaning. In the Hebrew language they are also the first two letters, aleph and beth, and together they form the word “ab”, which means “father”. This shows how prominent the “Fatherhood” of God is in the Scriptures.

Summary

Right at the beginning of this Psalm we have the type of the Lord Jesus Christ as the one who said: “I am among you as He that serveth” and, I “came not to be ministered unto, but to minister” (Luke 22:27; Matthew 20:28). He gave Himself, the supreme sacrifice. For the heart of the believer, who sees in Him the burnt offering, He is typified in the “ox”. This offering typified the largest apprehension of His Person.

Verses 1-24. Resources for the Pilgrim Journey Section One. Verses 1-8 : “The Happy Ones in the Way”

Verses 1-3. Reasons why they are such happy people:

Verse 1: ASH-REY...“Blessed...” The word for “Blessed” in the Hebrew is in the plural, and therefore describes the “abundant blessings” that are the portion of all true believers in Christ: “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenlies in Christ...” (Ephesians 1:3). a. Consider their character: “...the perfect...”.

They were not always “perfect”, but once sinners, every one going his own way, dead in trespasses and sins. But Christ gave Himself as a sacrifice for sin, to redeem sinners both from the guilt and power of sin.

It is interesting that the “ox” signifies the greatest measure of appreciation of the Person and sacrifice of Christ in the book of Leviticus. This Psalm begins by reminding us of the blessed Person of Christ and His worthiness and greatness, and what He means to the Father. Here in this first verse the Lord Jesus Christ is brought before us as the supreme sacrifice for sin. The last letter of the Hebrew alphabet is the letter “tau” which means a “sign” or a “cross”. We see therefore that the Psalm begins and ends by reminding us of the Person and death of Christ on the cross for sinners, that they might be “perfect” before God, in Him. The word “perfect” has the meaning of “blameless, complete, whole, entire, sound” (Exodus 12:5; Leviticus 3:5; Psalms 19:8). b. Notice where they walk: “...in the way...in the law of Jehovah”. In Isaiah 53:6 we read: “.. we have turned

every one to his own way...” That was in their unconverted days. Now they are the Lord’s. They have “found” the true way: “...Jesus says... I am the way, and the truth, and the life...” (John 14:6). c. See how they are making progress.

After being born again there must be growth. Not only have they found the way, but they are walking in it. They are making progress. The Hebrew verb for “walking” is “Hah-Lach” and has the meaning of going on, or going forward. “Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the wicked...” (Psalms 1:1). This is very practical. We are “in Christ” and, “As therefore ye have received the Christ, Jesus the Lord, walk in Him, rooted and built up in Him...” (Colossians 2:6-7).

Verse 2: ASH-REY...“Happy and abundantly blessed...”

There is a double blessing here: a. “They...keep His testimonies...”.

Remember what we said about this word “testimonies”? It testifies what God is, and it also shows me what I ought to be. Before we can “keep” His testimonies, we must first have received them, accepted them, and be willing to obey. b. They “seek Him with the whole heart...”

Notice that they seek “Him”; they seek to please Him, to be more like Him. This is not a merely “intellectual” activity, but it is a question of the whole heart being engaged. My heart yearning after Him day by day, all day long. “Ye shall seek Me, and find Me, when ye shall search for Me with all your heart”, is the wonderful promise (Jeremiah 29:13).

Verse 3: APH...“Also (they do no iniquity)...”

Here we have a double purpose: a. Negative: “...they...do no iniquity...” As they “keep” His testimonies, and seek the Lord with their whole heart, staying close to Him, they do not sin. It is not characteristic of a true Christian that he practises sin. Rather, an act of sin in the life of a believer is considered an “accident”, totally uncharacteristic of his position. “...if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous...” (1 John 3:9; 1 John 2:1). b. Positive: “...they walk in His ways.” They walk with Him, and in His strength. He is the “way” in which they walk; like Him. “He that saith he abideth in Him, ought himself also so to walk, even as He walked” (1 John 2:6). The effect of “abiding” in Him is seen in our “walk”.

Verses 4-6. What is the secret of their happiness?

Verse 4: ATA...“Thou (hast commanded us)...”

1. There is first of all complete submission. Remember that a “commandment” is a divine imperative decree: it is an order. Whether to Adam or to Noah, they had to submit. Adam did not, but Noah did submit. Are we willing to submit our will to His will? This submission is not imposed upon us, we are not forced to submit to our Lord Jesus! That would be servile. No, it is because we love Him that we willingly and gladly submit to Him. The verse continues: “...to keep thy precepts diligently”. There is nothing superficial about this submission! It is not a partial submission, but complete. There is no reserve, no holding back part, no hesitation, but a glad and whole-hearted surrender.

Verse 5: AH-GHALEY...“Oh that! (Would that!)...”

2. Then there is next a complete abandon. This is a prayer! It is the deep longing of the heart expressed in a sigh! There is a profound consciousness of complete weakness and inability of ourselves to do anything that is pleasing and acceptable to God. Here is a cry for assistance, for help, for power! Surely the Lord hears such a sigh! Surely the Holy Spirit will direct you and me to "...keep Thy statutes", to do His will and not our own! A "statute" is a divine direction to obtain our obedience, or to arrest disobedience.

Verse 6: AHZ..."THEN...then shall I not be..."

3. Lastly there is complete confidence. "Then": consequently! He has learned from experience. He has learned from past mistakes. He has learned that he will not be ashamed, when he has "respect" unto all the Lord's commandments! He says as it were: "Yes, looking back I am ashamed of those times when I acted in self-confidence and in my own strength and wisdom, and failed miserably. But now I have learned not to have this 'self-confidence', but to have complete confidence in the Lord".

We must learn not to pick and choose with regard to the Lord's will for us. All His ways are blessedness and peace, all His will is good and acceptable and perfectly suited to our needs.

Verses 7-8. The happy results:

Verse 7: AHDAK..."I will thank Thee..."

We saw in verse six that he had learned some very important and useful lessons. Here in verse seven we see what more he has learned by submitting himself and surrendering himself to the Lord. He has "learned the judgments of the Lord's righteousness." What does that mean? The judgments of His righteousness are the decisions He makes concerning right or wrong, which give expression and put into execution the righteous character of God. We have much to learn about His "judgments". We must learn that He always judges righteously, never arbitrarily or with any prejudice, as men judge. We must learn now on earth from Him, how to judge like Him, so that later, when we reign with Him a thousand years, we shall be able to put into practice what we have learned. Whatever He thinks best is good and right, even when He must discipline as a tender and compassionate Father. One day, when we shall stand before His judgment seat to be recompensed, we shall praise Him with uprighteousness of heart for all His righteous judgments.

Verse 8: ASHAMAR..."I will keep..."

Meanwhile we continue our walk as Christians here on earth. What is to be our ambition? "I will keep Thy statutes...", is what the Psalmist said he would do. "Keeping" means to observe and put into practice. His "statutes" are His directives to obtain our obedience. "If ye love Me, keep My commandments", the Lord Jesus said (John 14:15). As well as many other things, that means that we love one another with the same divine love that He Himself has poured into our hearts by the Holy Spirit (Romans 5:5). So there is divine provision to enable us to do His bidding. All this will keep us humble, realizing that of ourselves we can do nothing, as the Lord Jesus said: "...without Me ye can do nothing" (John 15:5). The Psalmist finishes this first section of eight verses with a prayer: "...O forsake me not utterly", but there is no need for us, believers in the present dispensation of grace, to think that the Lord will ever abandon us or that the Holy Spirit will leave us or be taken from us, for He abides with us for ever (John 14:16). However, this should not make

us careless, but encourage us to continue on our way with this constant prayer: “Lord Jesus keep me close to Thyself”. From the above arrangement the reader will notice that every verses starts with the same letter “aleph”. In the next section each of the eight verses begins with the letter “beth”.

Cor Bruins.

(To be continued, if the Lord will).

“The Sermon on the Mount” (2) Blessed are they that mourn (Matthew 5:4)

Nobody likes to mourn. Many prefer to avoid those who are mourning. It is so difficult to find words of comfort when somebody mourns the death of a relative or a friend.When the Lord Jesus Christ called them that mourn “blessed” in this second “beatitude” He was not thinking of mourning over the loss of a beloved person. No, when He said “Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted”, the meaning was a completely different one.

Here we are concerned with the kingdom of God and He had come as King (see Matthew 12:28). How was He received by His people? “He came unto His own, and His own received Him not” (John 1:11). When He was born, there was no room for them in the inn, king Herod tried to kill Him, and His relatives once said that He was like one demented. Even His disciples, who were closest to Him during the three years of His public service, often did not understand Him; one denied Him, and one even betrayed Him to His enemies!

Yes, our Lord had much reason for mourning. He cried over Jerusalem and said about the city, “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not! Behold, your house is left unto you desolate. For I say unto you, Ye shall not see Me henceforth, till ye shall say, Blessed is He that cometh in the Name of the Lord” (Matthew 23:37-39). After His appearance in glory for the establishment of the millennium He will be joyfully welcomed by His people and will be truly “comforted”. The believing remnant of the Jews will also go through deep mourning during the great tribulation, shortly before this appearance of Christ. They will mourn the hardened state of the hearts of the people who will follow the Antichrist, and mourn the guilt of the Jewish people and their complicity in the death of the Messiah. But they, too, will be comforted by the Lord Himself: “the Lord shall yet comfort Zion, and shall yet choose Jerusalem” (Zechariah 1:17). “As one whom his mother comforteth, so will I comfort you; and ye shall be comforted in Jerusalem” (Isaiah 66:13. See also Isaiah 40:1; Isaiah 49:13; Isaiah 51:3; Isaiah 51:12; Isaiah 61:2). Are there not reasons for a similar mourning among God’s people in the present day? Do we see how the Lord Jesus is being dishonoured within Christendom, how the Word of God is not taken seriously even by true Christians, how hardness of heart instead of love, self-will instead of obedience, meaningless formalism instead of true dependence on the Lord, and worldliness instead of separation from evil are spreading? Do we pass by carelessly and indifferently, or are we above such things in a judging, self-righteous manner? Or do we do what is right and pleasing to our Lord: do we really mourn over the Lord being thus dishonoured?We find such a mourning in the Old Testament with Nehemiah, who said to king Artaxerxes: “why should not my countenance be sad, when the city, the place of my fathers’ sepulchres, lieth waste, and the gates thereof are consumed with fire?” (Nehemiah 2:3).

We also read of Daniel and Ezra that they mourned over the unfaithfulness of God's people and the consequences of that unfaithfulness (see Daniel 9:1-27 and Ezra 9:1-15; Ezra 10:1-44). We can learn from what these men of God did. Considering their age, none of these men could be regarded as personally responsible. They were not self-righteous and did not think of themselves as above their people. They confessed their people's sin and included themselves in their guilt. They understood that they themselves were no better and that they formed part of this people. That is why God owned them and answered them. That was their comfort.If in our day we take such an attitude, then the beatitude is valid for us as well: "Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted." Surely this will be the case in perfection only at the Lord's return, but even now in this prospect we have the comfort that God Himself will wipe away all tears from our eyes, and there will be no more mourning (see Revelation 21:4).

Arend Remmers.

1 John 4:19 Because Thou first loved me I love Thee Lord, Sweet truth revealed to me In Thy blest word;

Thoughts of Thy wondrous grace Pure deepest joy doth raise, My heart o'erflows in praise Saviour, to Thee.

Father, Thy love I know, For Thou hast given Thy well-beloved Son, Sent Him from heaven:

Sent Him to show Thy heart, Thy boundless love impart, And take us where Thou art, Cleansed and forgiven.

Fruit of His work complete, Made meet to see Thy house of perfect love, My home to be.

Yet, by Thy Spirit now, Can I before Thee bow, In true devotion vow My love to Thee.

Respond, my feeble soul To love divine!

Closed be my heart's desires To all but Thine.

Hush every outside voice;

Thou, Thou art all my choice, O, let my soul rejoice In Thee alone.

Muriel J. Flett (1922-1987). The Third Epistle of John

Verse 1

John again takes up his pen to write a brief letter to the well-beloved Gaius. Like the previous epistle to the elect lady, this is brief enough to have been sent out on a single leaf of papyrus. Again, an urgent matter had arisen in John's pastoral sphere that required prompt attention. He expected to visit Gaius soon. Since Gaius was among the more common names in the first century Roman world, it is perhaps best not to rush into attempting to identify the recipient of this epistle with those of the same name in Acts 19:29, Acts 20:4 or 1 Corinthians 1:14. The Gaius of Romans 16:23 is described by Paul as "mine host". John's well-beloved friend certainly knew something of the privilege of exercising Christian hospitality. John's affection for him was sincere. The truth was the sphere in which their mutual affection flourished.

Verse 2

There was apparently no need to pray for Gaius's spiritual prosperity, for John knew that his soul prospered. Gaius seems to have been an exemplary believer. John nevertheless expressed his desire regarding Gaius's material well-being. The word translated here "be in health" is found in Luke 7:10; Luke 15:27 where, in the King James translation, it is rendered "whole" and "safe and sound". When Paul wrote to the assembly in Thessalonica, he prayed that their whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ (1 Thessalonians 5:23).

Verses 3-4 The fidelity of Gaius's conduct was a source of great joy to the apostle (even an apostle needed encouragement). Here he was refreshed by good news from visiting brethren. John's soul was thrilled to hear about one of his children1. The testimony Gaius had is one that ought to characterise us in these last days. Is our walk in the path of truth or are we conducting our lives on some fondly cherished prejudice which we vainly think is Christianity?

Verses 5-6

Again, the elder addresses Gaius with the affectionate term "beloved". His work was the fruit of his faith. Hebrews 13:1 speaks of "brotherly love", philadelphia, and in 13:2 of being not forgetful to "entertain strangers." The two words "entertain strangers" have been used to translate one Greek word — philoxenia, which literally means "love of strangers". Here in verses 5 and 6 we find love operating in a similar way. The strangers were brethren hitherto unknown. The truth is emphasised before John takes up practical love. Mr. William Kelly writes, "One must have the truth intact before we can speak of love or exercise it: else we may be helping Satan against Christ under the name of charity"2. Those who had been ministered to by Gaius could only witness to his love. Gaius did not live for himself, but was a brother who proved his kindness in caring for and serving others.

"If thou bring forward" (verse 6)

John desired to encourage Gaius to go on in his excellent work. His chief delight was to care for those who had gone out into full time service for the Lord. He set them forward in a manner worthy of God, not just after a godly sort — see the marginal note in the King James translation. It is right that those who have gone forth for "His Name's sake" should be supported and helped on. Paul expressed his confidence in his brethren at Rome that by them he would be brought on his way to Spain (Romans 15:24. See also 1 Corinthians 16:6; 2 Corinthians 1:16 and Titus 3:13). The phrase "bring forward on their journey" suggests that the financial needs of the Lord's servants would be met by the saints. With the sacrifices Gaius would make, God would be well pleased. Had not the Hebrews been instructed: "to do good, and to communicate, (share) forget not: for with such sacrifices God is well pleased" (Hebrews 13:16). This service was most comely. While 1 Corinthians 16:1-24 teaches us that much of what is given is into the assembly collection, it is evident that further resources should also be devoted to the Lord's interests of an assembly character.

1The phrase, "my children", seems akin to Paul's, "mine own son", and suggests John's part in the conversion of Gaius (Titus 1:4).

2Brief hints on the Epistles of John by W. Kelly, 1903.

Verse 7

“For His Name’s sake” can also be rendered “for the sake of the Name”. Only one Name matters, the Name of Christ. The travellers were not tourists, but had a mission. They were in the Lord’s service and the Lord’s people were to take account of this fact. They went forth without any desire to profit from the world. They might be needy but they would not stoop to ask for support from the world. Rather, these emissaries of Christ sought the good of the Gentiles — to bring them the truth as it is in Jesus. They maintained their dignity as being His servants and He would supply their needs, albeit through the saints. How unlike this primitive state is so much that passes in Christendom today. Fund raising and soliciting monetary donations are so prominent a feature of Christendom now that not to be asking for money seems strange to some. An unconverted friend visited our meeting room and searched in vain for a box to make his offering. He was truly perplexed. “How does your church work?” he asked.

Paul condemns the many pedlars who were making gain by corrupting the Word of God (2 Corinthians 2:17). He refused to be chargeable to those to whom he preached the gospel of God (1 Thessalonians 2:1-9; 2 Thessalonians 3:8).

Another thing to note is that these faithful itinerant preachers, who were without any visible means of support, were also outside any formal missionary society or committee. Para-church organisations were not known in apostolic times3. Neither did the church send them forth. Doubtless they had the confidence and fellowship of their brethren locally and where they served, but there is no mention of any man-made structure or committee involved in their calling or support. We need to maintain this Scriptural order and not resort to man’s carnal devices, which usurp the place of Christ, and have many pitfalls.

3Readers would find “Even So Send I You”, by Cor Bruins, helpful on this point.

“We...ought” (verse 8) This verse opens with a statement of our obligation. Of course the assembly delights to acknowledge and support those sent out by the Lord. It is evident that we Christians must support Christian enterprises. It was not to be the privilege of Gaius alone: the apostle writes, “we”, and joined himself with all who should support and receive the zealous servants of Christ. They would receive nothing from the Gentiles, but we should receive them, thereby being co-workers and so playing our part in spreading the truth.

Verse 9

We now come to a name which still festers with disgrace. Down through the centuries this dark blot stands recorded against a man who loved to usurp Christ’s place (See Colossians 1:18). John had written some letter, not in the canon of the New Testament, which had provoked Diotrephes’ pride. The apostles of old were, and their writings still are, the highest authority on earth in the assembly. When apostles wrote they expected obedience (2 Thessalonians 3:4; 1 Corinthians 14:37). There was to be no apostolic succession. Diotrephes was evidently the thin end of the wedge. Monarchial bishops were functioning by AD 120 (See the article “The Rise of Clergy in Early Christianity” at page 117 of volume1 of this magazine).

Verse 10

If John should come, he would be present in apostolic power and would certainly bring up the matter. The word “prating” conveys the idea of nonsensical talk. Diotrephes was opposed to John’s position and sought to undermine it with baseless and spiteful slander. He clearly had pretensions to ecclesiastical authority. He was more concerned about his own name than the Name to which the humble preachers had addicted themselves.

Verse 11

John turned then to give a word of personal counsel to his beloved Gaius. He was to imitate that which is good. John obliquely questioned whether Diotrephes was a believer at all: “but he that doeth evil hath not seen God”. The true Christian is “of God” (1 John 4:4; 1 John 4:6; 1 John 3:6).

Verse 12 The truth which Demetrius professed was embodied in him4. His life closely resembled it and was in conformity to the truth. Gaius could therefore have confidence in Demetrius, a man honoured of God. It is a good thing in an evil day to look for others who are like-minded and in sympathy with the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship. John’s approval of Demetrius would carry weight with Gaius. He need not be alone, for the Lord would provide others with whom he could have true fellowship.

Verses 13-14

John “had many things to write”: much more than could be contained on a single sheet of papyrus. However, the epistle shows that the urgent need was to warn and encourage Gaius. He would soon enjoy refreshing fellowship with the elder. Undoubtedly he would contribute with moral influence what was needed to help in the strife-ridden situation.

“Peace be to thee” is a greeting familiar to Jews but here so appropriate in view of the pressure of Diotrephes’ maliciousness. The designation “Friends” is unique in the epistles. The Lord called his disciples “My friends” (John 15:14). Their privilege to be such was conditional upon obedience. Gaius was to greet the friends by name. They did not form an amalgam of nameless ones whose individuality and personality did not matter. Gaius was not to greet in a vague way, but everyone, individually, by name. The assembly should be a closely knit community where all know each other personally and are able to greet one another by name.

4Mr. H. A. Ironside suggests that Demetrius was “the servant who had been so ruthlessly barred-out by this self elected leader”, Diotrephes.

Conclusions: The truth as to Christ was the passport among Christians.

Hospitality and support were encouraged to be exercised to all believers who were in the Lord’s service. In spite of dark blots in the testimony, we may take encouragement from faithful men such as Gaius and Demetrius.

Spiritual resources are available in turbulent times to those who obey Christ’s commandments.

E. N. C. The bibliography is as given at the end of the previous article on the Second Epistle of John (page 101) but with the following additions: Brief hints on the Epistles of John, by W. Kelly, T. Weston 1903; Addresses on the Epistles of John, etc., by H. A. Ironside, Loizeaux, 1931. From Our Archive The True Grace of God Wherein Ye Stand (1 Peter 5:12)

God is made known to us as the “God of all grace”, and the position in which we are set is that of tasting “that the Lord is gracious”. How hard it is for us to believe this, that the Lord is gracious. The natural feeling of our hearts is, I know that “Thou art an austere man”; there is want in all of us naturally of the understanding of the grace of God.

There is sometimes the thought that grace implies God’s passing over sin, but no, grace supposes sin to be so horribly bad a thing that God cannot tolerate it: were it in the power of man, after being unrighteous and evil, to patch up his ways and mend himself so as to stand before God, there would be no need of grace. The very fact of the Lord’s being gracious shows sin to be so evil a thing that, man being a sinner, his state is utterly ruined and hopeless and nothing but free grace will do for him — can meet his need.

We must learn what God is to us, not by our own thoughts, but by what He has revealed Himself to be and that is “the God of all grace”. The moment I understand that I am a sinful man, and yet that it was because the Lord knew the full extent of my sin and what its hatefulness was, that He came to me, I understand what grace is. Faith makes me see that God is greater than my sin and not that my sin is greater than God. The Lord that I have known as laying down His life for me, is the same Lord I have to do with every day of my life, and His dealings with me are on the same principles of grace. The great secret of growth is the looking up to the Lord as gracious. How precious, how strengthening it is, to know that Jesus is at this moment feeling and exercising the same love towards me as when He died on the cross for me. This is a truth that should be used by us in the most common everyday circumstances of life. Suppose, for instance, I find an evil temper in myself, which I feel it difficult to overcome. Let me bring it to Jesus as my Friend and virtue goes out of Him for my need. Faith should be ever thus in exercise against temptations and not simply my own effort; my own effort against it will never be sufficient. The source of real strength is in the sense of the Lord’s being gracious. The natural man in us always disbelieves Christ as the only source of strength and of every blessing. Suppose my soul is out of communion, the natural heart says, “I must correct the cause of this before I can come to Christ”, but He is gracious; and knowing this, the way is to return to Him at once, just as we are, and then humble ourselves deeply before Him. It is only in Him and from Him that we shall find that which will restore our souls. Humbleness in His presence is the only real humbleness. If we own ourselves in His presence to be just what we are, we shall find that He will show us nothing but grace.

It is Jesus who gives abiding rest to our souls and not what our thoughts about ourselves may be. Faith never thinks about that which is in ourselves as its ground of rest; it receives, loves and apprehends what God has revealed and what are God’s thoughts about Jesus, in whom is His rest. As knowing Jesus to be precious to our souls, our eyes and our hearts being occupied with Him, they will be effectually prevented from being taken up with the vanity and sin around; and this too will be our strength against the sin and corruption of our own hearts. Whatever I see in myself that is not in Him is sin, but then it is not thinking of my own sins, and my own vileness and being occupied with them that will humble me, but thinking of the Lord Jesus, dwelling upon the excellency in Him. It is well to be done with ourselves and to be taken up with Jesus. We are entitled to forget ourselves, we are entitled to forget our sins, we are entitled to forget all but Jesus. There is nothing so hard for our hearts as to abide in the sense of grace, to continue practically conscious that we are not under law but under grace; it is by grace that the heart is “established”, but then there is nothing more difficult for us really to comprehend than the fulness of grace, that

“grace of God” wherein we stand, and to walk in the power and consciousness of it. It is only in the presence of God that we can know it and there it is our privilege to be. The moment we get away from the presence of God there will always be certain workings of our own thoughts within us and our own thoughts can never reach up to the thoughts of God about us, to the “grace of God”.

Anything that I had the smallest possible right to expect could not be pure, free grace — could not be the “grace of God”. It is alone when in communion with Him that we are able to measure everything according to His grace. It is impossible, when we are abiding in the sense of God’s presence, for anything, be what it may — even the state of the church — to shake us, for we count on God and then all things become a sphere and scene for the operation of His grace. The having very simple thoughts of grace is the true source of our strength as Christians; and the abiding in the sense of grace, in the presence of God, is the secret of all holiness, peace and quietness of spirit. The “grace of God” is so unlimited, so full, so perfect, that if we get for a moment out of the presence of God we cannot have the true consciousness of it, we have no strength to apprehend it; and if we attempt to know it out of His presence, we shall only turn it to licentiousness. If we look at the simple fact of what grace is, it has no limits, no bounds. Be we what we may (and we cannot be worse than we are), in spite of all that, what God is towards us is LOVE. Neither our joy nor our peace is dependent on what we are to God, but on what He is to us, and this is grace.

Grace supposes all the sin and evil that is in us, and is the blessed revelation that, through Jesus, all the sin and evil has been put away. A single sin is more horrible to God than a thousand sins — nay, than all the sins in the world are to us; and yet, with the fullest consciousness of what we are, all that God is pleased to be towards us is LOVE. In Romans 7:1-25 the state described is that of a person quickened, but whose whole set of reasonings centre in himself. He stops short of grace, of the simple fact that, whatever be his state, let him be as bad as he may, GOD IS LOVE, and only love towards him. Instead of looking at God, it is all “I” “I” “I”. Faith looks at God, as He has revealed Himself in grace. Let me ask you, “Am I or my state the object of faith?” No, faith never makes what is in my heart its object, but God’s revelation of Himself in grace. Grace has reference to what GOD is and not to what we are, except indeed that the very greatness of our sins does but magnify the extent of the “grace of God”. At the same time we must remember that the object and necessary effect of grace is to bring our souls into communion with God — to sanctify us, by bringing the soul to know God and to love Him; therefore the knowledge of grace is the true source of sanctification. The triumph of grace is seen in this, that when man’s enmity had cast out Jesus from the earth, God’s love had brought in salvation by that very act — came in to atone for the sin of those who had rejected Him. In the view of the fullest development of man’s sin, faith sees the fullest development of God’s grace. I have got away from grace if I have the slightest doubt or hesitation about God’s love. I shall then be saying, “I am unhappy because I am not what I should like to be”: that is not the question. The real question is whether God is what we should like Him to be, whether Jesus is all we could wish. If the consciousness of what we are — of what we find in ourselves, has any effect than, while it humbles us, to increase our adoration of what God is, we are off the ground of pure grace. Is there distress and distrust in your minds? See if it be not because you are still saying “I”, “I”, and losing sight of God’s grace.

It is better to be thinking of what God is than of what we are. This looking at ourselves, at the bottom is really pride, a want of the thorough consciousness that we are good for nothing. Till we see this we never look quite away from self to God. In looking to Christ it is our privilege to forget

ourselves. True humility does not so much consist in thinking badly of ourselves, as in not thinking of ourselves at all. I am too bad to be worth thinking about. What I want is to forget myself and to look to God, who is indeed worth all my thoughts. Is there need of being humbled about ourselves? We may be quite sure that will do it. Beloved, if we can say as in Romans 7:1-25 “in me, (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing”, we have thought quite long enough about ourselves; let us then think about Him who thought about us with thoughts of good and not of evil, long before we had thought of ourselves at all. Let us see what His thoughts of grace about us are and take up the words of faith “If God be for us, who can be against us?”.

J.N.Darby.

Divine Care (3) The Care of the Son and the Holy Spirit

Luke 10:30-35 In the two previous articles in this series we have been occupied with God’s care and the care of the Father. We have seen how this care sustains the suffering saint and supplies his temporal needs. Here in Luke 10:1-42, in this well-known parable, the emphasis is upon our spiritual need and the way in which this is met. In a few brief words the Lord portrays the full extent of that need. Sin having ravaged the man, whose journey from the outset had the place of the curse at its end, he was left in a half-dead state (Joshua 6:26). It is a picture, not of Israel only, but of the whole human race. The priest and Levite could give no help. The ravages of sin might be less apparent in their case, but the direction and end of their course was the same as that of the “certain man”. Their function was connected with the law. The law was given to show that sin was there, but having done so it could only convict and condemn (Romans 3:20; Romans 7:7; 1 Timothy 1:8-11). It might “see” and “look at” the sinful state of mankind, but it must pass by “on the other side”, showing the need of a remedy, but bringing none (Romans 8:3 a). The weakness of the law in this respect having been manifested, we read next of the “certain Samaritan”. What Christian would question that the Lord was speaking of Himself under this figure? In the course of his journey the Samaritan came where the “certain man” was. This can be connected with the incarnation. The Lord Jesus well knew what our need was, and in His care for us He came down to meet it. In becoming flesh He identified Himself with those who are the objects of His care, and took up their cause (Hebrews 2:14-18). Those who despised the grace in which He came had no sense of need and rejected Him: “Say we not well that Thou art a Samaritan, and hast a devil?” (John 8:48). Nevertheless, His heart went out to the needy ones. He was deeply moved and yearned with compassion1 over them. Yet this in itself, wonderful grace though it was, left the root of the malady untouched.

Here in Luke 10:1-42 we read concerning the Samaritan, not only that he “came where he was”, but also that he “went to him, and bound up his wounds...” This latter statement may be connected with the cross. The human nature which the Lord took was untainted by sin, but in those three hours of darkness “Him who knew not sin” was “made sin for us...” (2 Corinthians 5:21; Matthew 27:45-46; Mark 15:33-34; Luke 23:44). He fully identified Himself there with our state, and was dealt with by God in our place (Isaiah 53:5-6; Romans 8:3 b). The word for care used in verses 34 and 35 is care “involving forethought and provision” (W.E.Vine’s Expository Dictionary of Bible Words) and these two verses develop the provision that has been made. Oil and wine are poured in, and the wounds bound up. Oil is a figure of the Holy Spirit. The Lord Jesus having been “delivered for our offences, and...raised again for our justification”, the “love of God is shed abroad

in our hearts by the Holy Spirit, which is given unto us" (Romans 4:25; Romans 5:5). This in turn leads to the joy of which the wine speaks. It is the joy of reconciliation to God: "And not only so, but we also joy in God, through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the reconciliation" (Romans 5:11). The Holy Spirit may be referred to again under the figure of the Samaritan's "own beast" (verse 34). The man was placed upon it and brought to the inn. It was in the power of the Holy Spirit that the Lord Jesus Himself was carried through this world. The Holy Spirit is called "the Spirit of Christ", or, "the Spirit of Jesus Christ", only three times in Scripture (Romans 8:9; Php 1:19 and 1 Peter 1:11). In Romans 8:1-39 possession of the Spirit of Christ identifies those who belong to Christ in this Christian dispensation: "Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His". Php 1:1-30 verses 19-20 show that the power for Christian living and testimony is found in that Spirit: "For I know that this shall turn to my salvation through your prayer, and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ, According to my earnest expectation and my hope, that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but that with all boldness, as always, so now also, Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life, or by death". The reference in 1 Peter 1:1-25 is to the Spirit of Christ in Old Testament prophets.

1The word translated compassion only occurs in the synoptic Gospels. There are twelve references. It is used eight times of the Lord (Matthew 9:36; Matthew 14:14; Matthew 15:32; Matthew 20:34; Mark 1:41; Mark 6:34; Mark 8:2; Luke 7:13), once in a request made to Him (Mark 9:22), and twice in parables that speak of Him (Matthew 18:27; Luke 10:33). The only other reference is in Luke 15:20, where it is used of the Father. The inn to which the man was brought may be taken as representing "God's house, which is the assembly of the living God" (1 Timothy 3:15). In this connection we have a third figure of the Holy Spirit — the inn-keeper. When the time came for the Samaritan to depart, it was to the inn-keeper that the care of the man was entrusted. When the Lord Jesus was about to depart out of this world and go back to the Father, He spoke to the disciples of "another Comforter". This Comforter is the Holy Spirit (John 14:15-17; John 14:26; John 15:26; John 16:7). Of course, the Lord in glory continues to care for His own, but in view of His departing He committed their care to One who could care for them as He had done — another divine Person. If this is so how are we to understand the promise of recompense when the Lord returns: "...and whatsoever thou spendest more, when I come again, I will repay thee" (verse 35). The word for care in verses 34 and 35, already considered, only occurs once elsewhere in the New Testament. This third reference is helpful here: "For if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God?" (1 Timothy 3:5). The care which the Holy Spirit shows is often exercised through believers whose spiritual formation has had that end in view. There has been a process of training in God's school, so that responsibility in this matter can be fulfilled. Those who do so will receive a reward when the kingdom is manifested in glory. As we consider the care of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, may we be given grace to mirror the same care.

R. F. W.

(To be continued, if the Lord will) The Life of David (7) The Throne of David The Promise. 2 Samuel 7:1-29

David said, "I had in mine heart to build an house of rest for the ark of the covenant of the Lord, and for the footstool of our God", but God said, "Thou shalt not build an house for My Name".

Why? Because David was a man of war and had shed much blood. For this reason he was disqualified from building God's house, the Temple (1 Chronicles 28:2-4). David was shown to be a humble, obedient and godly servant of the Lord. Without reasoning or complaining he accepted God's refusal of his sincere desire to build Him a house. In his later life he gathered together enormous amounts of gold, silver and other materials to enable his son, Solomon, to build the Temple in Jerusalem. His energetic preparations showed that he had no pique because his offer had been refused. What a lesson for believers in Christ! Resentment and ill-feeling because one's own way is refused shows a bad spirit and an underlying impoverished spiritual condition.

However, if David was not to be honoured in building God's house, he received from God something much greater. Through Nathan the prophet, God revealed what he had in purpose for David. God promised David that he would have a house, a kingdom, and a throne for ever (2 Samuel 7:16). God knew in His foreknowledge that the magnificent Temple that Solomon would build would be destroyed. Although partially restored in the days of Ezra and Nehemiah, it was finally destroyed and was replaced by an evil king, styled Herod the Great. God's promise to David was forever and would eventually be fulfilled in Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the Son of David. It is this wonderful truth that makes the study of the throne of David so interesting.

David's dignified reply, as he sat before Jehovah, was beautiful and intelligent. There was no God like Jehovah Elohim. There was no nation so great and blessed as the nation of Israel. The land of promise belonged to them according to God's purpose and sovereignty. In that land God's Name would be blessed. David realised that the promise concerning his house, kingdom and throne were related to the greatness of God and His people Israel. God's promise to David wasn't simply to make David great ("Thou...hast regarded me according to the estate of a man of high degree" 1 Chronicles 17:17). It was to implement His purposes in relation to Israel and the land of Israel, for His own glory and their blessing (1 Chronicles 17:1-27). David, like Abraham, "staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God; And being fully persuaded that, what He had promised, He was able also to perform" (Romans 4:20-21). When God speaks He doesn't tell lies or make exaggerated promises. It is good for us as Christians if we accept without question what God says in His Word. Any other attitude is unbelief. The message from God through Nathan must have been sweet to David's disappointed soul. To be assured that a seed of his would always sit upon his throne in Jerusalem was high honour indeed. Were God's thoughts fulfilled in the historical record of his seed reigning in Jerusalem? We must confess that His purpose was not fulfilled. Read 1 and 2 Kings and 2 Chronicles and many portions in the prophets. The few good kings, beginning with Solomon, David's son, had mixed testimonies. Asa, Jehoshaphat, Jehoash, Uzziah, Jotham, Hezekiah and Josiah possessed excellent features and did good things for God. Regrettably they had some ugly features too. Disobedience to do all God's will is failure to represent Him rightly. The other kings of Judah, not mentioned, were grossly evil and a disgrace to David's name. Not one of them, good or bad, had God's words fulfilled in their reign. Hear what God said, "thy kingdom shall be established for ever before thee: thy throne shall be established for ever" (2 Samuel 7:16). The last king of Judah was taken captive to Babylon. He was blinded, bound in brass chains and carried ignominiously to that city (2 Kings 25:7). Was God's promise overthrown? It was not. If the historical account of David's seed ended in abject failure, it is obvious that another seed of David must come in order that God's promise to David may be fulfilled. Assuredly that Seed has come.

It is interesting and worthy of note that the throne is always referred to as David's throne, not Solomon's or any other king's (1 Kings 2:12; Jeremiah 13:13; Jeremiah 29:16). Solomon made a throne (1 Kings 10:18; 2 Chronicles 9:17-18). The divine record reads, "there was not the like made in any kingdom" (1 Kings 10:20). It was a great throne. It was made of ivory overlaid with refined gold: the very best gold that was available. It had six steps. There were two arm rests and a carved lion beside each one. Carved lions were placed at each end of the steps; so there were fourteen carved lions in total. A footstool of gold was provided for the king. All this has symbolic teaching and interest. It will have its fulfillment in the One who is to sit upon the throne of David in power and glory for a thousand years. The throne is a subject in itself. The Psalm. (Psalms 89:1-52)

Psalms 72:1-20 presents a beautiful picture of the coming kingdom of the Son of God, great David's greater Son. It was written for Solomon, but the features mentioned in the Psalm were never seen in Solomon's reign. They will be fulfilled perfectly in the reign of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Psalms 89:1-52 has been selected to show that the promise referred to in 2 Samuel 7:1-29 was embodied in the worship of Israel in song. Ethan, the Ezrahite, wrote the Psalm. He was contemporary with Solomon, but not as wise as he (1 Kings 4:31). Parts of the Psalm refer to God's covenant with David: to his throne, his seed, and the fact that his seed and throne shall endure for ever (verses4,29, 36).

"I have made a covenant with My chosen, I have sworn unto David My servant" (verse 3). "My covenant shall stand fast with him" (verse 28). "My covenant will I not break, nor alter the thing that is gone out of My lips. Once have I sworn by My holiness, that I will not lie unto David" (verses 34, 35). The promise of 2 Samuel 7:1-29 is reiterated in song and its eventual fulfillment is as sure as God's Word which cannot be overthrown.

David's throne and seed are joined together in song as they were in the promise given to David and also the duration of time "for ever". "Thy seed will I establish for ever, and build up thy throne to all generations" (verse 4). "His seed also will I make to endure for ever, and his throne as the days of heaven" (verse 29). "His seed shall endure for ever, and his throne as the sun before Me. It shall be established for ever as the moon, and as a faithful witness in heaven. Selah" (verses 36-37). God's thoughts concerning His servant furnished a theme for singing in the house of the Lord (Psalms 89:1-52 -see heading and verse 1; 1 Chronicles 25:6-7). For how long it was sung we do not know, but it embodied all the great thoughts that God had for His valued servant. A note of failure is mentioned in verses 38-51, in relation to David's seed. Anything committed into the hands of men results in sad and grievous failure. The Psalm in its fulness and blessing waits to be fulfilled in another Seed, the Lord Jesus Christ. The Prophecies (1). Jeremiah 33:14-26 The service of Jeremiah the prophet was performed in a decadent period in Israel's history. Israel, the northern kingdom, hadn't had one good king reigning over it. It's idolatry and wickedness had gone from bad to worse and eventually, under God's permissive ways, had been scattered among its enemies. With Judah, the southern kingdom, God had had patience for His servant David's sake. When God's patience was at an end He announced through Jeremiah that Judah would be carried to Babylon after Jerusalem was destroyed. Judah would be in Babylon for 70 years. Zedekiah, the last king to sit on David's throne, was a wicked and evil king, and the rule of the seed of David, historically, ended in him. But God was not defeated. How could He be? A God who cannot

perform His Word is not a true and living God. It is in this context that the prophecy of Jeremiah 33:1-26 is so beautiful and encouraging. After the remnant of Judah returned from Babylon according to God's Word, there was no king of the seed of David raised up to be king over Judah (Jeremiah 29:10). Obviously Jeremiah's prophecy has a future application and will be fulfilled in the Lord Jesus, the Son of David. The return of the remnant of Judah to Jerusalem was preparatory for the coming of the Branch of righteousness out of David a few hundred years after the return (Jeremiah 33:15 a). The genealogy in Matthew 1:1-17 clearly establishes that Jesus of Nazareth, the carpenter, was none other than the Son of David. The central emphasis in the prophecy is in verse 17: "David shall never want a man to sit upon the throne of the house of Israel". Note that it is the house of Israel and not just Judah. The prophecy contemplates the nation unified and God's centre, Jerusalem, the city of righteousness. The foolishness of Rehoboam, David's grandson, was the immediate cause of the division of Israel and Judah, though God had already told Solomon that the kingdom would be rent because of the idolatry of Solomon (1 Kings 11:9-13; 1 Kings 12:12-19; 1 Kings 12:24). The wisdom and righteousness of the Branch out of David will heal the division of Israel and bring it to a pinnacle of greatness under Himself.

F. Wallace.

(To be continued, if the Lord will).

News from the Field Cameroon and Equatorial Guinea Dear friends in the Lord,

During my recent trip the same hymn was sung in several meetings in Cameroon and Equatorial Guinea. One sentence of this hymn reads: "And bless the Lamb with cheerful voice". The hymn has been translated into Bulu (South Cameroon and Equatorial Guinea) and Kaka (East Cameroon) and Kombe (Equatorial Guinea). It was a special experience again to give thanks to the Lord Jesus for His death on the cross, with brothers and sisters of different tribes and countries.

Cameroon Both at the beginning and at the end of my trip I got to know of a new work in this country going on in two cities:

Yaoundé: Since last year Bert and Sjoerdje Eysink have been living in this city and I was able to stay with them for some days. By means of a Christian bookstore, a Bible correspondence course and weekly Bible studies, they regularly have new contacts with interested people. From the second of May there has been the breaking of bread in this city. Two brothers (Joseph and Aimé) help our brother Bert in the bookstore. They accompanied me to the airport and I enjoyed their fellowship in the Lord during the waiting time there. Their questions and remarks proved a deep interest in the Word of God. Please pray for: physical and spiritual strength for Bert and Sjoerdje to do their work the six other brothers and sisters of the local assembly at Yaoundé, that the mutual fellowship may increase, both by their meetings and by mutual visits in their homes.

Douala: Since last month Huite and Betty Oppenhuizen have settled down in this large port. I stayed two nights with them in their apartment and experienced how hot and humid it can be in this city. Since last year meetings have been held in the house of brother Tchakounté Pierre, and I had the opportunity to get to know several believers during a Bible reading. Huite will soon open a Christian bookstore where the meetings will take place. Three young brothers are selling books in

the streets every day. Please pray for Huite and Betty, who in an oppressive climate will have a lot of work to do after the opening of the bookstore. There are many sects in Douala, and some disappointed members of these are looking for the truth.

Brother Olla'a Jean was willing to visit the brothers and sisters in East Cameroon with me. Both at Nol and at Gadji we had Bible studies with the brothers and sisters. The Lord is blessing His work in Nol. An older man (Jean), who in the past was drunk every day, came to the Lord a short time ago. I met him regularly during previous visits and I was deeply touched by the Lord's grace. Jean radiates rest and peace, and he often visits brother Joseph to talk with him about the Lord. He often ran away from his home when his sons came home drunk. The brothers and sisters at Nol need our prayers. Problems in families and among relatives threaten to disturb the good mutual fellowship. At the request of the brothers Simon and Albert we studied 1 Corinthians chapter 10 (the Lord's Table) and 1 Corinthians 11:1-34 (the Lord's Supper). On account of the teaching that one can be defiled inwardly (communion with demons) by an outward act (eating of what is sacrificed to an idol), we were asked about customs during burials amongst the Kakas. Brother Joseph proved that the animal, which people eat during a burial, is called a sacrifice in the Kaka language. People eat this sacrifice (also called "the meal of the dead one") to avoid more evil. After his explanations those present understood that "things sacrificed to idols" are called simultaneously "pollutions of idols" (Acts 15:29; Acts 15:20).

Because of heavy rainfull, we could not drive to Batouri to visit the Ernst family. A large part of the road was very bad and on the way back we had to plough through the mud. The car I had at my disposal suffered much on this trip. In South Cameroon I was able to visit the assembly at Mebanga. The brothers themselves had prepared everything for a conference of two days and had invited interested people of another village (Toko). I heard the date of this conference too late, and so I could only stay there one day. By the grace of the Lord, the bothers Laurent and Robert are still stable in their spiritual life. The young brother Zeh Daniel will soon take his place at the Lord's Table at Mebanga. Please pray for a good and lasting relationship between this young brother and the older ones. On the way back to Equatorial Guinea I had the opportunity to stay one night with brother Eneme Samuel at Mekomo and to hold Bible studies at Evolé, and Endendem after that. Brother Samuel asks for prayer for wisdom in the education of his children. The brothers of Nko'emvon told me that the annual conference will take place from 24 to 28 August, God willing. Some brothers from Ebolowa and Nko'emvon will also organize gospel meetings in the villages of Adjap, Mekomo and Bikpwaé in August D.V. Please pray that the Lord will bless these activities.

Equatorial Guinea The brothers Zue Jules and Eneme Samuel (from Cameroon) visited Eyangebôt some months ago, where they had talks with several brothers and sisters. Their visits were very useful for the Lord's work in Equatorial Guinea. Therefore I was thankful that brother Jules had the desire to accompany me to Equatorial Guinea. We had a good time with Albert and Sue Blok and with the brothers and sisters at Rio Ekuku and Eyangebôt. Together with Albert we held meetings in both villages and had exploratory talks about the Lord's work. At Eyangebôt the brothers Jules and Madiba (from Rio Ekuku) had a talk with an elderly man who has attended the meetings for many years. We found that he was a powerful witch-doctor who is using occult power. The grandson of another brother in this village is educated by a witch-doctor now, after he had been healed by this man. It is not clear to what extent he or his wife approve of this education of their grandson. We think that fear of the power of darkness keeps them from a resolute attitude.

They do need our prayers.

Albert and Sue pray that it may be possible to start a youth center in the town of Bata, in order to reach young people. At Rio Ekuku Sue started a Bible study group for sisters and Audrey van Kampen, the teacher of their children, started a Bible class for children at Eyangebôt. The Bible correspondence course they recently started gives them many contacts with interested people and also a great deal of work.

We thank you very much for your prayers during this trip, particularly for Jeanette and our children at home. The Lord gave the daily strength we needed and we are very thankful to Him for this grace.

Hilvert Wijnholds.

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Editorial

Although necessarily prepared in advance, by the time this issue of the magazine is in the hands of the reader 1993 will be drawing towards its close. We may wonder at the Lord's longsuffering, but know He is "...not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance". We can "...account that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation" (2 Peter 3:15; 2 Peter 3:9). On the one hand the long centuries have seen a full display of the will of man, and the sin that this entails, while on the other God in His grace has been, and is still working. His will, and what it has purposed, will soon be achieved (Romans 1:21-32; Romans 2:1-29; Romans 3:1-20; Ephesians 1:5; Ephesians 1:9; Ephesians 1:11). Meanwhile, may we have grace to be faithful to our rejected and absent Lord.

…. Finally, we would like to record our thankfulness to the Lord for the help and encouragement He continues to give in this work. We value your prayers that God may be glorified by it, and the believing reader built up. The Editors.

How Can I Be Motivated? At a time when human wisdom and philosophy is trying hard to add to or modify the revealed truth of the Word of God, and this kind of thing becomes attractive to many minds, I want to urge every believer with all my heart to spend much time considering the simple, vital facts of Christianity. If we have grown up with the knowledge of these things, our tendency is to take them for granted. We do not take vitally to heart and enjoy the great significance of every detail God has revealed in relation to the person and work of His beloved Son. There is marvellous power in the right appreciation of all these things, power that only a child of God can know.

Take time to meditate upon the wonder of the incarnation of the living God in the lowly person of the Lord Jesus. Though Himself the infinite, eternal, omniscient, omnipotent, omnipresent God of the universe, He has become Man, in marvellous grace (Php 2:5-7). A Man of perfect dependence and faith, whose every act, word and thought was beautiful for its simplicity, with grace and truth wonderfully blended in every detail of personal life and in His dealing with others.

Think also of the amazing wonder of the willing sacrifice of this Lord of glory, when He was "led as a lamb to the slaughter". Everything connected with that unique death at Calvary is worthy of our deepest consideration and meditation. There was His humble dignity in submitting to the bitter enmity of mankind against Him, and the more astounding, awful, bearing of the outpoured judgment of God against our sins (the details of our guilt: 1 Peter 3:18) and against sin (the root principle of evil personified as the horrible enemy of God: 2 Corinthians 5:21). Consider too that that sacrifice has totally cleansed every believer from his guilt (1 John 1:7), and has liberated him from the cruel bondage of sin (Romans 6:22). This deliverance is not understood by many Christians, though they have perfect title to it, and none of us properly take in the fullness of its significance.

Another matter for our attentive contemplation is that all believers are “accepted in the Beloved” (Ephesians 1:6). Christ is the Beloved of God, who has been raised from the dead and exalted to God’s right hand, and “in Christ” every believer is as perfectly accepted and beloved as He Himself is before God. Let us take time to think deeply of His exaltation and our acceptance in Him. Yet let us refuse utterly the common teaching today of “self-love”, “self-esteem”, and “self-worth”. This is merely confidence in the flesh. “In the flesh” man is worthless: “they that are in the flesh cannot please God” (Romans 8:8). But “in Christ” you are of great value to God, for this is a position of absolute perfection.

Connected with this is the wonderful fact of the Spirit of God having come to indwell every child of God in this present age of grace, to give understanding (1 Corinthians 2:12) and power (Acts 1:8) for true Christian life and testimony.

How good to be reminded too that Christ is our Great High Priest at God’s right hand, who cares for us in perfect grace, preserving believers from danger, trouble and evil (Hebrews 4:14-16). He is also our Advocate with the Father, mercifully restoring us if we sin (1 John 2:1). We greatly need His intercessory work, yet may too easily forget its significance.

Let us also rejoice that not only are individual believers so greatly blessed by these things, but that Christ is “the Head of the body, the Church” (Colossians 1:18). He is keenly interested in every member of His body, and we ought to be too. He has united believers together in a unity that can never be broken, and expects us to act on this established truth, having real love for His assembly, and understanding the significance of all that is involved in His headship of the body.

What sweet meditation too may be ours of the promised prospect of the coming of the Lord Jesus (John 14:3). This should be just as real to us as those things that are already accomplished facts, for it is just as certain. Its significance and attendant circumstances may well occupy our grateful reflection. If you are not glad to think of welcoming His coming at any moment, then search your heart before the Lord, and have every hindering thing banished, so that you can “rejoice in hope of the glory of God” (Romans 5:2). In all these simple facts of living truth (and in many more that have not been mentioned here) there is such power as to vitalise and stimulate the believer to wholeheartedly follow and serve the Lord Jesus. We need the pure truth of God for this. Timothy, a young man, was told by Paul, “Meditate on these things; give yourself entirely to them, that your progress may be evident to all” (1 Timothy 4:15 NKJV).

It is clear that at the most we have very little time left us in which to serve the Lord; and to be a true witness for Him we ought to know well the facts concerning which we witness.

L.M.Grant. The Life of David (7) The Throne of David (Continued from page 157) The Prophecies (2). Isaiah 9:6-7 The passage in Isaiah 9:6-7 presents in superlative language the deity, glory and greatness of great David’s greater Son. He will sit upon His throne for a thousand years. His kingdom will not deteriorate or be destroyed by enemies. It will not disintegrate because of internal dissension. When the thousand year period is completed the kingdom in power and glory will be handed over to God, that God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, might be all in all. The sons of David never handed on to their successors a kingdom of power and glory. But the Lord Jesus, the Son of God, will give the kingdom to God intact and in power, a marvellous indication of His righteous reign for God, Israel and the Nations. The church will have the wonderful privilege of sharing the

administration of the Son! (1 Corinthians 15:24-28). In Revelation 5:12 power, riches, wisdom, strength, honour, glory and blessing are ascribed to the Lamb, who is also the Lion of the tribe of Judah. These features will be manifested in the kingly rule of the Lord Jesus in that day to come.

WONDERFUL

If it were possible for a man to arise who would solve all the problems that afflict mankind, he would be a wonderful man indeed. That is a forlorn hope. The reason is sin. No plan of man's has ever taken into account the awfulness of sin active in fallen nature. No legislation has ever succeeded in curbing its power, not even the law given to Israel by Moses at Sinai. Sin, operating as greed for power, selfishness, greed for money and fame, has wrecked every good intention, even of sincere men. But Christ dealt with the evil principle of sin when He became the sin offering on the cross of Calvary. Because He satisfied God about His hatred of sin, and has enabled sinners to return to God and be forgiven, He is morally qualified to be the ruler of the world and to rule in righteousness. Poor mortal man cannot bring the world into a state of peace and blessing. But the Man whose Name is Wonderful will accomplish the wonders that are necessary to make the world a fit place to live in. Many people were affected by the wonders that the Lord Jesus accomplished in His pathway. Death, disease, demons and the elements were all subject to Him. Such demonstrated power caused wonderment in those who saw it. The miracles accomplished by the Lord Jesus as recorded in Matthew chapters 8 and 9 are often referred to as "the powers of the kingdom". It is a little picture of what will take place in the kingdom. (Isaiah 35:5-6). A wonder has been described as "A marvel which man's senses are unable to understand". God has displayed His wonders in judgment. Read Exodus 3:20; Exodus 15:11; Deuteronomy 4:34; Deuteronomy 6:22; Deuteronomy 26:8. The Lord Jesus, who is Jehovah, will execute judgment on Israel and the Nations before He introduces His positive blessings. It is a divine principle, since sin came into the world, that judgment precedes blessing. The One whose Name is Wonderful will work wonders in judgment and blessing. See Psalms 77:14; Psalms 86:10; Psalms 136:4; Job 37:14-16. Prior to the kingdom being set up there will be many attempts by Satan to deceive mankind by lying wonders. These will be swept away in judgment. Divine power and blessing will follow. To read about Satan's attempts read Matthew 24:24; Mark 13:22; 2 Thessalonians 2:9; Revelation 13:13 and Daniel 8:24.

Counsellor This word has various meanings: to guide, to advise, to plan, and to purpose. How important it is that the One who is to sit on David's throne should have this Name and all the qualifications that go with the Name. He will be able to guide perfectly and to advise perfectly, and to plan and purpose perfectly. Such a Ruler will have an astounding and transforming influence over the whole earth. The instability and uncertainty of our times is an indictment of man's unhappy failure in government. Praise God that we have a prophecy like Isaiah 9:6 which focuses our attention on a Counsellor who will be able to implement His plans and purposes. In Isaiah 11:2 the Branch out of Jesse shall have the Spirit of counsel and might. His counsel will be given and received in the power of the Holy Spirit. Christ is the power and the wisdom of God (1 Corinthians 1:24). The whole passage in Isaiah 11:1-10 is a beautiful and majestic picture of the coming kingdom under the Seed of Jesse. Psalms 73:24 gives the principle of guidance connected with counsel, "Thou shalt guide me with Thy counsel". Proverbs 20:18 tells us that "Every purpose is established by counsel". The exquisite language of Isaiah 46:9-10 should be quoted "I am God, (El: the Mighty One) and there is none else: I am God, and there is none like Me, Declaring the

end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all My pleasure". All these references, and there are many more of like character, create confidence in the rule of the Seed of David who bears the Name Counsellor. He will have the wisdom, and the power to effect His wisdom, in His reign of blessing. The Mighty God This Name of the Messiah indisputably denotes the deity and the omnipotent power that belongs to such a glorious Person. It is in the middle of the five features of the Name of David's greater Son. It guarantees that illimitable power will be available to Him to effect all that the other features represent. "There be god's many", wrote the apostle Paul, but for the intelligent Christian there is only one living and mighty God (1 Corinthians 8:5-6). Dagon, the fish god of the Philistines, was humiliated beside the Ark of God. The gods of Egypt were impotent in the presence of Jehovah's power (Exodus 12:12). Baal and his worshippers were ridiculed by Elijah on mount Carmel (1 Kings 18:21-39). But someone might say "The title The Mighty God is connected with a man, David's seed, who will sit on David's throne. Can a man be The Mighty God?" The answer is an emphatic "yes". The Man who will fill David's throne is God. The Old and New Testaments bear witness to this fundamental truth. In Micah 5:1-2 the prophet wrote that the ruler who would come from Bethlehem Judah was One whose goings forth are from of old, from the days of eternity. Zechariah prophesied that the coming Shepherd who was to be smitten would be none other than Jehovah's Fellow (Zechariah 13:7. See also Mark 14:27). A careful comparison of Isaiah 6:1-5 with John 12:37-41 will reveal that the King, Jehovah of Isaiah 6:1-13, is the Jesus of John chapter 12. Three times in the book of Isaiah Jehovah is called the First and the Last (Isaiah 41:4; Isaiah 44:6; Isaiah 48:12. There is a slight difference in Isaiah 41:4). Three times in the book of Revelation the Lord Jesus is called the First and the Last (Revelation 1:17; Revelation 2:8; Revelation 22:13). Compare Exodus 17:9 with Matthew 1:21 (Mr. Darby has a footnote to Exodus 17:9, "Joshua — Jah the Saviour, called Jesus in Greek"). The Jehovah the Saviour of the Old Testament is Jesus, Jehovah the Saviour of the New Testament. In the New Testament the testimony to Jesus being God is abundant and plain. Jesus the Word, is God (John 1:1-4). That unequivocal testimony should be quite sufficient for any unbiased reader. So called "Jehovah's witnesses", who do not believe that Jesus is God, have attempted to alter the accepted Greek text of this passage to support their denial. Competent scholars have exposed their errors. The Jews were in no doubt that when the Lord Jesus claimed that God was His Own Father He was claiming equality with God (John 5:17-18). When Jesus said, "I and My Father are One" the Jews attempted to stone Him. They accused Him of blasphemy and that He was claiming to be God (John 10:30; John 10:33). Thomas, the doubting apostle, addressed the Lord Jesus as "My Lord and My God" (John 20:28). The Lord Jesus didn't rebuke him, as the angel rebuked the apostle John (Revelation 22:8-9). Jesus is God, but the angel was a creature. Paul worshipped the Lord Jesus in his doxology in Romans 9:5. Christ is God blessed for ever. The fulness of the Godhead was pleased to dwell in Him, the Son of God (Colossians 1:19. See also 2:9). That could never be said about a creature. Jesus existed in the form of God and did not grasp to be on an equality with God. He is God (Philip. 2:6). This is the great contrast between the first man and the second Man. The Lord Jesus is the great God and our Saviour who is to appear in glory, the Son of God (Titus 2:13; Hebrews 1:7-8). Peter refers to the Lord Jesus as our God and Saviour Jesus Christ (2 Peter 1:1). John ends his first epistle as he began his gospel, with a clear testimony that Jesus is God: "We are in Him that is true, even in His Son Jesus Christ. This (He) is the true God, and eternal life" (1 John 5:20. See also John 17:3). The Lord Jesus is referred to as the Image of

God (Colossians 1:15; 2 Corinthians 4:4). He is never referred to as being in the likeness of God for the simple reason that He is God. A humble contemplation of these Scriptures will provide substance in the soul for worship. What a glorious Man to sit on David's throne. The Mighty God, possessor of omnipotent and irresistible power, will subdue all things to Himself (Philip. 3:21). THE FATHER OF ETERNITY; THE FATHER OF THE AGE; THE EVERLASTING FATHER.

It must be obvious to intelligent believers in Christ that the Name Father connected with David's seed has no connection with the New Testament revelation of God as Father. The Father is not the Son and the Son is not the Father. Divine Persons cannot be separated but they can be distinguished. We must try to find out what the term Father means in this context. In Mr. G. V. Wigram's Hebrew and Chaldee concordance the Hebrew word for everlasting is rendered in different ways. Forty one times it is given as "for ever", twice as "everlasting", (including the reference here in Isaiah 9:6), and once each as "eternity", "world without end", "of old", "perpetually" and "evermore". "For ever" seems to be the main idea of the word. Understandably, the context governs its usage. It might be correct to say that for the duration of the one thousand years reign David's Seed will have the character of Father towards Israel and the Gentile nations. In Genesis 17:4 Abraham was promised to be a father of many nations. They could trace their descent from him. In the world to come many nations, along with Israel, will be brought into blessing through the reign of the Lord Jesus (Psalms 72:8-11). "Blessed be Egypt My people, and Assyria the work of My hands, and Israel mine inheritance" (Isaiah 19:25). The Son of David will be the originator, the Father, of their blessings. In Genesis 45:8 Joseph is described as a father to Pharaoh. This suggests that he cared for the king's interests: he would advise him, and administer his affairs. Is it unreasonable to believe that the Seed of David will fulfil a similar function for Israel and the Nations? In Job 29:16 Job described himself as a father to the needy. The poor and helpless in the kingdom to come will be helped by the Lord Jesus (Psalms 72:12-14; Isaiah 61:1-2). Perhaps the most interesting reference is in Isaiah 22:21. Eliakim, a type of the Lord Jesus, is prophesied to be a father to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and to the house of Judah. The key of the house of David will be laid upon His shoulder, and government and a throne of glory are to be given to Him. The reference to father would involve protection, provision, love and care. The Lord Jesus, great David's greater Son, will provide all these things when He sits on the throne of His father David. The father character of the Son of David will provide a most impressive array of qualities for the blessing of all concerned. Nor must we forget fatherly discipline when required. The Originator of blessing, the great Advisor, Counsellor, Administrator, Helper of the needy, Protector, Provider, Carer and Lover, will guarantee a reign of blessing for ever.

F. Wallace.

(To be continued, if the Lord will).

Divine Care (4) The Care of an Apostle 2 Corinthians 11:23-28 The divine care shown by the Holy Spirit is often exercised through those in whom He dwells. Paul was such a vessel. He laboured unceasingly in fulfilling his service, carrying the gospel to the gentiles (Acts 26:20; Romans 11:13; Romans 15:15-17; Galatians 2:7-9; 2 Timothy 1:11). This involved great hardship, as verses 23-27 here in 2 Corinthians 11:1-33 show. The writer has counted 23 different ways in which pressure, persecution, privation and peril were experienced by the apostle, and the sufferings he catalogues were yet to be added to. We may wonder that Paul was sustained under the weight of these

things. It was manifest that the surpassingness of the power that did sustain him was not from him, but of God (2 Corinthians 4:7). Yet there was in addition a burden that was greater perhaps than all he writes about up to verse 27: “Beside those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches” (2 Corinthians 11:28). The writer has found it helpful to consider this verse in connection with the book of Acts and some of Paul’s epistles. In AD 581 Paul wrote to the Galatians. They were getting off the Christian foundation, turning from grace to law (Galatians 1:6-7; Galatians 3:1). Paul stood in doubt of them and was afraid lest he had bestowed labour on them in vain (Galatians 4:11; Galatians 4:20). He travailed in birth again, until Christ should be formed in them (Galatians 4:19). In AD 59 he wrote his first epistle to the Corinthians. They had not finished with the things of the flesh, but were carnal (1 Corinthians 3:1-4). Instead of walking in self-judgment they were puffed up (1 Corinthians 4:6; 1 Corinthians 4:18-19; 1 Corinthians 5:2; 1 Corinthians 8:1; 1 Corinthians 13:4). This had opened the door to the working of party spirit, immorality and idolatry (1 Corinthians 1:10-11; 1 Corinthians 5:1-5; 1 Corinthians 10:19-22). There was confusion at the Lord’s supper and some were calling the resurrection of the dead into question (1 Corinthians 11:17-34; 1 Corinthians 15:12). In AD 60, on his way to Jerusalem, Paul had sent from Miletus for the Ephesian elders. He spoke to them about what would take place after his departure: “grievous wolves (shall) enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them” (Acts 20:29-30). In AD 61-62 he was a prisoner at Caesarea and in AD 63 a prisoner at Rome. He was no longer able to help the saints as present among them. In AD 64 he wrote the epistle to the Colossians. He had great conflict for them and for those at Laodicea (Colossians 2:1; Colossians 4:13; Colossians 4:16). All fulness is found in Christ, but they were in danger of being beguiled and led away (Colossians 1:19; Colossians 2:9; Colossians 2:4; Colossians 2:8; Colossians 2:18). In AD 65 he wrote to Titus in Crete that Titus might set in order the things that were wanting and ordain elders in every city. The saints there were evidently troubled by law teachers, while at the same time prone to display certain features which called for severe rebuke (Titus 1:10-14; Titus 3:1-2; Titus 3:9). In AD 66 he wrote the second epistle to Timothy. All those who were in Asia had turned away from him (2 Timothy 1:15). The word for care in verse 28 of 2 Corinthians 11:1-33 signifies “anxious, distracting care”. In the light of this brief review can we not understand what a burden this care would have been to his heart? What great concern Paul had for each of these and other companies too. There was care for both the young and mature in the faith (the Thessalonians & the Philippians), as well as for those who had never seen his face (the Romans). It was not the burden of care for one church only, great as that may be, but “the care of all the churches”. From the things from without there would have been respite, but these cares came upon him daily. How was he able to carry such a burden? The epistle to the Philippians furnishes the answer (written in AD 64). In chapter 4 he exhorts them to “Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus” (Php 4:6-7). How well fitted he was, by personal experience, to pen such words! R.F.W.

(To be continued, if the Lord will).

1 The dates given in this article have been taken from the printed notes in the King James translation. They may not be completely accurate, but are not thought to be far out.

“The Sermon on the Mount” (3) Blessed are the meek (Matthew 5:5) This is the third “beatitude” of our Lord: “Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth”. Whereas the promise of the first beatitude is “for theirs is the kingdom of heaven”, it is described more precisely here: “they shall inherit the earth”. For the listeners, whose land was under the rule of the Romans, this was a clear indication of the future time of the millennium (see Psalms 37:11).

“Meek” does also mean “kind, gentle”. In the world meekness is often regarded as weakness, and is therefore often thought little of. The recklessness, daring and lack of consideration shown by the successful of this world are more likely to be admired.

Yet the meekness in our passage is not weakness or ingratiating servility. A meek child of God can bear malice and hardness without having bitter resentment, because he knows he is supported by the One who has more strength. He enables the believer to manifest this characteristic of true discipleship. The perfect example of meekness is the Lord Jesus Himself. He said in Matthew 11:29, “Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls”. Just before, Israel’s leaders had called Him a glutton and wine-bibber, and He had to upbraid the cities wherein most of His mighty works were done (Matthew 11:19-24). Even in such a situation He was able to look up and say, “I praise Thee, Father...”. The Lord Jesus was meek. We can learn meekness only from Him. If we find ourselves in a situation where we are provoked, we can pray to Him “Lord, let me show Thy mind now!”

Moses, the great man of God in the Old Testament, learned meekness form God during his forty years as a shepherd in Midian. When he was young he had in sudden and righteous anger struck an Egyptian man dead who was ill-treating an Israelite (Exodus 2:11-12; Acts 7:23-24). More than forty years later, when his sister Miriam and his brother Aaron opposed him, the Holy Spirit could bear testimony to him, “Now the man Moses was very meek, above all the men which were upon the face of the earth” (Numbers 12:3). This meekness of Moses was the result of his education in God’s school, but though he was the meekest man on earth he was not allowed to enter the land of Canaan, in contrast to the meek ones in our verse who will inherit the earth.

Let us remember that it is not said that they will acquire the earth, but that they will inherit it. Certain expositors of the “Sermon on the Mount” refer everything to the natural person, and to the present time and world, suggesting that those who act according to what the “Sermon on the Mount” says will be victorious and possess the earth in peace. That is impossible. The Lord Jesus is here talking of true disciples who have accepted Him in truth and follow Him. He is viewed as having accomplished the work of redemption, on the basis of which His inheritance is granted to them as well (see Psalms 2:7-8; Hebrews 1:2; Ephesians 1:10-11). The inheritance of the faithful remnant of Jews who will pass through the great tribulation, and who will be protected by God, will be the land of Israel in the millennium. Each one of them “shall sit every man under his vine and under his fig tree” (Micah 4:4). The inheritance of believers in that glorious day will be more, that is the whole earth, even the whole creation (Hebrews 2:7-8). Those who form the assembly will receive and possess this inheritance in Christ.

It might be difficult for some Christians to understand that they are on the side of the Victor and yet often have to suffer or are treated in an unfair way. Soon we will share His position of power with Him. So the Lord comforts the disciples in our verse, as He also comforted the Thessalonians by the apostle Paul who wrote: “Seeing it is a righteous thing with God to recompense tribulation to

them that trouble you; And to you who are troubled, rest with us; when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels" (2 Thessalonians 1:6-7). The Lord Jesus went this way. In Isaiah 53:7 Scripture says of Him: "He was oppressed, and He was afflicted, yet He opened not His mouth". But in verse 12 we see the results: "Therefore will I divide Him a portion with the great, and He shall divide the spoil with the strong".

Arend Remmers.

1 Corinthians 4:5; 1 Corinthians 15:51-58 (A Bible Reading at the Kilkeel conference in May 1993)

We began this series of meditations on the Lordship of Christ in the epistle to the Corinthians by considering that He, God's Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, is the uniting and unifying bond of the fellowship into which we have been brought. In chapter 1 we considered His personal dignity, His essential deity, the reality of His manhood, the perfection of the work that He has done, and the necessity of yielding to His Lordship. After spending some time seeing how the apostle, by the Spirit, was enabled to deal with various aspects of disorder brought in by man, we have begun to see how God's order in the local assembly is established. That part of the epistle that deals with the establishment of godly order finishes with a grand summary statement: "Let all things be done decently and in order" (1 Corinthians 14:40). Then the apostle comes back to this matter of the wonder of the work that was accomplished in the death of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to consider the implications of His personal, bodily, resurrection.

We did see, when we studied the detail of the first five verses of chapter 4, that a sense of the coming of the Lord is the proper regulator of any service which is taken up under the Lordship of Christ. We saw in chapter 11 too, how there is a special sense of urgency in remembering the Lord in the Lord's supper, because there is only the opportunity "till He come". Here, in this final expository chapter before the practical salutations in chapter 16, we find that the apostle again comes back to this matter of the coming of the Lord.

"Behold, I show you a mystery". There was something coming out in detail which, until the apostle was led to divulge it by the Spirit, had been hitherto hidden.

There was a general understanding of resurrection in the Old Testament. We learn that from Martha's words, for example, in John 11:1-57 : "I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day" (verse 24). But now there was truth coming out in the New Testament epistles that wasn't known in Old Testament days. In verse 51 the weight seems to rest on the little word "all" — "We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed". There will be those who are alive on earth who will be changed, but you have to bring into the picture those who have been laid in the grave and who are raised again. The overriding subject of 1 Corinthian 15 is resurrection.

It was stated in an earlier reading that there are four mysteries particularly associated with the apostle Paul. Under the heading of the fourth 1 Corinthians 15:1-58 and 1 Thessalonians 4:1-18 were counted as one. They are really two parts of the same mystery. The difference between the understanding of resurrection in the Old Testament and the New is highlighted by the expression "out resurrection". In the Old Testament resurrection was really life again on earth. We will find this lower down in the quotation from Isaiah 25:1-12. But it is especially the privilege of the Christian company to know the truth of "out resurrection". The Lord Jesus was taken out from among the dead and the Christian company likewise will be taken out from among the dead.

Yes. What we are learning about is not selective between believers, but it is selective in that when the first resurrection takes place at the coming of the Lord, it will be out from the mass of the wicked dead. In verse 12, where the Lord's own resurrection is referred to, and again in verse 20, the preposition "ek" is used, signifying that His resurrection was "out from" among the dead. Paul is telling us here that Christ's resurrection is the pattern of ours. He was raised out from among the dead leaving others still in their graves. When believers are taken out of the grave, those who have fallen asleep, then it will again be a selective resurrection, out from among the dead. In Marks Gospel the Lord used this expression and the disciples didn't understand what He meant (Mark 9:10). It wasn't that they had never heard of such a thing as resurrection, but they didn't understand the Lord's expression, and we have it opened out for us here in 1 Corinthians 15:1-58.

You get a little picture of the selectivity of it in John chapter 11, when the Lord said, "Lazarus, come forth" (John 11:43). It was from among the dead. In the New Testament there are two main words that are used for sleep. Where the word is used in connection with the death of the believer it is clearly an involuntary sleep, a sleep which is induced, as sleep which is caused to come upon one by the power and activity of another. The same Greek word occurs in verse 6, "but some are fallen asleep", in verse 18, "Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ...", in verse 20, "now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept", as well as here in verse 51, "We shall not all sleep..." It is used in 1 Thessalonians 4:1-18 too: "I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep" (verse 13), "them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with Him" (verse 14), and "we which are alive, and remain unto the coming of the Lord, shall not prevent them which are asleep" (verse 15). The phrase in 1 Thessalonians 4:1-18, "asleep through Jesus", tells us that the death of the believer is no accident (verse 14, J.N.D. translation). The death of the believer occurs as, how and when the Lordship of Christ permits.

It should be pointed out that sleep is connected with the body, and not with the soul or spirit.

We don't find this word for sleep used in relation to the Lord's death.

We have had ministry this week emphasising that there is never any suggestion that the burden or the gravity of His personal death was lessened in any way. While the Scripture speaks of Christ as "the firstfruits of them that slept" as to resurrection, His death and aspects of His resurrection were absolutely unique to Him.

There couldn't be a better figure of resurrection than sleep. Normally if one is sleeping he will awake. As in natural life we enter sleep with a view to coming out of it in wakefulness, so the believer goes into death with the confident expectation of coming out in life. The Lord said of Jairus's daughter, "she is not dead, but sleepeth" (Luke 8:52).

Yes. The word for sleep there is the other major word that is used. In general that word is used when the need for moral alertness, as a matter of responsibility, is considered.

"We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed". When the Lord comes there will only be two kinds of believers, those who are alive, and those who have died. When Paul says "all", and he refers to those who have died previously, and to those who will still be alive, there is no possibility of any believer being excluded. This writes off the notion of a partial rapture. The end of Php 3:1-21 reminds us of the power that will be exerted in accomplishing this change, "the power which He has even to subdue all things to Himself" (Php 3:21, J.N.D. translation). This is a tremendous

thing to consider, that the millions of believers who have died, and the millions of believers who will still be on earth, in one moment of divine power are going to receive bodies of glory. The harvest is guaranteed in quality and quantity by the firstfruits. I came across a good statement some time ago and if you will permit me I'll pass it on. "The sleeper does not cease to exist while his body sleeps. The dead person does not cease to exist while his body is dead. Sleep is known to be a temporary condition. So death will prove to be a temporary condition. Sleep has its waking, so death will have its resurrection". That seems to sum it up. The apostle goes in to detail: "In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye". What can we understand by these terms?

It's the shortest division of time that it is possible to conceive. It is a moment, actually even less than that, the twinkling of an eye. For many years I read this as being the blinking of an eye, but relatively recently I've come to the conclusion that the twinkling of an eye is much more abbreviated. When you know someone well, and the light is falling upon their eyes, you can see just a little change of expression, and then it's gone. The Greek word for moment is the word from which we get the English word atom. The first letter, a, means "not", and temnõ means "cut", so it's a division of time that cannot be further divided. It is an extremely small period of time and that's how long it will take for this change to be accomplished. It might be helpful to put it alongside verses 35 to 38 where we get the sowing of the body. What is sown is bare grain, but what comes up is different. That is a process, and it takes quite a while between sowing and harvesting. Here we get the other side of the picture, where the whole process is compressed into the shortest possible period of time. Can we just say it's extremely fast.

We need to bear in mind the distinctions given in 1 Thessalonians 4:1-18. It doesn't say so here, but it is the Lord who has induced the sleep, and He will wake the saints who are sleeping. The trumpet here isn't the seventh trumpet that we have in Revelation (Revelation 8:2; Revelation 10:7; Revelation 11:15). The seventh, the last trumpet in the series in the book of Revelation, is connected with judgment. The trumpet here is rather connected with the voice of the archangel, and the trump of God, in 1 Thessalonians 4:1-18.

It may be a reference to the third trumpet in Roman military operations. When they were striking camp the first trumpet signified that they were going to move, the second trumpet called them to get ready, and when the third trumpet sounded they marched.

It is certainly a military term in 1 Thessalonians 4:1-18. The voice of the Lord is the voice of the commander. The alarm has been given, the marshalling has been done, and they're off. The trumpets referred to in Numbers 10:1-36 were silver trumpets, and this is the redemption of the body.

They also blew the trumpets on the feast days as a celebration and a sound of triumph. The issue of the personal resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ results in victory, and these verses go on to that. At the end of verse 52 there is a distinction amongst the all, in that there are those who are dead, who will be raised when the Lord comes, while those who are living will be changed. Perhaps the term incorruptible there can be considered in the light of verses 53 and 54. The end of verse 52 parallels with 1 Thessalonians 4:1-18. "The dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain, shall be caught up together with them..." Here it says "the dead shall be raised incorruptible" and "we", and I take it that these are those believers who are alive on earth, "and we shall be changed". What we are reading about will take place when the Lord comes. The

earlier verse in the chapter says, “every man in his own order; Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ’s, at His coming” (verse 23). It is His coming that will bring about this wonderful event. The hymn we sang at the beginning of this meeting referred to the Lord coming to reign, but what we have here is His coming for His saints. The coming includes both. We mustn’t imagine that there are two second comings. There are two parts to His second coming, but there are not two second comings. In 2 Thessalonians the word parousia is used in connection with His appearing; “whom the Lord shall consume.....with the brightness of His coming” (2 Thessalonians 2:8). The word used there for His coming is the same word that is used in verse 23: “they that are Christ’s, at His coming”. The word is parousia. It is His presence with the saints. Would the value of His administration in the church period be demonstrated by the difference between His coming at the incarnation and His coming for the church. When He came in incarnation how few there were who were ready for that, but when He comes at the end, what a tremendous harvest there will be. The value of the Lord’s work in relation to His people will be seen.

Yes, and there is a contrast too. Being with Him when He came the first time was very much a matter of personal responsibility for those who lived at the end of that dispensation. Being with Him in His presence when He comes again is not a matter of responsibility, but rather of privilege, and wherever this is referred to in the New Testament it is beyond responsibility. We could never deserve to be in His presence. No doubt there are things connected with His second coming which will highlight how responsible we have been, but what we are considering is not a matter of responsibility.

It is difficult for the human mind to grasp these things because there is an interval of time between the two, between the rapture and the appearing.

If we look at this term presence, it is used of the moment when the Lord Jesus comes for His own, and we are ushered into His presence. It is used of Him when He appears in power and great glory. It is used for intermediate phases and events that we read of in Scripture. We will be with the Lord for ever, but this term presence is used peculiarly for that period beginning with the rapture, and ending with His public appearing, and we need to look at the context to see which particular part or aspect of His coming is referred to.

Titus brings the two of them together: “Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ”.

That’s Titus 2:1-15 verse 13. You are connecting the “blessed hope” with the rapture, and the “glorious appearing” with that moment when He comes to reign. The only time that John uses the word parousia is in 1 John 2:1-29 verse 28: “And now, little children, abide in Him; that, when He shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before Him at His coming”. That may refer to the judgment seat, a point between the rapture and the appearing, but the whole period is covered by this expression. When we are ushered into His presence, either by being alive and being changed, or being dead and being raised, that which verses 53 and 54 refer to will have been achieved. We have noticed in previous readings that moral corruption and pollution were rife at Corinth, but having been abstracted from that moral filth, the last touch of corruption to be considered is the effect upon the body. The body is mortal, subject to death, and it is subject to corruption. So when Paul speaks about this corruptible putting on incorruption, he is referring to the believer’s body being raised from the grave. When he speaks about this mortal putting on

immortality, he is referring to the believers alive on earth whowill be changed. It is exactly the same order as in 1 Thessalonians 4:1-18. A living body is mortal, subject to death. A dead body is subject to corruption.

We ought never to connect mortality with the Lord Jesus. He was not subject to death, but He voluntarily went into death. And the Scripture says that He saw no corruption, clearly referring to the period after He had died (Acts 2:31).

Clever people seem to change their minds from generation to generation, as to when death actually occurs. Scripture seems to make it clear for the simple believer that death occurs when the immaterial part of the person leaves the material part. Is that correct?

That's right. James says in his epistle, "the body without the spirit is dead" (James 2:26). When the Lord raised the little girl it says, "her spirit came again" (Luke 8:55).

That's why, when the Lord Jesus went into death He said, "Father, into Thy hands I commend My Spirit" (Luke 23:46). For the understanding of verses 53 and 54 can we insert the word "body" as understood? "This corruptible (body)..., this mortal (body)..." This is one of the Scriptures that make it clear that death relates to the physical body.

It will be here in this scene of death that the change takes place. The quotation from Isaiah 25:1-12 verse 8, "Death is swallowed up in victory", really presents a millennial scene. Here in this world of sin and death God is going to triumph. The victory of God will be manifested down here. Our attention is drawn to that moment before we are taken up to heaven when, in the scene where death has reigned, there will be such a victory that this exclamation can be made. That is very helpful because resurrection doesn't take us off the earth. It leaves us here and that's as far as 1 Corinthians 15:1-58 takes us.

It helps to get death into its right perspective. The triumph is God's doubtless, but we are going to come to the statement "giveth us the victory" (verse 57). We can see that death is completely conquered, and it's our privilege to enter into the victory of God.

I believe that the major subject of chapter 15 is not only the death of the believer, but death itself, and the victory that God will manifest over death. We are used to considering that our blessing is eternal, spiritual and heavenly, and the way we shall be ushered into the enjoyment of that blessing, in the ultimate sense, will be by what is described here. But we need to bear in mind that there will be a full cycle of time, a thousand years, when God will demonstrate His victory over all the opposition that there has ever been: Sin, Satan, death and so on. This will be introduced by a spectacular display of power dealing with death; first of all the death of believers. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death (verse 26). This is why there is such a cry of triumph. It is the beginning of the demonstration of the victory of God.

It is difficult to speak about a progression in this matter, but we could say that 1 Corinthians 15:1-58 changes you, but leaves you still on earth. 1 Thessalonians 4:1-18 catches you up from this scene, and John 14:1-31 introduces you to the Father's house. That ought to be underlined. In 1 Corinthians 15:1-58 we have the change, and in 1 Thessalonians we have the rapture. We have got to see the two to make a complete picture. There may be a very short period between them, but they are dealt with separately in these two passages. And we have in this chapter "the last

trump", and in 1 Thessalonians 4:1-18 "the trump of God". That's how we can synchronise the two events and know that Paul is speaking about the same period.

We know the Corinthians may have had the letter to the Thessalonians, and they would certainly have known the teaching of it, because Paul wrote it from Corinth.

It says in verse 57 that God has given us the victory, and he goes on to speak about our service, and being immovable in that service. Do you think that in verse 56 the apostle is reverting to the kind of thing he teaches in Romans chapters 6 and 7, and that because of that we have a present victory, and can go on with the service of the Lord? The first statement says, "the sting of death is sin". The awful stab of sin has brought death into being, but He has triumphed over it. We know ourselves today, according to Romans 6:1-23, to be dead to this awful tyrant, that once held sway over us. We also read here, "the strength of sin is the law", and in Romans 7:1-25 this is shown to be what aggravated the sin condition. By His death and resurrection the Lord Jesus has delivered us from the bondage of law. The victory has been secured, the work has been done. That is past. The time will come when the victory will be celebrated universally. We are intended to live in the moral good of that victory and this gives the energy and the impulse to any work that is done for the Lord now.

It might be useful to add that in verse 57 the word that is translated "which giveth us the victory" is a present participle. This is the character of the God that is before us in the passage. He gives the victory, and I think we are right in seeing the present emphasis.

Any work that is done at the moment is done in the sense of that which God has done, and here we return to where we began. It's not our work, it doesn't even say the work of Christ. It's the work of the Lord, and it's to be done in the Lord. There is the sense that, having been brought into the gain of such a victory, while we wait for the Lord to come, everything that is done is to be done in a proper manner, and for a proper motive, under the Lordship of Christ. The result of considering this chapter should be that we get on with the work that has been given us to do. In 1 Thessalonians 4:1-18 the outcome is comfort. Here it is intended that we should get on with the work of the Lord.

Joints Colossians 2:19. Ephesians 4:16 In the human body joints are mostly for movement. Paul, in the Scriptures quoted above, clearly connects them with supply. The Darby footnote on Ephesians 4:1-32 verse 16 tells us that the word supply "has the emphatic article, and the article denotes a known source of supply...Christ, to which the preceding words 'from whom' lend force". So the question is, how are these two ideas reconciled? In the human body, movement, and with Paul, supply.

Looking at the Greek one scholar offers the suggestion that the expression "joint of supply" may be translated "the joints with which the body is supplied". This makes easy reading and is also medically satisfying. But is it right? The word for joint in the original is "haphe" and has the basic meaning of touch, or grip, or contact, or point of contact. Keeping the exhortation of Colossians 2:1-23 verse 19 in mind, "holding fast the Head", it is not difficult to see how the spiritual body needs joints — that is, saints who maintain contact with the Head, Christ. In Colossians 2:1-23 there are many forces to divert us from Christ: philosophy and vain deceit (rationalism), judaistic religion (ritualism), and oriental mysticism (things not seen), and there is only one safeguard, to

hold fast the Head. Likewise in Ephesians 4:1-32, where we are exhorted to walk worthy of our vocation, the great end in view is in verse 13: “the measure of the stature of the fulness of the Christ”, 1:e., the features mentioned in Ephesians 4:1-32 verses 2 and 3. With this in mind we all have grace (verse 7), gifts that operate in the assembly are there (verse 11), but there is also the self building up of the body of Christ (verse 16). All this flows down from the One who died and rose and is now in the position to fill all things (verses 8-10). This is where the joints come in (verse 16). The joints of supply, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, makes increase of the body — its self building up in love. And if this is the exegesis, is it not also true in experience? How refreshing it is for us all, wherever we are, whoever we are, to meet a soul who is in living contact with the Saviour, our blessed living Head. Such a one, consciously or unconsciously, brings Christ home to our souls. They are a source of supply to the whole body, they are a “joint of supply”. Is there a better expression to convey this truth than the word “joint”? The best I can suggest is “point of contact”, which is directly from the Greek.

D.W.P.

Psalms 119:1-176 (5) (Continued from page 138) 2. BETH — HOUSE The idea this letter gives us is that of a “solid foundation”, the rock on which our house, our lives, are built. In this section of eight verses we have important “foundation” truths. “Beth” means “house”, and occurs in the names Bethel, the “house of God”, and Bethlehem, the “house of bread”. It comes from the root “bana”, meaning “to build”. The numerical value of this letter is two. “B” alone, put in front of any Hebrew word, means “with”, or “in”, and thus has the meaning of “abiding”, “Constancy”.

Verse 9 begins in Hebrew with “Bmeh”, which signifies “With what?” “B” plus “ah” = “Bah”, which means “in her”. As an example see Isaiah 62:4, where God will call His people “Hephzi-bah”. Hephzi means “My delight”, and hence “My delight is in her”. The “ah” ending is usually a feminine ending in Hebrew as well as Arabic.

“B” plus “o”, pronounced boo, means “in him”. Thus the name “Boaz” means “in him is strength” (“az” = strength). We see thus that Boaz is a type of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Section Two: verses 9-16 : “In the Shadows of Doubt”

What is the remedy for doubting? Knowing the truth(s) contained in the Bible. Reading and studying the Bible, and so filling our thoughts with the Word of God, will deliver us from doubting. “Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things. Those things, which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do: and the God of peace shall be with you” (Php 4:8-9).

1. The Word of God Purifies Verse 9: BMEH...“With what..?”

Here is a soul with a question! He has sought to walk in a way that is pleasing to the Lord, but he is conscious of the defiling influences of the world around him. There has been defilement in thought and imagination. Some believers suffer from unclean thoughts or unclean suggestions from the enemy. This young man had been defiled in this way. Now he asks the question: “With what” shall I cleanse my way, my heart, my thought life? This verse gives us the first wonderful fact about the

Word: it purifies. There are several New Testament Scriptures we can turn to in this connection: “Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you” (John 15:3). “Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God” (2 Corinthians 7:1). “Christ...gave Himself...that He might sanctify and cleanse it (the church) with the washing of water by the Word” (Ephesians 5:25-26). The Bible gives us light, power and support, but we are responsible to keep ourselves from becoming defiled.

2. The Word of God Keeps Verse 10: B-KOL...“With all...with my whole heart...” This verse shows us that the Word keeps the believer from wandering from the path of obedience. When God’s Word is obeyed daily it will keep me from being deceived, and it will purify me from the defilement contracted by having to walk through this world which is so full of uncleanness. “With my whole heart have I sought Thee...”. We have to be in earnest about it! To rush in and out of the Lord’s presence for a little reading and prayer is not what we might properly call a “quiet time”. We must take time to be holy. Notice that the second half of this verse is a prayer: “...O let me not wander...”. We have a prayer in verses 5 and 8, and in this verse too. Prayer and Bible study go hand in hand.

3. The Word of God in My Heart Verse 11: B-LEHVI...“...in my heart...”

Someone has said that we have in this verse: a. The best thing: Thy Word. b. In the best place: My heart. c. For the best purpose: That I might not sin against Thee.

What a good thing it is to memorise Scripture, so that we may be able to quench all the fiery darts of the enemy and say, “It is written”.

4. The Word of God in My Thoughts Verse 12: BA-RACH...“Blessed...” This does not mean that mere man can bless God in the sense of imparting something to Him Who is all-sufficient. The sense of the word “blessed”, in the Old as well as in the New Testament, is that He is worthy “to be praised, to celebrate with praises...”, and thus we acknowledge His goodness, with the desire to glorify Him. The Lord Jesus was that blessed Man on earth, and He could say: “If ye continue in My word, then are ye My disciples indeed; and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free” (John 8:31-32).

There are various ways in which we may learn the truth: a. By faithfully reading and studying God’s Word day by day. b. By the oral ministry of the Word, through God given teachers. c. By reading commentaries written by gifted and spiritual men. The Holy Spirit is our Teacher and through these instruments which grace employs, He can teach us the will of God (John 14:26). Let us therefore echo the prayer of the Psalmist to the Lord: “...teach me Thy statutes”, and remember that the meaning of a statute is “a divine direction to obtain our obedience, and to keep us from disobedience”.

5. The Word of God Upon My Lips Verse 13: B-SAHPHATI...“With my lips...”

“With my lips have I declared...”, the verse begins. The believer may speak in “living echoes of His words...”, but the Lord must first be able to speak to us, before we can tell others what He has told us. We do well to remember this. Before the Lord Jesus can send us forth “to preach” He calls us first to “be with Him” (Mark 3:14). Perhaps it is good to ask ourselves: “What do I use my lips for?”

Surely not for tale-bearing? How we need to pray daily: "...keep the door of my lips" (Psalms 141:3; Job 27:4).

6. The Word of God is My Joy Verse 14: B-DEH-RECH..."...in the way (of)..."

"I have rejoiced in the way of Thy testimonies...". When we remember that the meaning of "testimony" is that which testifies or speaks of Him, of what He is and what we ought to be, we see clearly that the focus is on Him. We rejoice in Him and the way in which He leads and guides us. Is it true that we really delight to please Him and to live for Him? Is reading the Bible a real pleasure for us, or simply a daily duty? How do we profit most from our daily Bible readings? Here are some suggestions that may help. Before we read, we ask for the Lord's help and illumination. When we have finished reading we may ask the following questions:

1. Is there an example in the passage I must follow?

2. Is there a commandment I must obey?

3. Is there any sin mentioned that I must avoid?

4. Is there a promise that I can claim by faith?

5. Is there a new thought concerning the Lord Jesus Christ? Of course, the list could be added to, but the important thing is that we meditate on what we have read, and take it in.

7. The Word of God for My Contemplation Verse 15: B-PIK-KOO-DEEMAK..."...in Thy precepts..."

Here is a determination expressed: "I will meditate...". How important it is to be determined about maintaining a daily Bible study. Most Christians are so disorganised that they cannot find time for Bible study, or rather that is their excuse. We can always find time for something we really want to do! The important thing is that we do find some time each day. The Psalmist wrote: "My voice shalt Thou hear in the morning, O Lord; in the morning will I direct my prayer unto Thee, and will look up" (Psalms 5:3). Here in Psalms 119:1-176 the writer continues "...and have respect unto Thy ways". It is not enough to be interested and to meditate upon the Word, but this should be followed by putting what we read into practice. To have "respect" is to be willing to obey the Word of God.

8. The Word of God Memorised Verse 16: B-GHOOK-KAHTAK..."...in Thy statutes..."

How important it is that we do not forget what we have read: "...I will not forget Thy Word". In verse 11 we saw the need for hiding it in our hearts. To store the mind with the Word of God is the way of victory. It was true of the Lord Jesus that the Word was in His heart. How can the Holy Spirit possibly bring any word from the Bible to our remembrance if we have not first stored it there. Today we say of the computer that it will give you nothing but what you have first stored in its memory yourself! Some Christians take verses of Scripture out of context, Luke 12:12 for instance: "For the Holy Ghost shall teach you in the same hour what ye ought to say". These believers think this verse means that you do not have to prepare yourself in order to minister the Word of God. They say that no preparation is necessary. I am convinced that the spiritual believer continues in daily Bible study, and that the Holy Spirit prepares him while he stores his mind with the Word of God. Then, when a believer is called upon to minister that Word, the Holy Spirit will bring to his remembrance what he should say. The verse in Luke 12:12 was fulfilled in the apostles when they

were persecuted, as we find recorded in the book of Acts. So everything really depends upon our appetite for the Word of God. Our verse says: “I will delight myself...” The writer of this Psalm certainly gives us a good example to follow. He repeats the fact that he delights in the Word of God at least 8 times: see verses 24, 35, 47, 70, 77, 92, 143, and 174. The young men the apostle John addressed in 1 John 2:1-29 are said to “...have overcome the wicked one...because ye are strong, and the Word of God abideth in you, and ye have overcome the wicked one.” (verses 13 and 14). Notice the activity in verses 15 and 16 of this Psalm: a. I will meditate. b. I will have respect. c. I will delight. d. I will not forget.

Cor Bruins.

(To be continued, if the Lord will).

Book Reviews The Ark of the Covenant, by Hugo Bouter, published by Chapter Two, price £2.95 This book of 93 pages gives a comprehensive survey of one of the important types of Christ in the Old Testament. Beginning first with the construction of the ark and its meaning for us, its central position in the Tabernacle, it goes on to give an interesting account of its journeys in the wilderness, then in the land where it finds its resting place in Shiloh, the place where the Lord put His Name. Opportunity was missed here to present Shiloh — the Name of the Christ, Genesis 49:10, — as the exclusive gathering centre of the Lord’s people, but this truth is touched upon later. After many years, when the priesthood in Shiloh fails, the people lose the ark, but God guards His holiness even when the ark is captured by the Philistines (type of worldly professors). The lack of reverence displayed by the Lord’s people when the ark is returned, leads to judgment. The ark rested in mount Zion for a while and the final instalment of the story ends on mount Moriah. Ministry is rarer on this latter part of the ark’s history, so one found this part particularly interesting. It is a lesson to the Lord’s people who claim to be gathered to the Lord’s Name, that His presence is to be treated with the utmost reverence and certainly not taken for granted.

W.R.D.

Those Who Love God, by Hugo Bouter, 94 pages, published by Chapter Two, price £2.95 A choice little book concerning the four places in Scripture where the term “those who love God” occurs: namely Romans 8:28-30; 1 Corinthians 2:6-10; James 1:12 and James 2:5. For those who love God, these four Scriptures are presented under the headings 1)God’s plan of salvation; 2) God’s Wis 3:1-19) the Life of God; 4) the Kingdom of God. The book begins by demonstrating who those who love God are — every truly born-again believer. It continues, as can be expected, through a wide range of truth, and becomes a profitable study that will reward the reader.

W.R.D. The Children of God, by Edward Dennett, 205 pages, published by Chapter Two, price £8.95

Really to know God as Father is a great blessing. One of the truths recovered for the enjoyment of the saints in the last century was the Fatherhood of God — not the universal Fatherhood of God which is modern heresy, but the spiritual relationship possessed by all true believers. In these days when we can only walk with a minority of Christians, we should never forget our debt of love to these souls and that the Father’s heart is towards them equally. This book covers quite comprehensively the wonderful privileges, responsibilities and blessings of this family relationship; the purposes of the Father for His children and His ways to bring these purposes to fruition; the

felicity of fellowship with the Father and our ultimate Home in the Father's House. All in the family are not in the same stages of maturity and the diversity between fathers, young men and babes is gone into extensively. We recommend this work as a devotional classic.

W.R.D.

News from the Field

I am sorry that I have not sent any news of the work for the past two months. I have been tied down attending to the many letters that come, and the other responsibilities of the expanding work here. I thank God for the faithful men He has sent along to help in the work in different parts of India, like brothers Satpal Hans in the Punjab, Anand Prasad in Bihar, Som B. Rai and Hemraj Chettri in Bhutan, Sunil Ghosh in W. Bengal, Bhumeshor Sharma in Manipur, and Daniel Jayaraman in Kerala. To think that all these brothers were once idolaters and that now they serve the living God and are waiting for His Son from heaven, is an encouragement itself in the work. We can praise God that in all these 6 states we have literature depots from where literature is going out to many precious souls. Many who belong to Christ are receiving sound ministry and large numbers of those who are not Christians are receiving gospel literature. We are seeking to bring out literature in the native languages of these states. We also purchase thousands of Bibles, New Testaments and Gospels from the Bible Society and the Bible League so that we may meet the needs of those who desire the written Word of God in their own language.

Recently we had the joy of having with us our dear brother Daniel Hauber of Canada. We were able to visit Tenali for the opening of the new orphanage-cum-school building on June 15th. There are 65 orphans and 80 day scholars in the school. Please pray that the facilities that the Lord has provided may be used for the blessing of many young hearts. From Tenali we went to Calcutta and were able to visit brother Sunil Ghosh in his village Jiarah, which is 40kms outside Calcutta — a 2 hour journey by taxi. We are always amazed when we go to Calcutta at the needs there. In a letter it is difficult to explain the conditions under which people live in this city of about 12 million souls. To see the dirt and filth and poverty makes one think about what deliverance there is for these precious souls. In our hearts we realise that the only hope for these souls is the gospel of Christ.

Finally, we were able to visit the saints in Phuntsholing, Bhutan, and then the refugee camps in Nepal. It is always a joy to meet these dear saints, who are living under such uncertain conditions, but are always rejoicing. They also long to hear the Word of God and seek with diligence to obey what they have learnt. Brother Som Bahadur shared with us how the believers were warned that they should give up Christ or be expelled from Bhutan. Brother Tashi, an ethnic Bhutanese believer, also shared how his boss told him that Christians are going to be expelled from Bhutan. We do not know whether this will actually happen, but to see how these dear saints press on encourages and challenges us. The conditions in the refugee camps are much better now, but the heat was unbearable. Schools and medical facilities are now open and young and old are encouraged to go to school. Because none of them have work they do not have any money in their hands. In this modern age can we imagine life without money? We can praise God for what the relief organisations are doing for these needy people. We were able to take funds to help the saints who are in fellowship, but our hearts ached when we thought about other refugees who we could not help. The believers meet every day in these camps to read the Bible and pray, and we thank God for some young brothers who are visiting the believers in the different camps. As the

camps are not close to each other, the young brothers can travel from camp to camp only if they have money, so we are sending them funds for purchasing 15 bicycles, which will be distributed in the camps. Our hearts were touched by the lives of these dear ones, who seek to witness for Christ in the camps. They can identify with each other as they have all lost everything in Bhutan. They can share with their neighbours that only Christ can fill and satisfy the heart, in spite of their circumstances. Brother Yohan and I are planning to go again to the camps in August, as we still have to visit 2 camps we have not visited so far.

Overall our hearts were encouraged to see how this work is growing, but we also feel the responsibility to lay a good foundation, and for this we need wisdom from above. We thank you for your prayers which mean so much to us We send love in Christ to you and your dear ones, and the saints in the assembly,

Ronny Fernandes

Vol 02 - Truth & Testimony Vol. 2, No. 7, 1994.

Truth & Testimony Vol. 2, No. 7, 1994. The Incarnation of the Son

There is no more profound subject than that of the incarnation; yet though unfathomable to the wisest, nothing is more enthralling to the affections of the Lord's people. The wonderful truth is that One who is God Himself, while never ceasing to be God, became a real man, living amongst men on earth. The Holy Spirit has given us four accounts of that immaculate life. No creature could have thought up such unimaginable details: a perfect human life, yet with glimpses of the glory of His Person shining through the veil. If any human intellect tries to add anything from its own thoughts, how hollow and confused it sounds! — as the spurious gospel of Thomas demonstrates.

Though the incarnation is beyond our reasoning powers, there are certain truths about it which we can confidently affirm, because they are firmly based upon the Holy Spirit's own account in the Scriptures.

(1) TRUE GOD The Eternal Son of God became Man, yet He never ceased to be the Infinite Creator. He emptied Himself of His reputation. His Manhood veiled His glory so that He did not receive the universal obeisance that was His due; yet He never ceased in His Person to be omniscient, omnipotent, and omnipresent, upholding all things by the Word of His power.

(2) PERFECT MAN

He became a Man, entirely untainted by the fall. His Manhood was the same, in essence, as unfallen Adam's, though, of course, there were differences. The main one was that His Manhood, though truly human, was joined to Deity in His Person, and therefore vastly glorified. Also Adam was innocent; that is to say he had no knowledge of good or evil. The Lord was not innocent, but He was holy. The Lord was in the midst of evil, but wholly undefiled by it.

(3) REAL MAN

He became a real Man, body, soul and spirit. When God created Adam, He breathed into him the breath (spirit) of life and he became a living soul. The animals were also living souls, but they did not have life by receiving spirit from God. As well as being a living soul, Adam had a spirit. In his soul he had physical life and emotions; in his spirit he had reason and awareness of himself and God. He could have rational communion with God and give God pleasure by his fellowship. For this he was created. The subject of soul and spirit is a study in itself, and cannot be more than touched upon here. The Lord took body, soul and spirit to Himself. He had a real body, visible and tangible, made of flesh and blood, capable of pain and suffering, but not partaking of the consequences of the fall. He was not subject to death as an inevitable event. He died by His own power. The ageing process, which is a result of the fall, was not in Him. His body was perfect. Also, as having a soul, He had real human emotions but without any sinful tendency. In His spirit He had real human thoughts by which He could have, even as Man, perfect fellowship with His Father.

(4) ONE PERSON The Son of God is One Person. The Son of God is the same Person as the Son of Man. Now we are beginning to come up against the inscrutable mystery. Men will argue that body, soul and spirit make a person. This is correct. Therefore (they say) the Son of God and the Son of Man are two persons in unity. No, certainly not! The Scriptures are dead against such an idea. The Person who is in the form of God at the beginning of the sublime sentence in Php 2:1-30 verse 6, is the same Person who was obedient to the death of the cross in verse 8. The subject of the sentence is the same throughout. There is no change of Person halfway.

We may shrink from saying baldly, “God died”. How can God die who has immortality and is the Source of life? The bare statement, “God died”, needs important qualification. Firstly, the One who died was God the Son, not the Father or the Holy Spirit. Secondly, He did not die as God, but in the Manhood He had taken. However, to qualify a statement is not to deny it. To say it was the Son of Man and not God who died, is to divide His Person and make Him two Persons. The fact is that God the Son became a Man for this very purpose, that He might die. He did not cease to be God when He died. The blood that He shed was human blood, but it was the blood that He had taken as His own. The Son of God shed His blood, and experienced death. He who is God laid down His life for us. It is the infinitude of His Person that produces the infinite atonement. This is the marvellous thing that takes our breath away. A divine Person has been through human experience from birth to death. He who is God, remembers His human experiences from birth to death, and sympathises with us in our infirmities. One who is both God and Man feels for us for He has felt the same. What a great High Priest He is!

(5) TWO DISTINCT NATURES The opposite error to saying that He is two persons is to say that His two natures have combined into one. It was an ancient heresy that the two natures, Manhood and Deity, merged together. For this reason the writer does not like the expression the “God-man”. It implies to him (though not to many orthodox Christians) that He is half man and half God. Such an idea must be resisted. He is wholly Man and wholly God. He possesses all the attributes and properties of real, unfallen, holy Manhood, and at the same time possesses all the infinite attributes and properties of Deity. The unity consists, not in the amalgamation of essence, but in the Oneness of His Person.

If we suppose an archangel becoming incarnate, a creature tremendously powerful but still finite, and by becoming incarnate having two finite natures (but natures very different), we would say, rightly, that such a situation was impossible. Here would be a baby, unable to do anything except to cry and suck, with no ability to talk, unable to understand a word his parents were saying; at the same time that person would be an archangel with tremendous power, not only able to understand the parents but knowing far more than they did. We would say, quite correctly, that it would be impossible for such things to be true in one person at the same time. Our finite judgment would be competent to come to such a conclusion. We would say that the archangel was only pretending to be a baby. Of course, it is not an archangel but an infinite Person who has become incarnate. When we are facing the infinite it is right beyond our ken. We can make no judgment. Mathematicians tell us that both opposites and parallels meet in infinity. We cannot understand, and never will understand it, for we will never have infinite minds. But God has revealed it to us, and so we believe it. The Lord grew in wisdom, yet was always omniscient, as we have seen. He said He did not know, and yet He knew all things. Yet it is very important to see that He could not make a mistake in what He said in Manhood; it would have been God who had spoken falsely and

that would be a moral impossibility. To take human limitations is grace, but to take human fallibility would be to compromise God's holy nature.

Lastly, let us consider Matthew 11:27 : "No man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal Him". Here we see that it is possible for a man to know the Father if the Son reveals Him to him, but, without exception, it is not possible for a man to know the Son. Why then, is the Son unknowable, but not the Father? It is not the inscrutability of Deity, for that would apply equally to both Father and Son. Nor is it the inscrutability of divine relationships for if the relationship of the Son to the Father is unknowable, so would be the equivalent relationship of the Father to the Son. Clearly, it is the Incarnate Son who is unknowable. The Father, Himself, cannot explain this to us, for to understand the incarnation we would need to have the infinite understanding of the Father Himself.

W.R.D. The Peace Offering by Muriel J. Flett (1922-1987) Father, by Thy Spirit, tell me Of Thy love for Thy blest Son:

He Who brought Thee all the glory By the work that He has done.

Show me how He lived to serve Thee Faithful every step He went, E'er revealing in His pathway He was by the Father sent.

What devotion ever marked Him!

What obedience to Thy will! In that life of deep dependence, All Thy pleasure to fulfil.

Men could see no beauty in Him, Blind to all His comeliness;

Hid their very faces from Him, Could not bear His righteousness. When the light of His blest presence, Showed the darkness of their hearts, And the evil of their actions They, with Him, would have no part.

Israel would not receive Him, His own whom He came to save, All they were prepared to give Him Was a cross and felon's grave.

Meek and lowly Jesus, taking Little children on His knee;

Mighty God, Lord of creation, Calms the boistrous wind and sea.

See Him too at Cana's marriage Changing water into wine!

Master of each situation, Showing power and love divine.

"I have meat to eat ye know not," His disciples He did tell, When they found the Saviour, talking To the woman at the well: When he gave her living water, Set her thirsty spirit free, Taught her, Father, Thou art seeking Souls, to come and worship Thee.

Weeping with the sorrowing sisters, Giving sight to one born blind, Healing all who came unto Him Sick in body and in mind:

Feeding the five thousand persons With but five small loaves of bread Son of God, yet Son of Man, Who Had not where to lay His head!

While the ever growing shadow Of the cross loomed o’er His soul, Still was He in blessed communion With His Father and His God. Is not this a wondrous privilege We can hear Him pray to Thee?

Learning in His loving utterance All His care for such as we.

Now He crosses the brook Cedron, Moving to Gethsemane, Goes through Calv’rys bitter suff’ring There, anticipatively. In an agony He prays there, “Not My will, but Thine, be done”:

Then they come to apprehend Him, Lead away Thy blessed Son.

What a precious meditation Is that grief-acquainted One;

Man of Sorrows, yet ’twas for us He was scorned and spit upon.

Wounded for all our transgressions, Bruised for our iniquity, Bore our chastisement upon Him, When He hung upon the tree.

Seated now in brightest glory, Thou hast placed Him at Thy side, Waiting there till come the moment He will claim His spotless bride.

What an answer to the suff’ring, Of the cross on which He died;

He will see of His soul’s travail, And His heart be satisfied.

Father, tell us by Thy Spirit, More of Thy beloved Son;

Occupy our hearts’ affections With the object of Thine own;

Till those hearts are overflowing, Pouring out in praise to Thee, Worshipping Thee, God and Father, As we shall eternally. The Life of David (7) The Throne of David (Continued from page 168) The Prophecies (2). Isaiah 9:6-7 THE PRINCE OF PEACE what an elusive thing peace is. Since sin came in there has never been settled peace in the world. Individuals seek for it in vain. Households are ruined because they lack peace. Communities live in fear because of organised violence. Nations spend enormous amounts of money in order to arm themselves because of the fear of invasion, and perhaps with war-like intentions against others. After the first world war the League of Nations was formed in the hope that it would be able to curb aggressive nations. It failed. The United Nations was formed after the second world war. Surely this time common sense and earnest collective endeavour would save the world from devastating wars and ensure a settled time of peace. The subsequent years have shown that this was a forlorn hope too. Is there no remedy for the continual strife that exists at all levels? Yes, the remedy is Christ. One day, perhaps very soon, the Prince of Peace will sit upon the throne of David and wars and strife will cease. At the present moment the Lord Jesus sits upon His Father’s throne (Revelation 3:21). In the coming day He will sit upon His own throne and will reign over the earth, its undisputed Monarch. The church, His body and bride, and others, will reign with Him (Revelation 20:1-6; 2 Timothy 2:12). One great contributing fact that will make for peace on earth is that the great fermentor of trouble, Satan, will be shut up during the thousand years’ reign of Christ (Revelation 20:1-3). But the main guarantee that peace will be a paramount feature of the Kingdom of Christ is because He will be in power and in supreme control when He sits on His father David’s throne. When the Lord Jesus was rejected by Israel and crucified by the power of Rome, both being

equally guilty of the death of Jesus, Barabbas was preferred by Israel to the Son of God. Barabbas was a robber, an insurrectionist, a murderer and a notable rogue. The righteous Man was refused. The evil man was pardoned. Since that awful and solemn judgment by the world it has had its just recompense: violent and carefully organised robberies, insurrection, political, religious and industrial strife, murders for every conceivable reason, perpetrated by notable people as well as by insignificant criminals. What a story of “mans inhumanity to man”, and more than that, of mans rebellion against God and His wise laws for mankind. Praise God that there is hope. It is centred in the Man of Calvary. He was rejected by the world, as attested by the superscription that was placed on His cross. It was written in Hebrew, Greek and Latin, being the language of the religious, intellectual and political world respectively. The whole world stands condemned, and Satan, its ruler, too (John 12:31).

Psalms 72:7 looks on to the day when, in the world to come, the peace secured will be universal, and not limited to any particular country or region. There will be an abundance of peace. This is emphasised in Micah 5:1-5. The ruler in Israel, Jehovah’s Fellow, shall be great even unto the ends of the earth, and this Man shall be the peace. “He shall be the stability of thy times” (Isaiah 33:6 — J.N.D.). What a glorious prospect for a world that is drenched in the blood of innumerable victims of violence, beginning with the blood of Abel (Genesis 4:10). What a triumph for the Man of Golgotha, who secured peace for all who now, and in the future, trust in Him. Peace of soul and conscience now antedate the reign of peace to come (Romans 5:1; Ephesians 2:14; Ephesians 2:17; Colossians 1:20).

There are many passages about peace in the Holy Scriptures. Two will suffice to show what Scripture foretells for Israel and the nations: “But it shall come to pass in the end of days (anexpression which means the Kingdom on earth under the Messiah. See Mr. Darby’s footnote to Isaiah 2:2) that the mountain of Jehovah’s house shall be established on the top of the mountains, and shall be lifted up above the hills; and the peoples shall flow unto it. And many nations shall go and say, Come, and let us go up to the mountain of Jehovah, and to the house of the God of Jacob; and He will teach us of His ways, and we will walk in His paths. For out of Zion shall go forth the law, and Jehovah’s Word from Jerusalem. And He shall judge among many peoples, and reprove strong nations, even afar off; and they shall forge their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning-knives: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more. And they shall sit every one under his vine, and under his fig tree; and there shall be none to make them afraid: for the mouth of Jehovah of hosts hath spoken it” (Micah 4:1-4, J.N.D. trans.). “And I will set up one Shepherd over them, and He shall feed them, even My Servant David: He shall feed them, and He shall be their Shepherd. And I Jehovah will be their God, and My Servant David a Prince in their midst: I Jehovah have spoken it. And I will make with them a covenant of peace, and will cause evil beasts to cease out of the land; and they shall dwell in safety in the wilderness, and sleep in the woods. And I will make them and the places round about My hill a blessing; and I will cause the shower to come down in its season: there shall be showers of blessing” (Ezekiel 34:23-26, J.N.D. trans.). Note the references to “I will”. It is the language of Deity, making the accomplishment of the statements a certainty. The government is to be on the shoulder of David’s greater Son (Isaiah 9:6). We are often reminded that both of the Shepherd’s shoulders were required to carry the lost sheep to safety (Luke 15:5). For the Lord Jesus Christ one shoulder is sufficient to carry the burden of the government of the universe. But what a

shoulder! On the most shameful day in the world's sad history it carried a cross, the instrument of an agonising and humiliating death. At Calvary the Lord Jesus bore the burden of God's wrath against sin when He was the sin offering (1 Peter 2:24). The burden of the government of the universe will not be as heavy as that awful burden. Because the Lamb of God prevailed on that solemn day He has the title to rule the universe (Revelation 5:9-12). The universal Kingdom of David's Seed will be upheld by the exercise of judgment and righteousness. Judgment will cleanse the earth of all the accumulated filth and guilt. He will take out of His Kingdom all the things that are an offence to Him and to God (Matthew 13:41-43). Righteousness, the first principle of the Kingdom, will reign, and will guarantee a Kingdom pleasing to God and beneficial to all concerned. (Look up the following Scriptures for the importance of righteousness — Matthew 6:33; Romans 14:17; 2 Timothy 2:22; Isaiah 32:1; Isaiah 32:16-17). Righteousness has been described by Mr. Darby as "consistency with every relationship in which God has placed us". If this truth were obeyed today it would renew the Christian profession and revolutionise society. It is much more than honesty in financial matters, although it involves that. It is right living according to God's standards as laid down in His holy Word. It regulates the life of the individual as well as the home life of husband, wife and children. It is a blueprint for right relations between employer and employee. National and local government would be just and obedience to their laws would ensure peaceful and happy living. Relationships between nations wouldn't be strained by demands that cause tension and wars. The shameful divisions and dissensions of the Christian testimony would be healed. Why is the virtue of righteousness not extolled? Alas, the answer is "sin". It will not be until the Lord Jesus is reigning in righteousness that the world will learn what a valuable feature it is (Isaiah 32:1). In the eternal state righteousness shall dwell, not for a thousand years, but for ever and ever (2 Peter 3:13). See Proverbs 10:1-32 for the blessings that attend a righteous man or woman. The Person. Luke 1:30-35 The promise, the psalm and the prophecies all point to one Person. And what a Person! The virgin Mary received the most marvellous news ever given to a woman. She was to give birth to a son. His Name would be called Jesus (Jehovah the Saviour). He would be great. The One to be born was the Son of the Highest, who would sit on the throne of His father David. His Kingdom would have no end. The Holy Thing that was to be born would be called the Son of God. No human generation would be involved in this conception. It would be accomplished by the power of the Holy Spirit. This was a miracle which surpassed human comprehension. This marvellous message from heaven guarantees that the Old Testament prophecies will be fulfilled to the letter. Sadly, the Gospel narrative ends in the rejection and death of the Son of David. But God's purposes for the earth were not frustrated, and He had other purposes too which are to be fulfilled. The rejected Saviour ascended to God's right hand after rising from among the dead. From that exalted position the Holy Spirit was sent down into the hearts of those who believed in Jesus. The church, the assembly, was formed of the called out ones and the church period began. It has lasted almost two thousand years. Soon, perhaps very soon, the church period will end as described in 1 Thessalonians 4:1-18 verses 13-18. From that moment God will resume direct intervention in the worlds affairs. From Revelation 6:1-17; Revelation 7:1-17; Revelation 8:1-13; Revelation 9:1-21; Revelation 10:1-11; Revelation 11:1-19; Revelation 12:1-17; Revelation 13:1-18; Revelation 14:1-20; Revelation 15:1-8; Revelation 16:1-21; Revelation 17:1-18; Revelation 18:1-24 there is a preview of what will happen on earth after the church is caught up to be with Christ. This period culminates with Christ coming in judgment to establish His Kingdom as King of kings and Lord of lords (Revelation 19:1-21). As

Christ is indispensable to God for the fulfilling of God's eternal purpose concerning the church and heavenly blessing, so He will be indispensable to God for the fulfilling of God's purpose relating to Israel and the nations. Note again the wonderful Names of the One who will sit on David's throne:

Jesus — Jehovah the Saviour Salvation received.

Son of the Highest (Most High) Government received.

Son of God (Deity) God's will secured.

Hasten that glorious day when God's great thoughts for His servant David will be fulfilled in Jesus of Nazareth, Son of David, Son of the Highest, Son of God.

F. Wallace.

(Further articles in this series are to follow, if the Lord will).

Grace, Mercy, and Peace This threefold cord is wonderfully strong when each of its strands is woven rightly with the others. The first is doubtless most wonderful of all, in many respects, but the child of God does well to cultivate deeply his appreciation of all of these precious endowments of a loving God and Father. A concordance will show us that peace is spoken of in Scripture far more often than the others. Both peace and mercy have a much larger place in the Old Testament than in the New, while grace holds the largest place in the New Testament. This has much to teach us. Is it not peace for which man naturally yearns the most deeply? Does not the Old Testament, in all its testings of human nature, lay bare to us the painful struggle through which man grasps for the peace that constantly eludes him? Doubtless the word is used frequently in the Old Testament in reference to man's temporal relationships with man, and in connection with earthly circumstances. The entire history bears its depressing witness to the fact that settled, stable peace of this kind is a mere idealistic vision, hopeless of being reached on earth until the blessed Prince of Peace, the Lord Jesus Christ, establishes His own Kingdom. But how much higher and sweeter is that peace which has been made by the blood of the cross of Christ (Colossians 1:20). The believer is the eternal possessor of this peace: "being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ" (Romans 5:1). No longer does he grasp for it: he has it.

Yet this peace from God and with God would be impossible apart from the mercy of God. Why is there no peace on earth? Because of man's sin. It is this that makes him more and more miserable, more self-centred, more grasping, more intolerant of others, more hard and stubborn. Not until he is brought down (though by means of his troubles) to take the place of the publican who prayed honestly, "God be merciful to me a sinner", (Luke 18:13), will he know true peace; for this is the peace of God's forgiving mercy.

Little as one may realise it at first, this wonderful transaction of the soul with God involves more than mercy and peace. "But God, who is rich in mercy, for His great love wherewith He loved us, Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ..." (Ephesians 2:4-5). Let us observe here that God's rich mercy is because of His great love. Love is His very nature, and love acts in mercy toward a wretched sinner, even when dead in sins, moving God's heart to work in the most helpful way possible. Mercy is that tender compassion of God toward the deep need of the soul in its circumstances of misery or of guilt. Mercy can forgive, and delights to do so.

However, immediately the apostle speaks of our being quickened together with Christ, he adds, “(by grace ye are saved;) And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus”. If in mercy God has looked upon us and given life when we were dead in sins, His grace has gone further still, conferring upon us favour that lifts us far above all our former circumstances, saving us, bringing into a realm of perfect joy and peace and circumstances of heavenly blessing in Christ. This is more than compassionate mercy. For a mere humanitarian could show mercy to another who was in dire circumstances, clothe him, feed him, perhaps give him work, but to take him to his own home, as his own son, and invest him with his own wealth, would be a far different matter. This is what grace does. It not only forgives: it provides abundant blessing on a far higher level than the circumstances out of which it delivers. Is this not the reason why grace is much more markedly a subject of the New Testament than of the Old? For the Old Testament regards man as on an earthly level, no doubt in need of peace, in need of mercy, but never knowing the grace that is the marvellous result of the death of Christ for sinners. The New Testament reveals the fulness of the heart of God and His wondrous desire to have guilty sinners not only redeemed from their bitter bondage and misery, but brought in peace into the very circumstances of heaven, the immediate presence of God, known as Father, through our Lord Jesus Christ. In an absolute and full sense then the believer knows God’s grace, mercy, and peace as his eternal possession by virtue of the death of Christ on his behalf. Yet Paul, in greeting Timothy, his child in the faith, wishes him “Grace, mercy, and peace, from God our Father and Jesus Christ our Lord” (1 Timothy 1:2). Does it not teach us that the believer has constant need of appropriating in practice those things that are truly his in principle? If, for instance, we know the preciousness of peace with God, this does not guarantee our constant enjoyment of “the peace of God”. For this our hearts must be set on the proper Object, and our souls must be in that lowly state where we receive from Himself our daily supply for our daily need; for it means the tranquillity of soul that rests, with thankfulness, in calm submission to the will of God. Does the Lord Jesus not speak of this when He says, “My peace I give unto you”? (John 14:27). This was a peace that could meet circumstances of unutterable sorrow, of cruel injustice from ungodly men, yet with calm, unshaken confidence and holy submission. May our souls know this far more than we do!

How is this possible for ourselves, in our present state, without the mercy of God? Indeed, we need this compassion of His heart constantly: compassion that comforts, helps, and encourages us when pressures increase and tend to cast down our souls. Is it not wonderful to know the sympathising, tender care of our “merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God”? (Hebrews 2:17). We must seek this daily, if our souls are to derive comfort from it, or rather we must seek Him, and thus learn the sweet, pure blessedness of His sympathy and care. As we have seen however, grace is higher yet. Grace is the active, energetic favour of God which delights to fill our cup to overflowing, “exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think” (Ephesians 3:20). Now if we have known it in principle, we ought also to know it in daily practice, and by this we should be lifted above our circumstances. Grace is a power which Paul found sufficient to strengthen his soul to bear infirmities, reproaches, necessities, persecutions, and distresses for Christ’s sake, and to do so most gladly (2 Corinthians 12:9-10). Grace enabled him to preach “the unsearchable riches of Christ”, and to serve God acceptably (Ephesians 3:8, Hebrews 12:28). It is the active, positive power for good, for having brought salvation, it also teaches us to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world (Titus 2:11-12). Let us think then of grace, not merely as an attitude of kindness

on God's part, but as His great, active favour in furnishing us with every provision for our good.

It is well that every one of us should linger long and drink deeply of the fresh fountain of "the grace of God", with its fulness of provision; "the tender mercy of our God," bearing its sweetness of comfort, and "the peace of God" with its quietness of contentment.

L. M. Grant.

Reconstructionism, or Dominion Theology

One of the basic premises of what is called Reconstructionism or Dominion Theology is that the present day church is "The Israel of God". What does that mean? To put this doctrine in simple terms it means that Israel has been permanently set aside, since the Old Testament curses have been applied to the Jews, and the blessings applied to the church.

These are tragic mistakes, which were first introduced into the church in the days of Constantine the Great (4th century AD.) and in general were adopted by the Reformers too. It is this kind of error that ultimately resulted in persecution of the Jews and the perpetration of the holocaust. We notice today among so-called evangelical Christians a similar thinking, sometimes the result of a shift from dispensationalism to a charismatic position.

ANOTHER CAUSE. A lack of accuracy in interpreting Scripture leads to error. For example, some people find repetition of a certain expression in the Bible and automatically think it must always have the same meaning. While we accept, for example, that the mystery of Ephesians 3:1-21 refers to the church, to conclude that everywhere "the mystery" is mentioned the church is the subject, would be wrong. The mystery of God in Revelation 10:1-11 has little in common with the mystery of 1 Corinthians 15:1-58, or with the one of Ephesians 3:1-21. Nevertheless, this is what we find in the kind of theology we are faced with today. A similar lack of accuracy is found in connection with the covenants. Do we have anything to do with the new covenant? Yes, the church enjoys the spiritual blessings of the new covenant, though not the literal, physical blessings, since they will be enjoyed in the millennium. Paul calls himself and those ministering with him, "ministers of the new covenant". Does this mean that the church is literally and formally part of or in the new covenant? In Ephesians 2:1-22; Ephesians 3:1-21 we find nothing of that nature, though respected theologians of newer and older generations sincerely thought, and still think, that the believing Jews and Gentiles have been introduced into the new covenant.

Another common misunderstanding is the failure to see the difference between the blessings of Abraham (which belong to all believers) and the new order of blessings the Lord introduced with the coming of the Holy Spirit. THE PRETERITE INTERPRETATION OF PROPHECY. The Dominion school of thinking is linked with the so-called preterite interpretation of the books of Hebrews and Revelation, and the Olivet Discourse. Although there are variations in their positions, the preterites teach that the prophecies have been fulfilled in the destruction of the temple and that the millennium started in the year 70 AD! Of course, we have to bear with our brothers and sisters in the faith, but it is important to see the consequences of these and similar erroneous teachings, especially when these views are not privately held, but are imposed on everyone.

One of the arguments we hear quite often is that Mr Darby received his ideas about the rapture through a prophetess or medium in the school of Mr Irving. It is clear that Mr Darby was used by

the Lord to teach the imminent coming of the Lord and that believers should live in a daily expectancy of His coming, with all its practical and moral consequences.

HEAVENLY OR EARTHLY CALLING.

It is no wonder that these teachers concentrate so much on this earth and this world, since they have lost sight of the heavenly nature of the church's calling. According to them the millennium (1000 year reign) has already been here for 1923 years! Of course, the believer has obligations and responsibilities as to his walk through this world. However, when we teach that we are already in the millennium, we forget that the church has a very special position and relationship with Christ in the glory (see Ephesians 1:23), enjoying with Him all spiritual blessings, during the time of His rejection in this scene.

Based on the belief that all prophecies were fulfilled around the year 70, the reconstructionists deny what we already see in our day, that the messianic Jews will return to the old shadows. Nevertheless, the temple will be rebuilt, and the services re-instituted by a remnant who will be recognised by God, and He will consider this temple as His temple (2 Thessalonians 2:4). The majority of the nation will be apostates, together with the masses of the Christian profession left here after the rapture. These Jews will act according to the light they will have and will not be part of the church.

FOUR INCONSISTENCIES.

Firstly, the dominion theologians say that there is a fundamental difference between the Kingdom our Lord preached and the one the apostles preached (in view of the destruction of the temple). In reality, the Kingdom preached by the Lord and the apostles is the same, though it adopted a different character when the Lord was rejected by the nation (Matthew 11:1-30; Matthew 12:1-50; Matthew 13:1-58) and during His absence (Luke 19:11-27). It will be seen in glory again in a different character, but it is the same Kingdom.

Secondly, the dispensationalists are accused of making a puzzle book out of the Bible. One of the charges brought is that they teach that God interrupted His ways when He introduced the church age. Of course, there is no interruption in God's ways, though the church does have a parenthetical character (see the vision of the sheet in Acts 10:1-48 and Paul's ministry in Ephesians 3:1-21 as examples). On the other hand, in a certain sense it replaces Israel as a testimony here on earth, although only for the time being (Romans 9:1-33; Romans 10:1-21; Romans 11:1-36).

Thirdly, a favourite verse to deny the coming millennial reign is Genesis 49:10 : "The sceptre shall not depart from Judah... until Shiloh comes"! But this is simply a wrong conclusion. The verse does not say that the sceptre would depart. This is the way the reconstructionists read the verse, in order to defend their claims that we are already in the millennium. The word could be translated with, "to Whom it belongs". Without wanting to be dogmatic (there is no way to be certain about its meaning, but the old rabbis interpreted it with regard to the Messiah), I compare this with the crown God will give "to Whom it belongs" (Ezekiel 21:27). It is interesting that both the antichrist and the true Christ are from Judah!

Fourthly, one more example. A very strange interpretation is given of Hebrews 10:37 : “For yet a little while, and He that shall come will come, and will not tarry”. We are told that the coming one would refer to the antichrist, or his spirit, and the destruction of the temple signals an end of his reign!

ABRAHAM AND GOD’S PROMISES.

These theologians accuse God of being unjust, 1:e., if we accept the “dispensational” interpretation of Scripture, namely that He would deceive His own in giving promises, but not fulfilling them. This is important enough to discuss in more detail. The final fulfilment of the blessings of Genesis 12:1-20 is still future, but this does not imply or mean that God was as it were purposely deceiving Abraham when He gave him these promises. Abraham responded to God’s glory and walked by faith, though he also failed here and there as we, his sons, do. When living in the land of God’s promise he did not receive the promises, but remained a stranger there and learned that God had prepared something better for him (see Hebrews 11:1-40). Does this mean that all God’s promises for Israel have been set aside or have been fulfilled in the church? What then about the curses? On the contrary, Romans 9:1-33; Romans 10:1-21; Romans 11:1-36 teaches something quite different. God’s calling is without repentance and His promises will be fulfilled, after the rapture of the church and the coming judgments.

DIVIDING THE WORD OF TRUTH.

We will find some mistakes in Scofield’s outlines as well as in the writings of other dispensationalists. We may learn from covenant theologians, as far as certain areas are concerned, but to adopt their entire school of thought and set aside dispensationalism would go much too far. We should not be too dogmatic, e.g., as to the “gap” theory and similar things. We ought to realise the limitations of a system of teaching. Here indeed we should be balanced, as we need to be in so many different areas: earthly/heavenly blessings; God’s purpose/man’s responsibility, and so on.

Some dispensationalists have been too pessimistic and have neglected their responsibility, but I would feel ashamed to have my Jewish friends read the articles and books of the reconstructionists! They often refer to the Old Testament church, and this is one of the errors typical of this school of thinking. The Old Testament church, if you want to use that word as Stephen does in Acts 7:38, has little to do with the New Testament church (the Lord refers to it in Matthew 16:1-28 and we find its birthday in history in Acts 2:1-47 : l ff), except for the fact that both have life from God and are found in a certain relationship with God. In conclusion I suggest that there are elements that both Israel and the church have in common. This is sometimes not noticed enough by dispensationalists. On the other hand there are great differences between Israel and the church, which are simply denied by the dominionists, in making Israel the church of God or vice versa. Let us not forget that this consideration also has to do with the Person of our blessed Lord and what He means to our hearts and lives, as expressed in this well-known verse: “And we have the prophetic word made surer, to which ye do well taking heed (as to a lamp shining in an obscure place) until the day dawn and the morning star arise in your hearts” (2 Peter 1:19 — J.N.D.).

A. E. Bouter. From Our Archive The Primitive Church (1) Acts 4:23-37; Acts 5:1-6; Acts 5:11-14 (An address given in Lowestoft in 1960)

Here is a picture of the church in Jerusalem as it was at the outset. There are some very interesting and striking features to be noted as having marked these early saints. The picture shows us what was God's mind when, for the moment, the power of the indwelling Spirit of God was very powerfully felt. The first point I would like you to notice is this, that being let go Peter and John went to their own company. They had been hauled up before the authorities, but they were let go. We are told in the earlier verses of the chapter that they found "nothing how they might punish them" (Acts 4:21). They found that what had happened was really beyond their criticism and reluctantly, having given them a beating, they had to let them go, and being let go they went to their own company. There was to be found in Jerusalem at that time a number of people who formed a company, so that the apostles, released by the antagonistic authorities, knew where to go. The church of God is a company distinct from the world. That has been forgotten. Through the years the object of the adversary has been to mingle the church with the world. If possible, to swamp what is of God in worldly circumstances, and all too often he has succeeded in that kind of thing. But before there was any very widespread failure we see there was a distinct line drawn between the church and the world. That line still exists today and you and I have to recognise it. The church is not a part of the world's religious system. The church is a called out company. That is what the word translated church, or assembly by Mr. Darby, really means. The Greek word has been brought in to our language, albeit as an adjective. You might go to London and find the offices of the ecclesiastical commission: people who have to do with church affairs. The Greek word ekklesia comes from "ek", meaning "out of", and "klesis", from "kaleo", meaning "to call". It simply means the called out people. That has always been God's way. He calls out His own, and we notice it right in the beginning of the Bible. If you read those early chapters in Genesis you find that after the flood, when perhaps a century had passed and they were beginning to multiply once more, they said, "Go to, let us build us a city, and a tower whose top may reach unto heaven" (Genesis 11:4). They said in effect, "we can't achieve what we want as individuals, we must achieve it together. We must have something collective and not merely individual". In the Darby translation, rather more homely and striking, it is rendered, "Come on". The world is saying, "Come on, let's all come together. You can accomplish a lot more if you come and join us, and give a kind of Christian push to what we're doing". That's what they were saying when they started to build the tower of Babel. One man couldn't do it but all of them together could, and they started to do it. Against that background God said to Abraham, "Get thee out..." (Genesis 12:1). The thought of calling out has marked God's work all through. He called Israel out to make them a distinct nation. That is why the word "ekklesia" is used in connection with that nation in Acts 7:38 : "This is that Moses which said unto the children of Israel, A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me; him shall ye hear. This is he, that was in the church in the wilderness, with the angel which spake to him in the Mount Sina, and with our fathers..." It was a people called out of Egypt. We belong to the ekklesia, the church, the called out family. Immediately after Pentecost this became manifest in Jerusalem, and Peter and John "went to their own company".

What marked this company? The first thing I notice is that they were familiar with the Word of God, and their thoughts were governed by the Word of God. In this emergency, brought face to face

with the opposition of the powerful religious leaders, they found light and direction in the Word of God. They didn't have the New Testament Scriptures, but they had the Old Testament and they went back to what David had written in the second Psalm. Here's a remarkable case of how Scripture often has a double fulfilment. There is a preliminary fulfilment, before the complete fulfilment comes. When Peter preached on the day of Pentecost he said, "This is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel" (Acts 2:16). If you read the prophet Joel you will see he is predicting what will happen on a greater scale at the opening of the millennial age. Peter was saying that the outpouring of the Spirit and the speaking in tongues on the day of Pentecost was a kind of sample of what is yet to be. So it is here in connection with the quotation from Psalms 2:1-12. When the climax of the age is reached, and the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing, and the anti-Christian powers are all apparently at the top of their form, God will intervene, and He will set His anointed on His holy hill of Zion. They only quote this part, "Why did the heathen rage, and the people imagine vain things? The kings of the earth stood up, and the rulers were gathered together against the Lord, and against His Christ". Exactly what was predicted then had happened. Jew and Gentile had crucified the Messiah, but they had only done what "Thy hand and Thy counsel determined before to be done". Although they didn't know it, they had only succeeded in accomplishing what had been predicted concerning the suffering of the Christ. But what fortified the early church was the knowledge and the counsel and direction of the Word of God. That is equally true for us who belong to the church of God today. The Word of God should be the governing factor.

There was also prayer. They were in touch with God. They didn't appeal to the ruling powers or try to cultivate things with the men of the world. No, they cast themselves wholly on God, and there is no doubt that when saints do that there is sure to be a gracious answer. They lifted up their voice to God with one accord, and what did they ask? They didn't complain about the antagonism of the rulers or the difficult time they were having. They certainly didn't ask God to judge or to stop them. They viewed things from what we might call the divine standpoint. They said, "And now, Lord, behold their threatenings", but also, "and grant unto Thy servants, that with all boldness they may speak Thy Word" (Ch 4:29). They asked God to stretch forth His hand and make His power felt, so that they might be able to do what they knew they were commissioned to do. They were to go and preach repentance and remission of sins among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem (Luke 24:47). It was as if the Lord said: "You are going to begin at the most difficult place of all, the place where sin has reached its climax", because there never was a sin before, and never could be again, like the rejection and death of the gracious Messiah. It was the supreme sin of humanity and it was perpetrated at Jerusalem, the city that had slain the prophets. When our Lord wept at the graveside of Lazarus with the sisters, the word translated "wept"1 means to shed tears silently. When He wept over Jerusalem the word used for "wept" means loud lamentation. He knew what lay before the city (Luke 19:41-44). Yet the gospel was first to be preached in this very city, and there its mighty power and efficacy were first to be shown. Knowing what their commission was, and not thinking for the moment of the nations, they prayed for boldness in speaking the Word of the Lord, and that is exactly what they did. We're told that "they spake the Word of God with boldness" and "with great power gave the apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus" (Ch. 4:31, 33).

Consequent upon prayer there was the working of the Holy Spirit in their midst. That is one of the great marks of the primitive church. The Holy Spirit is come and the power is His. Let us not forget that. It is the power of the Holy Spirit that accomplishes the work of God. We are living in an age when man is thought to be very great and his thoughts and doings are around us on all sides. We may forget that power doesn't lie in human abilities but in the Holy Spirit of God. That is made very clear in a doctrinal way in Paul's first epistle to the Corinthians. It is the Holy Spirit of God who, by His power, operates in the assembly of God. People may sometimes be inclined to say of so-called "brethren" meetings that they appear to be a kind of democratic institution where any brother can get up and speak. We should say that no one can get up and speak, except under the gracious power and direction of the Spirit of God. I do not deny that it is difficult to practise. I feel it often when I sit in a meeting. Should I be right in perhaps rising to my feet to give thanks or to speak or to pray. We have to be exercised. I may make mistakes and others may make mistakes, but it is better to do the right thing even imperfectly than the wrong thing in a first class style.

1This is the only time that the word is used in the New Testament.

Alas, Christendom has largely drifted away from the simplicity of the primitive church, which was marked by the power of the Spirit and consequently by great oneness of heart. Do we see that today? All too often we do not. In the beginning they were "of one heart and of one soul" (Ch. 4:32). The divergence that we see today tells us how little we have known of the controlling power of the Spirit of God. There was great oneness of heart amongst the saints and there was powerful testimony to the world. These two things, the oneness inside and the testimony flowing to the outside, are more intimately connected than sometimes we imagine. The oneness of heart meant care for the saints. People have often spoken about this remarkable outburst of generosity. We must remember that the saints were an outcast people. Nevertheless, there was a great outflow of divine care and compassion. This generosity wasn't something laid on them as a divine demand. Peter said to Ananias: "Whiles it remained, was it not thine own? and after it was sold, was it not in thine own power?" (Acts 5:4). He was under no compunction. He might have sold it and kept the money, not pretending anything, but he came acting a lie. Poor Sapphira told one. When "as many as were possessors of lands or houses, sold them, and brought the prices of the things that were sold, And laid them down at the apostles' feet", Ananias brought money pretending it was the full price, but keeping back a part of it. It is often the way, when that kind of sin comes into the circle of the saints, at the outset you see a very drastic exhibition of holy discipline. The church is a place of discipline. It was shown in the primitive company when the first outbreak of selfishness came. There was pretension and unreality. It was lying to the Holy Spirit, as if the Spirit of God didn't know the truth of the case. He was powerfully active in the church and manifested His power in holy discipline. He illumined the mind of Peter so that he was able to speak as he did and Ananias died. He had been behaving as though you can deceive the Spirit of God, and you can't. Often, at the beginning of an epoch, God gives a very drastic exhibition of power and of disciplinary judgment. Some will remember the case of Achan, when the children of Israel were entering the land. It is important to learn this lesson. The church of God in its primitive state was not only marked by the features we have already considered, but also by holy discipline. The church is the house of God and God dwells there by His Spirit. Here was something that no ordinary person could have detected, but the Holy Spirit knew about it, and He proved the reality of His dwelling in the church, the house of God, by acting in this way. Peter simply spoke the words that the Holy

Spirit gave him to speak and both Ananias and Sapphira died. The fact that God dealt with them shows that they were His saints. God doesn't deal with the world in that way. That is the great thing in Psalms 73:1-28. The poor psalmist says, "But as for me, my feet were almost gone; my steps had well nigh slipped. For I was envious at the foolish, when I saw the prosperity of the wicked" (Psalms 73:2-3). He was troubled and plagued and chastened every morning while the people of the world were doing things and seemed to be unchecked. But when the psalmist went into the sanctuary, then he understood their end. He saw things from God's standpoint. The people of the world may appear to get away with many things in this life, but then they plunge into a lost eternity. The child of God doesn't get away with it. One has often seen that. A child of God has done something that isn't right, and God has allowed it to be found out. You may say that that thing has been done again and again by other people in that place and they've got away with it. A Christian does it and is caught. Why? Because God deals with the Christian. If a saint dishonours the Lord he's pulled up. That is what happened here in Acts 5:1-42. Such discipline having come in, it had a restricting effect. In the first place, "great fear came upon all the church" (Acts 5:11). They were reminded that God doesn't want the believer to do the kind of things that the world does. They were committed to a life of holiness. As saints of God we are committed to a life of another order that isn't marked by the ways of the world. The eye of our Lord is upon us.

Then there was something else. This fear came upon "as many as heard these things". God's power was manifested through the apostles and "of the rest durst no man join himself to them" (Acts 5:12-13). There may have been those who were impressed with the generosity of the saints, who would have joined themselves to them, while being no true members of Christ and only sources of trouble and weakness. This disciplinary action hindered the inrush of mere outward professors, but it didn't stop the true work of God. "Believers were the more added to the Lord, multitudes both of men and women" (Acts 5:14). That is what we ought to see. Believers brought under the Lordship of Christ. Such become a source of real help and joy.

F. B. Hole (Two other addresses in this series are to follow, if the Lord will) The Testimony in the Home 1 Chronicles 13:14; 1 Chronicles 16:38

It is worthy of note that we find in the epistle to the Ephesians, in chapters 5 and 6, the fullest exposition of the responsibilities and privileges of the Christian family. This would indicate to us that we must view the Christian home and family in connection with the deepest truth and in association with the mystery in all its fulness. The Christian home needs to support the testimony of God today more than ever before, no matter what its composition may be. It may range from a number of people in a large house, down to one brother or sister in a bed-sit, but the Lord Jesus must be honoured there, with a definite commitment to the maintenance of His testimony. Then there will be blessing and a re-establishment of a wider testimony. We see a picture of this in the case of Obed-edom. Although he originated from Gath and had obvious association of old with Edom, his other name, Obed, means "worshipper". Perhaps this feature was known to his neighbours when David sought an abode for the ark following the breach upon Uzzah. They would recommend him to David as a suitable candidate for receiving the ark into his home. This would have been a great relief to David after the tragedy with Uzzah. In our day any similar attempts to maintain the testimony by copying the world with its "new cart" will only come to grief.

What a privilege for Obed-edom to open his home to the ark. Likewise, what a privilege for Christian households to have Christ in their home today. The ark typifies the Lord Jesus as God manifest in flesh. It is often referred to as the ark of the testimony (e.g. Exodus 25:22; Exodus 40:21; Numbers 4:5; Joshua 4:16). It is in this aspect that it can be applied to the house of Obed-edom and to us today. Obed-edom faithfully maintained the testimony in his day and God blessed him for it. When David heard about this he went and brought up the ark with joy (2 Samuel 6:12). We read in 1 Chronicles 15:1-29 of the orderly way in which this was done, based upon the Scripture in Numbers 4:1-49.

About 160 years ago it pleased God to raise up a testimony to the truth of the one body of Christ, with Him its Head in heaven. Since then a few believers have sought grace from the Lord to act in the light of this precious truth. They do not claim to be the body of Christ, but humbly seek to give expression to it, albeit in weakness, yet counting on our faithful Head. They recognise that while all truly born again believers form the assembly of Christ which is His body (Ephesians 1:22-23), that assembly is God's house which holiness becomes. Hence the need to maintain in the assembly conditions which are in accordance with God's holiness and honour.

It is sometimes suggested today that it is no longer possible to act on the truth of the one body and maintain links between local gatherings. It is sometimes said that we can freely receive whom we will at the Lord's supper, without any reference to the fact that some are known to be in association with error. Revelation 3:20 is brought forward to support the claim that it is an individual pathway today. To this we say that God does not change His holy principles to fit in with our ideas. Those who open the door to the Lord Jesus are not left on their own. They can be found among those in Philadelphia, who keep His Word and do not deny His Name. No one Scripture contradicts another. They complement one another. Revelation 3:20 does not set aside the necessity for believers today to purge themselves out from vessels unto dishonour and follow after righteousness, faith, love and peace with those who call upon the Lord out of a pure heart (2 Timothy 2:21-22).

1 Chronicles 16:1-43, verse 38, shows that Obed-edom's faithfulness was not forgotten. He shared with Hosah the privilege of doorkeeping. How necessary to have faithfulness, wisdom and love, in allowing those to approach who were suited to do so and refusing any who were not (1 Thessalonians 5:21-22; 1 John 4:1). It is also not without significance that two were sent by the Lord to prepare for the passover supper on the night that He was betrayed (Mark 14:13; Luke 22:8).

A.S.

Notice

Because of the inclusion of other material, it has not been possible to carry the next part in the series on Psalms 119:1-176 by Mr. Cor Bruins, in this issue. This will follow in the next issue, if the Lord will.

"The Sermon on the Mount" (4) Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled (Matthew 5:6) In Luke 6:1-49, where the Lord addresses His disciples personally, He says in a general way: "Blessed are ye that hunger now: for ye shall be filled" (verse 21). The fourth of the nine "beatitudes" in Matthew 5:1-48 speaks of a particular hunger and

thirst — a hunger and thirst after righteousness.

Hunger and thirst involve an intensive desire for what is vital to the preservation of life. They indicate that one has to manage without these objects of desire, or that they are not at one's disposal. Was there no righteousness on earth at that time? When God gave the law to His people at Sinai, He said: "...in righteousness shalt thou judge thy neighbour" (Leviticus 19:15). But what did this people do with the Lord Jesus, the only just One? Peter had to say to the Jews: "But ye denied the Holy One and the Just, and desired a murderer to be granted unto you; And killed the Prince of life..." (Acts 3:14-15). The Romans who occupied Palestine at that time were proud of their ancient law. It still serves as a basis for laws on the statute books of many of the European states, and hence the standard of Roman righteousness continues with us to this day. However, when the Lord Jesus stood before Pilate, the Roman governor, Pilate said: "I am innocent of the blood of this just person..." (Matthew 27:24). Yet he had Him scourged, and delivered Him to be crucified, because of the demand of the inflamed crowd. The unrighteousness of the world cannot be expressed more clearly than by the treatment of the Son of God, our Lord and Saviour.

Generally speaking, righteousness today is thought of as a principle of conduct that provides the same rights for everyone. In Scripture however, God Himself is always the source as well as the object of righteousness. He is the perfectly righteous One who always deals righteously, 1:e., in accordance with Himself. God deals with mankind for the benefit and blessing of all, yet many do not understand the basis of these dealings, and therefore imagine that God is unjust. Of course, God is not unjust (see Romans 3:5; Hebrews 6:10). God's righteousness requires that He punish sin which is, as we know, mainly directed against Himself. The perfection of God's righteousness is seen at the cross of Calvary. There the Man Christ Jesus was punished in the place of sinful people so that God might give His righteousness to those who accept this work of Christ.

True righteousness will only begin to be experienced when we accept this by faith. Man, equipped by God with intellect and a sense of responsibility, knows human righteousness, and endeavours to practise it, but because of the sin that is in him, he is unable to fulfil even this righteousness in the different areas of life to which it applies. Quite apart from this inability, there is often an unwillingness to attempt to meet these human standards. We are living at a time when the demands of human righteousness are clearer than ever before. Think of the demands of tax and social legislation. Think of the international attempts to even out the differences between industrial nations and developing countries. Protestant churches support and motivate these endeavours, and some of these pursue this objective by becoming active politically. Yet the "Sermon on the Mount" contains no instructions to improve the condition of the world, and it is not a political programme. Rather, it describes the characteristics and the future lot of all those who, by believing, have part in the Kingdom of God (or the Kingdom of heaven). This is meant particularly for the believing remnant of the Jewish people, as well as for the believers from among the nations in the coming tribulation. They will experience the unrighteousness of the world at its peak, in the person of the antichrist (2 Thessalonians 2:10; Isaiah 51:1; Isaiah 51:6). They, like their Lord before them, will be unjustly persecuted and attacked. Their renewed hearts will be filled with a deep and longing desire for righteousness, and this desire will have its answer when the Lord comes at the beginning of the millennium.

“Behold, a King shall reign in righteousness, and princes shall rule in judgment” (Isaiah 32:1). When God, under the rule of Christ, lays judgment to the line, and righteousness to the plummet, all those will be filled who earlier hungered and thirsted after righteousness (Isaiah 28:17).

Yet this is not the case at the present time. We must realise that in this world perfect righteousness will exist only when the Lord Jesus Himself introduces it in the millennium. Is not the ardent longing of mankind for righteousness (and for peace which is the work of righteousness — Isaiah 32:17), a sign that this period is soon to come? This longed-for aim will not be achieved by the efforts of those who seek it for the world, but only through the righteousness and peace of God. This verse speaks to us as Christians too. As children of God we realise how much unrighteousness there is among the people of the world. We see that some believers have to suffer unjustly, not only because of their faith in the Lord Jesus, but simply because of their righteous conduct. And, sad to say, is there not sometimes unrighteousness even among true Christians?

How many a child of God sighs because he feels unjustly treated. The desire for righteousness in these cases is understandable. Yet this hunger and thirst will be satisfied for us all, eternally and perfectly. According to His promise, we look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness (2 Peter 3:13). In the millennium, the Lord Jesus will reign in righteousness, yet in the new creation righteousness will abide eternally. Then the aim of God’s ways with man will be achieved. Can we not say that our hunger and thirst after righteousness are stilled already in many respects? Has not God counted our faith for righteousness (Romans 4:5; Romans 4:22)? Are we not the living proofs of the righteousness of God, because we believe in Him, whom He has made to be sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him (2 Corinthians 5:21)? Can we not rejoice already in the moral characteristics of the Kingdom of God: “For the Kingdom of God is... righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost” (Romans 14:17)? Yet we should not only rejoice in these things, but also put them into practice in our lives among our brothers and sisters in Christ, and in the world. In Matthew 6:33 the Lord says to His disciples: “But seek ye first the Kingdom of God, and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you”. Are not these words a worthy motto for Christians who desire to be faithful disciples of their Lord?

Arend Remmers.

Divine Care (5) Timothy’s Care. Php 2:19-21

Both as to his calling and his service, the place occupied by Paul was unique1 (See footnote on next page. Acts 9:1-16; Acts 22:3-15; Acts 26:8-20; 1 Corinthians 15:8; Ephesians 3:1-12; Colossians 1:21-29). Though a man of like passions to us, his obedience, energy, and spiritual intelligence, as well as his deep love for the saints, made him a vessel through which divine care could be exercised. Doubtless in this, as in all things, he was “...in nothing... behind those who are in surpassing degree apostles” (2 Corinthians 11:5, J.N.D.). But what of the working of this care in those who are not apostles? Here in Php 2:1-30, Timothy is brought before us. Verses 5-11 present the One who, beyond all comparison, looked “not... on his own things, but... on the things of others” (verse 4). Though He was and is God, His mind was to serve in humility and obedience, even unto death. While there must ever be an infinite distance between the Creator and the creature, was not the same mind seen in Paul? He exhorted the Philippians to “Let this mind” be in them, “which was also in Christ Jesus”, and who among the servants of Christ was more marked

by that mind than he? Yet Paul says of Timothy in verse 20, “For I have no man likeminded, who will naturally care for your state”. The trend in that day, as in this, was evidently in the opposite direction. Instead of looking on the things of others, all sought their own, “not the things which are Jesus Christ’s” (verse 21). In marked contrast to this selfishness there was on Timothy’s part genuine feeling as to how the saints got on (Verse 20: J.N.D. trans.). In what way was Timothy’s care for the saints manifested? Many of the references to him in the New Testament help to answer this question. He was marked out for a particular service and fitted for it, and his own brethren happily identified themselves with him in the matter (1 Timothy 1:18; matter (1 Timothy 4:14). Paul speaks of him as his “...beloved and faithful child in the Lord”, and these qualities manifested themselves during the years that Timothy was with him (1 Corinthians 4:17 — J.N.D.).

1This is not to deny that there are in his calling, elements common to the calling of every Christian, and in his service, governing principles that ought to be seen in the service of every Christian.

Paul first took Timothy with him during his so-called second missionary journey (Acts 15:41; Acts 16:1-3). In the course of it they came to Thessalonica. Having spent three sabbath days there, with evident blessing to many, it had been necessary to depart (Acts 17:1-10). Paul, Silas and Timothy had gone to Berea, and Paul moved on at once to Athens, where Silas and Timothy joined him again (Acts 17:10-15). In his concern for the Thessalonians Paul sent Timothy back to them to establish and to comfort them (1 Thessalonians 3:1-2; 1 Thessalonians 3:6). Timothy had a real care for these new converts and the necessary wisdom to meet them in their difficulties.

Here in Philippians Paul proposes to send Timothy, that he might be of good comfort, when he knew their state (Php 2:19). Timothy had a heart for these brethren too. They were not new converts, but spiritually mature. They had fellowship in the gospel with Paul and his co-workers (Php 1:4-7). Like Timothy, they had Paul in their hearts (Php 4:10-18; Php 2:17).

Serving the Lord among the Thessalonians and Philippians was no doubt a happy task, whatever the opposition from without. However, Timothy was sent to other assemblies too. Paul would not go to Corinth because of their low spiritual condition. Had he gone it would have been necessary for him to exercise divine discipline (1 Corinthians 4:18-21; 2 Corinthians 1:23). Instead, Paul sent Timothy to them. As his beloved and faithful child in the Lord, and his companion and fellow labourer, Timothy was able to remind the Corinthians of Paul’s ways and teaching. How different they were to much that was seen and taught in the assembly at Corinth! (1 Corinthians 4:17). This was not an easy task. There were those there who strongly opposed Paul. (1 Corinthians 9:1-12; 1 Corinthians 15:12; 2 Corinthians 10:1-11; 2 Corinthians 11:1-15). It would seem that Timothy was naturally more sensitive than Paul, and he would have felt the weight of his task. The Corinthians were to see to it that he was without fear among them (1 Corinthians 16:10). The first epistle brought about the repentance that was necessary and it is probable that, in the faithful discharge of his service, Timothy helped to bring about this result (2 Corinthians 7:8-12).

Later, when Paul was going to Macedonia, he besought Timothy to abide still at Ephesus (1 Timothy 1:3). In the history given in Acts Paul went from there to Macedonia twice (Acts 16:8-11; Acts 20:1). Timothy accompanied him on the first occasion, and on the second went in advance of the apostle (Acts 17:1-15; 1 Thessalonians 3:1-6; Acts 19:22; Acts 20:1-5). It is probable that 1 Timothy 1:3 refers to an occasion between Paul’s first and second imprison-ment at Rome2. The saints at Ephesus had been favoured with an extended stay amongst them by the apostle, and by

an epistle which sets out in remarkable fulness the purpose and counsel of God (Acts 20:31). Timothy was to watch over what was taught, that this might be sound. There were not wanting those that would teach other doctrines and the law (1 Timothy 1:1-7). Godly order was to be maintained and Timothy had a particular responsibility in this matter. No doubt he felt the difficulty, as a younger man, of having to deal with those who were older than himself (1 Timothy 5:1-2). He was to give no occasion to any to despise his youth, but rather to be a model believer (1 Timothy 4:12).

Timothy's care for the saints would have entailed his feeling more keenly the turning away from Paul of "... all they which are in Asia" (2 Timothy 1:15). If Timothy's ministry at Corinth helped to turn the tide there, at Ephesus it was apparently not so. Paul was aware that his young fellow labourer might become discouraged, and pressed his responsibility to the Lord (1 Timothy 1:18-20; 1 Timothy 5:21; 1 Timothy 6:13-16). In the second epistle he reminds him that all is secure "in Christ Jesus", and of the unfailing resources we have in Him to meet the difficulties of the last days.

R.F.W.

(To be continued, if the Lord will).

2The following extract from the "New and Concise Bible Dictionary" may be helpful here: "The history of Paul is... given in the Acts of the Apostles, but there are intimations in the later epistles that after two years at Rome he was liberated. His movements from that time are not definitely recorded; apparently he visited Ephesus and Macedonia, 1 Timothy 1:3; wrote the first epistle to Timothy; visited Crete, Titus 1:5; and Nicopolis, Titus 3:12; wrote the epistle to Titus (the early writers say that he went to Spain, which we know he desired to do, Romans 15:24; Romans 15:28); visited Troas and Miletus, 2 Timothy 4:13; 2 Timothy 4:20; wrote the epistle to the Hebrews; and when a prisoner at Rome the second time, wrote the second epistle to Timothy, when expecting his death".

John 1:14

Php 2:7 John 2:24-25; John 21:17

Matthew 8:27 John 3:13; Matthew 18:20; Matthew 28:20 That is to say, He had body, soul and spirit

Genesis 2:7

Genesis 1:21; Genesis 1:24. (The word "creature" in the King James translation-Nephesh-should be translated "soul" as elsewhere).

1 John 1:1-2

Hebrews 2:14

John 10:18 The Lord grew to maturity but this was not ageing in the sense meant here.

Matthew 26:38; John 12:27 Mark 2:8; Mark 8:12; Luke 23:46; John 19:30 (dismissed His spirit).

1 Timothy 6:16

Hebrews 2:9 Acts 20:28. (I believe the King James translation and most other translations are correct here).

1 John 1:7

Romans 5:10

1 John 3:16 Hebrews 2:17-18; Hebrews 4:14-16

Luke 2:52

Mark 13:32

Vol 02 - Truth & Testimony Vol. 2, No. 8, 1994.

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Some Features of True Worship “Then began men to call upon the Name of the Lord” (Genesis 4:26)

It is always very helpful to see when and in what context a certain saying is first mentioned in Scripture, particularly so in Genesis, which in many respects is the “book of beginnings”. The expression “to call upon the Name of the Lord” first occurs at the close of Genesis 4:1-26, after the birth of Enosh, the son of Seth. In contrast with the offspring of Cain, mentioned earlier in this chapter, who had gone out from the presence of the Lord, we find here the family of Seth and perhaps also other descendants of Adam and Eve who desired to seek God’s presence. So here we have the children of God distinguished from the children of this world who tried to manage without God. Cain was the first builder of a city, and his descendants were the founders of civilization. However, they had no relationship with God, which is the special feature that marked the offspring of Seth. In the midst of a world without God the children of Seth called on the Name of the Lord and honoured Him, knowing that they could not live without Him. They realized that they needed His help from day to day.

God noticed this and had it written down. Here we have the beginning of regular worship. They started to serve the Lord and to call on His Name, and this was no individual but a collective matter. “Then began men to call upon the Name of the Lord”. Abel was the first man to bring an offering that was pleasing in God’s eyes, and he did so alone (as far as we can gather from the beginning of Genesis 4:1-26). But Seth, the one who had come in the place of the deceased Abel, and his offspring did it collectively. In Seth we see a picture of the risen Lord praising the Father together with His own, and singing God’s praises in the midst of the assembly (cf. Genesis 4:25; Psalms 22:22; John 20:17-20; Hebrews 2:10-13; Hebrews 12:24). When did Seth and his children start doing this? It was after the birth of Enosh, whose name speaks of man’s weakness and mortality (cf. Job 7:16; Psalms 8:4; Psalms 90:3). They began to call on the Name of the Lord in the awareness of their own weakness and helplessness. They realized that in themselves they were no more than a breath and so they called upon Him who lives for ever, the LORD, the eternal I AM. They acknowledged Him as both the Source and the Sustainer of life. While Cain’s offspring were marked by pride and self-glorification (if we may interpret Genesis 4:23-24 this way), the descendants of Seth were marked by humility and self-abasement.

They called on the Name of the Lord. God’s Name indicates who He is and what we can know about Him. It reveals His relationship with men. The patriarchs knew Him especially as the Almighty, and Israel knew Him as Yahweh, the great I AM. Believers in the church period, the dispensation of God’s grace, know Him as their Father in Christ. In the future dispensation of the Kingdom of peace He will be known and honoured more especially as the Most High who possesses heaven and earth.

God is the God of Shem, as we are told in Genesis 9:26, and Shem means “name”. God is the God of those who know His Name and who have a relationship with Him. Thus, later on in the history of Israel we find that the Angel in whom the Name of the LORD was (Exodus 23:20-21) went with God’s people. We also find that God’s Name was put on the children of Israel in order to bless them (Numbers 6:27). That Name was their refuge: “The Name of the LORD is a strong tower; the righteous runneth into it, and is safe” (Proverbs 18:10). This indicates how strong the ties are between God and the people which has been called after His Name. This goes for us too, who may now call on God as our Father (John 4:23; Romans 8:15; 1 Peter 1:17). The Son has declared the Father, and the Spirit leads us to worship the Father (Galatians 4:6).

We do not know exactly how the family of Seth arranged their worship and called on the Name of the Lord. Genesis 4:1-26 does not give any details. Perhaps this indicates that it was done in all simplicity, without ceremony, or in the words of our Lord when He spoke with the Samaritan woman: “in spirit and in truth” (John 4:23-24). This would mean that they worshipped with sincere hearts, fully aware of their own littleness and of God’s mercy and truth. It would mean that they worshipped in the power of the Spirit of God, without impressive liturgies. This is how we as Christians ought to call on the Name of the Lord. “Calling on” Him means looking away from ourselves and our weakness and expressing what we have found in Him. It means worshipping Him for all that He has done and for what He is. It implies that we realize His greatness and bow down before Him in adoration.

Perhaps the only thing the family of Seth had was an altar. It was the case later on in the book of Genesis (Genesis 12:8; Genesis 13:4; Genesis 26:25). Abraham and Isaac called on the Name of the Lord by their altars, and we may assume that Seth did the same. With their sacrifices they drew near to God and offered them on the altar, following the example of Abel, whose offering was pleasing to God. The altar was the centre of worship, the place where man met God in order to worship Him. This is also confirmed by the history of Israel. The altar of burnt offering by God’s sanctuary was the most appropriate place to call on the Name of the Lord, for there He chose to make His Name abide in the midst of His people (cf. Deuteronomy 12:1-32 ff.). In the New Testament, calling on the Name of the Lord is not restricted to a certain geographical place (it is quite remarkable that even in Genesis 4:1-26 no such place is mentioned!). Yet we do have an “altar” in our midst, in the spiritual sense of the word. Our “altar” is Christ Himself, in whose Name we gather and through whom we offer the sacrifice of praise to God (Matthew 18:20; Hebrews 13:10; Hebrews 13:15). Christ is the centre and the basis of our worship. If we have anything to offer up to God — voluntary offerings, sacrifices of thanksgiving — it can be only acceptable to God by Him. When we as Christians call on the Name of the Lord, this should be in agreement with God’s full revelation in His Son, our Lord Jesus Christ. We do not call upon God as Yahweh, the eternal I AM, as the children of Israel did. We worship Him as the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. For the Father is seeking such to worship Him. This is true Christian worship. And we also call on Christ as our Lord, as we find it for example in the first epistle to the Corinthians: “...with all who in every place call on the Name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours” (1 Corinthians 1:2).

Calling on Him as Lord means that we recognize His authority as our Head and are guided by His Spirit, rather than by rules and commandments of men. In times of decline and decay this also implies that “every one that nameth the Name of Christ” departs from iniquity (2 Timothy 2:19). We

must reject all practices that contradict the rights of the Lord. If we would be vessels to honour, sanctified and useful for the Master, both outward and inward separation from evil is necessary. We should pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace together with those who “call on the Lord out of a pure heart” (2 Timothy 2:22). May these few, yet significant words at the end of Genesis 4:1-26 encourage us to call on the Name of the Lord in all simplicity, and in spirit and truth. Let this be our testimony in a world that does not know God and has turned its back on Him. Let us honour and glorify Him, both personally and collectively, “in the presence of all His people” (Psalms 116:14; Psalms 116:18). Let us do so because of all the benefits He has bestowed on us, but most of all, because of all the excellences of His Name!

Hugo Bouter. The Old Paths

“Thus saith the Lord, Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls” (Jeremiah 6:16).

“But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them” (2 Timothy 3:14)

We live in the last days and the perilous times are manifest to any who walk with God. Ignorance and disobedience, not always wilful, rob many of the great blessing of assembly privileges. Where saints do that which is right in their own eyes there is inevitably neglect of the testimony entrusted to the assembly on earth and with it the loss of the Lord’s hand in blessing and enrichment (Judges 21:25; 1 Timothy 3:15).

These few lines remind us of some of the things which we have learned, and are written with the desire that they may lead us to walk together in the old paths for the rest of our souls and the joy of Christ.

1. The Authority of the Word of God The inspired Word is the complete expression of God’s thoughts. It has absolute authority. It is the rule of personal Christian life as well as of assembly life. It is the Word of God’s grace, through which God builds us up (Acts 20:32).

Obedience to the Word is the only path to blessing. While one formal Scripture may not give the answer to a particular circumstance, the mind of the Lord is always learned through the heart and conscience, in submission to His Word (Proverbs 2:10).

2. The Believer and the Two Natures

Every human creature born in this world is a lost sinner (Romans 5:12; Psalms 51:5). The evil is neither in the matter itself nor in the human nature (and its faculties) as such. Coming from the hand of the Creator it was pronounced “very good” (Genesis 1:31). However, in man, as a descendant of Adam fallen, all is misery and defilement (Isaiah 1:6; Romans 3:10-18). God has declared this state as hopeless (Isaiah 2:22; Ephesians 2:12).

Through faith in Christ and His work, the believer receives from God the gift of eternal life, Christ Himself (1 John 5:11; 1 John 5:20). Having put off the old man, the believer puts on the new man (Ephesians 4:22-24). He becomes a child of God, and as such is brought into the Father’s family (John 1:12). From that moment the believer (spirit, soul and body), with all his faculties, becomes the dwelling place of two natures: one which is “spirit” and the other which is “flesh” (John 3:6).

The coexistence of these two natures in the believer results in an inner conflict between flesh and Spirit. A negligent believer may produce “the works of the flesh”, rather than “the fruit of the Spirit” (Galatians 5:19; Galatians 5:23).

3. The House of God on Earth and the Body of Christ

Every believer (born again and sealed by the Holy Spirit) is a living stone in the house of God on earth, and also a member of the body of Christ (1 Peter 2:5; Romans 12:5). The body of Christ is not subject to failure or breakdown. In contrast to this, God’s initial thoughts concerning His house on earth have been lost through man’s unfaithfulness. Christendom has become a great house where only “The Lord knoweth them that are His” (2 Timothy 2:19). The first characteristic of God’s house, the temple of the Holy Spirit, is holiness (1 Corinthians 3:16; Psalms 93:5; 1 Peter 1:15-16). Now, that which is holy will not take away uncleanness, and uncleanness will always defile that which is holy (Haggai 2:12-13). Leaven (a type of moral or doctrinal evil) corrupts the whole lump (1 Corinthians 5:6; Galatians 5:9).

Therefore, Christians who desire to be faithful to their Lord are called upon, not only to go forth unto Him without the camp, but also to separate themselves from vessels to dishonour (Hebrews 13:13; 2 Timothy 2:19-22). As well as separation from evil teachers, this also involves separation from those who are defiled by association with them. Those who call upon the Lord out of a pure heart will then find themselves together, with His promise to be in the midst of them (Matthew 18:20).

4. The Local Assembly; its Nature and Responsibilities In a locality those Christians (two or three or more) separated from iniquity and gathered to the Lord’s Name, are (if they realize God’s thoughts relative to His assembly) the local expression of the assembly, the body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12:12; 1 Corinthians 12:27). Such gatherings of believers are not independent of each other: their unity is that of Christ’s body, represented locally by each one of these gatherings.

Christ is the source of all life and activity of the saints, through the operation of the Holy Spirit, for the edification of the body, the assembly. All believers are members one of another and are exhorted to “keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace” (Ephesians 4:3). The local assembly is the sphere of the collective life of the saints. There, the Father is worshipped, and there the prayer of the assembly is presented. There also Christ’s spiritual food for His body is received (through the gifts). No activity carried on in a spirit of independence with regard to the assembly will bring lasting blessing, although it may seem useful for a time. The assembly is also entrusted with the prerogative of binding and loosing on earth (Matthew 18:18). An assembly decision, taken in the Lord’s Name in one place by those gathered to His Name, is ratified in heaven. All assemblies representing Christ’s body prima facie acknowledge it. This consistency of practice on the part of the assemblies is an essential truth. It proceeds from their very existence.

5. The Two Ministries of the Gospel and of the Assembly

During the present period of grace, God is taking out of the world a people for His Name (Acts 15:14). Christ’s purpose is to build up His body. To this end, every member (each one) has received grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ (Ephesians 4:7). In particular there are the evangelists, who bring souls into the assembly, and pastors and teachers who work for the perfecting of the saints (Ephesians 4:11-12). And finally there is the self-building up of the body in

love (Ephesians 4:16 — J.N.D. trans.). The apostle Paul was a minister of the gospel and a minister of the assembly (Colossians 1:23; Colossians 1:25). His two ministries were accomplished in harmony to fulfil God's purpose. Now, we are invited to co-operate together in the twofold aspect of this work, "according to the effectual working in the measure of every part" (Ephesians 4:16).

6. Discipline in the Assembly

Assembly responsibility is exercised in the sphere called "within" by the Word, where the Lord's rights are effectively acknowledged (1 Corinthians 5:12). The solemn authority entrusted by the Lord to His assembly on earth must be exercised with fear, searching the Lord's mind and with the deep conviction of His approval. The assembly is not infallible and a decision, even taken "of many", may be wrong (2 Corinthians 2:6). He who believes he is wrongly treated should commit his way in confidence to the Lord (Psalms 37:5-6). Humility, patience and a spirit of meekness are necessary in all. The Lord cannot fail to answer after our obedience is fulfilled (2 Corinthians 10:6). An assembly which refuses to judge evil (through discipline) would lose its character as an assembly of God. On the other hand, grace only may win souls and raise up again from a fall; and discipline (which always has as its purpose the healing of wounds) is precisely the prerogative of love. The Word directs us to be moderate in our judgments. In so far as a believer is concerned, the term "wicked person" is only used for one who persists in a serious moral or doctrinal evil. The table of devils characterises idolatry and cannot be applied to any Christian gathering (1 Corinthians 10:21). The expression is used by the apostle (about things sacrificed to idols) to illustrate an important general principle: to participate in a table establishes fellowship with all that which is in relation with this table. Thus, many godly believers are ecclesiastically identified with errors, without presenting the character of wicked persons, and even less of participating in a table of devils. Nevertheless, we cannot have fellowship with them at the Lord's table.

7. The Lord's Supper and the Table of the Lord The Lord's supper is the precious memorial of His death for the time of His absence (1 Corinthians 11:26). Every believer's heart should answer to the touching invitation of his Saviour. At the same time, to partake of the one loaf (an image of Christ's death, as a man, in His body given for us) is the expression on earth of the unity of the (spiritual) body of Christ (1 Corinthians 10:17). The Lord's supper (the remembrance) and the Lord's table (the communion) are distinguished by the Scriptures, although they are inseparably linked. Answering the Lord's desire (by partaking of His supper) implies the acknowledgement of His rights over the believer's personal life (1 Corinthians 11:27-32), and in the assembly (at the Lord's table). There, the believers are subject to assembly discipline in its various forms; in practice, they submit "one to another in the fear of God" (Ephesians 5:21).

8. The Lord's Table and the Unity of the Spirit To take part at the Lord's supper while gathered at His table is a collective act, accomplished by saints gathered in assembly, realizing consciously that they are a local expression of the whole body of Christ. The Lord therefore invites us to receive at His table every believer who is sound in his walk and in the doctrine of Christ. He who desires to break bread should, however, be conscious of the path he embarks upon and of the character of the collective testimony. By breaking bread he enters the sphere of assembly discipline. This same truth of the unity of the body has other practical consequences:

(a) No believer may partake of the Lord's supper on the basis of his individual responsibility alone, as if he were the sole judge of his state. He is not free to break bread independently, with any Christian company of his choice. One brother, on his own, does not have the authority to decide about who are those who may partake at the Lord's supper.

(b) A local gathering must decide with great care, whether or not to receive a believer occasionally at the Lord's table, in the deep conviction of involving the conscience of the whole assembly. It may never be the deliberate sanction of a state of independence in someone who desires to have liberty to go where he pleases.

(c) Finally, an assembly gathered in the Lord's Name cannot receive a person to the breaking of bread who presents himself on his own testimony. The letter of commendation is the Scriptural means to maintain practically the fellowship between assemblies (2 Corinthians 3:1).

9. The Well-being of the Lord's Flock In times of spiritual decline, separation from evil remains the divine principle of unity realised around Christ. There was need for gates as well as walls around the city of Jerusalem in the time of Nehemiah. The watchmen were upon the walls (Isaiah 62:6). But while endeavouring to realise this separation with sorrow and humiliation, let us think about the well-being of the Lord's flock. May we preach grace, which brings our hearts near to Christ, and directs the desire of our souls to Him, in the expectation of His return.

10. A Call to our Hearts

Beloved brethren, the Lord has revealed His thoughts to us, not only concerning the heavenly destiny of His church, but also as to the walk and testimony of the church on earth. We are charged together with the keeping of these truths (2 Timothy 1:14). Despite what was expressed at the time of the prophet Malachi, it is not vain to serve God in fearing Him and in walking mournfully before Him (Malachi 3:14). Have we left our "first love" for Christ (Revelation 2:4)? He calls us to repent, in order to "strengthen the things which remain", in keeping His Word and not denying His Name (Revelation 3:2; Revelation 3:8).

Together, let us hearken to His voice, with a tender heart, and with a broken and contrite heart (2 Chronicles 34:27; Psalms 51:17). Let us be confident in the resources of the Lord's grace and in the all-sufficiency of His Name.

"Remove not the ancient landmark, which thy fathers have set" (Proverbs 22:28).

"If the foundations be destroyed, what can the righteous do?" (Psalms 11:3).

J. Muller. The Life of David (8) David's Preparations for God's House

God dwelling in the midst of His redeemed people is one of the great truths of the Bible. The book of Exodus is occupied with the details involved in this great and wonderful blessing (Exodus 25:1-40; Exodus 26:1-37; Exodus 27:1-21; Exodus 28:1-43; Exodus 29:1-46; Exodus 30:1-38; Exodus 31:1-18; Exodus 32:1-35; Exodus 33:1-23; Exodus 34:1-35; Exodus 35:1-35; Exodus 36:1-38; Exodus 37:1-29; Exodus 38:1-31; Exodus 39:1-43; Exodus 40:1-38). After the nation of Israel was delivered from its tyrant Pharaoh, God gave directions to the nation through Moses, the man of God, concerning the Sanctuary. He desired to dwell in the midst of His redeemed and covenanted people. The pattern was given to Moses by God, and Moses obediently directed the

building of the Tabernacle according to that pattern. When the Tabernacle was completed according to God's will, His glory filled the beautiful structure. From out of the Tabernacle God gave instructions how He was to be approached in worship, etc. (Leviticus 1:1). God was worshipped and the people were blessed.

After the 40 years journey through the wilderness, and the many years of history in the land of promise, wear and tear would have taken their toll of the Tabernacle. Perhaps it was this that prompted David in his desire to build a house for God. We know he wanted a permanent house for God rather than a tent, a temporary arrangement (2 Samuel 7:1-29). God refused the generous offer of His servant and commended him for it, but He promised David that his son, Solomon, would build a house for Him (1 Kings 8:18-19). David humbly accepted God's discipline and arrangement, and at the close of his eventful life prepared enormous amounts of material which enabled his son, Solomon, to build the magnificent Temple in Jerusalem. A few remarks may be useful before considering David's preparations. The Prophecy of the House In the song of triumph in Exodus 15:17 refers to Israel being brought into the mountain of God's inheritance. In that inheritance (Canaan) God would have a place and in it would be His dwelling, His sanctuary. This prophetic utterance looks forward to the Land, the Place and the Dwelling. The Place for the House The book of Deuteronomy provides God's instructions for His people, Israel, when they take possession of the Land of Promise. In the book there are many references to the Place where God would cause His Name to dwell. (Deuteronomy 12:5; Deuteronomy 12:11; Deuteronomy 12:18; Deuteronomy 12:21; Deuteronomy 12:26; Deuteronomy 14:23-25; Deuteronomy 15:20; Deuteronomy 16:2; Deuteronomy 16:6-7; Deuteronomy 16:11; Deuteronomy 16:15-16; Deuteronomy 17:8; Deuteronomy 17:10; Deuteronomy 18:6; Deuteronomy 31:11). The reference in chapter 12:5 is particularly important. It is the only one of the references that refers to God's habitation. As it is the first reference, it contains important features of Jehovah's Name and His presence. The actual place is unidentified in the book of Deuteronomy. The Place Identified and Purchased.

1 Chronicles 21:21-30; 1 Chronicles 22:1; 2 Chronicles 3:1

"The Place" is identified as a result of God's mercy to David and Israel, and on the basis of David offering a sacrifice to Jehovah. David had made a serious mistake in numbering the nation of Israel. Pride led him astray. Because of his failure the nation came under God's chastening hand. David confessed his sin and failure and obeyed the angelic command to go to the threshing floor of Araunah the Jebusite and rear an altar there. He was afraid to go to Gibeon and offer a sacrifice to God where the Tabernacle was. David purchased the site from Araunah and his oxen too. A sacrifice was made by slaughtering the oxen and using Araunah's wooden implements to offer burnt offerings and peace offerings to Jehovah. God, in His great mercy, stopped the plague that affected Israel in such a severe manner. It was on Mount Moriah that David offered his sacrifice to Jehovah, and it was there that the Temple was built by Solomon (2 Chronicles 3:1. See Genesis 22:2). David then said these solemn words: "This is the house of Jehovah Elohim, and this is the altar of burnt offering for Israel" (1 Chronicles 22:1). The Place in the Land and the Dwelling Place were now specified. All that remained to be done was the building of the Temple.

All this is most interesting as far as Israel is concerned, but it illustrates profound truths connected with the Lord Jesus Christ and believers in Him. The shed blood of the paschal lamb is a type of

the blood of Christ which shelters the believer from God's wrath against sin and sins. The triumph of the Red Sea is a type of Christ's death and resurrection. This great victory, redemption by power, is so necessary for the believer as he passes through the wilderness of this evil world. The enemy's power was broken. The believer will share in the administration of the Lord Jesus Christ over the earth, not on the earth. Believers in Him do not give any allegiance to an earthly centre whether it be Canterbury, Westminster, Jerusalem, Rome or any other centre revered on each. The gathering centre is Christ (Matthew 18:20). In all things He must have the pre-eminence, and as He is the Head of the body He is quite competent to direct His own affairs without human aid, though He may use those who are subject to His leading through the Holy Spirit (Colossians 1:18). In the dispensation of grace believers do not look upon a material building as God's house. A building may be used exclusively for God's interests but this does not qualify it for the dignified honour of being called God's house. All true believers in the Lord Jesus Christ constitute God's dwelling place in the Spirit (Ephesians 2:22). The spiritual Temple will be complete when the last believer is added to the true church (Ephesians 2:21). The material has been superseded by the spiritual. The Pattern. 1 Chronicles 28:11-19

Before a house of any size or shape is built an architect prepares a plan for the varied workmen who are to do the building. When the plan is followed, orderly progress is assured and confusion is avoided. A Divine Architect, the Holy Spirit, provided David with the plan which would enable Solomon to build the Temple. The plans left nothing to the imagination of the builders. As Moses received from Jehovah the pattern of the Tabernacle (Exodus 25:8-9), and was obedient in following the Divine directions, so David relied on the Spirit's complete instructions for the rearing of the Temple. Apart from the fact of Divine revelation it is obvious that Divine directions must always be superior even to the best that the human mind can conceive. There is an important lesson to be learned from this. Is it not strange that in the Old Testament there are many occasions when mere mortal, feeble man, sought to improve or change Divine arrangements? Leviticus 10:1-2, Numbers 16:1-3, 1 Samuel 6:1-7, 1 Kings 12:26-33, 2 Chronicles 26:16-21 are sufficient to prove the assertion. Regrettably, the history of Christendom has manifested the same features of failure. The Christian profession has introduced many features that have no place in Divine revelation. "The Two Babylons" by Alexander Hislop, reveals how features of Judaism and Paganism corrupted simple obedience to the pure instructions of the New Testament, resulting in the present confusion and infidelity. "God is not the author of confusion, but of peace, as in all churches of the saints" (1 Corinthians 14:33). Unrestrained flesh, not subject to the Spirit or obedient to the Word of God, is another cause of confusion. Whenever the Word of God is set aside and human ideas substituted for it, the result is confusion and failure. Some may say: "If the Word of God does not prohibit what we are recommending it is permissible to adopt it". "No", answer those who desire to be faithful to the Word of God, "if Scripture does not sanction the change or suggestion, it has no validity for the believer". Of course, a great deal of latitude can be found in the practical day by day affairs of an assembly, such as times of meetings, arrangements for the care of the hall, etc. The great confusion is much more serious when the appointment of Popes, Archbishops, and Priests as distinct from the laity, is considered. The simple instructions the Lord Jesus gave for His remembrance have been changed into the elaborate ritual of the Mass. Church and State connections, distinctive garments, incense and music, are with the other things mentioned foreign to New Testament teaching. The teaching of the New Testament concerning church or assembly order is that members of Christ's body meet together as such. The

New Testament knows no other membership. The members derive directions from their glorious, living Head at God's right hand, the Lord Jesus Christ. Their power is derived from the presence and service of the Holy Spirit. The authority for their functions is found in the New Testament teachings regarding the assembly, the called out ones. To say this is now unworkable is to say that believers have been misled by the Divine instructions, which is blasphemy. The Preparations (1). 1 Chronicles 22:2-5

"David prepared abundantly before his death". Obviously he could not prepare after his death. David was assured of the Divine will and he did not hesitate to be obedient to it. There was work to be done and there wasn't a great deal of time left for him to do it. The most important service of his life had still to be accomplished. With diligence and method he began to accumulate the vast amount of material that was necessary to erect the house of God. There are lessons to be learned from David's activity in the closing years of his life. It has been well said that, whether the present time is bad or good, it is the only time that we have, and we are responsible to use it wisely for God. Tomorrow belongs to God, never to us, and age is no excuse to do nothing. Mnason was an old disciple and he showed hospitality to Paul and his companions (Acts 21:16). Anna was a very old woman but she was active in fastings, prayers and testimony (Luke 2:36-38). Abraham was aged when he demonstrated his great faith in God by offering up Isaac his son (Genesis 22:1-14). Jacob's best days were when he was old. He blessed the sons of Joseph, blessed his own sons and died a worshipper (Genesis 47:7; Genesis 48:13-16; Genesis 47:31; Hebrews 11:21). Every feature of service contributes to the service of God in His house. Psalms 92:13-14 is an encouragement to all who are elderly: "Those that are planted in the house of Jehovah shall flourish in the courts of our God: They are still vigorous in old age, they are full of sap and green". The young and middle-aged can also contribute to the spiritual substance of God's house.

F. Wallace.

(To be continued, if the Lord will).

"The Sermon on the Mount" (5) Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy (Matthew 5:7)

Solomon had already written in his proverbs: "He that despiseth his neighbour sinneth: but he that hath mercy on the poor, happy is he" (Proverbs 14:21). In His fifth beatitude the Lord uses similar words, but He adds a promise: "Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy".

Mercy and Grace

Mercy is the emotion of the soul in the face of misery or distress, and the aid resulting from this inner emotion. Mercy is not the same as grace. Grace is rather undeserved favour granted to someone who has become a guilty offender. In Scripture a clear difference is made between these two words. In the Old Testament God had said to Moses "... The Lord, The Lord God, merciful and gracious...", and in the New Testament we read repeatedly expressions such as "... Grace, mercy, and peace, from God our Father..." (Exodus 34:6; 1 Timothy 1:2. See 2 Timothy 1:2; Hebrews 4:16; 2 John 1:3). In the book of Ruth we have a moving example of godly mercy shown to a poor heathen woman, and the prophet Jonah had to recognise God's mercy for the inhabitants of Nineveh.

GOD'S MERCY BRINGS LIFE

God shows the greatness of His mercy to all those who believe in our Lord Jesus on the basis of His sacrifice on the cross of Calvary. The greatest misery of man is that he is spiritually dead in his sins and therefore completely unable to help himself. To those who are dead to Him, God in His mercy gives life, and He alone is able to do so. In 1 Timothy 1:13; 1 Timothy 1:16 Paul remembers the mercy he himself had obtained as an example for all those who believe on the Lord Jesus to everlasting life. In the epistle to the Ephesians he writes: “But God, who is rich in mercy, for His great love wherewith He loved us, Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ...” (Ephesians 2:4-5). In Titus 3:4-5 it is said that God has saved us “... according to His mercy... by the... Holy Spirit...”. Finally, Peter writes: “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to His abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope...” (1 Peter 1:3).

“blessed are the Merciful...” When the Lord Jesus says “Blessed are the merciful...”, He means those who have experienced this mercy of God and who now, as disciples of their Lord and Master, follow His example. How often we read in the Gospels that He was moved with compassion! Full of mercy and full of heartfelt sympathy, He healed the sick, gave food to the hungry and gave back her son alive to a mourning mother. Yes, He was the true merciful Samaritan, who could say to the scribe who had come to try Him, at the end of His parable, “... Go, and do thou likewise” (Luke 10:37). So here as well the word has a voice for us: “Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus...” (Php 2:5). In our case mercy involves the passing on of what we have learnt from the Lord Jesus, as to both the spiritual and material realms. If we are continually in the good of what the Lord has done for us we will have the right feelings for the sorrows, miseries and needs of others — not only our brother’s and sister’s in Christ — and we will also give practical proof that we are really merciful. The Lord wants to open our hearts and strengthen our hands in order that we may show His mercy.

It is a solemn lesson indeed which He gives in the parable in Matthew 18:23-35. The unmerciful servant who owed his king 10,000 talents1 had his fellow servant who owed him 100 pence,2 cast into prison. Let us ask ourselves whether we are conscious of the great salvation which we have received, and whether we act accordingly. If we open our hearts and eyes we will find many opportunities to show sympathy and mercy, e.g. visiting those who are sick, shopping for others, driving, etc. But let us not, in wrong narrow-mindedness, think only of our brothers and sisters in Christ. Paul writes to the Galatians: “As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith” (Galatians 6:10). The power of our testimony for the Lord depends more on our actions than on our words! The world may not study Scripture, but often it knows how to judge our behaviour. How many a soul has been broken down, not only by the pure gospel, clearly presented, but also by the mercy shown!

Yet in many ways the teaching of the New Testament has been degraded to something merely earthly and social. Instead of repentance and faith in the Lord Jesus, only charity is preached, and this often with a political flavour. This, however, is not the meaning of the “Sermon on the Mount” or the gospel of the grace of God! On the other hand it is no testimony to the grace and mercy of our God if one thinks that preaching the gospel is the only task of a Christian with regard to the world. As our Lord Himself helped those in their different needs to whom He presented the good tidings, we too can tell our neighbours of Him and at the same time show them the power and blessing of our faith practically.

1The value of the 10,000 talents has been variously estimated. Whether talents of silver or of gold are referred to, it would have been a vast sum, running to many millions of pounds (£) at today's prices.

2A penny was the usual daily wage of a working man. 100 pence would have been the wages for 100 days.

Wisdom is necessary for showing mercy, — as it is for everything. In cases of material need, quick action is very often required. But there are also occasions when we can not show our mercy immediately. When somebody has sinned it is not always appropriate to show mercy at once. It may be necessary to wait for some time in order that a true, thorough restoration of the soul may be reached. A beautiful example is the behaviour of Joseph toward his brethren. Only during their third meeting did he reveal himself to them and granted the mercy of forgiveness to their burdened souls.

"... for they shall obtain mercy" When we thus follow the steps of our Lord we will be more conscious of His mercy on our path of faith day by day. 1 Timothy 1:2, Hebrews 4:16 and 2 John 1:3 show this. Particularly beautiful are the words in Hebrews 4:16 which show that we will obtain mercy and find grace for seasonable help when we approach the throne of grace in prayer. The Lord Jesus is there as our "merciful and faithful High Priest" (Hebrews 2:17). Thus He accompanies us, in His mercy, throughout our lives, until He comes to take us to the Father's house. Jude connects even His coming with mercy when he writes: "... looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life" (Jude 1:21). Yet not only He will show mercy to us, but on our way we will also receive mercy from fellow-pilgrims, for "... whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap" (Galatians 6:7). The last opportunity to obtain the mercy of our Lord will be when we shall appear before the judgment seat of Christ. The apostle Paul prayed for his brother Onesiphorus that "... he may find mercy of the Lord in that day" (2 Timothy 1:18). Many might be surprised to hear of mercy in this connection. Mercy here has nothing to do with eternal salvation. Rather, it refers to service for the Lord here on earth. Even when every man will have praise of God, His mercy will exult and triumph.

Arend Remmers.

Psalms 119:1-176 (6) (Continued from page 189) 3. GIMEL — CAMEL In Phoenician monuments, on the coins of the Maccabees, and in the Aethiopic alphabet, its figure bears a resemblance to the neck of a camel. The root idea of this letter/word is "to give, to do, or to show to any one", or "to carry". In Arabic it is a cognate of "hamala", meaning to be carried on a camel. It also has the meaning of "to be kind". We find this meaning in the name Gamaliel which means "the kindness of El". The numerical value of Gimel is three. Taking its meaning as "to show any one", it gives us an indication of God's revelation given to us in His Word, the precious Bible. All the spiritual supplies and refreshment we need for our wilderness journey are found in that precious living Word.

Section Three: verses 17-24: "Trials of the Wilderness"

A. Prayers for:

1. Abundant Life Verse 17: GAH-MAL... "Deal bountifully..." The Christian pilgrim has started his wilderness journey (verses 1-8), and has asked many questions (verses 9-16). He has understood

that as he continues in the way of the Lord he will undoubtedly meet with difficulties and problems that must be dealt with. He realises therefore his deep need of help from the Lord and His divine guidance for his path. The Lord Jesus has said that He Himself is “the way” for us (John 14:6), and in John 10:10 He says: “I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly”. The Psalmist can only pray that Jehovah will deal bountifully with him, so that he might live. As Christians we can thank our Father for having blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenlies in Christ. We have all that God could give in Christ. What wonderful resources! What abundant life! In verses 9-16 we see a young man, still rather inexperienced, and with overwhelming needs. In verses 17-24 he realises he is a pilgrim (5: 19) and needs to be shown the way. James tells us, “If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him” (James 1:5). In order to be able to “keep” His Word, we must know the enablement of the Holy Spirit.

2. Illumination Verse 18: GAH-LAH... “Open! (Reveal!)...” (an imperative).

Here is an earnest pleading with the Lord to give insight and spiritual illumination: “Open Thou mine eyes...”. In Mark 8:22-26 we read about a blind man near Bethsaida whom Jesus healed. But the process of the healing is very interesting and instructive. After the first act of the Lord He asks him whether he can see, and the man answers: “I see men as trees, walking”. Obviously he had sight now, and he could see. But his seeing was far from what it should be. So a further act of Christ was necessary. The man was given the power of sight, then the power to use his sight in order to distinguish one object from another. This suggests the progressive manner in which the truths of Scripture are perceived.

“...that I may behold wondrous things out of Thy law”. The gospel opens the eyes to the knowledge of spiritual things, but in order to apprehend the spiritual blessings we have in Christ it is necessary that the eyes of the heart also be enlightened. Are we discovering wondrous truths in the Scriptures day by day? Never approach the reading or study of the Bible without this prayer: “Open Thou mine eyes...”.

3. Knowledge Verse 19: GEHR... “A stranger (I am)...”

One of the precious truths we shall discover when studying the Bible is the fact that we are strangers on the earth. Some questions will be asked as we study:

1. Who am I?

2. Where do I come from?

3. What is the purpose for my being here on earth?

4. Where am I going?

5. Am I ready for my eternal destiny?

Once, when still in our sins, we were “...aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world: But now, in Christ Jesus, (we) ye who sometimes were far off, are made nigh by the blood of Christ” (Ephesians 2:12-13). Now here is a prayer that the Christian never needs to pray: “...hide not Thy

commandments from me", because there are no longer any hidden "mysteries" for the believer today! The apostle Paul writes: "How that by revelation He made known unto me the mystery; (...Whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ;) Which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto His holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit;... to make all men see, what is the fellowship of the mystery,... that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known, by the church, the manifold wisdom of God..." (Ephesians 3:3-10). The Spirit of God delights to make known to every believer what was in the heart of God from before the foundation of the world. We see that in verse 18 there is the prayer for eyes that are open and in verse 19 there is the desire for an open Bible, 1:e. to be illuminated by the Holy Spirit. This is how the Christian progresses in the way through this world.

4. Satisfaction Verse 20: GAH-RAS... "(My soul) breaketh for (is crushed)..." The word Gahras signifies to crush or to break in pieces, and so we have this strong expression: "My soul breaketh for the longing...". It is a deep desire after the Word of God and the will of God. Paul expresses such a desire after Christ: "That I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being made conformable unto His death..." (Php 3:10). "As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after Thee, O God" (Psalms 42:1). This is not just an emotional moment, it is a constant longing: "...at all times". It is sometimes said: "You are what you long for". What is it we must long for? "...Mary, which also sat at Jesus' feet, and heard His word... hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her" (Luke 10:39; Luke 10:42).

B. The Proud:

1. A Rebuke Verse 21: GAH-GART... "Thou hast rebuked..."

There are some elements which are directly opposed to that which is spiritual. These are elements that would rather deceive and lead astray. Pride, self-sufficiency and independence of God are arch-enemies of spiritual progress and understanding. The Lord Jesus gives this direction: "Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls" (Matthew 11:29). Of all moral sins the Lord Jesus considered pride one of the worst and most hateful. There may be the pride of race, or the pride of face, or the pride of place, but the worst is the pride of grace. To have a superior attitude towards other Christians and pretend to be more spiritual than they, perhaps because of more light and understanding of the Scriptures. There is a danger in much knowledge, even in much Bible knowledge. The apostle Paul warns against this: "...we know that we all have knowledge. Knowledge puffeth up, but love edifieth" (1 Corinthians 8:1). Actually, proud persons are very miserable persons because no one loves them since they keep themselves so aloof. Never forget that pride was at the root of Satan's fall: "...lest being lifted up with pride he fall into the condemnation of the devil" (1 Timothy 3:6).

2. A Reproach Verse 22: GAH-LAL... "Remove (or roll away)..." The apostle Paul says in 2 Timothy 3:12 : "Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution". Today it is not easy for the believer to be faithful in this sin-sick world. To believe in God, that Jesus Christ is the eternal Son of God, that the Bible is true and that Jesus is the only way of salvation, brings much scorn and reproach. There must therefore be: a. A definite choice and decision of heart: "...all that will live godly..." (a life that pleases God). b. No surprise that we "...shall suffer

persecution". c. The knowledge that all our resources to remain faithful are "...in Christ Jesus...".

If we are treated with contempt, let us not meet the "flesh" with the "flesh" and retaliate. Let us rather turn to the Lord and lay our case at His feet and then be positively occupied with His will and Word and leave our defence with Him. It may not be that He will remove the trying circumstance, but He will surely give grace to bear it.

C. Princes:

1. Ignoble Nobles Verse 23: GAM... "Also (Princes did sit)..."

Look at the contrast in this verse. There are the princes and there is the servant. Which of the two are more noble? Both are occupied: the princes in speaking evil, and the servant in meditating upon God's statutes. The princes of this world have sat in judgment on the Son of God: "...the wisdom of God (is Christ: see 1 Corinthians 1:24)... Which none of the princes of this world knew: for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of Glory" (1 Corinthians 2:7-8). The unbelieving world has treated our Lord Jesus Christ like this. Will they treat His followers differently? Are we willing to be known as His disciples? Think of the attitude of the disciples in the Acts: "And now, Lord, behold their threatenings: and grant unto Thy servants, that with all boldness they may speak Thy Word" (Acts 4:29). This is no prayer for deliverance from their enemies, but a prayer that the Lord might give them even more zeal to continue their positive Christian service in witness for Him.

2. Humble Counsellors Verse 24: GAM... "Also (Thy testimonies)..." The positive attitude is continued in this verse with this conjunction of determination, "Gam (Also)!!" The believer is undaunted and fearless, because strengthened and encouraged by the Lord. But let us remember what we read in 1 John 2:13 about the young men who were able to overcome the wicked one. It was because they abode in the Word, and the Word abode in them, that they were strong and able to stand and resist. This section ends with this positive thought: "Thy testimonies also are my delight, and my counsellors". Verse 16 spoke of this same attitude. He will keep me, as I keep myself in the love of God!

Cor Bruins.

(To be continued, if the Lord will). From Our Archive The Primitive Church (2) Acts 11:19-26; Acts 15:1-11; Acts 15:28-29 (An address given in Lowestoft in 1960)

We have previously considered the picture of the primitive church at Jerusalem which is given in Acts 4:23-37; Acts 5:1-6; Acts 5:11-14. But one very prominent detail connected with God's present work in calling out the church is lacking in those verses. In writing to the Ephesians, in chapter two of his epistle, Paul reminded the believers there that God has abolished in the flesh of our Lord Jesus, through death, the breach that there was between Jew and Gentile. At the present time He is making of the twain one new man. The word for make, "for to make in Himself of twain one new man", is actually the word to create. The same word is used earlier in the chapter, in verse 10, were we read, "For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works...". Both Jew and Gentile are brought on equal terms, and in the same way, into a new position which God creates, and this is as valid today, near the end of the church's history, as it was when Paul wrote those words, very near the beginning of the church's history. An election

from the Gentiles is brought into this new position equally, and exactly on the same footing, as an election which God is making from the Jews. That, of course, was absent in the fourth chapter of Acts. God began the work in the midst of Israel. The masses who were gathered on the day of Pentecost were Jews, with perhaps a sprinkling of proselytes as they would have been called; people who were Gentiles originally in origin, but who had attached themselves to the Jewish synagogue. The gospel was preached and three thousand souls were converted. No doubt these too had got busy for the Lord, and then the apostles had been apprehended and other troubles had come to pass. Then we read that lovely account of the assembly in Jerusalem. I suppose that if we had been there at that time, and had examined the thousands who were found in “their own company”, we would have found them practically to a man and a woman to be of Jewish extraction. The book of Acts gives us what we sometimes call the transition period. God doesn’t do things in a hurry. No, quietly, the Divine thought was worked out. That is why I have read these verses about the work at Antioch. It was at Antioch that God began this remarkable work, in a very obvious way, of gathering out from the Gentiles a people for His Name.

I began reading at the point where many went forth, scattered abroad because of the persecution that arose after Stephen was martyred. The majority of them still had the Jews only in their thoughts. They preached the Messiah, crucified and risen from the dead, and they preached Him to Jews only. But there were some who went beyond that. These men of Cyprus and Cyrene spoke to the Greeks, preaching the Lord Jesus (Acts 11:20), and the hand of the Lord was with them (Acts 11:21), and a great number turned to the Lord (Acts 11:21), and much people was added unto the Lord (Acts 11:24). There was then a very powerful work among the Gentiles at Antioch, and the Lordship of Christ was evidently very much pressed and made plain. When Peter was talking to Cornelius he said: “The word which God sent unto the children of Israel, preaching peace by Jesus Christ: (He is Lord of all:)”. He is Lord, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles. Certainly His Messiahship more particularly applied to the Jew, who had got the holy writings, the prophetic announcements of the coming of the Messiah. But when we consider Him from the point of view of His Lordship, then all other distinctions vanish. He is Lord of the Jew, but He is equally Lord of the Gentile. They preached the Lord Jesus, and people turned to the Lord. If I turn to the Lord I shall at once admit myself to be under His authority. My place is subjection beneath His mighty Word. There was therefore a very remarkable work among the Gentiles in Antioch, almost parallel to that work which had taken place among the Jews on the day of Pentecost in Jerusalem. When Barnabas came down he saw the grace of God and was glad. He was a good man. He saw how greatly God had blessed the labours of someone else, and though it didn’t cast any credit on Barnabas, he was glad because he saw that the Lord was being exalted. He “exhorted them all, that with purpose of heart they would cleave unto the Lord”. We couldn’t have much better advice than that. Let there be a living link between my soul and the Lord, and your soul and the Lord, and don’t let anything come in to divert you from the Lord. “Cleave”, says this good man Barnabas, “cleave unto the Lord”. He came amongst them and it gave further impetus to the conversion work because the next verse, verse 24, says: “and much people was added unto the Lord”. Then Barnabas went away and found Paul, and brought him to Antioch, and for a whole year they were there, ministering and teaching. The disciples were called Christians first in Antioch. What do you think they were called in Jewish circles? We find the answer to that in Acts 24:1-27. There comes this Tertullus, and he accuses Paul in the presence of the Roman power. He says of Paul, “...we have found this man a pestilent fellow, and a mover of sedition

among all the Jews throughout the world, and a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes". There were the Pharisees, who were terrific sticklers for the law and rather full of themselves. There were the Sadducees, who were very analytical and critical and didn't believe this and didn't believe that. And there were the Herodians, who didn't bother their heads so much about these things, but who went along with the ruling power because they knew it would be profitable for them in worldly things if they did so. The Jews had these sects among them and they were saying: "Now we've got the Nazarenes, the followers of this remarkable Person, Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified". But another thing now arrives. Here where there was this work among the Gentiles, those who were converted owned the authority of the Lord over their hearts and lives and it put the stamp of Christ upon them. Others looking at these believers said, "We can't talk about them with a long rigmarole of explanation, we shall have to have something short and to the point. Well, they are Christ's ones, they are Christians". It has often been pointed out that that word only occurs three times in the New Testament. Agrippa knew it (Acts 26:28). The name Christian had clearly travelled into high circles. Agrippa didn't say, "Almost thou persuadest me to be a Nazarene", but, "Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian". And it is endorsed by the Holy Spirit of God because in the first epistle of Peter you have the Spirit of God saying, "Yet if any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on this behalf" (1 Peter 4:16). The Spirit of God, so to speak, accepts this name as a very good definition of those who are swept into this new and mighty work of His.

Here then we see God working among the Gentiles, and gathering out of them a people for His Name. Then the adversary gets busy. There were those, we sometimes speak of them as Judaising teachers, who wished to make all things, especially the Gentiles, conform to a certain Jewish pattern. That is why I turned on to chapter fifteen. Some of these teachers came down to Antioch and said, "Except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved" (Acts 15:1). Circumcision was something that, "after the manner of Moses", or according to the law, attached the circumcised person to Judaism. In proposing this these teachers were seeking to bring in the middle wall of partition which God had broken down. There is no such partition in the church, and we who form part of it are on a new basis altogether, because whether Jew or Gentile we're made one new man. We are brought together, and the adversary, of course, is out to mar the work of God. So these men came down and they said in effect, "You will have to make these people kind of second rate Jews. You'll have to incorporate them into our legal system, or they'll never be saved." If you read chapter fifteen carefully you will notice that there was a good deal of disputation. It doesn't mean that they were all flying at each other's throats and arguing in a very noisy way, but the whole matter was being thrashed out in discussion. Peter rose up and said: "Ye know how that a good while ago God made choice among us, that the Gentiles by my mouth should hear the word of the gospel, and believe". When was that? When he went to the house of Cornelius. Three times God gave him a special vision, to deliver him from preconceived notions that would only hinder him, and at last Peter went. It is a remarkable thing that not only do we have the divinely inspired account of it by Luke the historian, in Acts chapter ten, but in the next chapter it is repeated again, though from a somewhat different angle. When Peter returned to Jerusalem he was challenged about what had happened, and we have an account of it in chapter eleven from the lips of Peter, though recorded of course by Luke, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit of God. Now for the third time, here in chapter fifteen, Cornelius is referred to. It was an epoch making event. The Pharisees were very particular about the washing of this and the washing of

that, but they didn't bother much about their hearts. Peter said as it were: "My dear brethren, look what happened when God made choice among us that by my mouth the gospel should be preached to the Gentiles. Why, the Holy Spirit decided the question. You say they are unclean Gentiles, but their hearts were purified by faith. God has purified their hearts, and He who knows the heart gave them the Holy Spirit, even as He did unto us." If you read the tenth chapter of Acts you may be struck by the fact that no word was said as to their being baptised until they had received the Holy Spirit. In Acts chapter two, in answer to the question "Men and brethren, what shall we do?", Peter said: "Repent, and be baptised every one of you in the Name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit". Baptism has a very special place in connection with the Jew. If I was asked to give in one word its great significance I should give the word disconnection, though it has a new association in view. In the context of Acts chapter two it is cutting the link with the Nation that had rejected the Messiah. Peter says as it were: "Cut your links with the Nation that has killed the Messiah; stand out from it. Save yourselves from this untoward generation." And they were baptised; they cut their links with, there was disconnection from, the apostate nation of that time. But when you read Acts chapter ten you find that while Peter was preaching the word that pointed them to the risen Christ, the Holy Spirit fell on all them which heard. Has there ever been again an occasion like that? Many of them were doubtless God-fearing, pious persons, but not really converted. You start with all that were there unconverted, apart from Peter and those who went with him, and one hundred per cent they're converted. The Holy Spirit fell on all them that heard the Word. Cornelius, soldiers, friends and family. And Peter had to say: "How can we refuse to baptise these people? Let them cut the links with the old life, and come amongst us as Christians." God had settled it. That's what they say later in chapter fifteen: "For it seemed good to the Holy Spirit, and to us...". The Holy Spirit decided the question of the reception of the Gentiles by falling on them just as they were, as the light of the gospel dawned in their hearts. On the day of Pentecost there were three thousand, but here there was only a room full, but they were "by one Spirit... all baptized into one body". Here we see things taking shape according to what was later unfolded doctrinally in the epistle to the Ephesians, God's present work in calling out of the Nations a people for His Name. It started in a very remarkable way in the case of Cornelius and his household, and continued in Antioch by the labours of these humble people. They were not great preachers; just men of Cyprus and Cyrene. What their names were we are not told, though I hope we shall be permitted to know in the coming day when the Lord assesses all His servants and rewards them for what they have done for Him. These humble and unknown individuals who were driven abroad by the persecution that arose about Stephen and had, perhaps, to flee for their lives, they began talking to these Gentiles. And, as it was the purpose of God to go out to the Gentiles (He had made that perfectly plain at the outset to the apostles), of course the hand of the Lord was with them. A great number believed and turned to the Lord, and were brought into the church of God. When you come right to the end of the book of Acts you find the apostle in Rome, a prisoner. He gathers the Jews together and it seems that a few believed, but alas the great mass were rejecting the gospel testimony. To them Paul had to say a very solemn thing, after quoting some verses from Isaiah chapter six, "Be it known therefore unto you, that the salvation of God is sent unto the Gentiles, and that they will hear it". There is no doubt that through this long age in which our lot is cast, while still God works and gathers out of the Jewish circle, the main work has been the out-gathering from the Gentiles. Hence we get the Scripture that "in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His

grace, in His kindness toward us through Christ Jesus". The word "exceeding" might be translated "surpassing". Something that surpasses everything else. The grace of God that is working today, and gathering out of the nations a people for His Name, and bringing them into this wonderful position of nearness and favour and ultimately of glory in association with Christ, it is a surpassing display of the grace of God.

F. B. Hole. The Little Lamb? At page 114 of the July/August 1993 issue of the magazine Mr. Frank Wallace made the following statements:

"Who is able to confront the trinity of evil and the other enemies of the remnant? A little Lamb1. The little Lamb is none other than the "Lord of lords, and King of kings" (Revelation 17:14). ....The little Lamb, by divine power, has triumphed over the assembled Gentile powers and the little remnant has been delivered." The footnote reads:

"1There is a footnote to Revelation 5:6 in some editions of J.N. Darby's translation which reads "Arnion: a diminutive, used throughout Revelation: as John 21:15". The reference in John is "Feed My lambs"." A correspondent has drawn our attention to some comments of Mr. W. E. Vine in his "Expository Dictionary Of Bible Words":

"Note: The contrast between arnion and amnos (both translated lamb or lambs in the New Testament — Ed.) does not lie in the diminutive character of the former as compared with the later. As has been pointed out under No. 2, arnion lost its diminutive force. The contrast lies in the manner in which Christ is presented in the two respects. The use of amnos points directly to the fact, the nature and character of His sacrifice; arnion (only in the Apocalypse) presents Him, on the ground, indeed, of His sacrifice, but in His acquired majesty, dignity, honour, authority and power. In the Sept. arnion is used in Psalms 114:4; Psalms 114:6; in Jeremiah 11:19, with the adjective akakos, innocent; in Jeremiah 27:4-5 "lambs." There is nothing in these passages to suggest a contrast between a lamb in the general sense of the term and the diminutive; the contrast is between lambs and sheep. Elsewhere in the Sept. amnos is in general used some 100 times in connection with lambs for sacrifice."

Neither of the editors of this magazine know Greek. The substance of what follows was the result of a prayerful consideration of the matter. It was subsequently passed to three brethren who do know Greek, for their critical review. One of these was involved in the translation of the New Testament into Dutch. Each of these brethren have indicated that what follows is acceptable to them.

Mr. Vine implies that the distinction between arnion and amnos is determined by the context in which the words are used. If "the general tendency in the vernacular was to use nouns in -ion freely, apart from their diminutive significance", was the Holy Spirit bound by this general tendency? In the case of agapao and phileo Mr Vine nevertheless believes in the possibility that the use of words in Scripture might differ from their use in secular Greek; so why exclude this possibility in the case of amnos and arnion?

Perhaps our first enquiry ought to be how the two words are used in the New Testament. There are four references to amnos in John's Gospel, Acts and 1 Peter (John 1:29; John 1:36; Acts 8:32; 1 Peter 1:19). With one exception all the references to arnion are in Revelation (John 21:15; Revelation 5:6; Revelation 5:8; Revelation 5:12-13; Revelation 6:1; Revelation 6:16; Revelation

7:9-10; Revelation 7:14; Revelation 7:17; Revelation 12:11; Revelation 13:8; Revelation 13:11; Revelation 14:1; Revelation 14:4 (x2), 10; 15:3; 17:14 (x2); 19:7, 9; 21:9, 14, 22, 23, 27; 22:1,3). It is used 30 times in the New Testament, 29 of these being in the book of Revelation. All the references in Revelation refer to Christ, with the exception of Revelation 13:11, where it is anti-Christ. If there is no significant difference between the meaning of the two words, and context alone determines particular points of emphasis, why has the Holy Spirit used both words in the New Testament, but only arnion in the book of Revelation? Why not use only amnos or arnion in the New Testament, and let context decide throughout? The diminutive force would seem admirably suited in the book of Revelation. How full that book is of great things. Not only great things connected with God, but things great in their pretension and opposition to Him. There is a great red dragon who, when cast out of heaven, has great wrath (Revelation 12:3; Revelation 12:9; Revelation 12:12). He gives great authority to the first beast of Revelation 13:1-18, and a mouth speaking great things (Revelation 13:2; Revelation 13:5). The second beast in Revelation 13:1-18 does great wonders, causing both small and great to receive his mark (Revelation 13:13; Revelation 13:16). There is a great city, where also our Lord was crucified (Revelation 11:8). And another great city, Babylon the great, where there sits a great whore (Revelation 14:8; Revelation 16:19; Revelation 17:1; Revelation 17:5; Revelation 17:18; Revelation 18:2; Revelation 18:10; Revelation 18:16; Revelation 18:18-19; Revelation 18:21; Revelation 19:2). There is the judgment of the small and great when they stand before God (Revelation 20:12). There are other references beside these (e.g. Revelation 8:8; Revelation 8:10; Revelation 19:18, etc.). Who can and does deal with all these opposers? Is it not a little lamb? One who is morally, in every way, the complete opposite of those who vaunt their supposed greatness, only to be brought crashing down. What a wonderful meditation this opens out. The great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ was here in humility. He made Himself of no reputation. He humbled Himself. He was the perfect anti-type of the manna, which was “a small round thing, as small as the hoar frost on the ground”. The editors have found Vine’s Dictionary of Bible Words very helpful, and refer to it frequently. Readers will find that it is often quoted in this magazine. This does not mean that they agree with all his comments. As with all uninspired works it is necessary to read critically, comparing what is written with Scripture. The Editors.

News from the Field Republic of Lithuania The southernmost of the Baltic States was until recently part of the USSR. It has a population of nearly 4 million. The capital, Vilnius, has about half a million inhabitants. The Roman Catholic church plays a dominant role in the country. But gospel campaigns in the late 1980’s were blessed of the Lord and numerous younger persons were converted to Christ and several house groups were formed.

Up to the late 1930’s there were two localities where brethren met. They could be found in Memel-Budsargen and Schmelz. Then came the war and in its wake communism. The destructive forces then at work removed all trace of these two little testimonies. The recent circumstances have allowed the gospel of the grace of God to go forth into this dark land. We pray that the truth of God’s true ground of assembling around the Lord Jesus as Head of His body might be known.

Until the great political changes in the Soviet Union our contacts in Baltic countries were confined to Scandinavian lands. Correspondence is now received from Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Poland. We rejoice to have such contacts with the believers. Man has so long sought to close the door but we believe God has set before us the opened door. The following letter has been

received from Lithuania from a dear friend who is desiring to answer to what he and his household find in the Scriptures.

“Thank you very much for your remembrance of us. We receive Truth & Testimony regularly and like this magazine. We have now begun to publish a periodical. Starting this was rather difficult but thanks to our Lord, He helps us. You will know a little of our plans. We have very little good Christian literature in Lithuanian. We have arranged to translate and prepare tracts and books on computer here and they will be published in Germany by brethren in Dillenburg. Assemblies in Lithuania are rather young and small. The roots of Catholicism and atheism are very deep. The Roman church tries to usurp power and be the spiritual leader. We thank God that He knows the needs of the nation. We feel led to prepare literature which exposes the Roman errors to our people. We also dream about having the Good Seed gospel calendar in Lithuanian. We pray that the Lord will enable such a calendar to be published. The Boys’ & Girls’ calendar would also be worth consideration. The Synopsis of the books of the Bible by J. N. Darby would be much appreciated. I have asked you for this set earlier but you answered that there were then none left. We are sorry we cannot pay for these books. We live in a very poor country. The economic situation is a little better now than last spring but we can only dream about expensive books. We remember the words of the Lord Jesus that it is better to give than to take (Acts 20:35) and seek to give as much as we can. Our God is so kind, He gives us abundantly. Only a few months ago we had great problems but our hearts were being prepared for blessing. Our Lord used you to help us. It was an unbelievable miracle to get the cheque for £50 from you. This helped us very much in the most difficult moment for our family. In the past year many things have taken place. In April our third child was born. When the baby was only 12 days old, brother Neil Short and his wife Edith visited us for a few days. We had very blessed meetings. In August some young brethren from Germany came. In September a tract, “What does the New Testament teach?”, was distributed in relation to the Roman Pope’s visit. The distribution was very successful. October brought closer links with the publishing work in Germany.

Well, what about you? We read something in Truth & Testimony of visits seeking to strengthen the believers in Norway and Malawi. For this we thank the Lord. May He bless you and also brother Neil in India.”

V. S.

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Truth & Testimony Vol. 2, No. 9, 1994. The Life of David (8) David's Preparations for God's House (Continued from page 238) The Preparations (2). 1 Chronicles 22:14

How can afflictions enable materials to be collected to build a house for God? The afflictions that David experienced through his sin with Bathsheba (2 Samuel 11:1-27) did not provide any valuable materials for the building, but the afflictions and cares that David encountered in his wars did produce a rich harvest of gold, silver and other materials. David was a courageous warrior and his life was largely spent in fighting Israel's enemies. In these wars he was greatly helped by the Lord. The dangers he endured and the energy he expended were amply rewarded by his victories which brought to his successful army large amounts of booty. He shared the dangers and hardships of his soldiers, and on one occasion he would have died but for the intervention of one of his leaders (2 Samuel 21:15-17). David was no stranger to affliction (1 Kings 2:26, Psalms 132:1). David recovered all the spoil that the Amalekites had taken at Ziklag and no doubt he returned victorious with more than had been lost (1 Samuel 30:18-20; 1 Samuel 30:26). David defeated the Moabites, who gave him gifts (2 Samuel 8:2). The Syrians were smitten by David and they also brought him gifts (2 Samuel 8:6). By his many triumphs David secured gold, silver and bronze and dedicated them to Jehovah (2 Samuel 8:7-11). More gold was acquired by defeating the Ammonites. (2 Samuel 12:30 — David took no part in this fighting). It is a solemn lesson that David's great virtues were prior to his adultery with Bathsheba. Sin in any form weakens the resolve to fight for the interests of the Lord, but God honoured the sincere repentance of His servant and enabled him to gather the necessary materials for the building of the temple. That affliction is a valuable experience in relation to God dwelling with men is borne out by Isaiah 66:1-2 : "Thus saith Jehovah: The heavens are My throne, and the earth is My footstool: what is the house that ye will build unto Me? and what is the place of My rest? Even all these things hath My hand made, and all these things have been, saith Jehovah. But to this man will I look: to the afflicted and contrite in spirit, and who trembleth at My word." The lesson is obvious. Afflictions bring one near to God and produce a deeper knowledge of Him in the soul. This is shown often in Holy Scripture. After the long years of slavery in the land of Egypt the children of Israel were delivered from their affliction. They departed from Egypt with an abundance of riches (Genesis 15:14 and Exodus 12:35-36). No doubt some of those riches would be used in the construction of the tabernacle where God said He would dwell (Exodus 25:8-9. Regrettably they would also be used in making the golden calf of idolatry. How foolish man is! After all the upheavals and sorrows which he experienced, Job was much better off at the end of his life (Job 42:12-17). He had arrived at a deeper knowledge of God (Job 42:2) and consequently a true appreciation of himself (Job 42:6). Jacob, the father of Joseph and Benjamin, was overwhelmed by the seeming calamities that had invaded his life. He said "All these things are against me". How wrong he was! Everything was ordered for his blessing. Who would not covet an end like Jacob's? He blessed the two sons of Joseph, he blessed his own sons, he blessed Pharaoh, and he died a worshipper. His afflictions were well worthwhile. In Psalms 4:1 David said, "In pressure, Thou hast enlarged me".

He was under pressure because of Saul's enmity towards him. He was in the midst of pressure in the dangers of war. The rebellion of his sons Absalom and Adonijah were grievous pressures. All these sore burdens made him lean upon God and in so doing he grew in his knowledge and appreciation of God. For the unbeliever, suffering and affliction are enigmas. For the believer they are valuable teachers in the school of God.

Naturally, no one looks for affliction or asks for it, but when it is experienced in the pursuit of practical holiness or because of faithfulness to God and His interests it is used by God to bring blessing into the soul. As difficult times are gone through with God the believer emerges from them with a deeper knowledge and appreciation of God which leads to worship and praise (1 Peter 5:10-11). It would be wrong to close this section without a reference to the One who supremely was afflicted, the Lord Jesus Christ. "He was oppressed, and He was afflicted" (Isaiah 53:7). While the Lord Jesus endured much from the hands of evil men (Hebrews 12:3), His extreme sorrow was what He experienced from the hand of His God. As He became the sin-bearer He endured the unmitigated wrath of God in God's judgment of sin. Was it worthwhile? The millions upon earth who worship God will one day join the millions already in glory, and unitedly worship God and the Lamb (Revelation). "He shall see of the fruit of the travail of His soul, and shall be satisfied" (Isaiah 53:11) and "the pleasure of Jehovah shall prosper in His hand" (Isaiah 53:10). The Preparations (3). Power. 1 Chronicles 29:2

David was a man of boundless energy. His life, as recorded in Holy Scripture, was a life of vigour and achievement. It is sad to relate that when he had a time of relaxation it led him into temptation and grievous sin (2 Samuel 11:1-5). God had gifted David with great physical power and David used it unsparingly in his service for God. He would not be so foolish as to attribute to himself the power to prepare for the temple. He would remember the injunction of Moses, "But thou shalt remember Jehovah thy God, that it is He who giveth thee power to get wealth" (Deuteronomy 8:18). David acknowledged this in his prayer to God when he said, "In Thy hand is power and might; and in Thy hand it is to make all great and strong... for all is of Thee, and of that which is from Thy hand have we given Thee" (1 Chronicles 29:12-14. See Psalms 62:11 and Psalms 68:35). Misdirected power can be destructive. Power directed by a good purpose can achieve noble things. David was not a deluded visionary. He was a man with a distinct purpose and he used his God-given power to put into effect the plan he had received from the Spirit. When the time came for Solomon to build the temple all that was necessary for the task would be available to him. The correct amounts of gold and silver etc. were amassed by David. His purpose guided him in the employment of his power. Not only did David use his power in an energetic and purposeful way but his power was used to achieve an object. What an object! "This palace is not to be for man, but for Jehovah Elohim" (1 Chronicles 29:1). "The house that is to be built for Jehovah must be exceeding great in fame and in beauty in all lands" (1 Chronicles 22:5). In David's heart and mind the greatest and most glorious Person, God, deserved the best that he could give and every activity of his power was expended to that end.

It is important to distinguish between the temple that Solomon built and the spiritual dwelling place of God as described in the New Testament. Solomon's temple was reared in Jerusalem and was built with a variety of materials. In it priests functioned with distinctive garments and offered to God material sacrifices. Incense and music accompanied their functions. All the furniture connected with the temple was made of gold or bronze. In the Christian dispensation all is spiritual except the

two rites of the Lord's Supper and Baptism. Peter in his first letter wrote: "Yourselves also, as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, (consisting of all believers) to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God by Jesus Christ" (1 Peter 2:5). Christians everywhere on earth at any given time constitute the house of God and they increase day by day into a holy temple which will be completed when the last believer is secured (Ephesians 2:20-21). The people in Corinth who were converted through Paul's preaching were described by Paul as the temple of God (Acts 18:8-11; 1 Corinthians 3:16; 2 Corinthians 6:16). The temple of God today consists of living persons indwelt by the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 6:19). The features of David's power (energy, purpose and object) can be fulfilled in every Christian in the power of the Holy Spirit. By the Spirit's power every Christian can build with gold, silver and precious stones, figurative of enduring spiritual qualities. (1 Corinthians 3:12). The Greek words energia, energeo and energees, from which the English word energy is derived, are found in the New Testament. An examination of a few references will show from where the New Testament believer obtains energy:

1) Ephesians 1:19. God.

2) Ephesians 4:16; Colossians 1:29. Christ.

3) 1 Corinthians 12:11; Ephesians 3:20. The Holy Spirit.

4) 1 Thessalonians 2:13; Hebrews 4:12. The Holy Scriptures.

There is no excuse for a Christian to be lethargic. The Divine resources are ample for every exercise in relation to the support of Divine interests. Proverbs 24:30-34 is a sad picture of inertia in the things of the Lord.

If God deigns to dwell amongst His people it is important that there should be purpose of heart on the part of those who are so honoured. Each believer, brother and sister, can contribute to such a marvellous blessing. Not to forsake the assembling of ourselves together must be high in the agenda of purpose (Hebrews 10:25). Who would want to deliberately absent themselves from the opportunity to be in the presence of God? Not simply congregating in a hall or chapel, but entering into the presence of God with self-judged spirits. A simple prayer at home prepares the heart for greater things when gathered to the Lord's Name. 1 Corinthians 11:28 is important before partaking of the Supper and is applicable to all gatherings of the saints. If this important exercise were followed more often it would greatly affect the spiritual atmosphere of the gatherings. Holiness of life as a fixed purpose is an essential exercise in preparing for God's presence. It is one thing to rejoice in the blessing of holiness that belongs to every believer in Christ. It is another thing to be in practical consistency with it (Hebrews 12:14; Psalms 93:5). Love for each other guarantees the abiding presence of God (1 John 4:12). These are only a few of the things that could be followed with a fixed purpose, which would provide much that would contribute to the known presence of God in His house. God Himself is the great Object to engage the affections and the allegiance of His people. It is the knowledge of God and the believer's relationship to Him that governs their worship and service towards Him. The total commitment of Romans 12:1-2 would secure for God the kind of service that David so loyally rendered to God in his generation (Acts 13:36). Paul's exhortation is particularly appropriate for days of easy-going Christian profession: "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the compassion of God, to present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your intelligent service. And be not conformed

to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is the good and acceptable and perfect will of God".

Such commitment would inevitably lead to the worship of God, the highest and most dignified service Godward (John 4:24). Also, there would be no difficulty or hesitation in rendering "unto God the things that are God's" (Matthew 22:21). "Whatever ye do, do all things to God's glory", seems to sum up the matter concisely (1 Corinthians 10:31). Worship God — Render unto God — Do all for His glory. The Object is well worthy of such devoted service. The Preparations (4). The Affections. 1 Chronicles 29:3

"Love never fails", said Paul (1 Corinthians 13:8). David was an excellent expression of that statement. He gathered immense amounts of materials for the house of his God and he could have been content with that. But he was ready and willing to give what belonged to him, his own property, to augment what had already been gathered. An admirable exercise and one that proved beyond all doubt the depth of his affections for his God and His house. David had in the past exhibited this principle of personal sacrifice (2 Samuel 24:24). "Neither will I offer up to Jehovah my God burnt offerings without cost". A brother is reported to have said that he was never free in his spirit to recommend a gift from the assembly purse unless he had helped privately himself. It is easy to be generous with suggestions from the assembly purse and niggardly with one's own possessions. In Psalms 26:8 David said: "Jehovah, I have loved the habitation of Thy house, and the place where Thy glory dwelleth". His was no empty profession of love. He proved his love by his generous giving for God's house. Love gives; love sacrifices. John the apostle wrote: "Children, let us not love with word, nor with tongue, but in deed and in truth" (1 John 3:18). David's example had a great effect. The chief fathers and the people followed his example and gave willingly for the house of God. Love expressed in a practical way can be infectious. The giving of the Macedonians shamed the Laodiceans (2 Corinthians 8:2; Revelation 3:17). The giving of Ananias and Sapphira is to be avoided (Acts 5:1-10). The wide range of David's preparations for the house of God is seen in chapters 23-27. The precise arrangements that he made assured the order and continuity of the service of God. There was variety in unity, a most important feature. A final word. All that was seen so attractively in David was expressed in perfection in the Person of the Son of God. His Divine Workmanship, consequent upon His spotless life, redeeming death, glorious resurrection and triumphant ascension to God's right hand in glory, secured for God (and Himself) a building that would resist every attack of Satan, and preserve for God every response worthy of His Name. "I will build My assembly, and hades' gates shall not prevail against it" (Matthew 16:13-18).

F. Wallace.

(Further articles in this series are to follow, if the Lord will).

Divine Care (6) The Mutual Care of the Members of the Body of Christ. 1 Corinthians 12:25 In the previous article in this series we considered the care that Timothy had for the saints, and some of the ways in which his care for them was shown. We might rightly say that he was an apostle's delegate, which we are not, and was gifted in a way which we may not be. He could show care for the saints in ways that we are not fitted to do. This is true. Nevertheless, we are still responsible to care for one another. There are a great many passages which bear upon this subject, quite apart from those where the word "care" occurs. However, because of the constraints of space, we must

limit ourselves here to a consideration of 1 Corinthians 12:25 in the immediate and wider context of the epistle.

We know that the saints at Corinth were enriched “in all utterance, and in all knowledge”, and that they came “behind in no gift” (1 Corinthians 1:5; 1 Corinthians 1:7). These were very great benefits, bestowed upon them by the grace of God. They were intended for the profit of the whole company (1 Corinthians 12:7). Sadly, some were misusing what God had given, in order to exalt themselves. Others, giving their support to one or another, helped on a party spirit (1 Corinthians 1:12-13; 1 Corinthians 3:4-7; 1 Corinthians 3:22-23; 1 Corinthians 4:6; 1 Corinthians 11:18-19). This had led to envying, strife and division — characteristics of man in the flesh rather than of those “sanctified in Christ Jesus” (1 Corinthians 3:3; 1 Corinthians 1:2). At the beginning of the epistle Paul had shown that the cross of Christ has cut off the flesh, and everything in which man after the flesh might glory (1 Corinthians 1:18-31; 1 Corinthians 2:1-8; Colossians 2:11). Here in chapter 12 he shows how inconsistent their behaviour was with the inter-dependence of the members of the body of Christ. He illustrates his point from the human body (1 Corinthians 12:14-26). There is both a diversity of members, “For the body is not one member, but many”, and an essential unity, “But now are they many members, yet but one body” (1 Corinthians 12:14; 1 Corinthians 12:20). In writing that “the members should have the same care one for another”, Paul clearly had the divided state of the Corinthians in view. Instead of self exaltation and partiality, an understanding and appreciation of the fact that “There is one body” would stimulate this mutual care (Ephesians 4:4). It would be shown as each one functioned properly in their assigned place in the body (1 Corinthians 12:18). While some were more prominent than others there was to be the “effectual working” of every part (Ephesians 4:16). The contribution that each has to make was to be neither under or overestimated (1 Corinthians 12:15-17; 1 Corinthians 12:21-22). Paul writes that they were “(the) body of Christ” in Corinth, and it was Christ who was to be manifested in them, not the features of the old man (1 Corinthians 12:27). They were to have the same care for one another that Christ had for them. The range of gifts given is wide, as Romans 12:1-21, 1 Corinthians 12:1-31 and Ephesians 4:1-32 show. We are told in 2 Timothy 3:1 that “in the last days difficult times shall be there” (J.N.D. trans.). Where the eye is not single and steadfastly fixed upon Christ, these difficulties can lead to discouragement and despondency. Remembering that “unto every one of us is given grace (gift)”, perhaps like Timothy we sometimes need to “stir up the gift of God” which is in us (Ephesians 4:7; 2 Timothy 1:6). All the difficulties of the last days have been foreseen by God, and ample provision has been made to meet them. Innovation will not strengthen the testimony of God, but wholehearted obedience to God’s Word, in first love for Christ, will. As the gifts given are exercised under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, in submission to the authority and Headship of the Lord Jesus, so (and only thus) will the body of Christ be built up.

While there was scope for the Corinthians to show care and mutual consideration in most of the other areas that Paul touched upon in the course of the first epistle, there were several matters in particular where this was called for. In chapter 6 Paul writes: “Now therefore there is utterly a fault among you, because ye go to law one with another” (1 Corinthians 6:7). Some were doing wrong, defrauding (robbing) their brethren. While theirs was the greater guilt, those that were wronged were taking matters to court, with little thought of the dishonour thus brought upon the Lord’s Name and testimony. Genuine care for the people of God would rather have suffered the loss, trusting to the Lord to set matters right, and seeking to gain the brother or sister concerned (1

Corinthians 6:7; Matthew 18:15).

Paul turns to financial matters again towards the end of the epistle. While anxious to suffer no personal loss, and despite their apparent affluence, the Corinthians were slow to minister to the needs of others. In chapter 16 he directs them as to the collection for the saints at Jerusalem, and in the second epistle exhorts them to the doing of it (1 Corinthians 16:1-4; 2 Corinthians 8:11). The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ is pressed — “that, though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that ye through His poverty might be rich” (2 Corinthians 8:9). What a reproach it was to the Corinthians that others, much less well off than they, were far more forward in this matter. Paul writes of the deep poverty of the Macedonian believers, and how this “abounded unto the riches of their liberality”. They prayed “us with much entreaty that we would receive the gift, and take upon us the fellowship of the ministering to the saints” (2 Corinthians 8:4). The Corinthians had also been slow to supply the material needs of Paul and those who with him had sown to them in spiritual things (1 Corinthians 9:11). While “the Lord ordained, that they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel”, Paul had not pressed this claim (1 Corinthians 9:14). Others sent to him in his need, but not the Corinthian assembly as such (1 Corinthians 16:17; 2 Corinthians 11:8-9). It seems that even had such support been proffered Paul would have refused it because of their low spiritual condition (2 Corinthians 11:10-12).

Such passages may well challenge our own hearts today. The subject of giving is frequently taken up in the New Testament, both by the Lord Himself in the Gospels, and elsewhere. In Luke 16:1-31 faithfulness “in the unrighteous mammon” is faithfulness “in that which is another man’s” (Luke 16:11-12). The money that passes through our hands is not ours but the Lord’s and we are responsible to Him as to how we dispose of it. The Scripture: “And if ye have not been faithful in that which is another man’s, who shall give you that which is your own?”, would indicate that there is a very definite link between Christian giving and progress in spiritual things — the things which are our “own”. “Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom. For with the same measure that ye mete withal, it shall be measured to you again” (Luke 6:38). “Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver” (2 Corinthians 9:7). “Let him that is taught in the Word communicate unto him that teacheth in all good things” (Galatians 6:6). “But to do good, and to communicate, forget not: for with such sacrifices God is well pleased” (Hebrews 13:16). These Scriptures show the large and important place that giving has in the sight of God and it is a responsibility that we cannot escape.

There was another area where there was ample scope for this care and consideration to be shown. In chapter 8 Paul writes at length about “the eating of those things that are offered in sacrifice unto idols” (1 Corinthians 8:4). Some, having knowledge that the idol in itself is nothing, were so bold that they not only ate what was offered, but they did so in the very precincts of the idol’s temple. In eating there, they were compromising the holy Christian fellowship into which they were called and provoking the Lord to jealousy (1 Corinthians 1:9; 1 Corinthians 10:19-22). In eating the sacrifices at all they were disregarding the consciences of their weaker brethren, who might be made bold to do the same thing: “with conscience of the idol... as a thing offered unto an idol; and their conscience being weak is defiled” (1 Corinthians 8:7). Paul uses very strong language in verses 11 and 12 of chapter 8: “And through thy knowledge shall the weak brother perish, for whom Christ died? But when ye sin so against the brethren, and wound their weak

conscience, ye sin against Christ". He is said to be "the... brother... for whom Christ died", and will not perish in the eternal sense, but a brother whose conscience was so offended might be lost to the Christian testimony. How at all costs care for the saints would avoid such an outcome. "Wherefore, if meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no flesh while the world standeth, lest I make my brother to offend" (1 Corinthians 8:13). There is to be consideration for all who might be involved in such an action: "But if any man say unto you, This is offered in sacrifice unto idols, eat not, for his sake that shewed it, and for conscience sake: for the earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof" (1 Corinthians 10:28; 1 Corinthians 10:32-33). We are not to make a show of our own liberty, or to seek our own profit, but the edification of others (1 Corinthians 10:23-24). The whole of Romans chapter 14 deals with similar matters, though things offered to idols are not in question there. The principles enunciated are capable of wide application. We are to regard the consciences of others, and bear with those who may not yet enjoy full Christian liberty. Where fundamental Christian teaching is not involved, and where holy Christian living is not compromised, we are not to judge one another. Each one has his personal responsibility to his Lord and Master, and this is stressed (Romans 14:4; Romans 14:6-9). At the judgment seat of Christ it is our own conduct and service that we will have to give account for, and not that of others (Romans 14:10; Romans 14:12).

Before concluding this series of articles let us recall some of the verses from 1 Corinthians 13:1-13 : "Love suffereth long, and is kind; love envieth not; love vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, Doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil; Rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; Beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things. Love never faileth..." (1 Corinthians 13:4-8 a). Behind all Divine care there is Divine love. In some of these verses Paul has to write of things that Divine love is not, or does not do. Sadly, these negative things were seen amongst the Corinthians. May we rather give place to this love, and the care for one another that it would put into our hearts. Then what was seen in perfection in Christ in care for His people, may be seen in a measure in each one of us today.

R.F.W.

God's Remedy for Our Problems

Reflections on 2 Corinthians 2:14-17; 2 Corinthians 3:1-18; 2 Corinthians 4:1-18; 2 Corinthians 5:1-21; 2 Corinthians 6:1-18; 2 Corinthians 7:1

Introduction A few introductory remarks may prove helpful to better understand the reasons for writing on this subject at this time. As we are all aware there are many problems facing the Lord's people today. New ones arise before old ones are cleared away. Being firmly persuaded that the Word of God furnishes the answers to help in every situation I have asked myself the question, how is it that God's people can be so divided on so many issues? Would obedience to God's Word and dependence upon the Lord not unite us together? I found the answer in Paul's epistles to the Corinthians. They too were divided, because they were occupied with the wrong man (1 Corinthians 1:11-12). Until they had learned what Isaiah 2:22 states: "Cease ye from man, whose breath is in his nostrils; for wherein is he to be accounted of?", they were powerless to cope with the problems. In 2 Corinthians we are given God's answer, the solution to the difficulties.

Reflections The two epistles of Paul to the Corinthians are wilderness epistles. The saints are viewed as having been set apart from this world by a divine call (1 Corinthians 1:2). This world, which to the eye of faith has become a wilderness, furnishes nothing to sustain that faith. And the Christian passing through this world must live a life of complete dependence and obedience to the Lord. Failure to do so is the root cause of all the break-ups and break-downs in the family as well as in the assembly testimony.

God allows this time of testing in the wilderness in order that we might learn what is in our hearts. But what is of much greater value is to learn what is in the heart of God, and that is Christ. Then, as we learn this, we turn away from ourselves to find in Christ what answers every need. The Root Cause of Problems In reflecting on this portion of Scripture we must bear in mind the great object the apostle had before him. He longed to see the Corinthian saints lifted up out of their low spiritual condition as he had described it in the first epistle. Please note 1 Corinthians 3:1 : “And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal”. This carnal condition had led to worldliness and moral laxity, which further opened the door to assembly disorder and doctrinal error. And this left them with little spiritual discernment and no spiritual strength to cope with their problems. This is much of what we are facing today. This condition, exposed in the first epistle, is addressed in the second epistle. There we are shown God’s way of transforming us into the moral likeness of our Lord Jesus Christ. As this is being accomplished by the Spirit working out in us subjectively what God has purposed for us objectively in Christ, problems are solved in a God honouring way. Self is set aside.

It is not intended that we be occupied with difficulties and problems, but rather that we see God’s remedy for them. That does not mean that we try to avoid the problems, for we all know that none of us can run away from them. But we need to see God’s provision to meet every need; and that provision is in Christ.

Change is Possible The apostle Paul himself had been in such stressful situations as are described in 2 Corinthians 1:8-9; 2 Corinthians 4:8-9 : “... pressed out of measure, above strength... despaired even of life: But we had the sentence of death in ourselves”. In spite of these outward dangers, Paul does not faint or become discouraged. Instead he sees himself identified in testimony with a victorious Christ (2:14-15). And by his conduct and preaching, a sweet fragrance of Christ rises up to God. Paul, who called himself the chief of sinners, is now the greatest vessel God has raised up for the shining forth of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ (2 Corinthians 4:6). Only God could bring about such a change in the life of any person.

Now, what God did in Paul, He is also doing in each one of us who have believed. God by His Spirit is writing Christ upon our hearts (2 Corinthians 3:3). The law could not do that. It could only tell man what he ought to do and what is expected of him, but it could not change him (Romans 8:3-4). But the Christian has received new life (Christ), and a new nature that delights in what is of God. The Holy Spirit now dwelling in the believer, occupies us with Christ where He is in the very presence of God. As I am occupied with the Man Christ Jesus where He is now, a transformation will take place in me, a moral change, making me more and more like Christ (2 Corinthians 3:18).

One Great Hindrance

Now the greatest hindrance to the work of the Spirit in the believer is self. Good self or bad self is still self. Self-esteem, self-worth, self-image, self-love, are at best occupation with the wrong man, the very man whom God has set aside and condemned in the death of Christ. God is not attempting to improve man in the flesh. “Old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new” (2 Corinthians 5:17). The question might now be asked, how does this teaching help solve problems? First of all, we have to admit that: “... in me, (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing...” (Romans 7:18; John 6:63). The problems which cause us so much trouble, in our individual lives, in our families, and in the assemblies, find their source in our flesh. So if we don’t learn from God’s Word that the flesh profits nothing, God teaches us this by our own failures. But how sad if we have to learn it in this way. Yet what is even more sad is that we have grieved the Holy Spirit, and that every failure or sin necessitated those unfathomable sufferings of Christ on the cross. Then, as I learn how wretched the flesh is in me, I turn the eye of faith away from self and find in Christ an Object of supreme delight, One in whom God finds eternal joy and satisfaction.

It Begins in Me

Having experienced how wretched the flesh is in me (not in my brother), the second thing is to accept the teaching God has given in this, as in many other portions of Scripture. He is teaching us to look away from self to Christ and, in so doing, we take on the moral features of Christ. Some of these are obedience and dependence upon God, patience, meekness and self-control. Many others are seen in Galatians 5:22-23. This is the fruit of the Holy Spirit who works this out practically in the life of each believer. In chapter 4:7 Paul explains that our bodies, which he calls “earthen vessels”, contain this treasure which is Christ dwelling in the believer. And as the vessel is broken up the light that is within shines out. In 2 Corinthians 5:10, the apostle Paul reminds us that we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ. Everything we have done in our lifetime will be manifested in the light of His holy presence. Our motives, our self-seeking, even if it was mixed in with our service for the Lord, will be manifested. What was done in secret or in public, at the work place or at home, in private counselling or in public preaching, all will be laid bare. O how searching this is! But remember, when we stand before the judgment seat of Christ, the sinful nature in which we sinned is no longer in us. We will then be with and like Christ and will rejoice in that our old selfish, sinful nature is once and forever done with. Only what is of Christ remains forever.

Christ Really is the Remedy

If we like Paul lived our lives in the light of that day, what a difference it would make. It is far easier to sing, “Nothing but Christ, as on we tread”, than to live it. For to live it means that it will govern what I wear, how I spend my money, where I take my holidays, how I speak to my wife or husband and my attitude towards my children, etc. Moreover, it will affect relationships in the home, at the workplace, and in the world. But what is most important, it will bring an atmosphere into the assembly which is Christ-honouring. This is really the mind of Christ, and having that mind equips us to face all dangers. It enables us to make the right spiritual decisions. We will then understand with whom we can have fellowship and when associations are defiling. True separation and holy living is found only then, when it is coupled with affection for Christ and obedience to His Word (2 Corinthians 6:17-18). Then the question is never asked, “What’s wrong with this or that?” but,

“What is pleasing to Christ?”

Paul then concludes this section (2 Corinthians 7:1) by giving a word of encouragement: “Having therefore these promises”. If we allow God to work this out in our lives we will experience the deep peace and joy of fellowship with the Father. This will make all suffering or sorrow which we pass through well worth while. Faith looks beyond the present and evaluates everything in the light of eternity (2 Corinthians 4:17-18). It is my earnest prayer that these reflections may lead to deeper exercise in all who read them, so that Christ may be reflected in a greater measure.

J. Redekop. From Our Archive The Primitive Church (3)

Acts 20:17-38 (An address given in Lowestoft in 1960) The verses I have read have a very distinct connection with what has engaged us previously. Two nights ago, from Acts chapter four, I pointed out the features that marked the church in Jerusalem, in its primitive simplicity. Last evening I mentioned that what we haven’t got in Acts chapter four is the Gentiles as yet called into the church. For that reason we travelled on to Acts chapter eleven, where we saw the beginning of this remarkable work at Antioch. When we come to the gospel we step outside Jewish circumstances, and Jewish exclusiveness, and we contemplate God gathering out of the Nations, “A people for His Name”.

Here in Acts chapter twenty we are listening to a man who in those days was most used of God in accomplishing this. And we are instructed as to how he did it. There are three things that marked the ministry of the apostle Paul. Of course, he was tremendously antagonised by the Jews. If he wrote, as I think he must have done, the epistle to the Hebrews, instead of incorporating Gentile converts into Jewish circumstances he had to end his epistle by saying in effect, “Now you who are Christians from among the Hebrews, go forth to the rejected Saviour, without the camp”. What was it that God used in the earliest days in the accomplishment of His purpose? There are many things in the verses I have read and I can only attempt to speak on a few, but I notice the apostle speaks of his ministry; of the manner of it, the method and then of the themes that he ministered.

You might say to me, “Look here, you are preaching tonight and you’ve got to pay attention to the manner in which the apostle Paul exercised his ministry”. If you say that, I admit you are quite right. Let everyone of us who, in our small way today, seeks grace to preach or minister the Word of God, be guided by the spirit that marked the apostle. He said, “Ye know... after what manner I have been with you at all seasons”. It wasn’t a case of very hot today and very cold tomorrow. There were no fluctuations but steady, constant ministry, in humility and in trial and difficulty, such as the temptations or testings that he had by the lying in wait of the Jews. And then, not only did he declare things by word of mouth, but he showed them. Twice he said that in the verses I have read, I “have shewed you”. In other words he exemplified in practice the things that he preached. It was what he did, how he behaved himself. But what did he declare? Firstly, at the end of verse twenty four, he spoke of, “...the ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God”. That is where all began, and where everything begins today. It is no use advancing further until that is established. The foundation is laid in the gospel. Here it is not the gospel of the Kingdom, which we read about, for instance, in the Gospels. There were glad tidings for the Jew because at last here was the Messiah, the expected King. But they did not recognise Him. Alas, He was not received, save by a very few. But now there goes out, consequent upon the death and resurrection and glorification of Christ, and the coming of the Holy

Spirit, the gospel of the grace of God. This is the epoch which is characterised by grace. Never forget that. Grace is in contrast with anything like merit. Merit thinks I deserve something but Paul said, “I obtained mercy”, not, “I obtained merit”. I think we might notice what that meant practically when he came to what I might call our side of the matter. He said, “I... have taught you publicly, and from house to house, Testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ”. I don’t know whether I am right, though I’ve met other people who have the same impression, that preachers of the gospel of God, ourselves included, haven’t made the need of repentance toward God quite plain enough. The deeper the conviction in the soul of any convert, the deeper the conviction of sin and de-merit, the more stable and satisfactory the conversion that results. So often repentance is shallow and then the sense of grace is not deep and the Christian might afterwards be rather shallow as a consequence. But Paul didn’t stop there. In the next verse he mentions the second thing that he so ably ministered. He speaks of the gospel of the grace of God and then he says, “And now, behold, I know that ye all, among whom I have gone preaching the Kingdom of God, shall see my face no more”. Let me emphasise that little word, “ye” — you, all of you. Paul then preached the Kingdom of God among the saints. Paul said in effect, “Look, grace has reached you in the gospel, but it brought you under divine authority; you have been translated from the authority of darkness and brought into the Kingdom of God’s dear Son”. God’s Kingdom is established in the hearts of His people as they are brought into happy subjection to Jesus, who has become their Lord and their Head. Wherever Paul went he brought the truth of God to bear upon the consciences, the hearts and the lives of those who received the gospel. The apostle never contented himself with merely expounding truth. Of course, you have to begin with the doctrine, the unfolding of God’s truth, but Paul never stopped there. Take the epistle to the Romans, and the wonderful unfolding of the gospel that we have there. We all have to take our place as guilty men and women in the presence of God. There must be repentance towards God. As we read on in the epistle we have the grace of God in all its fulness; justification, reconciliation, our standing in Christ Jesus, the Holy Spirit bestowed, and the whole effect of sin countermanded. Then there are the three chapters that settle the questions that arise in some people’s minds as to whether this has in any way set aside what God had promised previously to Israel nationally. But when we come to chapter twelve you get, “I beseech you therefore, brethren...”. In the light of the truths that he had opened out to them he besought them to present their bodies to God. My body is that which, in my unconverted days, expressed my sinful thoughts and desires. It was all for self. But a Christian ought to present his or her body a living sacrifice. A sacrifice is that which is devoted to God in His service. We do it in a living way, and our bodies are to be under divine control. We are to prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God. The apostle didn’t stop with expounding all the wonders of the earlier part of the epistle. He applied what he had been teaching to the consciences of the saints. Presently he says that we’re brought into the Kingdom of God. It isn’t meat and drink, but righteousness, and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. The epistle to the Ephesians unfolds the truth concerning the church; what God is doing today according to His own gracious counsel and thought. But Paul doesn’t stop there. If you turn to about the middle of chapter four you find he suddenly says in effect, “Look, you’re not going to do as these Gentiles do in the vanity of their minds. If the things I have been writing are true, and they are, see what it means in practical Christian living. You are to put on the new man. The old man has been dispossessed. You have been brought under divine authority.” Although the word Kingdom is not mentioned, what it infers is. We are brought under

divine authority that the desires of our hearts, the words of our lips, the actions of our lives, may be controlled here. Everywhere Paul went he made that manifest. He was not a mere kind of theological professor, propounding all kinds of wonderful ideas, but leaving it there, with no one at all exercised as to any light which these ideas shed upon their practical behaviour. No, if truth is revealed, it is revealed in order that it may exert its control upon our lives as brought under divine domination. Wherever Paul went he preached among believers, “The Kingdom of God”.

He goes on to say, “Wherefore I take you to record this day, that I am pure from the blood of all men. For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God”. The counsel of God is very fully unfolded in the epistle to the Ephesians. Beyond that which meets our need is that which God has desired according to His own thought. In the course of that epistle the expression, “according to”, occurs again and again. We are shown that God has blessed us, not merely according to our need, but according to His own thoughts, purpose and counsel. These were formed even before the foundation of the world. Paul made that manifest. He says, “I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God”. Why should he have shunned doing so? We might have thought there would be only delight on Paul’s part in expounding such wonderful truths. But it was precisely that which brought upon him the wrath of the orthodox Jew. Why were his footsteps dogged in every place? Why was he treated as he was? Because he did not shun to declare all the counsel of God. This lifts the Christian into heavenly blessings beyond anything made known in connection with the Jew and the blessing which the Jew will have in the coming age.

Let us remember these three things and be careful not to get lopsided. We need all three: the gospel of grace, the Kingdom of authority and the counsel of the purpose of God. That was what wrought in the apostle’s ministry. Then he tells them that there were two dangers ahead. The one is a more obviously a movement of the enemy than the other. He spoke of grievous wolves getting in among the saints and not sparing the flock. That was going to mark the whole course of the Christian testimony until the end. As they are spoken of as wolves I think we can say that they are not true Christians at all, but they gain an entrance into Christian circles and what they propagate is destructive of the truth. But Paul indicated a second danger which I venture to think is for us even more urgent. Paul says that in addition to this, “Of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them”. Paul was addressing those who in a particular way were responsible, because the Holy Spirit had made them overseers or elders, exercising a measure of spiritual oversight or authority. Mr Darby’s translation gives, “speaking perverted things”. There is an element of truth in it but by a dextrous twist it is perverted. That again and again has taken place in the history of the church. Even with men who may be elders, if self comes in and a desire of pre-eminence, there is a tendency to teach something very novel with a little twist and presently he becomes a leader of a kind of party in the church of God. An exalted somebody who is supposed to be a little bit above the average servant of God. A leader gathering the saints around himself. Let us remember that these were the warnings issued so that we may be kept very clear of that kind of thing ourselves. In the light of these dangers Paul shows the source of preservation and blessing. Presently he says, “I commend you to God, and to the Word of His grace”. He couldn’t say, “I commend you to the elders”. He was talking to the elders. Elders are no safeguard in themselves. But Paul does say, “I commend you to God”. We each are put in touch with God and are to keep in touch with Him. If we have God before us we shall be living a

life where there will be an element of prayer and dependence. The best servant and the most usable is the servant who is in touch with God. It is God who has blessed us, it is God who has been revealed in Christ, and it is God with whom we have to do. We are prayerfully to keep in touch with Him. But there is another thing beside this. We are commended to God, “and to the Word of His grace”. It is not the Word of His law. That was very important in its place. There is nothing more effective in producing conviction of sin. The law entered that sin might abound, not as a matter of fact, but in its potency in the consciences of those who were under the law. But now we have the Word of His grace. If you ask me, it lays great stress on the New Testament. The Old Testament is the Word of His law, if I may be allowed to speak in a broad and general way, but the New Testament gives us the Word of His grace. The Old Testament does give us shadows of the good things to come, but as the epistle to the Hebrews tells us, “not the very image of the things”. The shadow gives me the outline, and I can deduce certain things from it, but it doesn’t give the very image of the thing. I think we can see the typical shadow in the garden of Eden when animals were slain to provide the guilty pair with coats of skin. But now we have the plain revelation of things and let us remember what a preservation we have in the Word of His grace. I am afraid we do not read God’s Word as much as we should. There are so many other things to distract us and occupy our time. But depend upon it, if I am going to have to do with God, and with the Word of His grace, it certainly needs the careful, prayerful reading of the New Testament, and of the Old Testament in the light of the New. So it has been through the centuries when God has wrought in reviving power. It has been through the Word of His grace. When centuries passed and then came what we speak of as the Reformation, not half a century or so previously printing was invented and the Bible began to be let loose in that way. Instead of being locked up in monasteries and smothered by the priests, the Word of God’s grace was let loose and blessing resulted. So it has been since the beginning. It is when our souls are brought under the mighty and gracious influence of His Word that our souls are preserved and taught. We are carried outside of man, even the best of men, and fitted for the service of God. We may go into the very presence of God and speak to Him, and on the other hand He speaks to us in His Word.

F. B. Hole. In putting this material into a form suitable for publication it has been necessary to edit some of Mr. Hole’s remarks. The three addresses in the series are available on two cassette tapes from Mr. B. T. Wolfe, 2 Grafton Bank, Yetholm, Kelso, Roxburghshire, TD5 8SB, price £1.00 each, plus postage.

Psalms 119:1-176 (7) (Continued from page 247) 4. DALETH — DOOR This word means “door” in the Hebrew, and appears to have been the most ancient form of the letter. Its numerical value is four, which speaks of universality. The spiritual significance of the letter seems to be that of “entrance”, “giving entrance”, or “opening up the way” — something which includes and excludes. The way we are in seems blocked. We are at a “dead-end”, and emotionally we may be at our “wit’s end”, deeply depressed and discouraged. “Daleth” will help us discover the way to being quickened, restored and encouraged.

Verses 25-48. Strength for the Weary Section Four. Verses 25-32: “God’s Word Quickens and Restores”

1. Earthbound!

Verse 25: DAH-VAK... “...clings...”

“My soul cleaveth unto the dust...”. What a discovery to make! Indeed, how much value do we attach to the things of this earth? Do we “theorise” about the Christian life, and yet live for this earth, rather than for the Lord Jesus? What are our priorities? Do we “cling” to some kind of idol that we cannot let go? We have tried so hard to get free from this thing, this particular weakness or temptation, but to no avail. We are depressed about it. Romans 7:18 is right when it says: “...for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not”. Well might we echo the cry: “...quicken Thou me...” That quickening is in the life of Christ, lived out in us. Have we come to Him, have we surrendered to Him?

2. Confession First!

Verse 26: DEH-RECHI... “...my way...”

“I have declared my ways...”. Have we told Him all? Our failures, our vain efforts? Our struggles and defeats? Have we left anything unconfessed? Are we willing to judge the root-cause of our defeat? Confession is not only that I tell the Lord my faults, but that I accept myself as I really am, without any pretence and without any excuses. This is a necessary lesson we must learn: “...teach me...”, continues our verse. Teach me the plague of my own heart. He “...is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy” (Jude 1:24).

3. We must be taught and understand before we can talk to others Verse 27: DEH-RECH... “...the way of (Thy precepts)...” In verse 26 the Psalmist asks to be “taught” because he is conscious of his ignorance. He lacks experience of many things. Now he asks: “Make me to understand...”. To be taught is not enough, we must also grasp and understand what we have been taught, otherwise our knowledge is simply theoretical. We can have an intellectual grasp of the Bible, have knowledge, but lack the wisdom (that comes from experience) to be able to impart that knowledge to others. In order to be able to: “...talk of Thy wondrous works”, we must have inwardly digested the truths of God’s Word. Too many assume they are teachers because they possess a certain amount of Bible knowledge. But there is something lacking in their talk, their teaching. Before what I say to others can grip them, it must first have gripped me. Paul says to Timothy: “But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them...” (2 Timothy 3:14).

4. Beware of self-occupation Verse 28: DAH-LAPH... “...drops (melteth)...”

There is nothing more disheartening and discouraging than to be occupied with oneself. Our spirits will begin to wilt and droop. Something has happened to us, and we wonder: “Why me?” We cannot understand why the Lord has allowed this. We begin to sulk. We become depressed and burdened with heaviness. In Romans chapter seven the personal pronouns I, me, myself, are repeated 47 times. I ask you, with whom is the man in that chapter occupied? The capital letter “I” is repeated 28 times! There is your answer. He is occupied with “self”.

Let us then follow the Psalmist in his prayer: “strengthen Thou me according unto Thy Word”. Occupation with Christ, with the word of Christ, will get us out of our depressions!

5. Beware of hypocrisy Verse 29: DEH-RECH... “...the way (of lying)...” Of course, I can refuse the truth about myself! But that is a form of dishonesty before the Lord, as well as before others. Have

you never felt like a hypocrite when you have talked about your spiritual experience with others and that same day you had been unfaithful to the Lord? We can hide our own spiritual destitution from others, but why try to hide it from Him? The Psalmist appeals to the law. But we know that the law can only condemn me and make me see even more my own wretchedness. But no, it is grace we need: “...and grant me Thy law graciously”. It may seem strange to find these two here joined together: law-grace! The literal Hebrew rendering is: “and favour me with Thy law”. If Jehovah favoured His people by giving them a written revelation of Himself in the law, how much more we have been favoured in Christ by being shown God’s wonderful grace of forgiveness of all our transgressions and grace to do His will!

If the law shows me what I am by nature apart from grace, then grace shows me what I have become in Christ: “accepted”. So then, it is no longer I, but Christ. Let us then be occupied with Him!

6. Determination Verse 30: DEH-RECH... “...the way (of Thy truth)...”

It is up to us now! There must be a choice! God does not do for us what we can do for ourselves! We can stay in our depression and keep on sulking and murmuring and get more and more depressed. But we need not. “I have chosen the way of truth...” is his decision! Spiritual advance and growth is not automatic! It demands our co-operation, an action of our will. “Wilt thou be made whole?” The prodigal son said: “I will arise and go to my father...”.

Here is the conviction that God’s Word shall govern our lives: “Thy judgments have I laid before me”. We have that same expression of determination in Psalms 16:8 : “I have set the Lord always before me: because He is at my right hand, I shall not be moved”. Have you made that decision yet?

7. Devotion Verse 31: DAH-VAKT... “I have clung...”

What a wonderful contrast with verse 25! There he was clinging to the dust. Here in verse 31 the same verb is used, “dahvak”, but now he is seen clinging to the Word: that which testifies of what God is and what we should be. Here is true devotion: clinging to the Lord. That is what Barnabas exhorted the believers at Antioch to do, he: “...exhorted them all, that with purpose of heart they would cleave unto the Lord” (Acts 11:23). The determination of verse 30 is here continued in!

“...O Lord, put me not to shame”, need never be the prayer of the New Testament believer. We are assured that “...whosoever believeth on Him shall not be ashamed” (Romans 9:33).

8. Dependence Verse 32: DEH-RECH... “...the way (of Thy commands)...” The Authorised Version here makes us think that the Psalmist is “striking a bargain” with the Lord: “I will... when Thou...”. But a better rendering is: “...I will run the way of Thy commands for Thou shalt enlarge my heart”. Here we have the Lord’s enabling! Everything depends upon Him strengthening us! How dependent indeed we are upon Him for our daily walk. What a wonderful change in his soul has been wrought since verse 25, where we saw him cleaving to the dust, so terribly earthbound. But now he is soaring! He is able to run, because his heart has been enlarged — given increased capacity. “But they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary, and they shall walk, and not faint” (Isaiah 40:31). May our prayer be: “...Draw me, we will run after Thee...”.

Cor Bruins.

Psalms 119:1-176 — Correspondence A careful reader of this magazine has written to the editors regarding an apparent contradiction in the first of the series of articles on Psalms 119:1-176. In the March/April 1993 issue Mr. Bruins listed all the verses in the Psalm which have a reference to the Word or one of its synonyms. One of these synonyms is the Hebrew word mish-paht. On page 36 of that issue it was stated that the word mish-paht occurs in verse 132, but lower down on the same page the verse was said to be one of only three in the Psalm to have no direct reference to the law (Word) or any of its synonyms. In the King James and J. N. Darby translations verse 132 is rendered as follows: “Look Thou upon me, and be merciful unto me, as Thou usest to do unto those that love Thy Name” (KJV), “Turn unto me, and be gracious unto me, as Thou art wont to do unto those that love Thy Name” (JND). The word mish-paht does occur in verse 132, and has been translated by the words in bold type. Mr. Bruins writes as follows:

“Mish-paht is translated “judgment” in the Hebrew concordance. However, in verse 132 it is scarcely admissible as a term for the Word. It is really a description of a particular attitude taken towards someone. The KJV has in the according to the custom toward” and this is the meaning of the word in verse 132. It describes the manner in which God acts towards someone. I conclude then that in the case of verse 132 we cannot really maintain that mish-paht is another synonym for the Word, so this still leaves verses 90, 122 and 132 as having no direct reference to the Word or any of its synonyms.”

Mr. Bruins suggested that the editors consult someone else who knows Hebrew, and the following reply has been received from Mr. John Eaton, of Birmingham University:

“Psalms 119:1-176 is a very systematically built Psalm, but with some surprising deviations from the system, some of which are picked up in the discussion you have sent me. (Only the first part of the series on the Psalm was sent to Mr. Eaton — Ed.).

It is certain that varying forms of the Psalm did exist, since a large part of one in Hebrew has been found among the Dead Sea Scrolls (J. A. Sanders, The Dead Sea Psalm Scroll, New York, 1967), and the Greek, Syriac, Targum and Latin Versions all witness to texts with variations of detail.

Internal logic suggests that the original poet had in verse 90 ’mrtk, “Thy promise”, instead of the present ’mntk, “Thy faithfulness”; and in verse 122 dbrk, “Thy Word”, instead of ’bdk, “Thy servant”; but there happens to be no external evidence for these particular possibilities. As regards verse 132, the deviation from the pattern may not be as definite as first appears. Admittedly, mishpat lacks the suffix denoting “Thy” (generally characteristic throughout this Psalm), and its occasional meaning “custom” seems suitable here. However, “Thy” may here be understood, covered by the “Thy” attached to “Thy Name”, which would be doing double duty. And there need be no doubt that the poet has chosen the term mishpat as part of his usual scheme — he will have been thinking of “judgment” in the sense of gracious decision and promise uttered by the Lord. The fact is that all the synonyms for the Lord’s Word used in the Psalm are capable of wide and flexible meaning. The poet nowhere specifies what “law/word” he has in mind, nor mentions any detail of a “law”. “The Law” (as an absolute expression, hattora) never occurs. The suffix for “Thy” is always added, and all verses from verse 4 on (except 115) address God. So the weight falls on communion with God, sustained in praise and entreaty by a great flow of references to His

gracious Word. The numerous expressions for this would show its richness and many-sidedness — guidance, warning, promise, salvation, etc. An especially wonderful aspect of the Psalm is what it shows about the stages on the way of communion. Attention to the Lord's teaching, full attention, leads at last to encounter with the Lord Himself, a breath-taking revelation.

I hope these reflections will be of assistance."

Textural criticism is not an area with which many are familiar and the editors are certainly aware that these matters are beyond their own depth. Nevertheless, they have found Mr. Eaton's remarks helpful and for this reason have included them here.

Notice The next part in the series on "The Sermon on the Mount", by Mr. Arend Remmers, will follow in the next issue, if the Lord will

Singing Hymns "And when they had sung an hymn, they went out into the mount of Olives" (Mark 14:26). The divine record does not tell us what hymn (or psalm) they sang on this solemn occasion, although some think that it was Psalms 118:1-29. This was usually sung at the Passover supper, and would have been most applicable to One who, having been presented as "He that cometh in the Name of the Lord," was now to be bound "with cords, even unto the horns of the altar". Whatever it was that they sang, this brief reference is sufficient warrant for the practice, later enjoined by the apostle Paul, of singing "psalms and hymns and spiritual songs".

While no mention of music is made in the outline of the gatherings of the newly-formed church in Acts 2:42, it becomes evident from Acts 16:25 and 1 Corinthians 14:15 that singing was a normal outlet for the individual Christian as well as the gathered companies. It has been estimated that since the foundation of the church on the day of Pentecost, more than a million hymns have been written, in many tongues, on many subjects, and varying in spiritual and poetical quality. An interesting factor in the Christian church, with all its divisions, is the Christian hymnal. The Roman Catholic, the Anglican, the Non-conformist, the missioner, have all at least some hymns in common. When we sing a hymn, we do not often stop to think who wrote it. The author's sentiments are ours, and on this common ground we swell the note of praise to our glorious Lord.

Some of the hymns that we sing are very old, almost as old as the Christian church. "Shepherd of tender youth," for instance, was written by Clement of Alexandria, who was born about the year 160 and died in 217. Another hymn that we often sing, "A shameful death He dies," was written by an unknown author in the ninth century and translated by W. J. Blew from the Latin. Others, like "Lord Jesus, think on me," were written much earlier. That hymn is attributed to Synesius (375-430), and was translated from the Greek. "Saviour, the very thought of Thee," and "O Head once full of bruises," were written in Latin, and are evidently from the pen of Bernard of Clairvaux, who lived from 1091 to 1153. Much later many German hymns were translated by John Wesley, who, with his brother Charles, composed many hymns as well. About the same time Isaac Watts, not satisfied with singing only Psalms, composed a prolific number of hymns, which we still sing. He lived from 1674 to 1748. In the last century there was an awakening in France, and many hymns were written during that time. César Malan and Henri Rossier are two of the best-known authors of this period, and some of their hymns have been translated into English and other languages. In England John Nelson Darby and Sir Edward Denny composed many hymns that we still enjoy singing. During the last century the "gospel hymn" came into being. Some of these are

still favourites, although many are sentimental, and not always spiritually sound. This century has also developed a slightly different form of “song”. Some of the recent compositions are based wholly on verses of Scripture, which is certainly commendable, although the practice in some quarters of singing the same words over and over again detracts from the appreciation of the text.

It is significant that the first song recorded in the Bible was sung by Moses and the children of Israel when they saw their enemies drowned in the Red Sea. The significant theme of this song, “The Lord is my strength and song, and He is become my salvation”, is taken up again in Psalms 118:1-29. It will also be sung in a future day, when the faithful remnant will be delivered through the great tribulation, as we read in Isaiah 12:1-6. “In that day” they will be able to rejoice that the Holy One of Israel is in their midst. Do we not have a song to sing as we come together to the Name of the Lord, since He has promised to be in our midst? Elihu spoke of “God my Maker, who giveth songs in the night”. This reminds us of Paul and Silas, beaten with many stripes, chained in the inner dungeon, who were yet able to sing praises to God — and the other prisoners listened to them. Who knows how many people listen when we gather together and sing our Saviour’s praises? The last book in the Bible contains in its first chapter a song that we still sing unto Him that loves us, and has washed us from our sins. Later on, in the fifth chapter, we are introduced to the “new song,” often anticipated in the Psalms (Psalms 33:3; Psalms 40:3; Psalms 96:1; Psalms 144:9; Psalms 149:1). We can even now sing: “O Lord, the glad new song is ours e’en here to sing.” Let our tongues not be silent. “Whoso offereth praise glorifieth Me” (Psalms 50:23).

R. E. A. Retallick.

News from the Field

Malawi

Dear brethren

“...We are come as far as to you also in preaching the gospel of Christ: Not boasting of things without our measure... To preach the gospel in the regions beyond...” (2 Corinthians 10:14-16).

I would like to give some further news about the work of the Lord in Malawi, Central Africa. Dr. Albert Nanninga and his wife Hennie are full time missionaries, based for the time being in the north of the country in the city of Mzuzu. In the south, near Blantyre at Ngludi, live Dr. Bert Nanninga and his wife Mathilde and their little children. He is employed as a doctor in a local hospital and seeks to reach souls in his spare time. I had the privilege of visiting them in October past. I flew to Malawi via Harare, Zimbabwe. During the long journey I wondered how things had developed since Hilvert Wijnholds and I were there last in 1992. The political situation had began to change so I was interested to know if this had had any effect. The two week visit then was far too brief to assess things well. Now that the Nanningas had been there for many weeks, what had been their experiences to date? How had our African friends fared? Had the literature been effective in reaching and edifying souls?

Ngludi is not far from Masuku, where last year we visited a little meeting, but up to my visit Bert had been unable to find the believers there. We hoped during my visit to locate them in the poorly charted countryside. The O S map proved very inadequate and alas, we were not able to find the Christians Hilvert and I met in 1992. This was a very great disappointment. I learnt subsequently

that Bert's father (Dr. Albert) had met up with the Masuku believers and spent time with them. He has since sent a pen sketch of the countryside to Bert and local contact has been made. This highlights one of the difficulties in Africa, where so few have a street address. Dwellings are scattered in simple villages miles away from made up roads. Savannah provides so few notable land marks that every locality looks alike. The stay in Ngludi nevertheless provided the opportunity to talk together over the Lord's interests in Malawi and back in Europe. After a few days I flew up to Mzuzu where brother Albert was waiting for me. The temperature was in the 30's. Mzuzu is 1,000 metres above sea level and the hot weather is modified by a very pleasant breeze. We eventually obtained a taxi and set off through the town via the bookshop, to where the Nanningas live. I spent most of my time discussing things with them. In the months that they had already spent there Albert and Hennie had gained a very good knowledge of the local situation. Their assessment actually confirmed very definitely the initial impressions Hilvert and I had gleaned over a year before. The ground needs to be ploughed and well prepared before any fruitful yields can be harvested. The need for simple Bible study is urgent but the appetite is very limited. The complacent opinion of the folk in Mzuzu is that it is enough to have secured a bookshop and a missionary. Their Bible knowledge is exceedingly poor, and for them the Bible is largely a closed book. Their comprehension of the gospel is also most deficient. So you will understand that there is a great deal to do before any testimony could even begin to be recognised, or considered for mutual fellowship. Of course new contacts are constantly being made. Albert and I had the joy of speaking with quite a number on the street who desired to know more about the truth of the gospel. Two men who had just left the bookshop, followed us down the road. One was clearly converted but the other was not a believer, though troubled about eternal matters. As we spoke with these two, another man began eavesdropping on our conversation. Finally, he interrupted: "Excuse me, but you are talking about Christ. That is a subject that deeply interests me — will you come to my work-place and provide some answers to my questions?" We were only too delighted to go in search of him later and to tell him the way of salvation. So you see that amidst discouragement on the one hand there is definite encouragement on the other, for which we praise the Lord. Elsewhere in the country contacts are being visited and assessed. Some demonstrate their deep desire to be taught, but others imagine they have enough knowledge (thereby showing they are either not sincere or self-deluded). A little news of the literature work in Malawi should also be brought to your attention in order that your prayers may be informed. Chapter Two and the Book of Books Foundation have purchased over $1,100 worth of Bibles in the Chichewa and Tumbuka languages. These have been distributed to various contacts but most were conveyed to Mzuzu. Hundreds of books have also been sent there from London and Frohnhausen (Germany) together with a very large quantity of tracts in English and local vernaculars. Since August the bookshop has been operating with heavy subsidies (for rent and subsistence). Numerous customers have purchased books and calendars. The need to consolidate the contacts is not appreciated and so opportunities to spread the gospel and other truths are frequently missed. Plans are in hand to ensure that the literature work is established on a right basis with specific aims. A week or two before I arrived the Nanningas had called on the local branch of the National Library Service. They arranged for some books and Bibles to be given for local use. When I was taken to the same library all 15 titles were out on loan. Discussion with the librarian indicated a vast need and upon my return to London a letter was written to the Senior Librarian in Lilongwe offering some stock free of charge and other items at local prices. We have also made good

contact with the Christian Literature Alliance in Malawi and propose sending substantial quantities in due course. It is our considered opinion that a literature work based in the capital would be best for nationwide distribution and follow-up. This could also provide a base for the supply of English and Portuguese literature throughout southern Africa. The potential is enormous and we need to proceed in dependence upon the Lord. There is also the need to publish more material in local vernaculars once reliable translators can be found. If the Lord so direct we would be very encouraged to see the literature work set up on a proper foundation in the year ahead. There was ample opportunity to discuss details of these proposals and aspirations. The walk to the centre of Mzuzu took about 45 minutes. So almost every day we could converse on our way to and from the meetings or the market. The long walk in the hot summer sun over unmade terrain could be quite exhausting but conversations made the distances seem shorter. The final day came, and a taxi was called to help with getting the baggage to the little airport. It was 32oC when I left Malawi, and a cold blast of 0oC greeted me when I emerged in London some 9 hours later. Africa was behind me but not forgotten. Do join us in prayer and thanksgiving with regard to these labours in the Lord’s vineyard in Central Africa. He alone can give the increase.

E. N. Cross.

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Addressing the Lord Jesus In certain circles it has become a rare practice, and even forbidden by some, to direct worship and prayer to the Lord Jesus Christ. It has been stated that an individual in the home may address the Lord Jesus but not in the assembly; it being added that there is no one to stop someone in their home from doing so. Thus, it seems necessary to study the Scriptures as to this most important issue. That there were those who worshipped the Lord Jesus when He was here on earth there can be no doubt. In Matthew 2:1-23 the wise men did so: they “fell down, and worshipped Him” (verse 11), and there were many other similar incidents (See Matthew 8:2; Matthew 9:18; Matthew 14:33; Matthew 15:25; John 9:38). It might be argued, however, that this was before the cross. Then we see in Matthew 28:9; Matthew 28:17 and Luke 24:52 instances when there were those who worshipped the Lord Jesus after His resurrection. Indeed, in John 20:1-31 we have one of the clearest addresses to the Lord Jesus: “Thomas answered and said unto Him, My Lord and my God” (verse 28).

Yet some may still not be convinced that it is right and proper to worship the Lord Jesus. What about now that He is ascended into heaven? Let the book of Revelation answer. In Revelation 5:1-14 we read, “The... four and twenty elders fell down before the Lamb,... And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by Thy blood, out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; And hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth” (verses 8-10). Further, for those who insist that priesthood is for God alone, in Revelation 20:6 we read: “They shall be priests of God and of Christ...” If this be the proper order of service in heaven, why should it be considered inappropriate in the assembly now on earth? Are there any accounts of address to the Lord Jesus by His saints on earth after He ascended into heaven? Indeed there are. In Acts 7:1-60 we read of Stephen, a man full of the Holy Spirit (verse 55), “calling upon God, and saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit! And he kneeled down, and cried with a loud voice, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge” (verses 59-60). It is hard to see how a man full of the Holy Spirit would be doing something that should now be forbidden. In Acts 9:1-43 there is a discourse between Ananias on earth and the Lord Jesus in heaven, the Lord making known His mind and a saint praying concerning it. In 2 Corinthians 12:8 the apostle Paul asked the Lord three times regarding the thorn in the flesh that was given him. Again, in 1 Timothy 1:12, he thanked Christ Jesus our Lord.

“But,” someone will say, “These are all the prayers of individuals.” In reply, it should be observed that there are instances of companies addressing the Lord Jesus. In Acts 1:1-26 the company assembled in the upper room prayed, “Thou, Lord, which knowest the hearts of all men, shew whether of these two Thou hast chosen” (verse 24). In Acts 13:1-52, in the church at Antioch, there were those we read of who were ministering to the Lord (verse 2). It is companies that the apostle exhorts to: speak “to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and

making melody in your heart to the Lord" (Ephesians 5:19. See also Colossians 3:16).

It must be emphasised that in all these references to the Lord, it is the Lord Jesus who is directly addressed and not the Father. Indeed, it is doubtful if we are correct in addressing the Father as Lord, since, "to us there is but one God, the Father,... and one Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Corinthians 8:6). Such a mode of address seems to be based on the usage of LORD in the Old Testament (in the King James Translation), before the Father was revealed in the Person of the Son.

We are all learners in the matter of prayer (Luke 11:1) and I do not desire to be critical. But is it not the case that one of the characteristics of Christianity is being assailed in the attempt to forbid prayer and worship to the Lord Jesus? It would seem from the book of Acts that calling on the Lord's Name was the hallmark of a Christian. In Acts 9:1-43 Ananias, in his prayer to the Lord, speaks of Saul of Tarsus as having "authority from the chief priests to bind all that call on Thy Name" (verse 14). And again, in verse 21, some were asking, "Is not this he that destroyed them which called on this Name in Jerusalem...?" Indeed, is one saved who has not called on the Name of the Lord? (See Acts 2:21 and Romans 10:13). How are we to be saved if we are not to call on the Lord's Name? From 1 Corinthians 1:2 it would appear to be the normal thing for Christians to address the Lord Jesus: "Unto the church of God which is at Corinth,... with all that in every place call upon the Name of Jesus Christ our Lord." Or, now that things are abnormal: "with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart" (2 Timothy 2:22). Whereas to be saved the call need only be once made, the references to calling on the Lord's Name by the Christian company are in the continuous tense and would suggest that saints would normally be calling on the Lord. As to calling on the Name of the Lord, it would seem abundantly clear from Scripture that it conveys, among other things, the idea of: A recognition of His deity and power (See 1 Kings 18:24; 2 Kings 5:11). A submission to His authority and acknowledgement of His rights (Jeremiah 10:25). A call to Him for help in the expectation of an answer (1 Kings 18:1-46; 2 Kings 5:1-27; Psalms 99:6; Zechariah 13:9). An approach to Him in worship and thanksgiving (Psalms 116:17).

It would be associated with the place where He dwells (See Jeremiah 3:17). Once this was at Jerusalem, as it will be again in the future, but today we know the system of grace which comes from "Jerusalem... above" (Galatians 4:26). Thus we gather to the Lord's Name, to act for the Lord in His absence, to invite His presence, to offer Him our praise and worship as we break bread in remembrance of Him, and to seek His mind and blessing.

It must be stressed that this does not rule out prayer and worship to God the Father. The matter for prayer should decide the Person to be addressed. For example, the Lord Jesus gave the commission to preach the gospel and thus, as the Lord's servant, I would seek direction from Him about this. It is God who desires that all men should be saved and hence our pleadings for the lost may be addressed to God (1 Timothy 2:3-4). And as children of God, we can address the Father. With regard to the Lord's supper, it is only fitting to address the Lord Jesus, for we break bread in remembrance of Him. It is the church's affectionate response to Christ who has loved and given Himself for her. As the Lord in the midst leads the praise of His own to the Father, God is worshipped according to the way He has made Himself known in the Person of His Son (John 4:23-24).

It is interesting that the whole canon of Scripture concludes with a prayer to the Lord: "Even so, come, Lord Jesus" (Revelation 22:20). Well may every believer pray such a prayer daily and mean

it. But is it not that the Lord Jesus, in a final appeal to His own here in this world, desires bridal affections in the assembly; that His own may be yearning for His actual presence as much as He desires to have them with Him? “The Spirit and the bride say, Come” (Revelation 22:17).

Mark Best. The Sonship of Christ (1) (This article will also be found in the ’variou~\miscella’ directory.) Pre-Incarnate, Eternal Sonship

There are a number of passages we can turn to that show the Lord Jesus was Son before the incarnation. In Hebrews 1:1-14 we read: “God, who at sundry times and in divers manners, spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, Hath in these last days spoken unto us by His Son, whom He hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also He made the worlds” (Hebrews 1:1-2). It was by the Son, as such, that the worlds were made. Creation is also attributed to the Son in Colossians chapter 1, though there He is presented as the Son of the Father’s love. Paul and Timothy give thanks to the Father, “Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of His dear Son (Darby gives here, “the Son of His love”)... Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature: For by Him were all things created” (Colossians 1:12-16). We have then, before the incarnation, the One who is the Son, God’s Son, the Son of the Father’s love.

We might also notice how Hebrews 1:1-14 and Colossians 1:1-29 distinguish these two aspects of our Lord’s pre-incarnate Sonship. As God’s Son He has the nature of God. In Hebrews 1:1-14 we read that God, “maketh His angels spirits.” That is their nature; they are spirit. “But unto the Son He saith, Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever.” The nature of the Son is deity; He is God. In Colossians 1:1-29 where He is presented as the Son of the Father’s love the emphasis is more upon relationship with the Father and the love that belongs to this relationship. Both the relationship and the love of the relationship are shown to be present before creation. We see this in John 17:1-26 too. In verse 5 the Son praying to the Father speaks about the glory which He had with the Father before the world was, and lower down He speaks of the love belonging to this relationship: “Father, I will that they also, whom Thou hast given Me, be with Me where I am; that they may behold My glory, which Thou hast given Me: for Thou lovedst Me before the foundation of the world” (John 17:5; John 17:24). The pre-incarnate Sonship of Christ is also seen in this, that as the Son He is sent, and comes, from outside of the world, into it. In John 3:17 we read that, “God sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through Him might be saved.” In John 16:1-33 the Lord Jesus says to the disciples: “I say not unto you, that I will pray the Father for you: For the Father Himself loveth you, because ye have loved Me, and have believed that I came out from God. I came forth from the Father, and am come into the world: again, I leave the world, and go to the Father” (John 16:26-28). The sending of the Son does not imply that as the Son He was in any way inferior to the Sender. In Galatians 4:1-31 His being sent is put alongside the sending of the Holy Spirit. We read there that, “when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth His Son, made of a woman, made under the law.” But just a verse lower down we read: “And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father” (Galatians 4:4; Galatians 4:6). The Greek word for sending forth is the same in both cases and in both cases the sending was of Divine Persons from heaven into the world.

There is another reference to the sending of the Son in 1 John 4:1-21 verse 9: “In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him.” The expression “only begotten” is a translation of the Greek word monogenees. This is derived from the Greek words monos, meaning only, or alone, and genos. Genos occurs 21 times in the New Testament and is variously translated1. It is rendered “offspring” (x3), “born” (x2), and “generation” (x1). But the Name “only begotten Son” cannot refer to the incarnation because this verse tells us that it was as the only begotten Son that He was sent from outside of the world into it. He was the only begotten Son before He came. What meaning then is to be attached to the expression “only begotten”? The word genos is also translated kind, kinds or kindred (x8) and the writer believes this is its meaning here. The only begotten Son of God is of the same kind as God. He is of the same kind as God because He has the nature of God. And He is the only Son like this. We know that others are called sons of God. The angels are called sons of God and believers during this present dispensation of grace are called sons of God, but the only begotten Son is alone in having the nature of God in all its fulness. As the Son He has not only the moral nature of God but deity too.

1The references are as follows: KIND — Matthew 13:47; Matthew 17:21; Mark 9:29; NATION — Mark 7:26; Galatians 1:14; KINDRED — Acts 4:6; Acts 7:13; Acts 7:19; COUNTRY — Acts 4:36; STOCK — Acts 13:26; Php 3:5; OFFSPRING — Acts 17:28; Acts 17:29; Revelation 22:16; BORN — Acts 18:2; Acts 18:24; KINDS — 1 Corinthians 12:10; 1 Corinthians 14:10; DIVERSITIES — 1 Corinthians 12:28; countrymen — 2 Corinthians 11:26; GENERATION — 1 Peter 2:9.

It is well known that the word monogenees2 occurs nine times in the New Testament. John uses the expression five times, only of the Lord Jesus. In Luke’s Gospel it is used three times of only children. In Hebrews 11:1-40 verse 17 it is used of Isaac. While Isaac was not the only child of Abraham, he was the only child of his kind — he was the only child of promise.

2The nine references are: ONLY — Luke 7:12; Luke 8:42; ONLY CHILD — Luke 9:38; ONLY BEGOTTEN — John 1:14; John 1:18; John 3:16; John 3:18; Hebrews 11:17; 1 John 4:9. The Sonship of Christ and His Incarnation

It is important to distinguish between the expression “only begotten” and the words in Psalms 2:1-12, “this day have I begotten Thee.” “This day have I begotten Thee” refers to the incarnation, as the New Testament quotations show (Psalms 2:7; Acts 13:33; Hebrews 1:5; Hebrews 5:5). But even in Psalms 2:1-12 the order of the words guards against the thought that the Son became such by incarnation. It is not said, “This day have I begotten Thee; Thou art My Son,” but “Thou art My Son; this day have I begotten Thee.” This is consistent with what has been noticed already. In Luke 1:1-80, answering Mary’s question how she could conceive in the womb and bear a son seeing she knew not a man, the angel says: “The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee; therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God” (Luke 1:35). In considering this verse the writer has found it helpful to keep Psalms 40:1-17 in mind: “Sacrifice and offering Thou wouldest not, but a body hast Thou prepared Me. In burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin Thou hast had no pleasure: Then said I, Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of Me) to do Thy will, O God” (Psalms 40:6-8; Hebrews 10:5-7). The words in Psalms 2:1-12 : “this day have I begotten Thee,” refer to the humanity of Christ. They refer to His human spirit and soul and body. But Psalms 40:1-17 shows

us the Son, the One that was sent from heaven by God and by the Father, coming to take the body prepared for Him. The Eternal Son, having become incarnate, would “be called the Son of God.”

Before proceeding further it may be well to notice a passage in Revelation chapter 2 where there is the greatest possible contrast between Christ as the seed of the woman, the Son of Mary, and Christ as the Son of God. In writing to the assembly at Thyatira John says: “These things saith the Son of God, who hath His eyes like unto a flame of fire, and His feet are like fine brass.” Thyatira represents the Roman Catholic system in its worst excesses. To this assembly, that gave (and gives) such a large and unscriptural place to Mary and thinks of the Sonship of Christ so habitually in relation to her, Christ presents Himself as the Son of God. As Mary’s Son He is the Son of man, but as Son of God He is “the Ancient of days” (Daniel 7:9; Daniel 7:13-14; Daniel 7:21-22; Revelation 1:12-16).

It is true to say, and important to maintain, that the incarnation did not change the Person of Christ. He did not for a moment cease to be what He had always been. What did change was the position in which He, the Son, was found. Psalms 40:1-17 has shown us that He came to do the will of God. He came not to command but to obey. In Php 2:1-30 we see the One who is in the form of God taking the form of a servant, and becoming obedient unto death. What is of particular interest in relation to the present subject is the way that Scripture contrasts the Sonship of Christ with these two things; with servanthood and obedience. In John’s Gospel chapter 8, where the word for servant or bondman is the same as in Php 2:1-30, the Lord says: “the servant abideth not in the house for ever: but the Son abideth ever. If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed” (Php 2:7; John 8:35-36). In Hebrews 3:1-19 we have a similar contrast. Moses “was faithful in all His (God’s) house, as a servant” (Hebrews 3:5). According to Mr. W. E. Vine the word for servant here (therapon) “is a term of dignity and freedom.” Yet the very next verse contrasts the Sonship of Christ with this. “But Christ as a Son over His own house; whose house are we...” (Hebrews 3:6). The beginning of Hebrews 3:1-19 shows us why this contrast is made. “For He has been counted worthy of greater glory than Moses, by how much He that has built it has more honour than the house. For every house is built by some one; but He who has built all things is God” (Hebrews 3:3-4 — J.N.D. Trans.). In Hebrews 5:1-14 we read that “Though He were Son, He learned obedience from the things which He suffered” (Hebrews 5:8 — J.N.D. Trans.). Obedience was outside the experience of the Son. He had been the One who was to be obeyed. But now having come into the world He learned in His own experience the cost in suffering that obedience entailed. This verse shows us His perfect obedience, even unto the death of the cross. A similar contrast between His Sonship and the position of obedience which He took at the incarnation is seen in His temptation by the devil. In Matthew chapter 4 the devil twice addresses Him as the Son of God. He knew very well who He was, but he says: “If Thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread.” The devil sought to induce the Lord to exercise His own power and will as God and had He done so He would have proven that he was the Son of God. The Lord answers in a way that shows He would not be moved from the position of obedience which He had taken: “Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God” (Deuteronomy 8:3; Matthew 4:3-4). In the second temptation it was a question of showing that as the Son of God He was the object of the love and care of the Father. “If Thou be the Son of God, cast Thyself down: for it is written, He shall give His angels charge concerning Thee: and in their hands they shall bear Thee up, lest at any time Thou dash Thy foot against a stone” (Psalms

91:11-12; Matthew 4:6-7). It is striking that in the third of the temptations the devil doesn't address the Lord as the Son of God. There is a simple explanation for this. In the third temptation the devil calls on the Lord to worship him. But the Divine Sonship of Christ is connected with His Eternal Personality and deity. As the Son of God He is the One who is to be worshipped and the devil knew that very well. The Lord answers with words from Deuteronomy 6:13 : "Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve."

Later in this Gospel, in chapter 14, we find that there were those who did worship the Lord Jesus, and they worshipped Him as the Son of God. After the feeding of the five thousand (five thousand men, beside women and children) the Lord had sent the disciples across the sea of Galilee. A storm arose but Jesus came to them walking on the sea. When He came into the ship, the wind ceased, and "they that were in the ship came and worshipped Him, saying, Of a truth Thou art the Son of God" (Matthew 14:22-33).

R. F. W.

(To be continued, if the Lord will) Those who desire to pursue this study may find the following listing from the New Testament helpful:

There are 47 references to the "Son of God" in the AV, and 42 in the JND Translation. The 42 references occurring in both Translations are as follows: Matthew 4:3; Matthew 4:6; Matthew 8:29; Matthew 26:63; Matthew 27:40; Matthew 27:43; Matthew 27:54; Mark 1:1; Mark 3:11; Mark 15:39; Luke 1:35; Luke 4:3; Luke 4:9; Luke 4:41; Luke 22:70; John 1:34; John 1:49; John 3:18; John 5:25; John 9:35; John 10:36; John 11:4; John 11:27; John 19:7; John 20:31; Acts 9:20; Romans 1:4; 2 Corinthians 1:19; Galatians 2:20; Ephesians 4:13; Hebrews 4:14; Hebrews 6:6; Hebrews 7:3; Hebrews 10:29; 1 John 3:8; 1 John 4:15; 1 John 5:5; 1 John 5:10; 1 John 5:12; 1 John 5:13; 1 John 5:20; Revelation 2:18. The references occurring only in the AV are: Matthew 14:33 — Darby gives "God's Son;" Luke 3:38 (referring to Adam) — Darby gives "of God;" Luke 8:28 — Darby gives "Son of the Most High God;" Acts 8:37 — Darby omits this verse; 1 John 5:13 — Darby omits the first reference.

There are 35 references to Christ as "The Son" (with no other words added which expand or describe that Name) and of these 33 occur in both the AV and JND Translations: Matthew 11:27(x3); Matthew 21:38; Matthew 28:19; Mark 13:32; Luke 10:22(x3); John 3:35; John 3:36(x2); John 5:19(x2); John 5:20; John 5:21; John 5:22; John 5:23(x2); John 5:26; John 6:40; John 8:35; John 8:36; John 14:13; 1 Corinthians 15:28; Hebrews 1:8; 1 John 2:22; 1 John 2:23(x2); 1 John 2:24; 1 John 4:14; 1 John 5:12; 2 John 1:9. The AV has a reference to the Son in Hebrews 7:28, but JND gives "a Son." Darby has a reference to (the) Son in Hebrews 1:2, where the King James Translation gives "His Son." In addition to the above there are 38 other references where Christ is called Son, and these include those occasions when He is called "My Son," "His Son" etc. References which refer to His being Son of man, Son of David, Son of Mary etc. are not listed. There are 34 references common to both the AV and the JND Translations: Matthew 2:15; Matthew 21:37(x2); Matthew 22:2; Matthew 22:42; Mark 12:6(x2); John 3:17; John 17:1(x2); Acts 13:33; Romans 1:3; Romans 1:9; Romans 5:10; Romans 8:3; Romans 8:29; Romans 8:32; 1 Corinthians 1:9; Galatians 1:16; Galatians 4:4; Galatians 4:6; 1 Thessalonians 1:10; Hebrews 1:5(x2); Hebrews 3:6; Hebrews 5:5; Hebrews 5:8; 1 John 1:3; 1 John 1:7; 1 John 3:23; 1 John 4:10; 1 John 5:9; 1 John 5:11; 1 John 5:20. References included in the AV only are Acts 3:13; Acts

3:26; Hebrews 1:2. There is also a reference in the JND Translation in Hebrews 7:28.

Some other designations (not included in the references above) are: “My Beloved Son” — Matthew 3:17; Matthew 17:5; Mark 1:11; Mark 9:7; Luke 3:22; Luke 9:35; Luke 20:13; 2 Peter 1:17. “Son of the Living God” — Matthew 16:16; John 6:69 (in John 6:69 Darby gives “holy One of God”). “Son of the Most High God” or “Son of God Most High” — Mark 5:7; Luke 8:28. “The Son of the Blessed” — Mark 14:61. “Son of the Highest” — Luke 1:32. “The Son of His love” — Colossians 1:13, JND Translation. “The Son of the Father” — 2 John 1:3.

Christ’s Greatness in the Epistle to Laodicea (1) The book of Revelation is part of the apostle John’s ministry. One of the features which characterises his written ministry is the way he presents Christ’s personal greatness1. In a unique way our Lord’s surpassing glories are described in John’s Gospel, putting even the great men of God in the shade. At the same time John effectively sets aside the enemy’s substitutes and man’s alternatives. This disciple and apostle is pictured in his Gospel as the disciple whom Jesus loved2. He has an intimate knowledge of the greatness of the Person, who is the Eternal and unique Son of God, the Son of the Father and the Eternal Life. John’s special commission is to unveil3 to believers this greatness and glory of Christ. He does so against the background of a world-system in which the Lord Jesus has been and still is rejected. Do we realise that this “outcast” who was despised and rejected by men, will be reintroduced into the same universe and every knee will bow before Him? (John 1:10-12; Isaiah 53:1 ff; Hebrews 1:6; Php 2:10 f).

1In a sense this is the purpose of all the New Testament writers. Think of Hebrews (I believe written by Paul), which is a presentation of Christ’s present greatness in heaven. This letter was written to the Hebrew Christians at a time when the temple services were still going on in Jerusalem. Peter speaks about the magnificence of the glory of God, and in chapter 1 of his Second Epistle he looks back to the transfiguration on the mount, which refers in a special way to Christ’s millennial reign. We also find this greatness in Luke 1:32, “He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto Him the throne of His father David.” This reference is indicative of Luke’s burden to present the glory of God displayed in a man, who represents a new order of mankind. Think too of Matthew who presents the great King coming to His people. But John’s ministry describes the personal glories of Christ, the unique Son of the Father.

2John was privileged to rest in His bosom while here on earth. He was the disciple who was most intimately acquainted with our Lord, and he was the one who followed Him quietly (John 21:20 — “the disciple whom Jesus loved”). He was also the one of whom the Lord said: “If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee?” Is it not appropriate that this disciple would see the Lord in all His greatness? On the one hand as future Judge and King, and on the other as the One who walks presently among the candlesticks? The book of Revelation gives a kind of framework of all Biblical prophecies, in order to help us understand the meaning and order of these prophetic writings. Its main purpose, however, is to show how our Lord Jesus will manifest His glory through and in the events described. It is on this account we read of a threefold blessing at the beginning and six more blessings further on in this book of judgments. How blessed it is to be occupied with such a glorious Person! Consider Him in His greatness as Judge, King, Priest, but also as the Executor of God’s judgment (Revelation 1:1-20). It is the Same who will be seated on the great white throne

(Revelation 20:1-15), the One who is the Alpha and Omega, the Eternal I Am. He is the great Lover of our souls, our Bridegroom (Revelation 19:1-21; Revelation 22:1-21). His voice thrills the hearts of those who read this book and who know Him as their Creator-Redeemer (Revelation 4:1-11; Revelation 5:1-14).

It is the Holy Spirit's ministry to draw our attention to Christ, and to present Him in manifold ways and qualities (John 15:26). No wonder that the book of Revelation starts with a doxology the moment He is mentioned (Revelation 5:5). John responds in the only right way: "And when I saw Him, I fell at His feet as dead" (Revelation 1:17 f). In other words there is no room left for the flesh, or for the glory of man. Through this "death" experience, John was strengthened and instructed by his beloved Master (Revelation 1:19). He was made fit to communicate to us the glories of our Lord. The purpose of the seven letters and a survey of the history of the church In writing about Revelation 3:1-22 it is not my intention to dwell primarily on the teaching or different interpretations of this great book; others have done this. From the very beginning of the history of the church there were deviations and remedies have been given by God's grace (Acts 20:32). It is important to see that John's ministry is characterised by what is essential, in order to preserve believers in the knowledge and enjoyment of God's blessings. He presents to his readers things that remain till the end and so gives strength to the overcomer. In a word, his ministry brings back to first love! The church as a professing body has lost this first love (Revelation 2:4). More than that, it has abandoned and forsaken it. What does this mean? It does not refer to the love we may have had for the Lord at the time of our conversion. First love rather means a moral condition where Christ is all, being everything concerning any matter that may occupy the believer. Such a condition, of course, would suggest at the same time a healthy spiritual maturity. As far as the public profession was concerned this condition had been abandoned, as Paul had already warned in his message to the Ephesian elders (Acts 20:29 ff).

3The Greek word for "Revelation" may be translated "unveiling." In this book it is the Lord Himself who unveils what is hidden.

Nevertheless, whenever there is failure in the public, collective testimony, we find that the individual believer is addressed in John's writings. It is in order to restore the believer to first love and to keep him in this condition and relationship till the very end, that is, until the rapture. The unfolding of Christ's glory throughout this book, before the coming of the Lord in public display, has a moral result. It prepares the church, the true bride, to be ready for the Bridegroom. Having been instructed by the letters from the Lord sent through John, and by the Holy Spirit throughout this book, she is finally ready for the coming of the Beloved. The Spirit and the bride say, "Come" (Revelation 22:17). This is the only word the bride speaks publicly. It is an expression of desire, of longing, of love, of amazement and of anxious waiting. The order of events in the history of the church may be summarised as follows: In Ephesus the church as a whole left her first love, historically at the end of the first century.

Because of this the Lord allowed persecution; Satan acting as a roaring lion (1 Peter 5:8) in the second and third centuries (Smyrna).

Despite and perhaps because of the many faithful martyrs, the church was then attacked by Satan as an angel of light. The result was that the church placed herself under the protection of the world system and the Roman Emperor became the head of the professing church. This development is

presented in the letter to Pergamos, which corresponds historically with the events in the fourth century and later. This link with the world gradually gave rise to the desire in the church to rule over the world. The ambition came to fruition in Thyatira and reached its zenith in the 12th century. There was the absolute authority of the papal system and moral corruption of the very worst kind. A remnant was led out of this degenerate system in the days of the Reformation in the 16th century. However, the letter to Sardis describes the condition approximately 100 years after the Reformation when a general state of spiritual death characterised the national Protestant churches.

Then, in sovereign grace, the Lord raised up a remnant seen in Philadelphia. This was a glowing revival and a testimony for Himself, although with little strength because of man's failure. There was a witness nevertheless, distinguished by faithfulness to His Name and to the Word of God (19th century).

Soon we come to the last phase in this development. The Lord, who is everything to Philadelphia (being a collective restoration to first love), has to leave Laodicea, and finds Himself outside, knocking at the door.

Please note carefully that in suggesting this outline I am not limiting the teaching of Scripture to this flow of events. Each letter has a message for every believer at any time in the history of the church. Another point to underline is the fact that these local assemblies coexisted at the time John wrote, with the variety of features described. Since then these local assemblies have all disappeared.

It searches but also encourages us to notice the patience of our Lord, who gently knocks at the door. He does not try to force Himself inside. He does not cry out or shout (Matthew 12:19) but shows patience, grace, gentleness, faithfulness and care; in other words, real love. It is striking to find that the Lord is placed outside. How solemn that this happened in Philadelphia where He used to be everything but where our own resources, solutions or inventions have gradually replaced Him!4 The Lord wants to challenge our hearts and consciences and restore us to first love, in order that practically He may be everything to us. As subject to God's ways we will all be brought to acknowledge Christ's greatness (compare Job 42:1-17). He is looking for a response from willing hearts to His gentle knocking, even though the answer may be weak.

4Laodicea represents what Philadelphia becomes through the letting slip those Philadelphian features which the Lord commends — Ed. An illustration from the book of Malachi

It might be helpful for readers who are familiar with the last book of the Old Testament, to trace a parallel between Malachi and the Lord's message to Laodicea. The priests in Jerusalem, at the time of the last prophet, represented a remnant which found itself in the right position. They were in the city of Jerusalem, serving in God's temple, but they were not in the right condition. Malachi's burden is to present the greatness of the Lord to His people (Malachi 1:5; Malachi 1:11; Malachi 1:14; Malachi 4:2). I hope to develop some of these points in the course of our study.

Thus to Laodicea, the New Testament's counterpart to Malachi's people, the Lord's greatness is shown in the many details we hope to consider. As was the case in Malachi's day, the Lord would see among them an unnoticed remnant which feared God. Impressed by His greatness and in true fellowship with Him and with one another, they would speak often one to another, esteeming His

Name. Is this not like the teaching of 1 John 1:1-10, which can be put into practice whatever the situation in the Christian profession may be?

A. E. Bouter.

Some might like a more systematic approach to this subject. There are so many good books available with outlines and details, that I limit myself to the burden I have, just to try to present something of the greatness of this glorious Person to our hearts.

(To be continued, if the Lord will) Psalms 119:1-176 (11) (Continued from page 374) 8. cheth — A FENCE The shape of this letter in the Phoenician monuments and the Hebrew coins resembles a hedge and therefore its name probably signifies “a fence,” from the Arabic root “hat,” meaning “to surround, to gird.” The pronunciation of this letter is a harsh guttural. It is often interchanged with the letter “he.” The numerical value of this letter is eight, and it therefore reminds us of resurrection.

Verses 57-64: “The Word of God Transforms into His Image”

I am His and He is mine Verse 57: GHEHLEKI...“My portion...”

We had precious promises in the precious section. Here we have a precious portion. The Hebrew has literally: “My portion is Jahweh...” We are not talking about blessings, or promises, but about a Person! Many Christians are so occupied with the blessings that they forget the Blesser, and likewise many are so enthralled with their spiritual gifts, that they ignore the Giver! In the previous section the Psalmist counted his blessings but here he revels in the vision of the Blesser. Psalms 73:25 expresses it beautifully: “Whom have I in heaven...?” (“but Thee” is added in the King James Translation, but does not appear in the original), “and there is none upon earth that I desire beside Thee.”

He is gracious Verse 58: GHAHLAT...“I entreated” The verse actually says in the Hebrew: “I entreated Thy face...” (not “favour” as in the King James Trans.). He was longing for the very presence of the Lord. Again it is the Person who is the object here as in verse 57. Does not all this have a bearing on the very letter “Cheth” above this section, which stands for intimacy; our being “fenced in with Him”? Does not all this speak of fellowship? The presence of the Lord is indeed the highest form of His favour. We sometimes sing: “There is a light that shines on me, The light of Jesus’ face, Oh, what a glory thus to be, The object of His grace.” That expresses what we have in this verse. His presence brings with it the favour we seek. The verse continues in the Hebrew: “... favour me according to Thy Word.” This is a petition which the Christian need not pray. We do not have to ask God to be favourable to us, for He has abundantly shown His favour. Paul says: “To the praise of the glory of His grace, wherein He hath made us accepted in the Beloved” (Ephesians 1:6). “By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand...” (Romans 5:2). The Psalmist asks nothing beyond what God has revealed: “... according to Thy Word.”

Transforming meditation Verse 59: GHAHSHAVT...“I thought (mused) on...” In this verse we can all think back to how God showed His mercy and grace to us in Christ and accepted us in Him. Let us follow the sequence: a. “I thought (mused) on my ways...: ” The arrest and conviction of the Holy Spirit. b. “and turned my feet unto Thy testimonies: ” Conversion: the sinner makes a

complete turn — judges his past. c. I shall consider the third step in the next verse.

We must not stop at self-examination, though that is necessary in its time, but turn to Him, the object of our faith and the bestower of grace and mercy.

“Ponder the path of thy feet, and let all thy ways be established” (Proverbs 4:26).

Never procrastinate!

Verse 60: GHOOSHT...“I hurried (made haste)...” To procrastinate means to waste time, to defer or to postpone action. Continuing the sequence I started in verse 59: c. The Hebrew has: “I hurried and delayed not to keep Thy commandments.” Of course a sinner cannot be saved by keeping His commandments, but in this sentence we find an important principle that forms part of a true conversion — total submission to His Word. There must be obedience to the Word of “repentance.” Now, what is true at the beginning of our spiritual lives is also true for the continuation of them. Never put off till tomorrow what you must do today. Prompt obedience is the secret of true spiritual growth.

Satan seeks to rob me of the sense of the Lord’s presence Verse 61: GHEHVEL...“The cords...”

Here is an attempt made by the enemy to stop the progress of the believer. He uses all sorts of devices to this end. The world may rob me of my joy in the Lord Jesus Christ. Sin may rob me of the sense of His presence and peace. Satan seeks to hem me in, to surround me and cut me off from enjoying fellowship and communion with the Lord Jesus. The apostle Paul says that we should not be ignorant of Satan’s devices. The Lord Jesus says: “... hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown.” Satan cannot make us lose our salvation, or eternal life, but he can rob us of much that makes up that “crown.” To counteract this strategy of the enemy the believer should occupy himself positively with the Word of God: “... I have not forgotten Thy law.”

Blessed insomnia! (see verse 55) Verse 62: GHEHTZE...“At midnight (at dividing half)...” When all is quiet at last, God can speak. Job knew about this when he said: “For God speaketh once, yea twice, yet man perceiveth it not. In a dream, in a vision of the night, when deep sleep falleth upon men, in slumberings upon the bed. Then He openeth the ears of men...” (Job 33:14-16). Paul and Silas: “... at midnight... prayed, and sang praises unto God: and the prisoners heard them”(Acts 16:25). Of king Ahasuerus we read: “On that night could not the king sleep...” (Esther 6:1). Then things were brought to his notice which he had previously ignored and consequently he set matters right. So insomnia, or sleeplessness, can sometimes be a hidden blessing. In any case it is always a good habit when we suffer from sleeplessness to praise and pray. “... I will rise to give thanks unto Thee...”

Make friends of God’s children Verse 63: GHEHDER...“A companion I am...”

It has sometimes been said: “Show me your friends, and I will tell you who you are.” The Bible gives this warning: “Be not deceived: evil communications corrupt good manners” (1 Corinthians 15:33).

Proverbs 18:24 has this precious encouragement: “A man of many friends will come to ruin, but there is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother” (J.N.D. Trans.). Let us attach ourselves to that “Friend.” What a Friend we have in the Lord Jesus! As we seek His fellowship, remembering that

the theme of this section of eight verses is fellowship, we shall also seek the companionship of all those that fear Him. How can two walk together except they be agreed! The transforming vision Verse 64: GHEH-SEDK...“...Thy mercy (or favour)...” This section began with the emphasis on mercy and favour (verse 58), and now it rightly finishes with the same thought. How we need His continuing mercy day be day. Grace is seen in that He gives us what we do not deserve. Mercy is seen in that He does not give us what we deserve. He therefore fills our vision from the beginning to the end of this section of eight verses. It is a transforming vision! He is my portion; He is so gracious; He is my Friend — indeed the earth is full of Thy mercy.

Cor Bruins.

“The Sermon on the Mount” (9)

Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for My sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you (Matthew 5:11-12) Sufferings for Christ’s sake The last of the nine beatitudes also forms the transition to the following part of the “Sermon on the Mount.” The Lord no longer speaks generally of the disciples in the third person, but addresses them directly with the personal “ye,” as He does in Luke 6:20-26 throughout. At the same time He applies to them His words of verse 10. He sees His disciples, knows already what they will have to go through and gives them a wonderful promise.

Although this beatitude is similar to the previous one, there is a difference. Here the Lord does not speak of sufferings for righteousness’ sake, but of abuses, persecutions and evil words for His sake. This is connected with the Person of our Lord and the confession of His Name. Suffering for righteousness is a consequence of our moral attitude and actions; suffering for Jesus’ sake is a consequence of our confession of Him. confession of Jesus In democratically ruled countries there is not official persecution of Christians as there still is in some other countries. As an example, according to the German constitution nobody may be placed at a disadvantage because of their faith and religious views; freedom of faith, of conscience and freedom of religious and ideological confession are guarded. This does not mean, however, that everyone is well disposed towards Christians. Many a young believer has experienced mockery and abuse when, upon starting work, they have confessed, “I believe in the Lord Jesus as my Saviour.” It may even be that there is not only abuse and slander, 1:e. words, but acts of persecution. By using the word “when” the Lord shows that He is not hinting at something that may possibly happen, but is pointing to a fact that is certainly to be expected. Those who take the side of our Lord and Saviour, openly and courageously confessing Him, will reap contempt, mockery and scorn. Suffering for Jesus’ sake and for righteousness’ sake often coalesce. Sometimes people react with scorn and contempt when the Name of the Lord Jesus is frankly confessed. Such a confession may even be met with a pitiful smile, but as soon as the believer shows himself to be a Christian by his practical conduct as well, there is rejection and hatred.

Satan always tries to prevent the disciples of the Lord from confessing His Name. He whispers to the soul, “Is it really necessary to speak of the Lord Jesus now? You do not always have to witness to the gospel!” He doesn’t only want to prevent the confession of Christ as Lord, but also the spreading of the glad tidings of His grace. For one who really loves the Lord there should not be any silence. Neither can there be any consideration of one’s own position or the position of

one’s family. Is the Lord not worthy of our unreserved confession of Himself, even if supposed disadvantages go along with it? In Acts 4:1-37; Acts 5:1-42 the apostles give an example of this suffering for the sake of the Lord Jesus. After they had healed many and led them to the Lord, they were taken captive by the leaders of the Jews and told not to speak in the Name of Jesus any more (Acts 4:18; Acts 5:28). But they could not and would not be silent. And when, after their second imprisonment and miraculous deliverance, they were again attacked and even beaten, how did they depart from the presence of the council? Rejoicing that they were counted worthy to be dishonoured for the Name (Acts 5:41 — See J.N.D. Trans.).

Joy

Thus the Lord Jesus adds to His beatitude: “Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven.” What a privilege to possess and confess Christ as Saviour and Lord! He is worthy that we should openly confess Him. For a fearful soul and for the flesh the supposedly disadvantageous consequences of a faithful confession of our Saviour carry a lot of weight. Here the Lord says something else. The disciples of the Lord should rejoice not in spite of, but because of the sufferings connected with their confession (see Romans 5:3; James 1:2). Even if the confession of the Name of the Lord does result in disadvantages here on earth — which is not always the case — the reward in the heavens which He has promised is incomparably greater! To know that we walk in the footsteps of the Lord Jesus already gives us joy, and this joy is increased by the promised reward which is not connected with earth but with heaven (Compare Matthew 6:19).

Examples The Lord then refers to the Old Testament prophets as examples. They had once been persecuted because they witnessed for God. Elijah (1 Kings 19:2), the prophet Zechariah at the time of king Joash (2 Chronicles 24:21), Jeremiah (Jeremiah 20:2) and many more (compare Nehemiah 9:26; Acts 7:27; 1 Thessalonians 2:15) are examples of this. Moses too, who calls himself a prophet (Deuteronomy 18:15; Deuteronomy 18:18) suffered for the sake of his God by the Egyptians as well as by his own people. In the New Testament the remarkable words are written of him that he esteemed “the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompense...” (Hebrews 11:26).

It is not mentioned here in Matthew 5:11-12 that the Lord Jesus Himself was persecuted and going to be killed. Nevertheless every disciple may remind himself constantly that He is the great example of suffering and patience. By comparing His disciples, who would be persecuted for His sake, with the prophets who had been persecuted for God’s sake, He silently testifies to His deity and thus gives the highest motive for enduring persecution for His Name’s sake. summary This last beatitude concludes the first part of the so-called “Sermon on the Mount.” In it the Lord Jesus as the King who would soon be rejected by His own people, announces the principles of the Kingdom of God as guidelines and encouragement for His disciples. When we look at the individual utterances we see in them a clear order. In the first three beatitudes the self-knowledge and humility which are first of all necessary for the disciple of the Lord, are mentioned. In the following four verses we see the striving for righteousness and a life which is pleasing to God. Finally, in the last two we see the trial which in this world is the result of a life with the Lord Jesus, and the suffering for Him which this entails.

Arend Remmers.

Zion’s King (1) The object in view in the present study was primarily to get some help in Matthew’s Gospel. It is generally known that it was written for the Jews and this accounts for the many Old Testament references (about 65). As we pursued our study of this book it became increasingly apparent that Zion’s King was not only the hope of every godly Israelite, but keeping Him central in our meditations we found the answer to many of the apparent difficulties which confront us in this Gospel. A second reason for taking up this subject has been the recent sad breakdown of our own Royal house. We do well to consider that kingship is a divine thought and not the product of man’s inventiveness. It was created by God (Colossians 1:16) and it is part of piety to “Fear God” and “Honour the king” (1 Peter 2:17). It is also normal in regular assembly prayer to pray “for all men; for kings...” (1 Timothy 2:1-2). The fact that most nations have given up royalty, and that our own Royal house is being shaken to its foundations, is but another evidence of the increasing apostasy that characterises these closing perilous days. Well may we say, “Thy kingdom come,” and “Even so, come, Lord Jesus.”

It is not the intention in the present article to attempt to deal exhaustively with the subject. It is, or should I say, He is, so wondrously great, one could not hope to touch on every detail. For the sake of simplicity and order the material is presented under three headings:

1. Zion’s King anticipated;

2. The King at His first manifestation and the result;

3. The King when He comes again in power and great glory.

Zion’s King Anticipated

We begin then with the expectation so frequently found in the Old Testament. It is necessary to say that this hope was not always precise in expression. Kingship was sometimes connected with God, sometimes with Jehovah, sometimes with Messiah. To list the references goes beyond the scope of this article, but readers will recall such Scriptures as 1 Samuel 8:1-22, where the people said, “make us a king to judge us like all the nations... And the LORD said unto Samuel,... they have not rejected thee, but they have rejected Me, that I should not reign over them.” And in the Psalms, (e.g. Psalms 145:1) “I will extol Thee, My God, O King,” and “I speak of the things which I have made touching the King” (Psalms 45:1) and many other like passages.

There are many Scriptures which plainly indicate the Divine intention to place all rule under one Man. In the types for example, we find that dominion was given to Adam — “over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth” (Genesis 1:26). Adam is the figure of Him that is to come, as we are plainly told in Romans 5:14 (See Mr. Darby’s Trans.). Then we have the wonderful double-type of David and Solomon. David was the man of blood and mighty conqueror over every enemy, and Solomon in all his majesty and glory — none like him before or since, sets forth the Lord when He comes to reign. There are others also, for example, Melchisedec, King of righteousness, King of peace, type of the King-Priest who will sit on the throne and reign (Genesis 14:1-24, Hebrews 7:1-28, Zechariah 6:1-15). He shall bear the glory! Mention should also be made of Moses, king in Jeshurun (Deuteronomy 33:5). Jeshurun means the upright ones, showing His reign will be in the midst of upright ones. Nebuchadnezzar, the head of gold, first Gentile monarch in the times of the Gentiles, was “ruler over... all” (Daniel 2:38). “Whom he would he slew,

and whom he would he kept alive" (Daniel 5:19). He was an absolute despot, as indeed our blessed Lord will be, though we also know the character of His reign will be completely different! The list could be greatly lengthened. Moses and the prophets spoke of the sufferings of Christ and the glory that should follow and one extract may be briefly mentioned. "Judah is a lion's whelp;... as a lion, and as an old lion; who shall rouse him up? The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come; and unto Him shall the gathering of the people be" (Genesis 49:9-10). It is evident that our Lord sprang out of Juda (Hebrews 7:14), but in the vision granted to John in Revelation 5:1-14, the One who has invincible power as the Lion of the tribe of Juda, the Root of David (telling us of His deity) is seen also as a Lamb (reminding us of His humanity) and also "as it had been slain..." The lion and the lamb thought are therefore seen both in the first book of the Bible (Genesis 49:9-10 and Genesis 22:8) and the last (Revelation 5:5-6). Suffering first and then glory is the history of this King. The point emphasised at the moment, however, is the "forward look" which is constantly sounded. Even the Mount of Transfiguration glimpse of the King in His glory (His face shining as the Sun, and His garments white as the light — Matthew 17:2) was granted as an encouragement to faithful saints and servants. In the light of that crowning day there is every incentive to sell all and lose all. From Abraham onwards, because of hope, faith has ever been prepared to accept the pilgrim path in this world. The King at His First Manifestation and the Result In approaching this section in our study it is helpful to consider Matthew's Gospel in two ways; first, in the way it is presented to us, and second, in the way in which it will be examined by the Jewish nation in a coming day. They are warned in Matthew 24:4-5 not to be deceived, a necessary warning at a time when there is strong delusion (2 Thessalonians 2:11). This King is the Son of David, and also the Son of Abraham to whom the Nation's promises were made (Matthew 1:1). Inevitably this leads to the question, so important to the Jew: what is His genealogy? Matthew, as is well known, gives us Joseph's line, the royal line, through Solomon. Luke gives Mary's line through Nathan, another son of David by Bathsheba (1 Chronicles 3:5). An interesting point is that Matthew brings in Jechonias (1:11), the Jehoiachin of the Old Testament, called Coniah in Jeremiah 22:28-30. As the verses there indicate, no man of Coniah's seed was to prosper, sitting on the throne of David. So Joseph could not be the father of our blessed Lord. The virgin birth was thus necessary if the Scripture was to be fulfilled. And of course it has been fulfilled to the very last detail: how He was to be born — of the virgin (Isaiah 7:14); where He was to be born — Bethlehem (Micah 5:2); and when He was to be born — Daniel's prophecy (Daniel 9:25-26). But there is more. Of necessity this King must have a fore-runner, and Jewish eyes would look for one who would fulfil this Old Testament promise, e.g. Isaiah 40:3, Malachi 3:1. The Lord Himself has confirmed this for us — see Matthew 11:14. He tells us in the same passage how great the fore-runner was: "Among them that are born of women there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist." But what does this great one say of the Greater than he? "whose shoes I am not worthy to bear" (Matthew 3:11). This statement is repeated in all four Gospels and also in the book of Acts! The greatness of this King is unsearchable.

Next in Matthew we come to the tempter, and again we notice not only the victory of the King but also a detail important for the Jew. In their eyes the temple, the ecclesiastical sphere, is more important than the city, the political sphere. Perhaps this is the proper explanation for the variation in the order in which the temptations are presented? In Luke we get the moral order, as always in that Gospel.

Passing on quickly, we come to the “Sermon on the Mount” (Chapters 5, 6 and 7). This King is mighty in word. He speaks with authority and not as the scribes (Matthew 7:29). The ten miracles in chapters 8 and 9 confirm to us that He is also mighty in deed. In chapter 10 He sends forth His disciples, but in chapter 11 he stands rejected. This causes us to pause. The King with all His credentials, the Porter opening to Him, and plain evidences of the Divine marking His every movement here, and yet He is rejected.

Although rejected at the outset in John’s Gospel, we are privileged to trace that rejection from the commencement to the climax in the Synoptic Gospels. Born and laid in a manger, no where to lay His head (Matthew 8:20), He was crucified on a cross of wood. In Matthew 27:1-66 we find not only brutal treatment from the soldiers (Messiah delivered into the hands of the Gentiles), but particular notice made of His royal claims — the scarlet robe, the crown of thorns, the reed in His right hand and the knee bowed in mockery, “Hail, King of the Jews!” They spat upon Him, and took the reed, and smote Him on the head, and mocked Him... and led Him away to crucify Him... They gave Him vinegar to drink, and mingled with gall... This is terrible indeed. But what of those who passed by and reviled Him... and likewise the chief priests and scribes...? “He saved others, Himself He cannot save. If He be the King of Israel, let Him now come down from the cross, and we will believe Him. He trusted in God; let Him deliver Him now, if He will have Him: for He said, I am the Son of God.” I suppose there are few readers who have not been deeply moved by this awe-inspiring solemn scene, but what of Israel in a coming day? They will look on Him whom they pierced. They will hear His cry, “Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani,” and it will have new meaning for them — it is the Nation’s trespass offering. They will repent in dust and ashes and a fountain for uncleanness will be opened to them (Zechariah 12:12; Zechariah 13:1). But let us not miss the message for ourselves. As we think again of John the Baptist in Matthew 11:1-30 we hear the words of the Lord Jesus, “blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in Me” (Matthew 11:6). John had temporarily lost sight of the One of whom he was the fore-runner. The miracles drawn to the attention of his messengers bore testimony to Him — the blind received their sight (only Messiah could do that — Isaiah 35:5. There were no blind eyes opened in the Old Testament), the lepers were cleansed, (and only God could do that — 2 Kings 5:7), and the dead were raised up (and only the Son of God can do that — Romans 1:4). There was no doubt as to who He was, but the depth of His humiliation (temporarily) was too much for John. As we seek to follow such a Saviour, let us be careful also not to be offended with a Saviour who died on a cross of wood! And what of Himself? The closing verses of Matthew 11:1-30 can only be described as a moral wonder. “At that time,” says verse 25. What time was that? It was the time of His complete rejection. John Baptist was in prison, doubting. The Nation were like children in the market places, they could not be pleased. And the cities where most of His mighty works were done, woe and judgment were pronounced upon them. Still deeper evidences of His rejection were to follow: “We will not have this Man to reign over us” (Luke 19:14). “We have no king but Caesar” (John 19:15). But the spirit that would crucify Him was already manifested. We read that in that hour “Jesus answered and said, I thank Thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes.” He was rejected, doubtless, but consider His dignity! He was indeed sustained! “All things are delivered unto Me of My Father,” and He tells us the impenetrable secret of His Person... “and no man knoweth the Son, but the Father.” It almost seems like an extract from John’s writings introduced into a Gospel telling us of Zion’s King! We are reminded of the Son’s relationship with the Father, and the inscrutable

character of His Person. This King's official glory is under-pinned by the personal glory that belongs to Him as Son — Son of God and King of Israel. Therefore He can say, "Come unto Me." Although in the glory of His deity He was accustomed to command, He now is seen in the humility of His incarnation, meek and lowly in heart, and having a yoke upon him, the yoke of obedience — even unto death. Little wonder our hearts have been touched and won, and would to God that many more may be similarly affected. I repeat it, Israel's heart will be won in a coming day. A bruised reed He did not break, and the smoking flax He did not quench. Rejected, reviled, refused, certainly He was, but how could He give them up? (Hosea 11:8). But this we must leave for another article.

D.W.P.

(To be continued, if the Lord will) The Life of David (9) David, Having Died, He Yet Speaks (Continued from page 380) My Servant David, Shepherd and King

After the death of David, the son of Jesse, his kingdom deteriorated under his son Solomon, was divided under his grandson Rehoboam, and eventually disintegrated completely. The Scriptural record abundantly testifies to this sad fact. From the end of Malachi and into the church period, and on into the time of Jacob's trouble, this broken condition is evident. But God has better times in purpose for His beloved people. The two portions in Ezekiel 34:1-31; Ezekiel 37:1-28 reveal that His purpose for Israel is connected with His honoured servant David. Not that these passages refer to the resurrection of David. The "David My servant" in the passages is none other than David's greater son, the Lord Jesus Christ. The failure of the shepherds of Israel (rulers secular and spiritual) throws into sharp relief the glory and triumph of God's care for His beloved flock, the nation of Israel. 1 Samuel 16:11; 1 Samuel 17:20; 1 Samuel 17:34-36 portray the shepherd care, faithfulness and service of David, the shepherd, in relation to his father's flock. These features will be seen in perfection when Jesus, the son of David, looks after His Father's sheep. Compare Micah 5:1-5 with Matthew 2:5-6. The One who will shepherd Israel is the Mighty God become Man. There is no possibility of failure with such a Shepherd, but the Shepherd has to be smitten and die in order to secure blessing for the sheep of Israel and also for the sheep which will form the church (Zechariah 13:7; John 10:11; John 10:15-16). Such a Shepherd could not be held by death. God raised Him from among the dead, Jesus, the Son of God, the Great Shepherd of the sheep (Hebrews 13:20). The reference to Jesus as the Chief Shepherd in 1 Peter 5:4 is in relation to the under-shepherds of the present dispensation. What a Shepherd!

If care and blessing for Israel is expressed in Ezekiel 34:1-31, permanent unity and blessing is the theme of Ezekiel 37:1-28. The wretched condition of the nation of Israel is an affront to the majesty and glory of God. It is a denial of His purpose for the Nation. No mortal man, political party or decision of nations will ever change its condition, but God can and will. Notice the oft repeated expression in chapters 34 and 37 "I will." That is the language of omnipotent deity. It was David, the son of Jesse, who unified the nation of Israel (2 Samuel 5:5). It was his son and sons who destroyed the unity. Praise God that it will be his Greater Son who will permanently unify the Nation. God will gather the scattered Nation from among the Gentile nations and bring them into the land of promise. There will be secured a unity in the Nation that will never be broken. They will have one King, not a succession of kings, the King whom they crucified, the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of David. God will not chastise His people any more. He will establish a covenant of peace

with them, an everlasting covenant, and God will be their God and they will be His people. Glorious destiny for Israel under God's servant the King. The strength, power and integrity of David, the son of Jesse, King of Israel, will be seen in perfection in Jesus the Son of God.

Jerusalem and David. Zechariah 12:1-14; Zechariah 13:1-9; Zechariah 14:1-21

David in his life of danger and strife often experienced the power and enmity of evil opposition. Sometimes in his psalms he expresses how his heart failed him. He was only a mortal man with natural feelings of weakness and fear. Some of his posterity were faced with the same problem but with God's help they all, David and his posterity, were delivered from their enemies and were victorious. The last, but most severe expression of hatred and enmity, is portrayed in Zechariah 12:1-14; Zechariah 13:1-9; Zechariah 14:1-21. Jerusalem will be surrounded by powerful enemies and submitted to many cruel indignities. When all seems lost God will intervene in unsparing judgment and deliver His beloved but besieged city. See Revelation 19:11-19; Luke 21:24-27. The many references to Judah and the house of David show the intimacy that exists between Jerusalem and the royal tribe from which David came. David and Jerusalem are linked together through history and the will of God.

It was David and his army that captured Jerusalem from the Jebusites (1 Chronicles 11:4-9). God claimed it for His centre (Psalms 132:13-18). Zion is described as the city of David (2 Chronicles 5:2) and I notice here a few of the references to Zion in the Psalms. Psalms 2:6 — Zion, the hill of God's holiness. On it He rests His anointed King, David/Christ. Psalms 9:11 — Jehovah dwells in Zion. Psalms 48:1-2 — Zion is the city of God — holiness is there — it is beautiful in elevation — joy of the whole earth — it is the city of the great King, David/Christ. Psalms 78:68 — Jehovah chose the tribe of Judah — mount Zion that He loved. He built His sanctuary there. Psalms 87:2 — Jehovah loveth the gates of Zion more than all the habitations of Jacob. Psalms 125:1 — Zion, it cannot be moved. See also Psalms 122:1-9 and Joel 3:16-21.

Because of the unfaithfulness of Judah and the failure of the last king in Jerusalem, Zedekiah, the city was destroyed (2 Kings 25:1-7). The glory of God had left the temple in Jerusalem. The idolatry practised there was an affront to God and His patience with a rebellious and wicked people was exhausted. Consequently the glory of God was withdrawn (Ezekiel 10:1-22; Ezekiel 12:22-24). Partial recovery was seen in the books of Ezra and Nehemiah but that soon crumbled away and provided very little for God. Worse was to follow when the Son of David came to Jerusalem. He was rejected by the Jews and crucified. Their house was left unto them desolate. They did not know the day of their visitation. Was God defeated in His promises to David? No! It is impossible for God to be defeated. His covenant and promise to David, His servant, and His decrees regarding Jerusalem, will all be fulfilled in His glorious Son, Jesus Christ the Nazarene. He was crucified in Jerusalem but will return to it in power and glory and establish His kingdom that will never end. Jerusalem shall receive a lustre from Jesus the Son of David that it could never have received from David himself. The influence of David pervades the historical, poetical and prophetical books of the Old Testament and much of that influence points unerringly to his greatest Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

F. Wallace.

News from the Field

Poland In Poland there are about six localities where brethren gather to the Lord's Name on the ground of the one body of Christ in separation from evil. These saints are separate from a Union of Free Evangelical brethren which was imposed on many under communism. Our brethren refuse this worldly interference with their assembling together. They absolutely refuse to have any part with either centralism or autonomy. Last August (1994), they held three days of meetings in Katowice. Those days of conference were truly memorable and an account of our visit should give you some impression of the order and exercises that exist among them. The smallest meeting is in the capital, Warsaw. About five saints gather there for the breaking of bread. We had the joy of meeting two from this company at the conference. The sister spoke German and this gave us a practical link. In the south of the country there are larger meetings. At Orzesze I am told that over a hundred are found in the assembly and in Katowice there are around a hundred brethren. In these two towns the breaking of bread starts at 8.30 in the morning. The other localities where the Lord's death is announced are Bogatynia, (with the Lord's supper at 9.00 to 10.30), Grabow n/Prosna, Wieruszow, and Stradomia Wierzchnia (these last three have meetings from 10.00 to 1.00 on Lord's day morning). The 1994 conference was held in a hired sports hall which could accommodate about 500 persons. More than half of these Polish saints had been converted to Christ in the past eight years. Their guide has been, and is, the Word of God. It is evident that it abides in them. The passage that we considered together was 1 John 2:12-29. There we could see the unity of the children of God in the various stages of growth. The passage was most fitting, especially as there was a wide range of ages present. The relevance of the passage was also apparent in regard to the exercises so many are facing just now. The pressure of the world and our need for decisive separation from all that is contrary to the Father's love is clearly seen.

It was a joy to experience harmonious fellowship with many old friends. Brethren had also come from Belgium, Germany, the Netherlands and Switzerland. It was also a joy to renew acquaintance with those who had kept the faith in Bohemia (Czech Republic). Some brethren had also came from the meetings in Israel (See report in the last issue). There were also visitors from the Ukraine and Belarus. The order and intensity of interest gave us great joy and encouragement. Our brother Laurie Waller came to the conference with twenty large bundles of used clothing. These had been lovingly collected by the brethren in the Hull assembly. The bundles were chiefly distributed for onward transmission to needy ones in the Czech Republic and Belarus. The standard of living is lower in these former communist lands than in Poland, but though poor in this sense, the saints are rich in faith. The ministry of the Word and the conversational Bible readings were translated into German and English. It was the first time that I had encountered the Polish language and so it was rather difficult to join in with singing the beautiful hymns that they have. 1 Corinthians 14:15 in Polish, reads "Chce spiewac duchem ale chce spiewac takze rozumem." From this you will see the difficulty one had to conform to the Scriptural injunction. Happily, many are translated into German or Russian in which it is considerably easier to sing. The multilingual character of the meetings demanded extra concentration. We were all grateful to the Lord for distinct help given even in regard to this need. The brethren from Poland and the Czech Republic took part in all the meetings, and substantial ministry was also given by our brethren from Switzerland and Germany (some of whom had been in the former DDR). Alan Smart of London also served with profit in these meetings. The character of the ministry bore the hallmark of 1 Corinthians 14:3. In all, we were greatly refreshed by the ministry of God's holy Word. The individual piety and devotion are also very attractive. One example that comes to mind, among many, is of a blind brother, one of

400,000 blind persons in Poland. Only 50 of these can read Braille but there is no Braille Bible in Polish. This obstacle was overcome by the Lord giving our brother great determination to teach himself German Braille which has completely different contractions (abbreviations). This gave him access to the Word of God and in spite of total blindness he is rejoicing in the goodness of God and His truth. His participation in the meetings is as a father in Christ. Another example of earnest devotion that touched me was of a sister who upon conversion to the Lord had visited all the expressions of Christianity in her home town of Poznan. She visited Pentecostals, Baptists, Evangelicals and others, but none answered to what she learnt from Scripture. During a visit to the then East Germany she came across brethren and asked if there were any like gathered saints in Poland. The nearest assembly was 200 km distant but such was her readiness to be obedient to the truth that had such weight in her soul, that she went. The sister is now in practical fellowship and in spite of a costly four hour journey, travels regularly to her nearest meeting. She had great joy in being present at the conference and we rejoiced in the Lord's grace toward her.

Since the revolution of 1989, the brethren have begun with greater liberty to circulate sound Christian literature. From Katowice, gospel tracts and some small booklets for believers have been issued. The brethren have recently circulated some 400 bookshops and societies in Poland with information of these publications. Within a month they had had a 10% response. The need exists for more substantial books to be translated. Literature that we take for granted in most West European assemblies is simply not available, e.g. C. H. Mackintosh's "Notes on the Pentateuch" and Darby's "Synopsis of the Books of the Bible." German and English books supplement the libraries of the few who can read them. There are a few more books in Czech than Polish. It is early days still, but with the help of brethren from neighbouring Germany various publication projects are in hand. Brother Heijkoop's "Tongues, Healing etc. in the light of Scripture" is being proof read. "What scripture teaches me" by our brother J. N. Darby is also typeset, ready for printing. "I am in their midst" by Christian Briem is being translated from German. Other titles are also being considered for earliest publication. The local brethren expressed interest in obtaining "Pure Gold" in Polish and we trust that this can be arranged, especially as it has been found so helpful in other languages and not least in English The brethren in Orzesze have taken up responsibility to produce the Good Seed gospel calendar in Polish. Their edition is different from the one issued from Hagen, Germany. In 1989 they printed 5,000. This sold out and so the next year they produced 10,000 of the block calendars. The print run for 1995 was 20,000, and for the time being that is as much as they can handle. By means of this calendar the pure gospel is distributed among friends and family, neighbours and colleagues. Some brethren also set up stalls in market places and sell the calendars for around 20,000 Zwoty (equivalent to about 55p in the UK). By this means many are reached with the gospel of the grace of God and brought into contact with the testimony to our Lord Jesus. Our hearts were greatly cheered to see what the Lord has done in sustaining and prospering the testimony to His Name and truth in Poland. The remembrance of our friends at the throne of grace gives us great joy and causes much thanksgiving to ascend to God the Father. Do pray that they might be maintained in the freshness of first love to Christ. Also that they may be preserved from worldly influences and alien encroachments.

E. N. C.

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Two Views of the History of the Church (1) The suggestions that follow as to the history of the professing church on earth pursue lines of illustration taken from two passages of Scripture. They do not expound those two passages but are made with the desire that the consideration of them will produce a walk in the ways and spirit suitable to that period of the church's history in which we are living. Both passages will be compared with the letters to the seven assemblies in Revelation 2:1-29; Revelation 3:1-22. In making this comparison it should be remembered that the book of Revelation doesn't present the church as the body of Christ, but rather as a vessel of testimony originally set in this position by God and responsible to Him about the witness that it renders. This is what is judged; not the body of Christ, but the testifying vessel in this present dispensation, a dispensation committed to man's responsibility. Hence what publicly takes the place of being the church remains even through the tribulation. In this first article a journey of the apostle Paul will be considered in order to see the effects of neglecting or receiving the truths which were particularly entrusted to him. In the second article the life of Samson will be compared to the various phases of the history of the church with the objective of learning various moral lessons.

Introduction In following this line of comparison with Revelation 2:1-29; Revelation 3:1-22, two things must be kept in mind:

Paul's sad remark in 2 Timothy 1:15 that, "all who are in Asia,... have turned away from me," and The historical presentation of the assembly of God in the Acts.

Men have said that Luke, in his desire to write with method to Theophilus, didn't know where to stop. Of course, he was inspired by the Holy Spirit to write the Acts, but there is a measure of truth in what men say. Luke couldn't stop with his Gospel. The Man Christ Jesus ascended to heaven and so the Acts gives something of the historical consequences of His being there. Where do you stop a history? Man's ability to record history ceases when the present moment is reached but God knows the end from the beginning. Does the history of the assembly in Acts cease suddenly at the end of Acts 26:1-32, to be replaced with interesting details as to shipping and transport in the first century, followed by a detailed survey of things to be understood merely in terms of earthly significance? Surely not. God knows the end from the beginning and loves to bring us into communion with Himself in revealing it to us. Nevertheless He knows the character of our hearts. The history of the vessel of testimony must be presented in a mystical way and be interpreted with spiritual understanding. This is true of both Paul's voyage and of the addresses to the seven assemblies. God knew of the assembly's future and He desired to communicate it to us, but to do so in a manner which would leave full room for our expecting the Lord's coming at any moment. The entire history is there. It doesn't stop at chapter 26 but continues thereafter in a mystical way. In 2 Timothy 1:15 they had turned away from Paul; they had not apostatized from Christ. In Acts 27:1-44 it is Paul personally and his counsel that are in view. Without being dogmatic we can trace the history of the assembly in relation to the way the unique truths committed to Paul, which

characterise Christianity, have been treated by Christians to the present day. The Shipwreck in Acts 27:1-44. Chapter Outline

Verse 1. Introductory. Julius in charge.

2. Ship of Adramyttium.

3. One day to Sidon. Paul allowed to see friends.

4. Sailing under shelter of Cyprus due to contrary winds.

5. Over the waters of Cilicia and Pamphylia.

Arrived at Myra in Lycia.

6. Ship of Alexandria. Bound for Italy.

7. Sailing slow at first due to wind, up until Cnidus.

Redirected down to Crete. Sailed in its shelter with difficulty.

8. Arrived at Fair Havens near the city of Lasaea.

9. much time spent. navigation dangerous. fast over.

10. Paul’s counsel. Disaster ahead.

11. Centurion believed rather the helmsman and owner.

12. majority suggestion to leave for Phoenice, a better port.

13. Sailing. Gentle south wind. Confidence. Sailed close to Crete.

14. Not long after — hurricane. Euroclydon.

15. driven by wind 16. under shelter of Clauda, able themselves to master ship.

17. used helps, frapping the ship. feared running aground at Syrtis (quicksands).

18. next day threw cargo overboard 19. third day threw furniture out 20. no sun or stars many days. All hope of salvation lost.

21. Paul’s counsel.

(i) Should have listened to him earlier 22. (ii) Predicts no loss of life (God’s promise) 26. (iii) Predicts they would arrive at an island 27. 14th night near midnight. Sailors perceived land was near.

28. they confirmed their thoughts by fathoming.

29. fearing rocks they cast four anchors.

30. sailors tried to flee under the pretext of taking out anchors.

31. Paul’s counsel. All must abide in the ship.

32. soldiers therefore cut away ropes of lifeboat.

33. Paul’s counsel. (i) Eat some food.

35. (ii) Broke bread.

36. All took courage.

37. All 276 numbered and accounted for.

38. When they had had enough food they threw the wheat overboard.

39. They did not recognise the land. Made their own plans.

40. Cast off anchors, loosened rudder, went with wind.

41. Ran aground where 2 seas meet. Prow stuck fast; stern broken.

42. Soldiers want to kill prisoners.

43. No, swim if you can.

44. The rest floated on what they could.

ALL GOT SAFELY TO LAND. The Voyage The chapter commences with Paul as a prisoner. It is remarkable that a characteristic feature of the man to whom the peculiar truths of the present dispensation were committed is that of physical suffering and difficulty.

Under law the mark of God’s blessing was prosperity in material things. In the present day every blessing is spiritual (Ephesians 1:3). Under law blessings could be seen. Today they are apprehended by faith. Paul endured physical privation. He represented a dispensation which is in faith (1 Timothy 1:4). As we trace through the chapter we must not forget that it is not merely Paul personally that is in view, but rather the features and truths peculiar to this dispensation, which were committed to him, and that are represented by him (Colossians 1:25-26).

Although a prisoner he was allowed to see his friends (5: 3). The voyage started with full liberty for persevering in the teaching and fellowship of the apostles (Acts 2:42).

1. Ephesus The first mark of decline was the cessation of that perseverance. They “set sail thence” (5: 4). The church departed from the teaching and fellowship of the apostles. All in Asia turned away from Paul. In leaving their first love they left Christ as Paul had presented Him. Paul preached “the glad tidings of the glory of the Christ” (2 Corinthians 4:4). He preached Christ in glory. In leaving her first love, the church forgot her links with Christ in glory. She did not hold the head (Colossians 2:19). As Head, He leads by affection (Ephesians 5:1-33). This sense of His affection and the response to it was lost.

Ecclesiastical men today still revere the so-called church fathers. Their writings demonstrate the complete turning away from Paul, the leaving of all that pertains to Christ in glory. One who was required, as part of his early training in life, to read their writings, said of them, “the thought of the presence of the Holy Ghost animating living members, or His unfolding the riches or fulness of blessing, flowing from living union (with the Head), never crossed their mindsl.”

1 Collected Writings of J. N. Darby, Volume 14, p. 42.

2. Smyrna The part of the voyage from Myra (5: 5), and before arriving at Fair Havens (5: 8), links with the phase of the church's history which was marked by persecution and suffering. The names Myra and Smyrna have the same root — myrrh, giving the thought of suffering. The slow sailing for many days (5: 7) would correspond with "ye shall have tribulation ten days" (Revelation 2:10).

3. Pergamos

"I know where thou dwellest" (Revelation 2:13). What a change was experienced by the church of God! Instead of persecution, acceptance by the world. Instead of difficult sailing, Fair Havens. The sense of being a pilgrim and a stranger was lost and was replaced by dwelling, "much time having now been spent" (5: 9). Instead of sojourning, settling down. Instead of crying to God on account of persecution, "the fast... was already past" (5: 9). The entire course of disastrous consequences, of which this was but the beginning, was perceived by Paul (5: 10). He spoke of departure and never held out hope of complete recovery (see, for example, Acts 20:29-30; 2 Timothy 3:1-17). Nobody believed him (vv. 11, 12). The majority opinion held sway. They thought that if they kept at it things would get better. It was really comfort that they had in mind. Are things different today? Men still cling to the idea that the world will improve, that by the preaching of the gospel the knowledge of the glory of Jehovah will cover the earth as the waters cover the sea (Habakkuk 2:14); that by moral and social reform and political influence a kingdom will be formed that will never be destroyed (Daniel 2:44); that "by God's grace, by God's strength, we can change the world"; all with a view to settling down here. The heavenly side of Christian truth was and is rejected. Paul's counsel was and is rejected.

G. Quail (To be continued, if the Lord will) Psalms 119:1-176 (17) (Continued from page 254) 14. NUN — FISH The name of this letter in Syriac, Chaldee and Arabic, denotes a fish, which appears to have been intended by its original form. This is also its common form in the Phoenician alphabet. Its numerical value is fifty.

Some have seen the idea of continuity in the meaning of this letter, while others regard the strength and energy of the fish to go against the current as being its significance.

Verses 97-120. The Importance of Bible Study Section Fourteen. Verses 105-112: "The Word of God Gives Direction"

It is like a lamp Verse 105: NOOR (or NEER)..."...a light (lamp) (to my feet)" The idea of giving direction is seen at once in this well known verse: "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path." We all realise that we need help and direction in our Christian life and walk day by day. How do we get this help and direction? Only through the Word of God. For our Bible study we always need spiritual illumination: light given by the Holy Spirit so that we may see things as He sees them. The only light in the holy place of the tabernacle was the light shed by the lampstand, which is a beautiful type of the activity of the Holy Spirit.

Israel in the wilderness was guided by a cloud during the day and by a pillar of fire during the night. This again is a beautiful symbol of the Holy Spirit's activity.

We could say that a lamp is needed during the night and the light of the sun during the day. We need both! The difference in Hebrew between lamp and light is small. "Noor" means lamp and

“Oor” means light, the difference being just a simple “n.” The “path” is the course we take when our feet actually execute our brain’s directions. In every sense we are dependent upon His help, to direct our feet in His path, and then each day during times of prosperity (day) and times of adversity (night) we need the light that His Holy Spirit gives us.

It helps me make decisions Verse 106: NASAVAT...“I have sworn...”

“I have sworn, and I will perform...” This sounds very much like making a vow. The Psalmist is also very sure of himself: “... I will perform...”

There is only one Man who could ever rightly have pronounced such words, and that is the Lord Jesus Christ. “Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of Me) to do Thy will, O God” (Hebrews 10:7). And then: “... I have finished the work which Thou gavest Me to do” (John 17:4).

I do not believe that it is right for a New Testament believer to make a vow. Unless we have not really understood the plague of our own hearts, we would not dare trust ourselves to be able to perform what we have promised. It is better to tell the Lord that we love Him truly, and want to please Him, but that we need Him to help us. “It is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure” (Php 2:13).

It helps me endure Verse 107: NAGAHNAHT...“I am afflicted...” The word for affliction (anah) here is the same as in verse 67, (see the verse), and means literally, “depressed.” The writer feels very much afflicted. Does he think he is afflicted beyond his ability to endure? We have a wonderfully comforting promise in 1 Corinthians 10:13 : “There hath no temptation (or affliction) taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.”

Just because we are Christians does not mean that we will be spared the afflictions and sicknesses and troubles of others. But God understands and gives us grace to bear and to endure. The Psalmist prays: “... quicken me, O LORD, according unto Thy Word.” He does not know about that abundant life that the Lord Jesus Christ came to bring and to manifest, for that life is the life of the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. The New Testament believer has the Lord Jesus as his life and that is why we can say, “Christ liveth in me” (Galatians 2:20. See also Colossians 3:3-4). “Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations: That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ” (1 Peter 1:6-7).

It helps me offer praise Verse 108: NADAHVAT...“...free offering (of my mouth)...”

“Whoso offereth praise glorifieth Me: and to him that ordereth his conversation aright will I shew the salvation of God” (Psalms 50:23). A Christian is the only human being who can really sing and be heard in heaven. It is the redeemed who have every reason to sing. Even in the Old Testament we read of saints offering praise to Jehovah. How much more should we, New Testament believers, obey the encouragement in Hebrews 13:15, “By Him, therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to His Name.” When should a believer sing? On every possible occasion. Paul and Silas were able to sing praises even while suffering physical pain: “And at midnight Paul and Silas prayed, and sang praises unto God: and

the prisoners heard them" (Acts 16:25). Where should Christians sing praises? Wherever they find themselves. Why should believers sing praises? Because it glorifies God, and it is a testimony to others. Praises from the lips of redeemed persons are simply the fruit of the Holy Spirit's activity. Can He use your lips? Also in meetings when the assembly gathers together?

It helps me face life every day Verse 109: NAFASHI..."My life (soul) (is continually...)" The Hebrew word naphesh or nephesh can be translated soul, breath, body, creature, or simply life. The Hebrew text here has: "My life is in my palm continually..." The life here encompasses everything I am and do each day. My total being: me! The believer is always practically in the very jaws of death! We have countless spiritual enemies in the powers of darkness. The verse is a Hebraism signifying a condition of extreme danger. Paul knew that in every city bonds and imprisonment awaited him. His attitude was expressed as follows: "None of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself..." (Acts 20:24). "I am ready not to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus" (Acts 21:13). As someone has said: "Paul could look tribulation, or persecution, or sword in the face; and, while he 'carried his soul/life continually in his hand,' in true Christian heroism in the most exalted triumph of faith, he could say in the name of himself and his companions in tribulation — "Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors." "

Paul also said: "I die daily" (1 Corinthians 15:31). But like the Psalmist who could say: "O Lord... teach me Thy judgments (5: 108),... yet do I not forget thy law," (5: 109) he wanted to know what the Lord wanted him to do in every situation.

It helps me conquer evil and sin Verse 110: NAHTHANU..."(The wicked) have given..." The fact of being surrounded by enemies continues in this verse. They are scheming and plotting and planning to make the believer stumble and fall. How much we therefore need the Word of God to direct us day by day and moment by moment. The apostle Peter says: "Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour: Whom resist, stedfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world" (1 Peter 5:8-9). How then can we resist and overcome the enemy? Only by using the Word of God as the sword of the Spirit, and like our Lord Jesus Christ being able to say, "It is written." If we do that, then we can join the Psalmist and give this testimony: "... yet I erred not from Thy precepts." The Lord will keep us, as we stay close to Him.

It will enrich me spiritually Verse 111: NAHGHALT..."I have inherited..." The enemy seeks to rob us of any spiritual blessing or possession we may have. We have received an immense inheritance in and with the Lord Jesus Christ. The enemy cannot take away our salvation and the eternal life which we have in Christ, but we can lose our crown and our reward.

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to His abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, Who are kept by the power of God..." (1 Peter 1:3-5). This is our inheritance as New Testament believers and it is heavenly, whereas the believers of the Old Testament looked forward to an earthly inheritance. How infinitely more blessed we are therefore! We can echo the words of the Psalmist: "... for they are the rejoicing of my heart." Peter continues in that first chapter, verse 6: "Wherein ye greatly rejoice (1:e. in that inheritance!), though now for a season, if need be, ye are

in heaviness through manifold temptations."

It helps me do His will Verse 112: NAHTAHT..."I have bowed..."

We are back at verse 106 where he makes this solemn vow: "I have sworn, and I will perform..." But in verse 112 it seems there is a noticeable advance. He is not so very confident of himself for he has learned to bow his heart before the Lord. There is no self-will or self-confidence any more. His heart and his entire being is in the hands of the Lord. As long as he remains in those hands he will be able to do the Lord's statutes. Remember, a statute is a divine direction to obtain man's obedience! The Lord is faithful to the end.

C. Bruins Eight Visions of a Young Man or Constructive Answers to Anxious Questions For some, Zechariah's night visions have become a source of encouragement, especially in days that are difficult for the testimony. For many others, they have always been somewhat obscure or even mysterious. This article is intended to help the second group in the following way: we suggest that Zechariah and other faithful Jews were troubled by a number of questions arising from their particular situation. We formulate these questions and show how each of them was answered by a distinct vision. We will also try to show how these eight visions build on each other. They show, step by step, the way from the remnant's desperate situation at that time to the time when God's plans concerning Jerusalem and, more importantly, concerning the "Man whose name is the BRANCH" (Zechariah 6:12) will be fulfilled.

1st Vision (Zechariah 1:7-17)

What were the difficulties in Zechariah's day? God's throne was no longer in Jerusalem (1. Chron. 29:23). The Persian empire was in power. Comparatively few Jews had returned to Jerusalem and even those had stopped working (Ezra 4:24). Zechariah lived among this poor, feeble, and oppressed "remnant" (Ezra 5:1) which had very little to boast of: no display of power, no miracles, no sign of God's presence, not even the glory cloud. This brief sketch of the background may suffice to show that a first question arising must have been the following:

Question 1 Is God not displeased in any way with the present situation, 1:e. with the Gentiles suppressing the people of God? In other words, should God allow this sad condition to persist indefinitely? The first vision (Zechariah 1:7-17) provides the answer. The man on the red horse stops between the myrtle trees (speaking of revival: Nehemiah 8:15; Isaiah 41:19; Isaiah 55:13). The angle's message contains the following key elements: Jehovah is jealous for Jerusalem and Zion (5: 14). Furthermore, He is sore displeased with the Gentile powers (5:15). Verse 16 contains the promise that He will again show mercy and, specifically, that His house shall be built. Jerusalem shall be chosen (5: 17). This answers the first question in a way that probably surpassed the expectations of many.

2nd Vision (Zechariah 1:18-21) Given God's affirmation of the first vision that He would show mercy again, the question arises:

Question 2 But what about the Gentiles? How can Jerusalem be chosen and the cities overflow with prosperity (5: 17) if there are Gentile powers oppressing us? The vision of the four horns answers their question fully. If these four horns of the nations have been allowed to rise against the land of Judah (5: 21) God will still have instruments to deal with them: four carpenters are

ready (5: 20) to “come to affright them” (5: 21).

3rd Vision (Zechariah 2:1-13)

Gentile dominion was not the only apparent impediment to Zion’s restoration. Looking around in Jerusalem, a faithful Jew would mostly see ruins. Walls, gates and houses were in ruins, a state that persisted even until Nehemiah’s time (Nehemiah 1:3). Further, only few people inhabited this city which made it appear even more desolate (comp. Nehemiah 7:4).

Question 3 Will God take an interest in a city largely consisting of “stones,... dust” (Psalms 102:14) and ruins? The man with the measuring line (5: 1) gives the answer. He is going to “measure Jerusalem,” 1:e. take possession of it. This is reinforced by the angel’s message stating powerfully that one day there will be so large a multitude living in Jerusalem that there can be no walls to it, except for the wall of fire which is Jehovah Himself (vv. 4, 5). Many who still found themselves in “the land of the north” or with “the daughter of Babylon” are invited to be, and will be, gathered (vv. 6, 7) after the Lord’s appearing in glory (5:8). Finally, Jehovah Himself will come (5: 10) and dwell in their midst (vv. 10, 11). He is presented as if He had already started His “journey” (5: 13), which would bring Him to them. Judah will then be Jehovah’s portion and Jerusalem His chosen (5: 12). How full an answer to every heart that was troubled about the ruins of Zion!

4th Vision (Zechariah 3:1-10)

We now pass from practical obstacles (Gentile dominion; a city in ruins; numerical weakness) to a moral one. Anybody aware of the moral state of the people had to ask:

Question 4

How can this land be holy (Zechariah 3:9)? Are we not all defiled? What about our guilt? Can Jehovah restore the land of a people that is defiled and therefore subject to Satan’s accusations?

Very fittingly indeed, in the next vision, the high priest Joshua appears on the scene, being clothed with filthy garments1 (5: 3) and standing before the angle of Jehovah (5: 1). Satan does not fail to be present (5: 2) in order to accuse the people represented by their high priest. But the angle’s message is different: “And he spoke and said unto those that stood before him, saying, Take away the filthy garments from off him. And unto him he said, See, I have caused thine iniquity to pass from thee, and I clothe thee with festival-robes” (5: 4). Iniquity taken away and festival-robes supplied instead: this is God’s answer.

1 Joshua’s iniquity appears to be representative and not personal. In other words, it speaks of the sins of the people, not of his own sins: the iniquity of this land shall be removed in one day (5: 9).

5th Vision (Zechariah 4:1-14)

Moral guilt being (promised to be) taken away, the problem of practical weakness remains. Israel had no king but only a governor, namely Zerubbabel (Ezra 2:2 and Haggai 1:1). Royal authority rested wholly with the Persian Empire. The troubling question therefore is:

Question 5 What about our weakness? How can a testimony possibly be maintained under these circumstances? The answer is framed in the vision of the candlestick (5: 2) and two olive trees (5: 3), the latter representing Joshua and Zerubbabel, the two leaders of the people or “the two sons

of oil, that stand before the Lord of the whole earth" (5: 14). Verse 6 gives a very plain message to Zerubbabel: "Not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit, saith Jehovah of hosts." If the civil leader of the people had apparently insufficient power this would not frustrate the plans of God. It was not a time of outward display of power but "the day of small things" (5: 10). It was by the Spirit of God (5: 6) that a testimony (candlestick) would be maintained. Zerubbabel, despite apparent weakness, is one who is chosen to finish the work by grace (5: 7).

6th and 7th Visions (Zechariah 5:1-11)

While the first five visions contain strong affirmations of Zion's restoration in its diverse aspects the last three deal with complementary issues. The first ones (visions 6 and 7) even have the character of a warning. A Jew having heard of the content of Zechariah's first five visions might have wondered:

Questions 6 & 7 But will God overlook the evil that pertains among us?

Even though "I will remove the iniquity of this land in one day" (Zechariah 3:9) it will not be overlooked. Grace must not be turned into lasciviousness (Jude 1:4, Romans 3:8 and Romans 6:1). Zechariah therefore sees a flying roll (5: 2), being the curse (5: 3) that reaches the land because of moral evils against God (false swearing) and against one's neighbour (stealing). The result of any moral failure along these lines must be destruction (5: 4). The seventh vision presents the woman sitting in the midst of the ephah and being personalised "Wickedness" (5: 8). This is suggestive of a system of idolatry. But religious evil can be tolerated no more than stealing or false swearing. Idolatry is traced back to Babylon (Shinar, 5: 11), its source. As storks (5: 9) always return to their nests, idolatry is shown to have its origin and roots in Babylon. God does not overlook it but treats it as it is.

8th Vision (Zechariah 6:1-8)

Another potential misunderstanding is guarded against in the final vision. If Joshua and Zerubbabel are accepted by Jehovah as "the two sons of oil, that stand before the Lord of the whole earth" (Zechariah 4:14) the question arises:

Question 8 Should we submit to Gentile powers at all? Is it not sufficient to respect the leaders God has given us? (Especially as God is "wroth exceedingly" with the nations anyway (Zechariah 1:15).

Especially in the light of the 5th vision such a thought may have occurred to several of the people. How attractive it would have been to get rid of the humiliating yoke of the Gentiles. But the final vision guards against this idea by drawing attention to the agents (spirits, 5: 5) operating behind the Gentile powers. They do not simply act according to their own ideas but "go forth from standing before the Lord of all the earth" (!) (5: 5b). Therefore, for the time being, they are sanctioned by the Lord. In part (only the black horses having gone to the land of the north and thus fulfilled their mission), they have already set God's mind at rest (5: 8. J.N.D. footnote: "or 'have satisfied mine anger' "). But until they have all accomplished what God has destined them to do, they have to pursue their course without deviating to the left or the right (5: 1).

How fully does God encourage His faithful ones in a day of ruin. And how carefully does He preserve from the misunderstandings that might otherwise arise. Thus, the way is open for the

concluding scene: a Man whose name is the Branch, King and Priest on His throne. A sequence of the glories of the Lord Jesus is presented in verses 12 and 13. God's counsel and Zion's restoration find their centre in this Man: "Behold a man whose name is the Branch; and He shall grow up from His own place, and He shall build the temple of Jehovah: even He shall build the temple of Jehovah; and He shall bear the glory, and shall sit and rule upon His throne; and He shall be priest upon His throne; and the counsel of peace shall be between them both."

Still relevant today?

Finally, we would claim that Zechariah's visions, after more than 2,500 years, have not lost their relevance. Even believers who occupy a very special place in the Lord's heart (the church that Christ loved and gave Himself for (Ephesians 5:25)) may draw moral lessons from these old visions.

Firstly, we may learn that when God's people are oppressed, He may not always intervene but He is far from being indifferent (compare vision 1). And it is just as certain that, for every opposing power, God has a suited instrument to deal with it in due course (vision 2). Further, we can be assured of God's keen interest in the weakest effort to be a faithful testimony to Him (vision 3). The Lord will provide for His people in view of their defilement and failure (if judged), as well as in view of the weakness of those involved (visions 4 and 5). However, we must never assume that God tolerates evil. Whether it be against our neighbour (vision 6) or against Himself (vision 7), He will judge it. Meanwhile, we are to respect God's ways of providence and to be aware that, although He moves behind the scene, He governs and directs all things perfectly according to His plans (vision 8).

Learning these lessons will help us to appreciate more what God has to say about the glories of the Man of His counsels (Zechariah 6:12-13).

M. Hardt Studies in the book of Revelation (4) (The Plumstead Conference, April 1995) Continued from page 284 Revelation 7:10-14

"And they cry with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God who sits upon the throne, and to the Lamb" (5: 10). As to their knowledge of God, Psalms 48:10 says, "According to Thy name, O God, so is Thy praise" and the response of the various families in heaven and upon earth is in accord with the revelation of God to each of them. Here we come to an expression which is very important in Revelation, "To the Sitter upon the throne." God is brought before us as the One who sits upon the throne. I think it occurs about eleven times in Revelation. However, it seems most important to press this again that everything rests upon the foundation of what has been accomplished at the cross.

Hebrews 10:1-39 teaches that in relation to the things of Old Testament times. There were sacrifices but they had just the value of looking forward to the finished work of Christ. Here there is a looking back to that work.

Another difference is that it doesn't appear that this crowd is singing. The Christian sings. Nor do they address God or the Lamb directly, which is the particular position of the heavenly company in Revelation 5:1-14. In the three circles of fellowship, of worship, the twenty four elders who form the inner circle address the Lamb directly and sing. All the others praise the Lord only indirectly and

they do not sing. I think that explains the moral position of that company of believers. Remember they are in relation with the throne which is in heaven but they are still on earth. Only the heavenly company is raptured into the heavens to stay there for ever. Here it is another company produced later. The content of the preaching is in close connection with the end of the dispensation. The preaching of the gospel of grace today is in relation to heavenly blessing and the heavenly hope, the rapture, but the substance of the preaching of the kingdom is basically that the King is coming and will judge, and their hope and consideration is in relation to that. “Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb.” That is their understanding. Nowadays, until the end of the dispensation, the gospel is calling us to heaven and that is totally different. Repent, believe and you will sing!

“Fear God, and give glory to Him; for the hour of His judgment is come: and worship Him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters” (Revelation 14:7). This seems to give an indication as to the contents of the everlasting gospel.

There could be no standing before the throne without the Lamb being connected with it as well. Which one of us, whatever we might be, would dare to stand before the throne of God? When Isaiah was before the throne in the Isaiah 6:1-13 he almost withered away. Now here we have the throne of God and the Lamb and of the heavenly city in chapter 22 it is said, “the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it” (Revelation 22:3). Whether we are considering saints on earth or saints above, that holy throne is connected with the Lamb. The only way that Isaiah could survive was by the live coal from the altar touching his lips. So there must be redemption along with the throne if we are to stand before it.

“And all the angels stood around the throne and the elders and the four living creatures, and fell before the throne upon their faces and worshipped God, saying, Amen: Blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honour, and power, and strength, to our God, to the ages of ages. Amen” (vs. 11-12). This section from verse 9 to the end of the chapter is clearly a millennial picture. It looks on to the day when this company which has suffered so much and has come out of the tribulation have God’s tabernacle spread over them. The words that are used could not apply to a company who are still in the midst of trouble. “They shall not hunger any more, neither shall they thirst any more, nor shall the sun at all fall on them, nor any burning heat.” It is in contrast to their situation during the tribulation, out of which they have been brought. In verse 11 the angels are looked upon as a separate entity while the elders and the four living creatures are associated with one another, as in chapter 5. We were reminded earlier that God has not put the world to come in subjection unto angels, “But one in a certain place testified, saying, What is man, that Thou art mindful of him?” With Him, of course, there is associated the heavenly company, sharing in His rule. Here that point is reached, beyond the tribulation, where the elders and the four living creatures are looked at as being together. The elders, but not the angels, fall on their faces. The elders have the intelligence of heavenly things and as soon as something happens they fall on their faces, which is true worship.

We read about the elders falling down six times. “And the four and twenty elders fall down before Him that sat upon the throne and worship Him that liveth for ever and ever and cast their crowns before the throne” (Revelation 4:10). That is in respect of creation. “And when He had taken the book the four beasts and four and twenty elders fell down before the Lamb” (Revelation 5:8). That

is in relation to redemption. In Revelation 5:14 I think they go a step further. The reference in Revelation 7:10, we have before us here. Then Revelation 11:16 : “And the four and twenty elders, which sat before God on their seats, fell upon their faces, and worshipped God, saying, We give Thee thanks, O Lord God Almighty” etc. Clearly, this is in respect of the climax when the kingdom of this world is become the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ. The last reference is in Revelation 19:4, and is the great hallelujah chorus: “And the four and twenty elders and the four beasts fell down and worshipped God that sat on the throne, saying, Amen; Alleluia.” That is after the judgment of Babylon.

Here in Revelation 7:1-17 there is a marked distinction between the voice of the Gentiles and the voice of the angels. In regard to the Gentiles, verse 10, they speak of “Salvation to our God.” That is salvation as they will know it in respect of the everlasting gospel. In verse 12 there is a sevenfold ascription of glory to God from the angels, “Blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honour, and power, and might,” but they don’t mention salvation because they don’t need any. In chapter 7 we have the same consideration as in chapter 5. In Revelation 5:1-14 the centre of the scene is the throne, and the Lamb is upon the throne ready to break the seals. Around the throne there are three concentric circles. The inner company, the inner circle of fellowship, is the four living creatures associated with the twenty four elders. They sing and they address the Lord directly, “Thou art worthy.” The second company, the second circle, is wider in dimension and comprises all the angels. So the angels are around the first company and obviously around the throne. The outside company is all creatures. Where are they? I am not sure. But definitely the angels form the second circle and it is the same here; they are around the elders and the throne. It is very interesting to compare this with the three circles of earthly worship and the results to God of Christ’s work in Psalms 22:1-31. However, that is a little beyond the scope of our conference. The company nearest to the throne are the four living creatures and the twenty four elders. The elders are not only the church but represent the company of Old Testament believers as well.

“And one of the elders answered, saying to me, These who are clothed with white robes, who are they, and whence came they? And I said to him, My lord, thou knowest. And he said to me, These are they who come out of the great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and have made them white in the blood of the Lamb” (vs. 13-14). In Revelation 21:23-24 we read, “And the city has no need of the sun nor of the moon, that they should shine for it; for the glory of God has enlightened it, and the lamp thereof is the Lamb. And the nations shall walk by its light.” Would you agree that the company of Gentiles we are reading about here in Revelation 7:1-17 is distinct from the Gentiles mentioned in chapter 21? The special character of the company of Gentiles here in chapter 7 is that they have escaped the terrible judgments of the great tribulation period. They have God’s light and have been spared by His grace to inherit the kingdom. In my opinion Revelation 21:1-27 is larger in scope. It includes all nations and among them will be those born during millennial times who will not all have God’s life. It says in Isaiah that “the youth shall die a hundred years old, and the sinner being a hundred years old shall be accursed” (Isaiah 65:20). There will remain some, if I may say, professing people during the Millennium time, and they will answer Satan’s call to go against Jerusalem and will be destroyed. So the nations, globally, will be blessed by heaven through the presence in heaven of the church, the heavenly Jerusalem. The question raised is exactly the question that is asked in verse 13, “And one of the elders answered, saying to me, These who are clothed with white robes, who are they?” This is a very interesting

point. Is this a company of Gentiles that is distinct even in the millennial reign? Here is a company who have come out of great tribulation and they have known what it is to turn to God in the midst of their sorrows. They seem to have a special link with God and they are precious to the heart of Christ because they are fruit of His sacrifice. They seem to form a special group in the world to come and Scripture carefully regards it. This gives rise to another question, is this the same company as the sheep who are mentioned in Matthew 25:1-46? That was in my mind because the terms used in the 25th of Matthew are very striking when He says, “Come, ye blessed of My Father.” Are we all agreed that the sheep in Matthew 25:1-46 are the same company that are referred to here, who come out of great tribulation?

I don’t think the Word will allow us to say definitely whether it is exactly the same company. There are certainly some moral comparisons. My general impression is that the company in Matthew 25:1-46 is larger than that going through the great tribulation. The criterion in Matthew 25:1-46 is listening to the messengers of the gospel, whereas here it is a specific company which went victorious through the great tribulation. That doesn’t seem to be the case with all of those who inherit the kingdom in Matthew 25:1-46. In Matthew 25:1-46 the test is not so much what they believed but how they behaved towards those who came preaching the gospel; whether they treated the messengers well. One of the things that is said about the company of Gentiles here in Revelation 7:1-17 is that they are clothed with white robes. Further down the chapter it speaks about their being clothed with robes washed in the blood of the Lamb, and that is clearly connected with redemption. This first expression, “white robes,” represents rather the character of their lives and the way that they conducted themselves towards those who came preaching the gospel of the kingdom. More generally “white robes” seem to represent an answer in practice to what saints have been given in blessing. In Matthew 25:1-46 we have the outward character of these Gentiles and in Revelation 7:1-17 their inward character. We have heard about the white robes connected with righteousness. The second characteristic of this multitude is mentioned in verse 9: they have “palms in their hands.” The palm is a peculiar tree and the only tree mentioned in connection with the Millennial Temple in Ezekiel 40:1-49; Ezekiel 41:1-26. It is a tree that speaks of righteousness. “The righteous shall flourish like the palm tree” (Psalms 92:12). It is the only tree that grows without branches and if it is healthy it will grow straight like a pillar. After the redemption of the people of Israel they came to the place Elim, where there were twelve wells of water and seventy palm trees, speaking of their redemption (Exodus 15:27). In Leviticus 23:1-44, in the feast of tabernacles, the palm branches speak of full joy after redemption and this is what we find here. These Gentiles have overcome the evil powers, not in their own strength, but because they were elect and have washed their robes in the blood of the Lamb. In the French translation in Revelation 7:9; Revelation 7:13 it says, “clothed with long white robes” and we see that even in their dispensation it is a necessity to be clothed before God. In Revelation 3:18 where the subject is Laodicea, those addressed are exhorted to buy white garments “that thou mayest be clothed.” In both cases the entire person is clothed with this long white robe. In Revelation 16:15 we find those that keep their garments that they may not walk naked and that their shame may not be seen.

We can say, Isaiah 61:1-11, verse 10, “for He hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, He hath covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decketh himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorneth herself with her jewels.” Clothing, garments, speak not only of the moral

state of the person but also of his testimony. The first thing you see in a person is his garment. That was the reason why there should not be steps up to the altar of the Lord, that the flesh should not appear. In our standing before God we have been clothed with this robe of righteousness. That is a passive clothing. It is what God has done. But there is also an active clothing, where we have to do something about it, to wash our garments in the blood of the Lamb, and that is the active side.

We see the same thing in Revelation 19:1-21. The robe is given by God: “And it was given to her that she should be clothed..,” that is the passive thing. But the fine linen “is the righteousnesses of the saints,” and that is the active part of it. In relation to the question of the palm, palm trees are also mentioned in 1 Kings 6:1-38 in connection with the temple of Solomon. The walls and the doors of the temple were carved with sculptures of cherubims and palm trees and half-open flowers. There was no representation of the palm tree in the tabernacle and it appears that it is an anticipation of the time of the Millennium. That is a further confirmation of the character of this crowd here.

Having Loved His Own Which Were In The World (5)

John 15:1-14 The Lord has been making known to His own how dear they were to Him. He has revealed His deep abiding love for each one and His desire that, appreciating His love, they would hold dear His commandments and His Word. To this circle of fellowship which He has formed He now speaks of what He would have them to be for Him in His absence.

He declares to them that He is the Father’s True Vine. He and He alone was the One in whom the Father could find His full and unfailing delight. All that He said and did was devoted to the Father’s pleasure. From Him only could the Father find fruit for Himself, yet as the figure unfolds He shows that there are also branches in Him to which the Father attends. The Father is seeking fruit from those who are branches in the True Vine. It is a privilege given and jealously watched over by the Father. The fruit He seeks and values is the reproduction of the virtues of His Son. Therefore as a true Husbandman He removes what does not bear fruit and prunes and helps on what does, to increase yet more the fruit He delights to see. The love that washed their feet and gave such words in discourse shows what it seeks: “Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you.” They are united to Him as branches to a vine. They need to consciously “abide” in Him that He might abide in them to bring forth fruit. Such abiding would result in much fruit. Love has given them a living link with Himself. They must receive everything only from Him that they might be here in His absence for the pleasure of the Father. The more they are like their Lord the more they bring forth fruit. The Father’s way with each one of “His own” is that they might bring forth much fruit. This is Love’s privilege; to be so like Him that the Father is glorified. In this living circle of union where His words abide, there is liberty to make request and assurance about receiving an answer. The keeping of His commandments is the surety of abiding in His love. The Lord is their example. How wonderful the love known in this fellowship: “As the Father hath loved Me, so have I loved you...” They were simply to abide in that love in the same dependant and obedient way that marked their Lord when He was here below. As they abode in His love, so His joy would find a constant abiding place in them. Knowing His joy within would lead their hearts into fulness of joy. Obeying the commandment to love one another would knit and bind His own together with love even: “as I have loved you.” How intense their love for one another was to be! Love would give all

for its friends. His love would cause Him to give His life for them. The keeping of His commandments was the proof of their being His friends, for that showed how much they valued Him.

(The brother who has written this series of articles wishes to remain anonymous)

Extract 3rd October 1939

“Will you kindly let me know whether there is the slightest warrant for the assertion that the word “in” (eis) in the original Greek text conveys the idea of movement in the following passage quoted from the Gospel by John, Chapter 1, Verse 18.

“No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared Him.” The authority of Liddell & Scott’s Lexicon has been advanced in support of the assertion that the Lord moved into the bosom of the Father.

I know no Greek myself but as a Christian I am gravely concerned regarding the point raised.”

E. C.

(Cambridge University) 6th October, 1939.

“I think it is quite certain that in John 1:1-51; John 18:1-40 the word “eis” means simply “in” and conveys no idea whatever of motion.”

(Dublin University) 9th October, 1939.

St. John 1:18.

“Your letter with its query regarding the above verse has been handed to me by Dr. — who is regius Professor of Greek himself but considers that the problem belongs properly to my department of study (Biblical Greek). In this he is quite correct, and in fact the answer to your question turns largely on the difference between Classical Greek (which he teaches) and the Hellenistic or late Greek employed in the New Testament (a difference sadly overlooked by the translators of our Revised Version). The view which alarms you derives its support from pressing the classical use of the preposition “eis.” It is in my opinion, with which Dr. — agrees, quite a mistake to force the idea of motion upon St. John 1:18.”

(Oxford University) 5th October, 1939.

“Any one who thinks that the Greek words for “in the bosom” mean “into the bosom” is, let me assure you, as ignorant of Greek as he is of theology. Liddell and Scott’s dictionary is of the classical language, BUT St. John and the other evangelists did not write classical Greek at all; they wrote more or less in the spoken Hellenistic Greek of that period.

Let your opponents consider the word before “eis ton kolpon;” it is “on” and “on” means “being,” the present participle of the verb “to be.” This is, of course, absolutely decisive for the meaning “in the bosom.”

“Eis” here (John 1:18) certainly does not contain the idea of movement and it is a great pity that before spreading such absurdities people do not take the trouble to look up the elementary books

dealing with the subject. It would save them from this sort of blundering and save other people a lot of trouble; you and me for example..."

Notice The next parts of the series on the Sermon on the Mount and Laodicea will appear in the September/October and November/ December issues respectively, if the Lord will. From Our Archive The Cross (2) (A Gospel Preaching at the Grove City Conference) Matthew 27:33-36; John 19:25-30; John 19:38-42.

(continued from page 265) In the nineteenth chapter of John we have this little company at the cross, and we have Jesus speaking to them. This was His concern for His loved ones, even there upon the cross. And those very persons that were sitting down in cold blood, having done all that they could: He was dying that they might be saved too, and He died that you might be saved, dear friend, even in spite of your attitude toward Him here tonight. But listen, dear friend, the Lord is not forsaken in John's Gospel. It is just like what we have in connection with Abraham and Isaac. The father and the son, they go together. What a moment for this world, the nearing of the completion of the work that was not only going to save sinners like you and me, but the work that was going to clear sins out of the whole universe of God. And that's the work that I'm resting upon tonight for the forgiveness of my sins: that work which is going to clear the whole universe of sin. Jesus said, after having received the vinegar, "It is finished." Three words in the English language, but they tell me that in the Greek language it is just one word. It wasn't the cry of a man whose life was ebbing out. Jesus didn't die like the two thieves; Jesus dismissed His Spirit. We sometimes sing, "The storm that bowed Thy blessed head." The storm didn't bow His blessed head; He bowed His head in the storm. He was superior to it all. He was able to accomplish the work that He came to do. Once in the end of the age hath He appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself, and there upon the cross of Calvary He was able to say "it is finished." In the seventeenth chapter of this very Gospel, speaking to the Father - it's a privilege to hear each other praying, but what a privilege to listen to the Lord praying, — He said, "I have glorified Thee on the earth: I have finished the work which Thou gavest Me to do."

Friend, we present to you tonight the Saviour who has completed the work that was necessary for your soul's salvation. You're not asked to add anything to what He has done; He's completed it to God's glory. Don't tell me that you expect something more than God expects! A little hymn says, "God is satisfied with Jesus, I am satisfied as well." Will it satisfy your heart tonight, dear friend?

I read those verses from the end of chapter nineteen to show you the effect that it had upon two men, and I trust that it's going to have this effect in your heart tonight. In one of the verses we read towards the end of the chapter it says, "And after these things." After what things? After Jesus had been crucified; after they had witnessed all that had been done to Him; after they had listened to the seven cries that came from His blessed lips upon the cross, beginning with "Father" and ending with "Father"; "Father, forgive them: for they know not what they do," and the last one, "Father, into Thy hands I commend My Spirit." After these things, something takes place.

Here are two men who were secret disciples; men who were not bold enough to come out and confess the Saviour. After these things they come out as witnesses of the Saviour. One of them was Joseph of Arimathaea, a rich man, a counsellor. Who are you, friend? You've perhaps gone to a high school; you might have had a good education. Here is a man who was in a high position — Joseph of Arimathaea, a rich man, a counsellor. He couldn't vote openly when the whole world

was against the Saviour, but he associated himself with the Christ of God who had died and he begs His body.

Perhaps your parents are not quite sure whether you're a Christian or not. Oh, I trust, dear young friend, that after these things you've been hearing tonight, you're going to make it known, aren't you? You say, "What shall I say? What shall I do?" Listen, you perhaps know the verse, "The Word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart: that is, the word of faith, which we preach; That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved." "The Word is nigh thee." You needn't move from the seat where you are. "Even in thy mouth, and in thy heart." That's not very far away is it? Right where you're sitting now you can confess with your mouth. It's a good thing to confess Jesus. You know what He says? He that shall confess Me before men, him will I confess before the holy angels. Would you like to be talked about in heaven, friend? If I thought they were talking about me in Buckingham Palace, where the Queen of my country lives, my chest measurement would be expanded.

Listen, you've got the privilege here tonight of being spoken about in heaven — Christ confessing you after you have confessed Him here as your Lord and Saviour. What a privilege. But mark what He says — the confessing with your mouth and the believing with your heart. God says, "Thou shalt be saved." We can depend upon that, friend. You can depend upon God's Word, whatever He says to you. You can set your feeling to it, whatever God says, it is true.

We're coming to the end. I want to tell you about a true incident. In the centre of England there's a place called Worksop — it's in Nottinghamshire. Just outside Worksop, there's a little village called Wickworth. There was a young woman there, eighteen-years-old, brought up in a Christian home, and she knew the way of salvation, perhaps just as well as the preacher could tell it. She had gone away with some friends, like the prodigal did, and not only the prodigal but his brother too. You remember his brother said to his father, "Thou never gavest me a kid, that I might make merry with my friends." He seemed to have friends that his father didn't know anything about. I wonder if you've got some friends that your father and mother don't know anything about? They are not going to do you much good. This young woman, she had some friends too, that her parents knew nothing at all about; but they knew that the friends she had were keeping her away from the meeting. She was invited over and over again to the Gospel Meeting, and they did get her along this Sunday evening. The gospel preacher certainly reached her conscience and she was troubled about her sins.

Friend, it's amazing how near some people can get. The Lord had to say with regard to one young man — do you remember him? — "Thou art not far from the kingdom." He was on the very threshold. Listen, you're on the very threshold here tonight. And this young woman, she sat in that meeting spellbound as she heard the story of the cross and of the love of Jesus. She was really affected and the preacher saw it. He spoke to her after the meeting. He said, "Now, what about it? Are you going to decide for Christ tonight?" You know what she said? She said, "No, not tonight." She had made arrangements to go to a dance with this friend that she had taken up with. She went to bed on Sunday night and couldn't sleep. She was troubled, mightily troubled about this preaching which she had been listening to earlier in the evening. She lay, tossing in her bed. Eventually she got up. There was a voice speaking in her ear, and speaking so loudly that tears

were rolling down her face. She was in such distress, that she was roaming up and down her bedroom, not knowing what to do. She had a Bible in her hand, because what the voice was saying to her was this: “Ezekiel seven and eight! Ezekiel seven and eight! Ezekiel seven and eight!” She couldn’t find it for the blinding tears. I’ll read it to you. Before I read it, let me tell you what happened. Her mother, who was sleeping in the adjoining room, heard the commotion that was going on, and she came in. Seeing her daughter in such distress, she was very anxious about it, and seeing the Bible in her hand and hearing her exclaiming, “Ezekiel seven and eight, Ezekiel seven and eight,” her mother took the Bible from her. She sat her daughter down in the chair and this is what she read: “Now will I shortly pour out My fury upon thee, and accomplish mine anger upon thee; and I will judge thee according to thy ways, and will recompense thee for all thine abominations.” Her mother turned to the chair where that young woman was sitting, and she was dead.

That’s not something I’ve read in a book but an incident that I heard of at Whitwell just outside of Worksop. Friend, I say to you tonight, how long, how long is God going to suffer you? The number of times He has spoken to you! Is this going to be the last opportunity He’s going to give you, in this meeting tonight? Oh, I say to you, be wise, be wise, friend. I’m coming to a close with this meeting. I’m going to take it no further. I say to you right now, don’t wait until we’ve sung the closing hymn. Bow your head, bow your heart before the blessed God and tell Him how thankful you are tonight for sending Jesus to die for you. Take your place along side the cross and be able to say like the great apostle Paul, “Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me.” Oh, may you come to Him tonight.

Friend, you’re being prayed for. These meetings have been held up to the throne of God on your behalf. There’s prayer ascending even at this very moment as we come to the close of our meeting. And I want to say to every Christian here tonight, don’t let the devil in at the end of the Gospel Meeting. It’s just then that he takes advantage, to get us all conversing together and the whole thing is confusing to anyone under deep exercise before God. Oh, let us not be ignorant of his devices, but let us prayerfully and quietly leave this auditorium, and leave it with the solemn thought that there might be someone like that young girl, that we just mentioned, here tonight. Someone that may be saying NO to the Saviour, and going to their bed, and perhaps being found dead in the morning. I know what people say: it could happen to anybody but you. My friend, don’t be so sure. Make sure of this, that you get right with God before it’s too late. Trust the Saviour and trust Him NOW, and make it known. Openly confess Him. Make it known to every one in the auditorium.

Friend, Christ was out in the open for you. He was crucified there in the midst of a mocking crowd. Are you afraid to confess Him as your Saviour in the company of Christians? My word, how easy He’s made it for you! — hard for Him, easy for you. Don’t miss the opportunity. Trust Him, trust Him NOW, and go on your way rejoicing — for His Name’s sake.

Now we’re going to sing together hymn number thirty-five. We’re going to sing two verses of it, and I want to give you the opportunity afterwards, dear friend, of making known to us that you’re going to trust the Saviour tonight. Don’t put it off. Don’t be out of this blessing. God wants you to have it, and it’s here for you tonight. “Softly and tenderly Jesus is calling, calling for you and for me, see on the portals He’s waiting and watching, watching for you and for me.” We’re going to sing the first

and the third verses. “Time is now fleeting, the moments are passing.”

Listen, before we close in prayer I want to give you every opportunity that we can. If there’s anybody here tonight that would like to openly confess Christ as their Saviour for the first time, you do so! Is there one? We want to do everything in our power to put you into the way of salvation. I commend you to God in prayer.

A. Dockerty The Blood of Christ: Its Great Value

Every animal sacrifice of the Old Testament adds its voice of strong insistence that apart from the shedding of blood there can be no true relationship with God at all. Sin has caused a total barrier that only the blood of a perfectly acceptable sacrifice can remove. All of this pointed to God’s one great provision of the New Testament: “Ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold,... But with the precious blood of Christ” (1 Peter 1:18).

What infinite value is in that blood, and what infinite blessing has been secured by it for the sake of innumerable sinners saved by the grace of God! Let us consider some of the dreadfully devastating effects sin has caused, and the wonderful value in the blood of Christ that is sufficient to fully remove them all.

1. The contamination of sin has rendered us all unclean. For this reason cleansing by the blood of Christ is an absolute necessity. Only His blood can cleanse us in the eyes of God from such filth. Every believer may have the firm assurance that “the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin” (1 John 1:7).

2. Because sin is an offence against God, an insult to His supreme power and authority, therefore we require forgiveness; and forgiveness is impossible without a basis of truth when we have offended the Creator of heaven and earth. This perfectly satisfactory basis is “the precious blood of Christ.” In Him “we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace” (Ephesians 1:7). But “without shedding of blood is no remission” (Hebrews 9:22). God forgives because He sees perfect virtue in the blood of Christ.

3. Sin has also brought all mankind into bondage: it has enslaved us. Therefore redemption is another great necessity. God’s Word says concerning believers, that in Christ “we have redemption through His blood” (Ephesians 1:7). That signifies the complete setting free and bringing back by virtue of a price paid; that price the bloodshedding of the Son of God. Only God can measure the greatness of that price, but believers can certainly appreciate the marvellous liberty it has brought them.

4. The guilt and stigma of sin is another of its dreadful consequences. For this we require justification. “Much more then, being now justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him” (Romans 5:9). The true believer is “now justified by His blood.” He is completely cleared from every charge, and righteousness is imputed to him, that is, it is put to his account, though he has no righteousness of his own. It is a perfect justification because of the perfection of the value God sees in the blood of Christ.

5. Because sin has also affected us by involvement with a world of evil, a separation from this involvement is necessary. This is sanctification, or being set apart. We could never accomplish this, for we were hopelessly enmeshed and beyond all human help. God has accomplished this

wonderful work for believers, again by the blood of His beloved Son, setting us apart to Himself from the world and its evil associations. “Wherefore Jesus also, that He might sanctify the people with His own blood, suffered without the gate” (Hebrews 13:12).

6. Sin has also caused enmity toward God, and though the need then for peace was great, no human effort could accomplish this. Not that God was our enemy, but we were His enemies. Only concerning Christ, the Son of God, could it be said, “having made peace through the blood of His cross” (Colossians 1:20). This is the only basis of peace for sinful mankind, and therefore all who receive Christ receive peace with God.

7. Closely connected with this is the fact that sin has caused distance between mankind and God. Humans in their sins do not like to think of being near to God. But nearness to God is what people need, and this too is accomplished only by Christ Jesus, through the shedding of His blood. Scripture says concerning true believers, “But now, in Christ Jesus, ye who sometimes were far off, are made nigh by the blood of Christ” (Ephesians 2:13).

8. Because sin has caused the false service of dead works in our outward conduct, this required the blood of Christ to purge the conscience in order that one may do true service to God. “How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?” (Hebrews 9:14).

9. Because sin has made man an idolater, worshipping almost anything but the true God, only the blood of Christ could change this, and transform one into a true worshipper of God. “Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus” (Hebrews 10:19). Apart from that precious blood shed, one can never enter God’s presence as a true worshipper of the living God. But what a transformation, from idolater to worshipper!

These are some of the wonderful reasons we have for profoundest thanksgiving to God for “the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot,” and all of this is applicable to all of those who have truly received Christ as Saviour.

L. M. Grant.

Vol 03 - Truth & Testimony Vol. 3, No. 11, 1996.

Truth & Testimony Vol. 3, No. 11, 1996. The Doctrine of Christ

(2 John 1:9-10)

Observant readers of Scripture have long noted that the character of the second epistles — 2 Thessalonians, 2 Timothy, etc., — is one of decline and a falling away from revealed truth. In the Second Epistle of John, that character is clearly apparent. In verse 7 it reads, “For many deceivers are entered into the world...” They are described as those who do not confess Jesus Christ come in the flesh, an expression which occurs also in 1 John 4:2 in connection with discerning the spirit of truth and the spirit of error. The writer is disposed to think that the expression, which heads this article, embraces all that the apostle John teaches about Christ’s person and work in both his Gospel and Epistles. From the way these two expressions are linked together in the Second Epistle there can be no doubt that it must embrace whatever the words, “Jesus Christ… come in the flesh” mean. It is vital we have some clear understanding because otherwise we will neither be able to identify nor refuse those who do not bring the doctrine of Christ. What follows attempts to clarify the meaning.

It could never be said of any one of us that we came in the flesh for we had no previous existence. The Lord Jesus did! John 1:14 speaks of it: “The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us... full of grace and truth.” Those beautiful words are saying that He — the Word — was there before His incarnation, clearly asserting His personal greatness and glory. It is not simply that He has made God fully known by His incarnation and death, but that He alone was ever able to fully declare Him, for He ever was and is God. Whoever first used the words about John 1:1, “Eternal existence, eternally distinct personality, eternal deity,” not only caught the very spirit of Scripture but also hit the nail on the head in relation to the deity of the Lord Jesus.

However, that is not all, for Scripture has more to say about His pre-incarnate existence. John’s Gospel was written to teach and maintain the truth of eternal relationships within the Godhead. One writer has written of those relationships as the very heart of Christianity. Another, writing to clarify that truth in the mid 1850’s, when it was strongly assailed, asked a very simple but vital question, “Had the Father no bosom in eternity?” The Bible not only says He had, but tells us so much about the One who eternally dwelt there — the Son of the Father’s love (Colossians 1:13, J.N.D. Trans.). The matchless words of John 1:18 illuminate all — “No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him.” This relationship is highlighted in 2 John verse 9 in the words, “He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son.” So in addition to His deity, the doctrine of Christ includes also His eternal Sonship.

It hardly needs to be said, let alone dealt with at length, that, “come in the flesh” must also mean that, sin apart, the Lord Jesus was a man; spirit, soul and body! Scripture bears witness to this: - “Jesus... was troubled in spirit...” (John 13:21) “Now is My soul troubled...” (John 12:27) “Who...

bare our sins in His own body on the tree...” (1 Peter 2:24) This is what Hebrews 2:9 means when it says, “Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, for the suffering of death... that He by the grace of God should taste death for every man.” Had He not been truly man, He could never have laid down His life an offering for sin. But He was and is truly man. He did lay down His life, both to glorify God and to lay that unshakeable foundation, upon which God in perfect grace is eternally and distinctively blessing the simple believer in Jesus.

Others would no doubt expand the foregoing. This simple outline is written to encourage us all in these perilous days to faithfully hold the truth in love. To cling to His Name and His Word in days of conflict is faithfulness indeed.

M. Johnson

Book Review The Way of Faith in an Evil Time, by H. H. Snell, 32pp, paperback, reprinted by Chapter Two, price £1.95. Who would dare deny that we live in an evil time as we approach the close of 1996? The nearer we come to the end of our present dispensation of God’s grace, the darker the times appear. Men of God have always been concerned about the trends of the times in which they lived. In Psalms 11:3, David poses the question, “If the foundations be destroyed, what shall the righteous do?” The author of this little booklet had similar concerns more than one hundred years ago. What he wrote then is still relevant today.

Unlike most contemporary writers, H. H. Snell does not concentrate primarily upon the declining moral standards and the increase in gross wickedness that even the world deplores as so pathetically commonplace today. He points out that “the natural conscience sometimes recognizes and recoils from moral evil,” and goes on to say: “but to discern and repudiate doctrinal evil we need to be spiritual.” It is this latter evil that he intends to focus on, both for the individual and for God’s assembly. This is of great importance today, where so many gloss over doctrinal differences, and where mass movements even endorse indifference to doctrine as a principle by which to unite all kinds of people. The author speaks plainly and straightforwardly. He points out that separation from evil is but a beginning: there is more to follow. Using Old Testament examples, he shows how in a time of ruin the judgment of evil was always followed by a returning to the Word of God and acting thereon. From the New Testament he points out what the essentials of Christianity are, at least as far as they directly relate to his subject. That which we “have heard from the beginning,” especially with regard to the Person of the Son, the headship of Christ, and the abiding presence of the Holy Spirit — these are precious subjects to which he devotes consideration.

While setting before his readers the importance of doctrinal soundness, the writer equally stresses the importance of an accompanying condition of faith and love and hope. He warns against being puffed up about separation from evil and warns also against “gliding” (an interesting word to use, isn’t it) “into formality and dead orthodoxy.” “God looks for reality,” he tells us in conclusion. “Are our hearts set on pleasing Him by walking in the truth?” From time to time we are told not to remove the ancient landmarks which our fathers have set. Often this verse is applied to pet customs and patterns that have become traditional among gatherings of Christians. In this little booklet we have some of those ancient landmarks that God prizes, for these are landmarks He has used our spiritual fathers, the apostles, to set for us in His Word. May we heed them — they are still appropriate today.

Eugene P. Vedder, Jr.

Genesis 38:1-30

Judah and Tamar

Introduction

What follows is the product of some study undertaken to try to understand a difficult portion of the Word. This chapter is seldom read in public as it refers to deeds of the darkest nature. It presents human nature in the raw, in its sordid character astray from God. It occupies a peculiar place, sandwiched in the unfolding progress of Joseph's history. Historically, the events recorded happened before chapter thirty-seven, but as is often the case in the Bible a moral order is given to the subjects that come before the reader. The bright light of Joseph's high moral conduct brings into even sharper relief the depraved and unprincipled behaviour of his brother Judah. Joseph is as constant and honourable at home doing his father's business looking after the sheep, as he is in Egyptian captivity. Joseph was a conscript into the world like Daniel in later years. Alas many are determined to go into the place where Christ has been rejected. They do not lose their first love but leave it. Demas forsook Paul's fellowship and went into the world that lies in the wicked one, where Christ is still hated and refused. Joseph (and Daniel) refused the seduction of the world but here we see Judah drawn into the closest ties with idolaters.

We are accustomed to viewing Joseph as one of the most beautiful types of Christ in Scripture. Genesis 37:1-36 gives us typical details of Christ's rejection even to parallels relating to Christ's betrayal by a man with the same name: Judas. Genesis 38:1-30 suggests the present period of grace, during which Israel as such has no history, but Judah (Jewry) is prominent. The question therefore arises: How does Judah fare now he is rid of Joseph? Sadly, we see a manifestation of perverted values, personal vileness and the hypocrisy of pretended virtue. William Kelly says that this is, "the most humiliating tale that we find perhaps anywhere in the book of Genesis." Those of Judah are filling up the measure of their sins, making terms with the uncircumcised and defiling the holy seed. This passage gives us the first crisis of succession in Judah. We know that our Lord sprang from Juda(h) (Matthew 1:3; Hebrews 7:14) and therefore perceive the intrusion of Satan into the circumstances. His design was ever to hinder the coming and work of the Messiah. We should note that not only is Tamar's security challenged but also her right to become the mother of Judah's heir. Something of the mercy and grace of the gospel is also seen. There is full departure from God's ways, with treachery and vile behaviour boldly exhibited. Any relationship with God is utterly despised and forsaken by Judah's reprehensible conduct. From the contrasts in the narrative we will learn both practical lessons and something of the unfolding history of Judah in Jewry. These themes are intertwined in the sacred text and will be of interest to the student of Scripture.

Outline The chapter can be divided into six subjects by enumerating the six sins listed below. This is indicative of the Spirit's mind to record man's condition and hallmark it with the number of Man in his failure and distance from God.

Sin 1 5: 1 Judah joins the world Sin 2 5: 7 Er's wickedness Sin 3 5: 9 Onan's selfishness Sin 4 5: 11 Judah's unrighteousness Sin 5 5: 14 Tamar's whoredom Sin 6 5: 24 Judah's hypocrisy CommentsSin 1. Judah Joins the World (verses 1-6)

Judah leaves his brothers to join the world of the Canaanite (the Merchant) in all its ruined character. The actual words of Scripture, “went down from,” indicate the course of departure embarked upon and alert the reader to the fact that what follows will be characterised by sin. The consequences of Judah’s wilful departure will be serious and he will have to learn that he cannot please himself without reaping a harvest of sorrow. He has to learn that what a man sows that shall he also reap (Galatians 6:7). Dispensationally this is where the Jew is at the present time, motivated by self-interest and governed by what he sees without regard for God’s counsel. Tamar’s history shows the infinitude of Divine mercy. We see God’s own wonderful way of connecting the Christ with Judah, and thus Tamar is listed in the genealogy recorded in Matthew’s Gospel. She is the first of the four women mentioned there, each having their own special place by God’s grace. It is sad to witness Judah’s departure from the relative safety and enjoyment of his brothers’ company. His heart was already at a distance from the joy of communion with his father and now he takes this further step and leaves his brethren. We have seen this often enough with those whose hearts have grown cold, when in due time their feet follow the inclination of their minds. The heart astray from God is a ready prey to the deceit and incitements of men. One not walking in communion with God will soon walk in fellowship with the unconverted men of the world. In verse 1 we see that Judah must have had common interests with Hirah. In verse 12 he is described as “… his friend Hirah the Adullamite.” James tells us that friendship with the world is enmity against God (James 4:4), but such considerations were absent from a man bent on doing his own will. In the second verse we see that the downward pathway brings Judah into the most intimate association with a daughter of a Canaanite. Here we have him repeating the sin of Esau, whose marriages were a grief to his parents (Genesis 26:35). Judah had no regard for the ancient landmark set up by Abraham who said: “thou shalt not take a wife unto my son of the daughters of the Canaanites” (Genesis 24:3). Judah had no compunction in marrying a pagan, “the daughter of a strange god” (Malachi 2:11). Today, for the Christian, the principle is clear. The instruction in 2 Corinthians 6:14-15 is, “Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers.” The criterion for selecting his wife is suggested by the phrase, “And Judah saw,” much the same as Samson in later years: “And Samson went down... and saw a woman... of the daughters of the Philistines... and said, I have seen a woman” (Judges 14:1-2). There was no thought of making a selection according to the mind of God (cf. Genesis 2:18; Genesis 2:24). Judah was motivated by base desires such as we read of in 1 John 2:16, “the lust of the eyes... is of the world.”

Sin 2. Er’s Wickedness (verses 6-7)

Judah had chosen a wife called Tamar for his eldest son. Er was the firstborn of Judah’s strength. He had been named by his father and the meaning of his name may be “watchful” (Potts). Er evidently became watchful for opportunities to do evil. He thought that no consequences would follow upon his sins but the biblical principle in Galatians 6:7 holds good for all time: “God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.” His wickedness was seen by Jehovah and he reaped the due reward of his actions. Pay-day came swiftly for him: “and the LORD slew him.” Er deceived himself but was he not merely following his father? To bring up children in an evil world is not easy. When parents introduce their offspring to the things of this present evil age, they will find them applying themselves most energetically to the world in all its ruin and departure from God.

Sin 3. Onan’s Selfishness (verses 8-10)

According to Old Testament custom a widow had her security provided for by the system of levirate marriage. You will recall that the kinsman in Ruth 4:6 was offered the opportunity of marrying Ruth and securing Elimelech's inheritance, but he said, "I cannot redeem it for myself." He seemed unwilling to affect his own inheritance by marrying a Moabitess and I suggest that in this he showed a selfish attitude. Onan exceeded this because he married Tamar but then refused to grant her the privilege of being the mother of Judah's heir. He was prepared to marry her and enjoy conjugal relations, but he wanted to refrain from giving of his strength. The sin that is so displeasing to God in Onan's case was not simply a matter of spilling his seed on the ground, but of selfishness. He wanted her to remain a childless and despised widow and his whole attitude was governed by this. It was not a single sin but a repeated one, for the word "when" in verse 9 should read "whenever." Augustine of Hippo once posed the question which, if my memory serves me correctly, was, "Whom have you ever seen content with a single sin?" So, as with his wicked brother, the solemn harvest was reaped and he too was slain by the Lord (5: 10).

Sin 4. Judah's Unrighteousness (verse 11)

Tamar had the right to be the mother of Judah's heir. He withheld this legitimate entitlement from her, effectively blaming her for the death of his sons. He did not blame his own sons for any wrong. Judah's prejudice in favour of his own family blinded him to the truth. He followed the same course as Eli and Samuel in later years. Many today allow the ties of nature to sway their judgment in matters of importance. Judah is characterised by perverted values. On a practical note, the suggestion that Shelah might be a husband before he was full grown is also contrary to the mind of God. In Genesis 2:24 we read, "Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother…" Maturity is supposed in every domain of life; physical, mental and emotional. Shelah was significantly younger than Tamar, and this was not a good recipe for a marriage.

Sin 5. The Whoredom of Tamar (verses 13-23) This sordid occurrence took place at the time of sheep-shearing, the time when something was taken from the sheep. To take and leave naked is Satan's work. Sexual temptation was increased by the practices of the Canaanite cult. Ritual fornication was part of their fertility magic. It seems that Tamar posed as a temple/cult prostitute. Such was the world that Judah had married into! Can there be anything so dreadful as this kind of union? Alas, it is also found in the New Testament among the saints of God. Paul spares no words in telling the assembly at Corinth that, "fornicators" shall not "inherit the kingdom of God" (1 Corinthians 6:9-10). What had been done privately at home was made known to the conscience of the assembly and strongly condemned (1 Corinthians 5:1-13). With such they were not even to eat. The wicked person had to be put away from among them. We know that these sins are commonplace in the world. We need to be aware of our natural propensities and ought to be most cautious and reserved in our conduct with those of the opposite sex (1 Timothy 5:2). Paul gives no licence for any dalliance with evil, but writes, "Flee fornication" (1 Corinthians 6:18). We are commanded by Scripture to put a great distance between ourselves and the temptation. Obedience to the Word of God is the only way of escape which has been provided. In the next chapter, Joseph, in captivity but still answering to God's will, "fled, and got him out" of Potiphar's house. Potiphar's wife was persistent but he was as resolute to please God. Such a consideration seems entirely absent from Tamar and Judah. They demonstrate their personal vileness.

Sin 6. Judah's Hypocrisy (verses 24-26)

What a hypocrite! Judah acts as if he is completely right and without blame, but it is he who has the greater guilt. It was he who caused Tamar to stumble and now he wants her punished. If I cause another to sin because of my own wickedness, how great then is my responsibility. Judah was the prime mover in these sins and now he places all the blame on Tamar. He would be horrified to have the responsibility and blame placed at his feet. Judah's pretended virtue is about to be exposed by the subsequent events. God's Spirit will say, as to his great heir, David, "Thou art the man" (2 Samuel 12:7). He has a double standard, which is not acceptable to a holy God. Judah is ready to condemn Tamar to be burnt, but she had secured a pledge from him. This she now brought forward in evidence (5: 25) and Judah's complicity in the sin is manifested before all. This is the way God works. A frank confession will secure His mercy. Tamar is acknowledged as being more righteous than Judah (5: 26). In Psalms 92:12 we read again of Tamar, "The righteous shall flourish like the palm tree…" (Tamar means Palm). The last verse of that Psalm is very appropriate to what follows in the narrative of our chapter: "the LORD is upright... there is no unrighteousness in Him." Having established righteousness He is now free to show mercy. The closing verses (vv. 27-30) of this chapter show how mercy rejoices over judgment. Of this J. G. Bellett wrote, "The hope of Israel is in the womb, a blessing is in the cluster; but truly it is such a cluster of wild vine as might well be doomed to the sickle, if sovereign, abounding grace did not say, "Destroy it not" (Isaiah 65:8; Matthew 1:3)." The midwife had seen nothing like this before and exclaims, "How hast thou broken forth?" (5: 29). But thus the line to Christ is carried forward. Pharez comes forth, the second Jacob, a supplanter. From this one there was to come the True Inheritor of every blessing. Christ is the righteous Supplanter of every usurper, and He will prevail and His kingdom will stand for ever. Out of Judah will come the chief ruler (1 Chronicles 5:2). We wonder how any good could come out of such a disastrous course of events, but what is impossible with men is not so with God. He brings glory to His Name out of darkest shame. This is fully shown in the cross, where Jew and Gentile joined together in the sin of rejecting and crucifying God's Son. It was from such sinners that a new body was formed, expressly to worship the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ (Ephesians 2:18).

Here we have seen sin abounding, yet grace much more abounding. Here we have, "God, in His great grace, rising above the sin and folly of man, in order to bring about His own purposes of love and mercy... How evident that there is nothing of man in this!" (C. H. Mackintosh). Grace reigns in every saint now but will reign in Israel in the future when Christ their King is upon His throne.

E.N.C.

Stone... Cut Out Without Hands (1)

"Thou sawest till that a stone was cut out without hands, which smote the image upon his feet that were of iron and clay, and brake them to pieces" (Daniel 2:34).

"Cut out of the mountain without hands" (Daniel 2:45). In the three previous articles on the theme, "Without hands," we have seen that the inward replaces the outward (circumcision), the permanent replaces the temporary (tabernacle) and the heavenly replaces the earthly (house). In this fourth article we shall see that the indestructible replaces the destructible (kingdom).

Introduction The subject of the "stone... cut out without hands," calls for some background information and this is provided in Daniel 2:1-49. The three verses, 28, 29, and 45, assure us that

the appearance of this “stone” lies in the future. “But there is a God in heaven that revealeth secrets, and maketh known to the king Nebuchadnezzar what shall be in the latter days” (5: 28). “As for thee, O king, thy thoughts came into thy mind… what should come to pass hereafter” (5: 29). Verse 45 says much the same and all three references clearly point to the end times. In our days many momentous events have taken place and we cannot ignore their impact. These events make us feel that we live in closing days. However, the focus of prophecy is upon the end times and they will not begin to be fulfilled until the church has been removed from earth to heaven. The familiar term, “the last days,” found in both the Old and New Testaments, does not always point to the same time. In 2 Timothy 3:1 we read, “This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come.” As we read on in this passage, we find described many of the features we see around us today. This confirms that the “last days” of 2 Timothy 3:1 are the closing days of the history of the church, just before the rapture. However, when this expression is used in the Old Testament it is connected with the period after the removal of the church. We give one example: “And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the Lord’s house shall be established in the top of the mountains” (Isaiah 2:2). This beautiful verse describes events consequent upon the appearance of the “stone... cut out of the mountain without hands” (Daniel 2:45). The Times of the Gentiles

It was the Lord Jesus who spoke these words in Luke 21:24 : “And they shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led away captive into all nations: and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled.” The view taken of the Olivet discourse in Luke’s Gospel, differs from that taken in the Gospels by Matthew and Mark. These last two writers almost immediately draw our attention to the last days. In Matthew 24:15 reference is made to the, “abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand(ing) in the holy place.” Also, the “great tribulation” is mentioned in verse 21 of the same chapter. Both of these events will take place on earth after the removal of the church. Luke, on the contrary, puts before us things that were then in the near future. In Luke 21:20 he writes: “And when ye shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies, then know that the desolation thereof is nigh.” This verse refers to what happened in A.D. 70 under the Roman armies. History records the awful calamities that befell the city, and the wholesale slaughter of the people. This event marked the beginning of long centuries of desolation and scattering.

Although it was not until the Son of God came to earth that the words were used, “times of the Gentiles,” those times actually began in the days of the captivity of Judah in Babylon (B.C. 604). However, consequent upon the rejection and crucifixion of their Messiah, the Jewish nation has suffered centuries of being “trodden down of the Gentiles” (Luke 21:24). Almost unbelievable persecutions and atrocities have been directed against them. At the present time the Jews have possession of Jerusalem. There is a nation of Israel in existence which makes its impact on world affairs. They are there in unbelief. Their troubles are not over yet, and the city will again be overrun by the Gentiles: “The holy city shall they tread under foot forty and two months” (Revelation 11:2). When did the Times of the Gentiles Begin?

It was a critical period for the kingdom of Judah. 115 years previously the ten tribes of Israel had been taken away by the king of Assyria into his own land. God in His righteousness had permitted this because of their sinful and idolatrous practices.

Judah had not taken this to heart. It ought to have been a warning to them and they should have changed their ways, but they heeded it not. Apart from one or two kings who were faithful, Judah never really gave up its idolatry. That kingdom ended in an ignominious way. The dreadful sins of Manasseh sealed its doom. The three wicked kings following the good reign of Josiah, hastened its end. This time, God used Babylon to chastise His people. In B.C. 606 Jerusalem was taken by Nebuchadnezzar and this was the commencement of the seventy years captivity in Babylon. This also marked the beginning of the "times of the Gentiles," already referred to. A little later, in the year B.C. 588, Jerusalem was completely destroyed, together with the temple which had been built by Solomon. God took power and authority out of the hands of His own people and put it into Gentile hands, Nebuchadnezzar being the first head of the succession of Gentile kingdoms (Daniel 2:38). It is still the "times of the Gentiles" and these will go on until the setting up of the kingdom in the hands of Christ.

Those days were very dark indeed for Israel. Jeremiah and ohers like-minded felt it acutely. The "Lamentations" bring to light his distress when he saw the city in ruins. It was by visions that Ezekiel saw the end. He saw the "Glory of the Lord" departing: "and the glory of the Lord went up from the midst of the city, and stood upon the mountain which is on the east side of the city" (Ezekiel 11:23). The prophet Hosea, in his book, records very sad words. Referring to his newly born son he writes: "Then said God, Call his name Lo-ammi: for ye are not My people, and I will not be your God" (Hosea 1:9). This verdict still stands today, and yet in spite of all, God's promises to the nation will be fulfilled. The day is coming when that nation will be brought to own their sin and folly, and recognize as their deliverer the One who they crucified. Their long centuries of blindness will then be over. Through mercy, they will come to trust the Lord Jesus, whom we have trusted. "For thus saith the Lord, Like as I have brought all this great evil upon this people, so will I bring upon them all the good that I have promised them" (Jeremiah 32:42). We are also told in Jeremiah that what God did to His people, He did for their good (Jeremiah 24:5). The history of God's earthly people illustrates His disciplinary ways, whether it be in relation to nations or individuals. God always has our profit in view. This is seen once again in the prophecy of Jeremiah: "The anger of the Lord shall not return, until he have executed, and till he have performed the thoughts of his heart: in the latter days ye shall consider it perfectly" (Jeremiah 23:20). This verse reminds us of the 12th chapter of Hebrews, where we who are Christians are seen to be under the Father's chastening hand. How often the apostle's words have been an encouragement: "For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth" (Hebrews 12:6). They seem to line up with the "heart" in the verse quoted above. "Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless, afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby" (Hebrews 12:11). As the nation of Israel will in the latter days consider their years of suffering perfectly, so may we be exercised by our trials and find that they have been truly for our good.

Nebuchadnezzar's Dream

Having ascertained the starting point of the "times of the Gentiles," we come now to the characteristics of this period. In Daniel 2:1-49 we are given an outline of the successive powers into whose hands rule and authority are committed. This outline of Gentile power was given to Nebuchadnezzar in a dream. He called upon his magicians and astrologers to make known to him, not only the interpretation of the dream, but also the dream itself. This command was thought to be

unreasonable by the wise men. They said, “tell thy servants the dream, and we will shew the interpretation” (5: 4). The autocratic character of the king came out in his answer: “The king answered and said to the Chaldeans, The thing is gone from me: if ye will not make known unto me the dream, with the interpretation thereof, ye shall be cut in pieces, and your houses shall be made a dunghill” (5: 5). The magicians were in great danger and the more they remonstrated with the king, the more furious he became. Even Daniel and his fellows were threatened. Evidently Daniel had not been consulted as to whether he could solve the matter. However, when the matter was made known to Daniel he asked for time and called together his companions, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah. These four godly children of Judah had a prayer meeting.

They decided that, “they would desire mercies of the God of heaven concerning this secret” (5: 18). The attitude of Daniel and his companions to what seemed an impossible situation is a striking example to us in our day. How do we react to circumstances where no way of escape is evident? What a resource we have! There is a “throne of grace,” available at all times. In spite of this, how often we try to sort things out ourselves and fail. When the Lord Jesus was here, He referred to a faith able to remove a mountain (Mark 11:23). Nebuchadnezzar and his edict must have seemed like a mountain that could never be removed. But by prayer Daniel and his friends did remove the mountain, for we read: “Then was the secret revealed unto Daniel in a night vision. Then Daniel blessed the God of heaven” (5: 19). Not only did they pray, but when the answer was given, Daniel was full of gratitude. “I thank Thee, and praise Thee, O Thou God of my fathers... for Thou hast now made known unto us the king’s matter” (5: 23).

G. Bell (To be continued, if the Lord will) Having Loved His Own Which Were In The World (6)

John 15:15-27

Using the figure of a vine and its branches, the Lord has not only demonstrated how vital it is to abide in Him, but that they are thus able to bring forth fruit for the Father’s pleasure. In unfolding these things, He is seeking to draw them closer to Himself. In the intimacy of this fellowship with Him and the Father, He can speak freely to them as friends. He calls His own His “friends” because they have a ready ear and heart to receive all that the Father has given to His Son to communicate to them. His heart, the heart of the Son, had gone out to them. how favoured they were! Further, He makes known that they were His chosen ones, set in a place of favour, as ordained to go and bring forth fruit which should remain. This would be fruit in service for Him. In serving Him they have a place of nearness that gives free access to the Father in His Name. They can seek the Father’s help and support. Such is the value of that Name to the Father that they will receive their requests. This service for Him requires unity amongst themselves and they are commanded, “That ye love one another.”

He passes on now to speak of the place of their service, where they were to bring forth fruit. The whole sphere and atmosphere of love into which they had been brought, is in direct contrast to a hateful and hating world into which He is sending them. He is hated by it: therefore they who are His own will be likewise hated. His deep caring love for them reveals these things to them so that they may be ready, prepared and strengthened. They were once part of the world, but as chosen out from it He says: “Ye are not of the world.” The measure of their Lord’s acceptance or rejection would determine their own. They would be rejected on His account. Darkness and ignorance marked the world that received not the light of the revelation of the Father, manifested through and

in the Son. The world did see Him whom the Father sent, for He had walked before them for three and a half years, and could not be hidden from their eyes. His words were words of truth, from which they could not escape. He had done works of power which they could not deny, though they refused them. Hatred toward the Son was hatred toward the Father, and this without a cause, for the Lord was without sin. All this He reveals to them beforehand, that they may be left in no doubt about the world into which He, in love, was sending them. How rich and how precious, therefore, would be the fruit they would bear. Were they then to be here without power? Not so. The Comforter, the Spirit of truth, would be their power and resource. He would come from the Father, sent by the Son, to bring a testimony from thence of His glory. Besides this heavenly testimony, they would be enabled to testify also concerning Him, for they had been with Him “from the beginning” of His ministry. His own could bear witness of His life of humility, His path of love, and His devotion, even to the death of the cross. Beside all this, as they lived like Him in the world, they would manifest Him continually for the Father’s pleasure while He was absent.

(The brother who has written this series of articles wishes to remain anonymous) Two Views of the History of the Church (1) (Continued from page 293)

4. Thyatira

Verses 14 to 20. Oh the sense of ease the south wind gave (5: 13). What a false sense of security! The period of acceptance by the world had Satan’s desired effect of lulling the assembly into a sense of comfortable numbness. Perched on deck with proud confidence, they made a sitting target for the sweeping hurricane of popery. This introduces perhaps the darkest and longest blot on the assembly’s history in this world. The features figured by all that happened to the ship hardly need comment: driven by the wind (5:15) — every wind of doctrine; they made themselves masters of the boat (5: 16) — as lording it over their possessions, recognising positions of ecclesiastical mastery; they used helps (5: 17) — human helps, saints, men and women dead and living. With no sense of the value of the finished work of Christ, they feared running aground and with cargo and furniture thrown overboard (5: 18, 19) they saw neither sun nor stars for many days (5: 20) and gave up all hope of salvation. No guidance from God. No access to His Word. What absolute utter darkness! Well might we speak of them as the dark ages.

How significant that over this entire period there is not one word from Paul.

5. Sardis

“Ye ought, O men, to have hearkened to me.” What characterised the revival known as the Reformation was a return to the Word of God. Gospel truth, justification by faith alone without works, the finished work of Christ, the sovereignty of God — all revived to the hearts and minds of many. The gospel Paul unfolded in Romans became the food and impulse of men of faith. Yet, as we also see here in verses 21 to 25, it is not a word of congratulation that the Lord gave to Sardis. In many respects, it is a word of rebuke. Paul’s voice was heard again after a silence of about one thousand years, but the word heard did not go beyond the truth of the gospel and the assurance of salvation.

6. Philadelphia The words of the Lord Jesus to Philadelphia were, “thou hast kept the word of My patience” (Revelation 3:10). He has been patiently waiting for the day when He will receive His bride to Himself. Early last century this was impressed on the hearts of godly men and women who

responded to the exhortation, “Behold, the bridegroom; go forth to meet Him” (Matthew 25:6). The Person of Christ and the imminence of His return drew forth a response from the hearts of many. They kept the word of His patience. In the words of our chapter, they “supposed that some land neared them” (5: 27). This “supposing” was founded on the teaching of the Word of God, by the Spirit of God, who confirmed to the hearts and minds of many the nearness of Christ’s return. This fresh response to the Word of God in its presentation of Christ and His coming enabled the subsequent understanding and appreciation of all the characteristic truths of the dispensation which had been committed to Paul. This was accompanied by an intense sense of humility on account of the assembly’s failure. It was accompanied by godly fear (5: 29) and this produced an absolute reliance on the Word of God and the Person of Christ. They cast four anchors. It is Christ, the anchor for the soul. For connected with the apprehension of Himself as dead and risen, as ascended and seated at God’s right hand, and as coming again are the four great realms of truth peculiar to the present dispensation: 1 — the truth of the gospel; 2 — the great doctrines of Christian life and position in connection with His death and resurrection; 3 — the truth of the assembly in all its varied aspects in connection with His having ascended and seated Himself at God’s right hand; and 4 — the rapture of the saints, their association with Christ in His millennial reign, and the manifestation of His glory by the judgment of the living and the dead, following His coming again. In summary, evangelical, doctrinal, ecclesiastical and prophetic truth.

These wonderful truths are so closely linked together: they depend on one another, they are consistent with one another, and they characterise this dispensation. They were, in a peculiar manner, committed to the apostle Paul, who by them completed the Word of God (Colossians 1:25). Early last century, when the anchors were cast, one wrote of “the testimony of God which He is giving at this time,” and enumerated the following truths as examples of that testimony:

“the peculiar glory of the exalted Man, its consequences in the sending of the Holy Ghost, the union of the church with its Head, the indwelling of the Comforter in the individual saints, their being members of His body, of His flesh, and His bones; the taking the bride up and presenting it to Himself, and the rapture of the saints: all that constitutes distinctively Christianity.”1 How greatly we need to feed on and be formed by these truths. When once the saints had been drawn together by the appreciation and affection for Christ, and by the love of the truth, it was not long before Satan attacked. The consequence of his attack was that the principle of independency was manifested (5:30); the sailors tried to go out on their own. The Person of Christ and the truth of God unite and establish souls. When these are, in any measure, let go (collective) unity and (individual) establishment decline commensurately. v. 33, 34

Paul’s counsel to those on the ship was to partake of some food. How we need to feed on the Word of God. “Controversy may instruct but it seldom feeds the soul.”2 When recovered, all these doctrines had to be fought for. They were rejected by the mass of the Christian profession. Yet the soul is not nourished by arguing and contending for the truth — rather by meditating on it and responding to God in worship on account of it. v. 35, 36

Paul broke bread. This is obviously not the Lord’s supper — but how forcibly does the use of the words describing his act remind us of it! The Lord’s supper was one feature of the dispensation which was delivered to Paul in order to ensure its perpetuation until the Lord comes (1 Corinthians 11:23). In it there is seen the link between the three great positions of Christ mentioned earlier.

The risen and ascended Lord delivered it to Paul. By celebrating it we announce the Lord's death. It is to continue until He comes again.

It is a solemn indictment against us that we can, as rejoicing in the work of God and the blessings of God, subtly begin to grow complacent in them and to regard them as though we had merited them. No doubt each one on the ship took courage from the words Paul spoke and the exhortations he gave; but the courage taken from the Word of God became corrupted, and confidence in self took its place. Thus pride enters in. A simple matter to number the people (5: 37), but what consequences! David learned this the hard way (2 Samuel 24:1-25). The self-complacent spirit of Laodicea can lie virtually undetected in our hearts, and once it has taken root it grows rapidly.

7. Laodicea

"And having satisfied themselves with food, they lightened the ship, casting out the wheat into the sea" (5: 38).

"thou sayest I am rich, and am grown rich, and have need of nothing" (Revelation 3:17).

How we need to confess that so much of this departure is true of us today. The wheat would correspond to all the truth connected with Christ in resurrection (John 12:23-24); all food that would tend to strengthen our appreciation of Him in glory and, in so doing, fashion us more and more in His image; all ministry that would have as its object our living down here as those who belong to heaven and have Christ as our life, having died with Him and been raised with Him. How dare we throw it overboard! How dare we say "we have had enough"!

Subsequent to throwing the wheat overboard they are unable to recognise the land and as a consequence they try to make do as best they can. Is our spiritual vision also impaired through not feasting on "all the counsel of God" as announced by Paul (Acts 20:27)? Have we relied rather on our own expedient solutions to the state in which we are found individually and collectively? How the intensity of the love of the Lord Jesus would seek to remedy this situation (Revelation 3:18-20). If we are willing to recognise any of these sad features as characterising us, there is a way back: the way of repentance.

Acts 27:1-44, however, refers to what is general. Any one of us may well buy gold and white garments and eyesalve, we may well repent and respond to His call and have fellowship with Himself, but the church of God, already in ruins as to its testimony here, has no hope of recovery held out to it. The truth will be cast away yet more and more and every wind of doctrine will take control until all is a complete wreck testimonially (5: 40). A sorry end indeed to the history of the vessel of testimony left here in responsibility to Christ; but a just end in view of the setting aside of all that was revealed to, and announced by, the apostle Paul. Yet in the faithfulness of God, although his doctrine has been ignored and rejected, the final results of it will not fail. Not one of Christ's own will be lost. He will not be dissatisfied with the fruit of the travail of His soul. He will not fail to present the assembly, glorious, to Himself. As Man filling all things, He will take delight in that which is His fulness. These things are connected with the eternal counsels of the Godhead, counsels which were once unknown, but have now been made known through the apostle Paul. They will not fail. The truth of these things is still available to us today. May we have a heart for them!

G. Quail (To be continued, if the Lord will)

REFERENCES:

1. Collected Writings of J. N. Darby, Volume 10, p. 268, 269

2. ibid. p. 91 Studies in the Book of Revelation (5) (The Plumstead Conference, April 1995) Continued from page 310 Revelation 7:15-17

“Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple, and he that sits upon the throne shall spread his tabernacle over them” (5: 15).

We were speaking earlier about the feast of trumpets and the day of atonement. Here I suppose we have reached the fulfilment of the feast of tabernacles.

I’m sure time is well spent in seeking to develop a little the thought of the feast of tabernacles. In verse 15 this company are said to “serve Him day and night in His temple.” The word for “serve” is the word to serve in a priestly way and quite clearly God gets a yield from this company that are brought out of the great tribulation. I wonder sometimes whether we take account of this sufficiently that everything is for the pleasure of God. This is the end to which God is working and He will have it, of course, in eternity. But in the meantime, in the millennium, there is a company who are able to minister to His pleasure because of the experiences they have gained in the great tribulation. That is even more striking when we remember that this is a Gentile company. We might suppose it of Israel or of the church today, but this company is neither one nor the other. Nevertheless they are still activated by this priestly worship.

“They shall not hunger any more, neither shall they thirst any more, nor shall the sun at all fall on them, nor any burning heat; because the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall shepherd them, and shall lead them to fountains of waters of life, and God shall wipe away every tear from their eyes” (vs. 16-17).

What is the reason that this company is so thankful and what is the theme of their priestly service? Salvation is, for them, having gone victoriously through the tribulation and where is the source of this? I would like to read Isaiah 63:1-19, verse 9, “In all their affliction He was afflicted, and the angel of His presence saved them: in His love and in His pity He redeemed them: and He bare them, and carried them all the days of old.” Every single circumstance that this company will have gone through, the Lord Jesus has gone through before them. This is a great encouragement for us now. It is not the same dispensation but there is not any circumstance or situation which the Lord Jesus cannot understand and carry us through. When it says in verse 17, “He shall shepherd them,” that surely refers to the circumstances of their tribulation. He shepherds them in the midst of all those trials and there they learn His heart and, brought into millennial conditions, they give Him an adequate response. In Psalms 23:4 we are taught the value of the Lord walking with us in the valley of the shadow of death. That is where we realise that the Lord is with us and I think many of us have had this experience. That is going to be a stimulus to their worship. Most altars in Old Testament times were built after someone had been delivered. Here, those who have been saved will return and an eternal song will be in their hearts and on their tongues.

Doesn’t that confirm that the principles we learn in other families are always the same principles, whether it is the Gentiles as here, the Jewish remnant which we consider so much, or the

assembly. Even the verse you quoted from Isaiah 63:1-19 shows that when we are in tribulation and learn that He has been there, then our hearts are won and drawn to Him. That same principle applies all along the way.

I heard from the brethren in Israel that sometimes when a palm tree is growing crooked they weight it with a large stone to make it grow straight up. That is a nice illustration of tribulation, which can be necessary to produce a righteous life. We have heard that the palm tree is not connected with the tabernacle but with the temple. In Leviticus 23:1-44 it is linked with the feast of tabernacles. The Passover could be kept even in the wilderness but not the feast of tabernacles. That feast looked back to the journey in the wilderness and celebrated their coming into the rest of the promised land as illustrated in Hebrews 4:1-16. That is why the feast of tabernacles is a beautiful picture of the millennial rest when the King will reign in justice. The first of the seven feasts was the sabbath and that was God's rest in creation. The last of the seven feasts, which is the feast of tabernacles, is the emblem of God's rest in redemption. The first is the first creation, and the last the emblem of the new creation. The Lord Jesus is the creator of all worlds and He is the beginning of the creation of God.

There was an eighth day connected with the feast of tabernacles which there wasn't with the other feasts. That seems to suggest that there is something beyond the kingdom. There is a new heaven and a new earth.

I would like to ask why in Revelation 1:1-20 and this chapter we have washing with the blood, while in the Old Testament there is only washing with water and the blood is only sprinkled?

Brother Heijkoop said once at a conference in Dillenburg that by the expression in verse 14, "have washed their long robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb," we should not think about atonement particularly, but that their practical life was in harmony with the blood of the Lamb. So here it is practical righteousness.

I have not made a study of this recently but my impression is that sprinkling with blood, an expression used in the Old Testament, signifies "committal to" the significance of what that blood stood for. When we come to the New Testament and the matter of washing, then obviously redemption has been accomplished and we are in a completely new set of circumstances.

I think it will help us is to refer to 1 John 1:7, "But if we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin." The question has very often been asked as to what sins the apostle is referring. It is a general principle that its application comes for the initial washing, the initial purification from sin. Then when we lapse along the way we still need the efficacy of the blood and the water.

I think it helps in looking at this verse in 1 John 1:1-10 to remember that it is in the present tense, "the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin." It shows the efficacy of the blood which is the foundation for all. The believer does not need a second application of the blood. The institution of the red heifer is helpful. There was the water of purification for sin and that was mixed with the ashes of the heifer. There was no question of another application of blood but there is the suggestion that by the Word of God the truth of the cross is brought to bear upon the soul which has failed. That would have the effect of humbling the person in the presence of God and eventually bringing restoration. The two things together, the water and the ashes, obviously refer

to the Lord's death as the anti-type of the red heifer, but there is no re-application of blood.

It has been mentioned that the feast of tabernacles was not kept in the wilderness but was to be enjoyed in the land when every man was under his own vine and his own fig tree. There is a very interesting verse in Nehemiah 8:1-18 where we find that "since the days of Jeshua the son of Nun until that day had not the children of Israel done so" (kept the feast of tabernacles). I think we ought to take that home to our hearts. In the smallest conditions, when they had returned from Babylon, they were able to get the gain of what the feast of tabernacles stood for. And right at the close of the present dispensation we can get the gain of what the feast of tabernacles stands for. We read in this very context, "and there was very great gladness" (Nehemiah 8:17). That is connected with the end to which God is working and in spirit we can anticipate that end and enter into that gladness. In Deuteronomy 16:1-22 there are three feasts. In the first, the Passover, the children of Israel had to eat bread of affliction and to afflict their souls or they would be cut off from Israel. In the second, the feast of weeks, which represents the present dispensation, there was a measure of joy. In the last feast, "thou shalt be wholly joyful." There is no place for affliction any more. This is where we have come to in this passage, and we have the hope of reaching it. In Deuteronomy 16:1-22 the feast of tabernacles is also called "the feast of our rejoicing." That is the name given to it by the Hebrew people. The "feast of ingathering," is another name of it. And it is a company matter rather than something to be enjoyed in an individual way.

Why do those who will enjoy such a blessing come to the fountains of blessing? Their thirst will be quenched. as a result of His work on the cross those who believe in Him never thirst spiritually any more. The comfort that is referred to last of all is mentioned twice in Revelation, once here in Revelation 7:1-17 and once in Revelation 21:1-27. Is it not remarkable? We do often weep now, but there will be a time when there will be no more tears. When they went through the tribulation they were hungry, they were thirsty, and they were in the burning heat, so their blessing answers exactly to what they have suffered. I think there is practical teaching in that for us. The measure in which we will have found the Lord Jesus with us in our trials will be the basis for present and future blessing and worship. That is why our journey through this world is immensely important for us.

We can have these blessings in our own souls now. In John 6:1-71 we find our Lord Jesus as the Bread of Life, so we need not hunger. In John 7:1-53, notice it was at the time of the feast of tabernacles, we find the Lord Jesus connected with the fountain of living water. He satisfies our thirst. And in John 8:1-59 the Lord Jesus speaks about Himself as the Light of the World and He said this in connection with the Shechinah, the bright cloud of the Divine presence. He shields us from the burning heat.

"The Sermon on the Mount" (15) Thou shalt not commit adultery (Matthew 5:27-30)

Following upon the other references to the law, the Lord Jesus now quotes the seventh commandment: "Thou shalt not commit adultery" (Exodus 20:14; Deuteronomy 5:18). Marriage is something into which two persons enter for life, and ever since creation it has enjoyed God's special care. According to the New Testament it is a picture of the relationship between Christ and His assembly, marked by divine love and human devotion. But what has become of marriage through sin! It was not the will of God that Lamech, Abraham, Jacob, Solomon and other men of the Old Testament should have several wives at the same time, and this only brought distress into their families. How serious was the adultery David committed with Bathsheba! And how are things

today with regard to matrimonial morals — not only in the world, but also among Christians? In recent decades Biblical standards in society have been systematically done away with in this area too. In God's sight immoral behaviour is so abominable that Paul had to write to Ephesus: "But fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not be once named among you, as becometh saints" (Ephesians 5:3). This means that we should not mention these things frivolously and so make little of them. The Bible speaks very clearly as to God's judgment about these sins. Holy Scripture not only calls prostitution fornication, but all extramarital intercourse, even where there may be the intention to get married, and even if it is done only once (cf. Genesis 34:1-31; Genesis 38:1-30). In the world today the word fornication is only used in connection with the first meaning. In the New Testament, however, extramarital intercourse in general is called fornication, that of married persons is called adultery, and both are condemned as abominable sin (Matthew 15:19; 1 Corinthians 6:9; Hebrews 13:4). In the Old Testament, adultery, unfaithfulness towards the spouse for the satisfaction of lust, was to be dealt with most severely. According to the law of Sinai this sin had to be punished with death (Leviticus 20:10; Deuteronomy 22:22-24). In the first place the law contained God's regulations for the outward and social life of His earthly people, and for this reason only the accomplished offence was to be punished, even though the tenth commandment forbad the coveting of the neighbour's wife (as well as all his possessions. Exodus 20:17). If a Jew kept the commandment not to commit adultery, he was acting according to God's will and contributed towards the maintenance of the people's community according to God's order. Fear of the punishment threatened certainly contributed to this. However, the mere outward observance of this and all the other commandments could not justify him before God.

"But I say unto you" In His own authority the Lord Jesus contrasts the commandment, "Thou shalt not commit adultery," with His words, "But I say unto you." He does not speak against an interpretation which is more favourable to man and a weakening of the divine commandment, (unlike verse 22), and certainly not against the commandment itself, for He was not come to destroy but to fulfil. For that reason the Lord now says, "But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her, hath committed adultery with her already in his heart" (5: 28). Because of the teaching of the scribes and Pharisees, the Jews thought the mere outward observance of the law was the way to be justified before God. Here, the Lord points to the human heart and shows that adultery has its source there. This is not a "spiritualisation of the law," as is sometimes said. He reveals for the first time something which had to become clear by experience to every honest Israelite, namely, that everyone who endeavoured to keep the commandment, "Thou shalt not commit adultery," had within themselves those very lusts which led to the actions forbidden by God, and had not the strength to overcome them. The lusts were even provoked by the commandment: "... for I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet" (Romans 7:7-11). The law of Sinai did contain commandments directed at the attitude and heart, for example the tenth commandment, "Thou shalt not covet they neighbour's house," etc. (Exodus 20:17). Other passages have a similar bearing: "Thou shalt not hate thy brother in thine heart... but thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself..." (Leviticus 19:17-18); "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart..." (Deuteronomy 6:5). However, most by far of the commandments regulated the outward conduct of the Israelites.

Adultery in the heart The Lord Jesus now explains that before God it is not just the accomplished act that is sin, but the looking with lust on a woman, for this is adultery in the heart. The word

“adultery” shows that either the man or both are married. Nevertheless, no unmarried believer should think that these words of the Lord have nothing to say to him. The Lord is not speaking here about accidental, unintentional looks which can hardly be avoided, but about the conscious covetous looking: “Whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her...” The intentional look is therefore preceded by the sinful thought in the heart. This distinction is very important. Nowadays we can hardly move in this world without, unintentionally, continually witnessing the moral depravity of our time. We are easily defiled by this. The intentional covetous and sinful look is something completely different. No Christian can avoid unclean thoughts rising up in his mind but they only become sin when instead of turning away from them he consciously gives himself to them. If covetous looks and unclean lines of thought are sin, then it is also sin if believing women and girls cause and provoke this by their dress and behaviour. The more casual and free contact between the sexes, especially with the younger generation and the negative example of most of their peers of the world, can lead to carelessness and great dangers. God-fearing Job said: “I made a covenant with mine eyes; why then should I think upon a maid?” (Job 31:1). However, there are also over-sensitive and over-anxious Christians whose consciences are heavily burdened by involuntary looks and thoughts. I would like to remind such of the well-known words of Martin Luther which he wrote on this verse: “I cannot prevent a bird flying over my head, but what I can prevent is it building a nest in my hair or biting off my nose.”

“And if thy right eye offend thee”

How serious the Lord judged the lustful looks and thoughts to be becomes obvious from His next words: “And if thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell” (5: 29). In the next verse He says nearly the same with regard to the right hand (cf. ch. 18:8). The Lord is not calling for self-mutilation or asceticism in these words. The Creator will never demand that His creature mutilate the body he has received from Himself. Even if someone plucked out both his eyes, the lust would still remain in his heart. Rather, the Lord here extends the teaching to the question of self-judgment. The mention of the right hand points to this.

Self-judgment The eye, the light of the body, can rightly be called the “mirror of the soul.”1 Furthermore, in the Bible the right eye is often described as something very precious (1 Samuel 11:2; Zechariah 11:17). The right hand, the “organ of action,” is mentioned much more often in the Holy Scriptures.2 The right eye and the right hand are symbols of attitudes and actions, but at the same time also of the precious and important things in human life. If these offend us, 1:e. are a cause of sin or stumbling, then we should not even spare the most precious and important things in our lives, but honestly and strictly judge ourselves, and if necessary separate from them. Even if they are not bad in themselves, this does not mean that they are not dangerous!

1 Cf. Matthew 6:22-23; Proverbs 21:4; Ecclesiastes 11:9; Ezekiel 6:9; Ezekiel 18:12; Ezekiel 20:8; 2 Peter 2:14.

2 For example Genesis 48:17; Exodus 29:20; Psalms 73:23; Psalms 121:5; Revelation 1:16; Revelation 10:5; Revelation 13:16. The Word of God again and again points out that there are only two pathways on earth and two termini, either following the Lord Jesus with glory as the end, or a life of sin which leads to hell. It is the same here in the “sermon on the mount.” The apostle Paul was a disciple of the Lord, who recognised the consequences of completely surrendering and

following the Lord and who put this into practice: “But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection; lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway” (1 Corinthians 9:27). He wrote to the assembly at Corinth: “Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers... shall inherit the kingdom of God” (1 Corinthians 6:9-10).

Arend Remmers Psalms 119:1-176 (18) (Continued from page 298) 15. SAMECH — A SUPPORT Verses 97-120. The Importance of Bible Study Section Fifteen. Verses 113-120: “The Word of God for Our Support” The name of this letter denotes a prop, or a support, and its form in the Phoenician alphabet answers to this. Its numerical value is sixty. The Ephraimites pronounced this letter Samech (Judges 12:6) like a “sh” instead of an “s,” and were consequently put to death. We learn from this incident that we should distinguish between things that are important and things that are unimportant. To press on others our views about unimportant things is like having our own “shibboleth.”

It gives spiritual discernment Verse 113: SEH-GAPHEEM...“...vain thoughts...”

Notice the contrasts in this verse: Hate - Love! These are very decisive expressions. He certainly has deep convictions! The writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews was longing for his readers to grow in spiritual discernment. He said: “... strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil” (Hebrews 5:14). Instead of “vain thoughts” the Hebrew also allows us to translate it “divided”: 1:e. a divided heart. The French Bible renders this “doubles de coeur” — double hearted. James gives us this warning about a divided heart: “... he that doubts is like a wave of the sea driven by the wind and tossed about; for let not that man think that he shall receive anything from the Lord; he is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways” (James 1:6-8, J.N.D. Trans.). This kind of attitude is hateful to the Psalmist. Is it also hateful to you, my dear reader?

It acts like a shield of faith Verse 114: SITH-RI...“(Thou art) my covert...”

Here we have the defensive attitude expressed in the words, “Thou art my hiding place.” There are times when we should flee from the evil one and temptation. Then there is the offensive attitude when we need our shield of faith. The Lord is both to us: covert and shield. The Lord protects us from the sun during the day, and from the moon during the night (Psalms 121:6). The literal translation of Isaiah 59:19 is: “When comes like a flood the foe, the Spirit of Jehovah shall make flee against him...” The J.N.D. Translation gives: “When the adversary shall come in like a flood, the Spirit of Jehovah will lift up a banner against him.” These verses certainly show that those who “... hope in Thy word..,” do not hope in vain!

It helps me stand and resist Verse 115: SOOROO...“Turn away (O evildoers)...”

Therefore, having put on the complete armour of God, and having taken the sword of the Spirit and the shield of faith, we must now stand against the artifices of the devil. “Depart from me, ye evildoers,” says the writer. We are able to say the same in the Name of the Lord Jesus. “Resist the devil, and he will flee from you,” is the promise we can claim (James 4:7).

It is not enough to hate vain thoughts. We must hate evil in any form. In this verse we find the only mention in Psalms 119:1-176 of the intimate expression “my God.” He has this intimate fellowship with the Lord and wants to do His will and keep His commandments. It is only in the measure that

we give ourselves to do His will that we shall be able also to resist evil and evil-doers.

It helps me to remain standing Verse 116: SAH-MACHNI..."Uphold me..."

Verses 116 and 117 carry the theme of this section of eight verses: "Uphold me," "Hold… me up." The Word of God gives us the support we need day by day to live the Christian life. "Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of My righteousness" (Isaiah 41:10). What a wonderful promise for us to lay hold of! He who gives life, also sustains it. We are "kept by the power of God" (1 Peter 1:5). Indeed, all our springs are in Him. Our sufficiency is of God. If we trust in His precious Word we will never be put to shame.

It will save Verse 117: SAH-GADNI..."Hold… me up..."

I remember in my childhood standing on the ice of a canal that was frozen over. How slippery it was and how difficult to stay on my feet! How good it felt when my father was there beside me, holding me up and helping me take my first steps on my skates! The strong hand of my father was there to support me. These things can be given a spiritual application. There was first of all the sense of weakness, and then the realisation that there are slippery paths before us, full of dangers and pitfalls. Our safety depends every moment upon the upholding power of our Lord and Saviour. "The eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms: and He shall thrust out the enemy from before thee" (Deuteronomy 33:27).

It gives me victory through the Lord Jesus Verse 118: SAH-LAHT..."Thou hast trodden..." Is this a prophetic view of the future victory of the Lord Jesus Christ when all His enemies will be made His footstool (Psalms 110:1)? The cross of Calvary was the place of Christ's victory over the powers of darkness. This victory has not yet been universally manifested because God is merciful, "not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance" (2 Peter 3:9). However, mark the character of those mentioned in this verse: they, "err from Thy statutes." It is not that they err in their minds through ignorance, but they err in their hearts through obstinacy. They deliberately err from God. They are like those in the parable who say: "We will not have this Man to reign over us" (Luke 19:14). They say: "We desire not the knowledge of Thy ways" (Job 21:14). In verse 119 they are justly called "the wicked"! "Their deceit is falsehood," is another way of saying: "Evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived" (2 Timothy 3:13).

It shows me what sin really is Verse 119: SEEGUM..."...(like) dross..."

Today there are those in the so-called Christian profession, "Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof..." (2 Timothy 3:5). Paul says: "… from such turn away." It is said of Israel: "Son of man, the house of Israel is to Me become dross... Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD, Because ye are all become dross... so will I gather you in Mine anger and in my fury, and I will leave you there, and melt you" (Ezekiel 22:18-20).

We are living in the last days before the Lord Jesus comes to take His bride home. These are days of apostasy and departure from the faith. We must therefore "… try the spirits whether they are of God..." (1 John 4:1). We shall be able to discern these false spirits only when we know what the Word says. "Therefore I love Thy testimonies" is the positive attitude taken by the Psalmist. We do

well to follow his example!

It will keep me from sin Verse 120: SAH-MAR..."(My flesh) has shivered…"

"My flesh trembleth for fear of Thee...?" Our loving Father punishes the wicked but does He punish His own dear children? Meditate on the following verses: "Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God" (2 Corinthians 7:1). "... work out your own salvation with fear and trembling: For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure" (Php 2:12-13). "And if ye call on the Father, who without respect of persons judgeth according to every man's work, pass the time of your sojourning here in fear..." (1 Peter 1:17). These verses prove that believers should have a healthy fear of the Father, just as a child who loves his father fears the punishment he deserves when he acts in disobedience to his father's will. We also fear to grieve and sadden someone we love. "I am afraid of Thy judgments" says the Psalmist. With the help and support the Lord gives us through His precious Word, we can experience victory over our spiritual enemies, avoid pitfalls and being deceived by false teaching. It will also keep us sensitive to His will and help us to obey Him in our daily lives.

C. Bruins

Vol 03 - Truth & Testimony Vol. 3, No. 12, 1996.

Truth & Testimony Vol. 3, No. 12, 1996. The Collective Bodies Existing on Earth Genesis 10:6; Genesis 10:8-12; Genesis 10:32; Genesis 11:1-6. Joshua 7:10-12; Joshua 7:20-22; Joshua 7:25 2 Kings 18:28-35; 2 Kings 19:14; 2 Kings 19:35; 2 Kings 20:12-16. Zechariah 5:5-11 Revelation 17:3-5; Revelation 18:2-5; Revelation 18:9; Revelation 18:11; Revelation 18:17-24; Revelation 19:1-3 Ephesians 1:22-23; Ephesians 4:10-15 The portions of the Word of God that we have read this evening are connected with the collective bodies which exist upon earth. It is very interesting to discover that two of these collective bodies are found from the very beginning and continue up to this present time. We therefore need to consider these powers because we may have some relation to them and have to learn their true character.

Genesis 10:1-32 is a chapter that few would read with interest. It seems to be just a listing of generations, of fathers, sons, and so on. What can be interesting about this? But the way that God gives us history is not at all the way that men give it. It is clearly stated in the last verse of chapter 10 that, “these are the families of the sons of Noah... from these came the distribution of the nations on the earth after the flood.” Not only are the names of the nations given here found throughout the Bible, but they have characters that they keep during all the history up to the end. In Ezekiel, especially in Ezekiel 38:1-23; Ezekiel 39:1-29, we find many of these names mentioned in connection with the very last days before the millennium. The few verses we have read in chapter 10 speak to us of two bodies quite different in character, even though they are presented at the same time and are closely connected in their origin and the regions where they are located. Nimrod was a son of Cush, who was a son of Ham, the one who sinned against his father. He began to be mighty on the earth, and was a mighty hunter before Jehovah. Those are few words but they are full of meaning. He was under the curse but that was nothing to him. He did not fear Jehovah at all and he was willing and able to show he was strong before Him. There is a clear difference between the hunter and people of God like David and Amos who were shepherds who took care of the sheep. The hunter tries to kill the animals he is hunting. This remains Nimrod’s character down the ages. He is closely connected with Babel because the beginning of his kingdom was Babel. Babel is described more specifically in chapter 11, but first in chapter 10 we have mention of the connection with Nimrod. Babylon is located in the land of Shinar and we will find elsewhere that Babylon is in some respects the counterpart of Nimrod. Nimrod is mighty and rules the old city of Nineveh and the people there. He is what, today, we would call a dictator. Babylon is completely the reverse. There is nobody specifically mentioned in connection with Babylon. The people desire to have a name and they combine their efforts to achieve their aim. The basic principle of Babylon is that unity makes strong and the desire of Babylon is to have a name, that is to say, to be recognised and to be important before everybody on the earth. We are going to see that these two collective bodies, with their specific characteristics, reign during all the time of the land of Shinar.

There is a portion that we have not read, in Genesis 12:1-20, where Abram is called outside these people of the earth. He is a man of faith who represents those who are called out of the existing

people and who are for God in a world which is at enmity with Him. That is to say, Abraham is totally the opposite of Nimrod and Babylon. Now we are going to see the relationship of the people of God to these collective and powerful bodies. The first mention we have of Babylon after Genesis 11:1-32 is in the story of Achan in Joshua 7:1-26. It is particularly interesting because it comes just at the time the children of Israel are entering the promised land. They had just fought the battle of Jericho and gained the victory. The Lord Himself had thrown down the walls of the city. At this crucial time there is the introduction of this mantle of Shinar which was taken from Jericho with some silver and gold. Achan saw it and coveted it, and through that action he introduced the curse of God among the people. All the people of Israel were defeated just because of this corruption which had its origin in Shinar. This was at the very beginning of the life of the people of God in their own country. What a warning! That is really the first mention of Babylon corrupting the people and this is what we are going to find right up to the end in Revelation. The reaction of Joshua was good. He rent his clothes, and turned to God about the situation. The Lord told him very clearly what had happened and showed him what was to be done in order that Israel might clear themselves in the matter. There was a clear confession of the sin by Achan, and they stoned him: they rid themselves totally of the sin which was among them. So, the first reaction of the people of God was good. They showed that they were pure of heart and put away this uncleanness. It is most solemn to see that this one sin of this one person introduced and placed the curse on the whole of the people of God. The next portions we have read are in the Second Book of Kings. In 2 Kings 18:1-37; 2 Kings 19:1-37 we have the story of Rab-shakeh who came from Assyria and spoke to Hezekiah, and in 2 Kings 20:1-21 we have the story of the visit of the messengers from Babylon. If I may summarise the speech of Rab-shakeh, he says to them, “It is no use relying upon the Lord. If Hezekiah tells you that you may rely upon the Lord he is deceiving you. It is no use relying upon the Lord because I am the one who is mighty and I am resolved to take you to a land which is better than yours. Nobody has been able to resist me so I am the lord and the Lord you are relying upon is nothing.” The city and people specifically named in Genesis 10:1-32 in connection with Nimrod, were found in Assyria, and the speech of Rab-shakeh shows the same principle we have seen with Nimrod. There is a collective body with a strong leader and hierarchy. It is strong, but strong against God. It doesn’t care about God but only about itself. The consequence of this is that it oppresses the people of God. There is direct persecution of believers. So from Assyria, Nimrod, and Nineveh we get power, a dictator, and a hierarchy; oppression, violence, and persecution of the children of God. Babylon is corruption introduced among the people of God. Nothing else is to be expected, at any time, from these worldly bodies.

We have read how Hezekiah overcame the problem of Assyria and Rab-shakeh. He didn’t dispute with him. He told his people to keep silent and he went to the house of God with Rab-shakeh’s letter and showed it to the Lord. Then the answer came from the Lord to Isaiah the prophet, indicating that He Himself would deal with the matter. we have read that in one night one hundred and eighty-five thousand were killed. All the mighty power of this nation was nothing before God. Hezekiah and the people of Israel were in very great weakness, but they were the victors in this story, not by their own power but by the power of God. But immediately after this victory Hezekiah became sick and was visited by people who were sympathetic about his sickness. They came and entered his house and he showed them all the treasure which God had given. He showed all the riches which were from God and which were blessings from God, to the coveting world of Babylon. This also has a typical meaning. There were not only the riches but also the fine oil which could be

used for the perfume for God. How can it be that a believer shares the precious portion reserved for God with the corrupting world? Immediately the Lord sent the prophet Isaiah again, who asks Hezekiah, “What said these men? and from whence came they to thee? ... What have they seen in thy house?” Hezekiah confesses what he has done and then the speech is very strong: “... all that is in thy house... shall be carried to Babylon.” Hezekiah was empowered by God but he sought the recognition of the world and lost everything. How much all this should speak to us and to our hearts, that we may realise and consider what is the character of the world and what should be the character of the believer.

We are not going to consider at length the passage in Zechariah. The specific character which is seen in the vision in Zechariah 5:1-11 is wickedness, and the woman with the wings of a stork takes the wickedness back to its origin which is Babylon in the land of Shinar. This is a very important point.

We have read some verses in Revelation. Without going into many details, we may observe that what we have seen already, we see again. There is Babylon, and people trying to be united. They have a religious character, and they are trying to have a name, to be important in the world. They do this as a collective body. They introduce corruption not only among the children of God but also among everyone else in the world. And Babylon keeps its influence through its business links, and all business is seen in chapter 18. Everyone weeps when Babylon is destroyed, the kings and merchants, the steersmen, sailors and the like. Everybody has benefited from Babylon but the Word of God is very strong: “Come out of her, My people;” have nothing to do with such an organisation, it is only corruption. And it is not only corruption like the mantle of Shinar in the story of Achan, and Hezekiah showing everything in his house to the Babylonian messengers. It is absolutely amazing: in Babylon there is found all the blood of the saints since the beginning of the world. There is only one sort of people who rejoice over this destruction, and that is the people of heaven. They say “Hallelujah.” It is a marvellous scene and this is the starting point of the marriage of the Lamb in chapter 19.

We read two portions of the Word of God in Ephesians. It is important to see that these verses speak of the assembly as the body of Christ. This is the third kind of collective body on the earth. The first kind is Nimrod the dictator, and is marked by mightiness and violence. The second kind is union, but without relationship with God and without conscience. The corruption is not considered important provided there is success: power in relation to the Beast, the political body, and money and business. These are the two principles governing the organisations in the world. And if we think about this problem we will see that in every political domain men are organised according to one or other of these principles, either the principle of strength, where one is dominating everybody, or of union together. But both are at the end against God and against His will. That is the organisation of men. But there is the collective body which is according to the thought of God and this is blessed. The principle of organisation in this case is totally opposite to what we have been considering. First of all it is not an organisation, it is an organism. Secondly, there is connection with the Head. You have neither dictatorship nor worldly union. You have unity in one body, and the clear relationship of each member to the Head. This direct relationship is not only a direct relationship for guidance, but it is also a direct connection for conscience. That is to say, each member should have the same appreciation of the holiness of God and of the saints, and the same appreciation of the Head. This is the key point: the collective body with conscience. This is

the only way that you can get a body for the glory of God. And this is the only principle that we are to follow together as individual members of the body, as local assemblies or as the assembly as a whole. Of course, there are many things to consider in relation to this subject. It is so beautiful to look into Ephesians 4:1-32. The Lord is not only the Lord and Head, but He is also the One who gives the gifts of apostles, of prophets, of evangelists, shepherds and teachers. And there is the growing of each member. Is it just growing to be competent? No, it is much more. It is growing up to “the measure of the stature of the fulness of the Christ; in order that we may be no longer babes, tossed and carried about by every wind of... teaching;” the teaching of men, “but, holding the truth in love, we may grow up to Him in all things, who is the head.” Dear brethren, that is what is before us, and what is so difficult to realise. But it is the only thing that we are to realise both as individual members of the body and collectively. In this way sin is avoided and holiness is maintained, but any organisation according to the spirit of men will arrive either at Nimrod’s gate or at Babylon’s gate. May we be preserved from either of these ways and may we cleave to this one organism according to the will of God. It is very striking that there are troubles precisely in connection with this matter of the unity of the body because it is this principle of organism that the Lord would like us to keep and that Satan would like to destroy. Satan only likes the principle of Nimrod or the principle of Babylon. Let us hold fast the principles connected with the one body and let us keep close to the Lord as members of His body, both individually and collectively.

C. Brachotte This is the last of the material from the 1995 Plumstead conference which will appear in this magazine. Please see the inside back cover regarding the full edited transcript of the conference which is being published separately. Is the Church of God an Organization or an Organism?

Read Exodus 18:1-27

Exodus 18:1-27 has sometimes been used as an argument to justify a practice in the church of appointing people to certain places of responsibility and dignity so that operations might proceed more smoothly. Does the Spirit of God have any such intention in recording the advice of Jethro, and Moses accepting this advice without question?

There was a friendly spirit between Jethro and his son-in-law, Moses. Jethro had not shared in the afflictions of Israel in their liberation from Egyptian bondage, but coming to visit Moses afterward, he found Moses sitting from morning to night to hear the causes of Israelites and to pass judgment for them. It was a most plausible alternative he suggested, one that appeals favourably to our natural thoughts. But notice that Jethro said, “I will give thee counsel, and God shall be with thee” (5: 19). He did not suggest that God should give Moses counsel, but implied that God would be with Moses if Moses accepted Jethro’s counsel. He advised Moses to appoint able and conscientious men to judge the smaller matters that arose between the people, and who could bring the larger matters to Moses.

Moses evidently considered that this was perfectly logical, and who could quarrel with this? But one fatal flaw was evident in adopting this advice. God had not commanded it, and Moses did not even consult God about this matter. Jethro could give the advice, then leave. He had not been linked with Israel in their former afflictions, and he was not to be linked with them in their wilderness trials. Moses chose “to suffer affliction with the people of God” (Hebrews 11:25), but Jethro did not.

If God intended Moses to act as he was doing, could He not give him strength for it? Certainly He could. But this history illustrates something most serious. Moses is a type of Christ. Should believers be content to have other people settle the problems they consider small, and only bring the great things to the Lord? No! We should go directly to the Lord with every occasion of need. The introduction of intermediaries is the legal principle of human organization. No wonder we find God introducing the law of Moses in Exodus 19:1-25, and God Himself putting Israel under a form of organization that Peter later spoke of as “a yoke… which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear” (Acts 15:10). But even among Christians the natural tendency of our hearts is to revert to legal bondage in some way, and we fail to realize that human organization in the church of God is legal bondage. Where some people are put in special places, then others do not need the spiritual exercise of being in the Lord’s presence to receive guidance, for they get their guidance from human sources. The body of Christ, the church, is not an organization, but an organism, that which is vitally connected with the Head of the body and which receives its nourishment, guidance and direction from the Head (Ephesians 4:15-16). When first instituted after the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, the church had no human head on earth, such as Moses. Apostles were present, not as being authorities themselves, but as unitedly insisting on the sole authority of the Lord Jesus. When some Jewish believers came to Antioch and insisted that Gentile believers should be circumcised and keep the law, this was settled at Jerusalem, not by the authority of any apostle, but by the Word of God (Acts 15:7-8; Acts 17:1-34; Acts 18:1-28), which was declared by the apostles and accepted by the gathered brethren.

It was necessary to have apostles as the connecting link between the dispensation of law and that of the grace of God, necessary that such men of devoted character should be used to lay the foundation of Christianity (1 Corinthians 3:10-11; Ephesians 2:20), that is, to lay down the truth of God concerning Christ in all His relationships. Apostles themselves passed away, but they have left their writings, Scriptures that are authoritative, and by which the church of God may be guided and preserved in all her subsequent history. While they were living, apostles did appoint elders in various assemblies, and Paul instructed Titus to appoint elders in each assembly in Crete (Titus 1:5). Assemblies never did appoint elders, and there are no apostles living to do so now, nor delegates of the apostles. However, once the church has been established, there is no reason why believers should not be unitedly guided by the Spirit of God, who remains as a living power in the church, as was not true under the dispensation of law. Are there no elders therefore? By all means elders are still in the church, but not as appointed by men. There are those who can do the work without any appointment, for God has fitted them for the work. We should certainly pray for such, and appreciate their wise counsel and help. As regards ministry of the Word of God, God Himself gives gifts who are to respond to His own leading in devoted service. They do not need the appointment of men, but the power of God. If the assembly sees a spiritual gift in a saint, they should gladly encourage him. With the Spirit of God leading, there will be humility and unity. The assembly will gladly express fellowship with such a servant in the measure in which they can approve of his service. In all spiritual service, we are therefore to depend, not in any way upon human arrangements, but upon the power of the Spirit of God. On the other hand, in Acts 6:3 the saints at Jerusalem were told to look out from among themselves seven men of good reputation to take care of material needs among the saints. These are the deacons of which 1 Timothy 3:8-13 speaks. As to caring for material things, the assembly is perfectly right to appoint those whom they can trust to do this work. But God does not allow us to choose for ourselves the ministers of

spiritual things whom we desire. How good it is that God cares for us so perfectly! Yet we so little respond to this that when difficulties arise we look all around us for some human means of meeting these. Such means will be appealing to our rationalizing minds, things that have been adopted by many groups of Christians, but leaving out the clear leading of God by His Spirit. How humbling it is that we are thus expressing the opinion that Christ is not enough!

It is natural to desire a thriving testimony, but if such a testimony becomes an object, then Christ has lost His place as the one Object worthy of our confidence. Let us return to our first love, and value the living power of the Spirit in the body of Christ.

L. M. Grant Two Views of the History of the Church (2) Judges 14:1-20; Judges 15:1-20; Judges 16:1-31

There are very few words of encouragement found by tracing through the incidents in the life of Samson for the purpose of comparison with the history of the seven assemblies in Revelation 2:1-29; Revelation 3:1-22. Samson's deep and shameful failure to maintain a testimony to the holiness of God, compared with the church's failure (our failure) to maintain God's testimony, give occasion for us to listen afresh to the warnings the Lord Jesus Christ may have for us. The lessons of history are lessons for the present time. The initial comments made by the inspired historian in recounting Samson's early life in Judges 13:24-25 may readily be compared to the bright days of the church's early history. Samson grew, Jehovah blessed him, and the Spirit of Jehovah began to move him. The book of Acts shows the same features of growth (Acts 6:7), blessing (Acts 4:32-33) and the moving of the Holy Spirit (Acts 9:31). Yet there is very little said about this period of Samson's life in Judges, in proportion to the details given regarding his failure. Likewise this early period of the church's history was very brief compared to the centuries of failure that ensued.

1. Ephesus Judges 14:1 : "Samson went down."

Revelation 2:4 : "thou hast left thy first love."

Decline is immediate and rapid: "And Samson went down." His affection was not set in the midst of the people of God. He became motivated by lust and not love — the lust of the eyes. The last phrase of verse 3, "she pleases me well," is translated in the German Bible, "she is right in my eyes," in full keeping with the final summary of the book of Judges as given in its concluding verse. The rebuke which the Lord Jesus gave to Ephesus was, "thou hast left thy first love." The bride had ceased to look for the Bridegroom. In the early days of the church, corresponding to the period represented by Ephesus in Revelation 2:1-29, one of the first things lost was the immediate expectation of Christ's return, the return of the Bridegroom.1

Although Samson himself was a bridegroom, his hopes, aspirations and desires regarding the marriage relationship were completely misguided. His first love was a love for God and His people which thus found its activities and interests among them (ch. 13:25). This love was replaced by lust for one of the daughters of the Philistines. If we are losing heart for the Lord's coming as a perfect expression of His love for us then we face the same danger into which both Samson and the early church fell.

2. Smyrna Judges 14:5 : "a… lion roared against him."

Revelation 2:10 : "the devil is about to cast of you into prison."

Samson's failure here was in touching the dead body of a lion (Numbers 6:6). No! It wasn't failure, it was sin. How often we are guilty by our words, of reducing the sinfulness of sin — by using terms which do not strike the conscience. Samson sinned — he acted in direct contravention to the revealed mind of God.

There is, however, no sin mentioned in the Lord's address to the assembly at Smyrna. The lion is mentioned, that is, Satan as a roaring lion (cf. 1 Peter 5:8) acting in persecution against them. The encouragement to them of which the bees and the honey are but a picture is also mentioned, that they would receive a crown of life and in no wise be injured of the second death: words speaking of resurrection from the lips of the One who became dead and lived. "Out of the eater came forth food, And out of the strong came forth sweetness" is surely a beautiful meditation on the theme of death and resurrection — yet for Samson this victory was marred by his sin.

Like Samson, we face the continual danger of allowing victories given by God to be occasions for our sinfully dishonouring Him. Perhaps it was also true for Smyrna and for the professing church in the historical period which Smyrna typifies. For us there is no "perhaps." Let us beware not only of the roaring lion but also of the workings of fleshly pride and complacency which may arise when God gives us any victory.

3. Pergamos Judges 14:10 : "Samson made there a feast."

Revelation 2:13 : "where the throne of Satan is."

Samson again went down into the territory of the Philistines. It was there that he made a feast; it was there that he did what was customary among the young men; it was there that he made a friend (5: 20). He played a game of cunning with those who were experts at cunning games, and he lost. The assembly at Pergamos dwelt where Satan's seat is. Historically this represents the period when the once antagonistic world began to show favours to the professing church. The result was a settling down in the world — a diminishing of the realisation that Christians are pilgrims and strangers. God's ways with His ancient people were characterised by bringing them out from the place where Satan had dominion and making them pilgrims and strangers: it was so with Abraham and it was so with Israel. Pergamos settled down, and the result was the accepting of doctrines which encouraged intimate links with this world in its religious character (Revelation 2:14).

Samson went to where the enemy was, not to fight but to feast. The enemy's mask was a mask of friendship, as it was in the case of Pergamos. We should reject everything which has the character of denying that, "friendship with the world is enmity with God," whether it be a teaching or a practice.

4. Thyatira Judges 16:1 : "a harlot."

Revelation 2:20 : "the woman Jezebel." The commencement of friendship with the world is often very subtle and its development can be slow. Judges 15:1-20 refers to incidents which follow on from the feast Samson had made. As time went by, what started as a compromise of friendship with the Philistines in chapter 14 developed into sexual immorality in chapter 16.

Samson's promiscuous relationships, having developed from the seeds of compromise, are like the Thyatira period in the church's history. What started in Pergamos, ripened in Thyatira. In one it

was the throne of Satan, in the next the depths of Satan. In one it was “thou hast” those who hold doctrines of compromise, in the next “thou permittest” the woman Jezebel who not only holds but teaches and leads into the same evils. The neutral condescension to “have” things in Pergamos became an active condoning of them in Thyatira.

We must beware of what we allow (individually or collectively) because what we allow will eventually become what we actively teach and encourage.

5. Sardis Judges 16:20 : “Jehovah had departed from him.”

Revelation 3:1 : “a name that thou livest, and art dead.”

“A name that thou livest, and art dead,” conveys the sad message of having reputation but no (present) ability. One of the marks of Protestantism (figured by Sardis) is its reliance on “the historic Christian faith”2 dating back to the Reformation, and making the Reformation a standard to be maintained, rather than seeking that the process of recovery may continue.

Samson relied on what he knew of his past ability, his past victories, and did not bother to examine his present condition. The warning to Sardis was “Be watchful, and strengthen the things that remain.” Samson was not watchful. He slept. He yielded to Delilah’s influence. He had a name to live; a name associated with strength, power, might, influence — but it was all gone. His hair was gone and he didn’t know it.

Collectively, if we make past victories and past recovery our standard, we come short of God’s desire and may imagine that a reputation won by our predecessors in some way throws credit upon ourselves. We can fail individually in supposing that because God has used us in the past He will continue to do so, regardless of our spiritual condition.

6. Laodicea Judges 16:21 : “seized him, and put out his eyes.”

Revelation 3:17 : “thou art the wretched and the miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked.” A name, a claim and an aim. These are respectively Sardis, Laodicea and Philadelphia. The condemnation of Laodicea is expressed in Revelation 3:17 with the contrast between “thou sayest” and “thou art.” We never have to say anything. There is no need to claim anything to ourselves. We must beware of this. There are many principles we claim to uphold and yet in practice we deny them. In the story of Samson the section which parallels Philadelphia follows that which parallels Laodicea — and surely this can be an encouragement to us. We must not give up hope. The Spirit of God has indicated that a testimony will be continued right through to the end, that the Lord’s death would be shown forth “until He come.” We should have this before us as an aim, yet beware of claiming that we are fulfilling it.

7. Philadelphia Judges 16:22 : “But the hair of his head began to grow.”

Revelation 3:8 : “a little power.”

Even if we dare call Samson’s last act a victory we will nevertheless admit that it contains nothing in which Samson could boast. This is not an attempt to downgrade what the Lord said to Philadelphia — but we should realise, if the comparison is considered, that the features of recovery follow on from what is only horrible failure. A little strength. Samson’s end was nothing

like his beginning. There are doubtless many things in assembly experience and practice which marked the beginning of the dispensation which will never be practically attained at the present time — but look at the exhortation, “hold fast what thou hast.” All Samson had was two pillars and he held them fast and made use of them. What a responsibility we have. Just because some features of the assembly may be unattainable due to the ruin that has come in it doesn’t mean that we should give up. We must seek to maintain what is proper to the whole assembly — but with this proviso — to do it in simplicity, not claiming any greatness to ourselves, but recognising how feeble is our attempt, as Samson did. At the very end he bowed himself with might (Judges 16:30). His power, little as it was comparatively, was brought into useful evidence through his bowing himself.

How we delight in any little feature of recovery. How the Lord Jesus delights in it too. Let us not overrate it, or take pride in it, or claim things as though we had achieved them. Let us rather acknowledge any recovery as being evidence of past failure and of present inadequacy. Samson’s final victory was not something about which any would boast. Let us make recovery our aim, as those who are conscious of weakness, and not our claim as though we were totally unconscious of our true condition.

G. Quail

Notes

1 For an account of the recovery of the truth of Christ’s return as an immediate hope see “Precious Truths Revived and Defended Through J. N. Darby,” available from the publisher.

2 Quoted from a book entitled “Light over Australia” published as a manual of Christian doctrine representative of the creeds of “the body of the Protestant Church.”

Extract

It is a very solemn thing that the apostles had the very same experiences themselves. The last of them had to face the fact that the very best of the churches — that which had been the brightest — became the object of the Lord’s warning, and the last of the churches of the Lord’s threatening; a warning of what soon came to pass, and a threatening to be surely executed viz. — to take away the candlestick of the one, and to spue the other out of His mouth (Revelation 2:1-29; Revelation 3:1-22).

Now, is that meant to weaken confidence? It was revealed in order to enforce the need of dependence upon the Lord, to encourage us to look up from the earth and things that are here — but not to give up. We are never free to give up anything that is of God. We are never at liberty to plead the state of ruin for carelessness about any expression of God’s will. The ruin of the church has nothing to do with weakening our responsibility. It brings in the necessity of greater watchfulness, of more prayer; and particularly the necessity of God and the word of His grace to deal with the difficulties altogether above man. But are they above the Spirit of God?

(From page 10 of “Lectures on the Epistle of Jude,” by W. Kelly) Stone... Cut Out Without Hands (2)

“Thou sawest till that a stone was cut out without hands, which smote the image upon his feet that were of iron and clay, and brake them to pieces” (Daniel 2:34).

“Cut out of the mountain without hands...” (Daniel 2:45).

(Continued from page 334) The Image The image seen by Nebuchadnezzar in his dream represented the line of Gentile powers under which Israel was to be subjected. There is an obvious deterioration in forms of government and in the value of the metals used. However the strength of the metals do not decrease, as is seen in the fourth, which is said to be “strong as iron.” The metals involved are gold, silver, brass and iron. We are not left to suppose what each metal represents. The interpretation of the dream given to Daniel to pass on to Nebuchadnezzar was very clear as far as the king was concerned: “Thou, O, king, art a king of kings: for the God of heaven hath given thee a kingdom, power, and strength, and glory” (Daniel 2:37). Part of verse 38 reads, “Thou art this head of gold.” The rule of Nebuchadnezzar was autocratic. It was absolute power given by God to whom he was responsible. It is said of this king, “whom he would he slew, and whom he would he kept alive, and whom he would he set up, and whom he would he put down” (Daniel 5:19). Nebuchadnezzar failed to act for God, he was a worshipper of idols, and there was no righteousness in his dealings. Nevertheless, the form of government with which the times of the Gentiles began, is that which will be exercised by the Lord Jesus Christ in the world to come. The exception will be that His rule will be of inflexible righteousness, equity and truth. The view taken of these four kingdoms in Daniel 2:1-49 is that given by the apostle Paul: “For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God” (Romans 13:1).

We are not left to conjecture as to what the three following kingdoms are. The “breast and his arms of silver,” represent the empire of the Medes and Persians (Daniel 5:28). The “belly and… thighs of brass,” represent the Grecian empire (Daniel 8:21). The “legs of iron, his feet part of iron and part of clay” point to the Roman empire which followed that of Greece. We ascertain the meaning of the fourth empire in the New Testament (Luke 2:1; Matthew 22:21). It was when Christ was here that this empire was in existence; indeed it was by a Roman form of execution that His life was taken. The Roman Empire

There is much more said about the fourth kingdom than the first three. This is particularly so in Daniel 7:1-28, where there is a more detailed account given of it. It is in Daniel’s dream in chapter 7 that these powers, described as metals in Daniel 2:1-49, are represented by wild beasts. It has already been said that the image presented these powers as “ordained of God,” whereas in Daniel 7:1-28 they are seen in their true character. The fourth kingdom is represented by a beast to which no name can be given, so terrible is its form. It is an apt description of the Roman empire at the zenith of its power. It is not surprising that many references are made to the fourth kingdom in the book of Revelation. It was under Rome that John was held captive in the Isle of Patmos. The reason why more is said about the Roman empire is that in the last days, after the rapture, there will be a revived Roman empire on earth. It will be in a form never seen before. Revelation 17:8 describes this empire in its three stages: “they... shall wonder, seeing the beast, that it was, and is not, and shall be present” (J.N.D. Trans.). “It was” in John’s day, and then for centuries it was non-existent: “is not.” “Shall be present” is its future revival. Coming back to Daniel 2:1-49 again, the last and final phase of the “times of the Gentiles” is represented by the feet and toes. The ten toes are important as are the ten horns on the fourth beast of chapter 7. “And as the toes of the

feet were part of iron and part of clay, so the kingdom shall be partly strong, and partly broken" (Daniel 2:42).

We learn from the iron that there will be an imperialistic rule, while in reference to the clay there will be ten separate kingdoms (Revelation 17:12-13). It is upon the feet of the image that the stone falls: "Thou sawest till that a stone was cut out without hands, which smote the image upon his feet that were of iron and clay, and brake them to pieces" (Daniel 2:34). This event, yet future, is the end of the "times of the Gentiles." A Kingdom which Shall Never Be Destroyed

"Then was the iron, the clay, the brass, the silver, and the gold, broken to pieces together, and became like the chaff of the summer threshingfloors; and the wind carried them away, that no place was found for them: and the stone that smote the image became a great mountain, and filled the whole earth" (Daniel 2:35). This destruction of Gentile power precedes the stone filling the whole earth. The description of it as "a great mountain" suggests its permanence and stability. The quotation above tells of the coming kingdom of Christ. While we are aware of the many Scriptures which refer to the Lord Jesus as the Stone, here His kingdom is prominent. This kingdom will never be succeeded by another. In a world ravaged by sin for centuries, where man has sought to dethrone God, there will be righteousness, peace and gladness. "And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed... and it shall stand for ever" (Daniel 2:44). The Stone Which The Builders Refused

Before bringing this article to a close, reference should be made to the Scriptures which speak of the Lord Jesus as the Stone. An Old Testament passage, quoted in the New Testament, is Psalms 118:22-23 : "The stone which the builders refused is become the head stone of the corner. This is the LORD's doing; it is marvellous in our eyes." It is actually quoted by the Lord Himself after telling the parable of the vineyard and the wicked husbandmen. The parable was a description of the way the nation was treating Him then. He was the Stone, refused by the builders. The Lord Jesus went on to warn them, "And whosoever shall fall on this stone shall be broken: but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder" (Matthew 21:44). These last words are akin to those we have considered in Daniel 2:34. While the emphasis in Daniel was on the kingdom, here in Matthew it is very distinctly upon the Person of Christ. The expression, "And whosoever shall fall on this stone," is further explained by the apostle Paul in Romans 9:32 : "For they stumbled at that stumblingstone." Had the Lord Jesus come in power to free the nation from the Roman yoke, it might have been different, but His lowly character and meekness, showing up their hypocrisy, did not suit them and therefore they stumbled. But He will come again in judgment to grind His enemies to powder. In the future days of the "great tribulation" (Matthew 24:21) there will be a godly remnant who, because of their faithfulness, will suffer. This remnant is referred to in Isaiah 28:16 : "Therefore thus saith the Lord God, Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner stone, a sure foundation: he that believeth shall not make haste." Christ, the "tried stone," will be the stay of these suffering saints. The Lord in whom they will trust is our Lord. Whatever be our trials we do not need to "make haste." How often we panic over our circumstances and anxiety overtakes us. May we in our day be like that remnant in that coming day and "trust, and not be afraid" (Isaiah 12:2).

Lastly, a reference to those who belong to the assembly: "And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner stone" (Ephesians 2:20). The

church is seen here as a building and is also said to be growing “unto an holy temple in the Lord” (5: 21). There is no thought of failure in this Scripture. Christ as the “chief corner stone” is the security of the building. Soon it will be complete: “a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish” (Ephesians 5:27). As we end this study of Christ as the Stone, may our hearts be more firmly attached to Him.

G. Bell Having Loved His Own Which Were In The World (7)

John 16:1-15 In the previous chapter the Lord has instructed His own as to the character of the world through which they were to pass. Its heart is made known. In this that follows He further instructs them as to the treatment they would receive from it.

He informs them of these things before they come to pass, that they might not be taken unawares. The truth as to these matters would put them on their guard. Their own countrymen would disown them, looking upon them as law-breakers. Blind in heart and mind, and not having the truth, they would be zealous for their religion and His own would be accounted as odious to God. In this way the world would prove that it does not know the Father or the Son. Men would be led on by Satan, for he blinds the minds of them that believe not. As these things came to pass their confidence would be strengthened in the One who had told them beforehand of them. He did not tell them these things earlier because He protected them while He was with them. What comfort He sought to bring to them now, showing how fully He knew, cared and felt for them.

He knew the sorrow that filled their hearts as they realised they were about to lose Him, their Lord, and contemplated the opposition they would receive from the world. Burdened by these things, they were no longer demanding where He was going. The Lord well knew their hearts’ feelings of loss and fear.

Turning from speaking of persecution and sorrow He seeks to bring in comfort and encouragement. He goes on to unfold yet more truth. It was necessary for them that He should go away in order that the Comforter may come. The Holy Spirit would be sent by the Lord, consequent upon His taking His place on high as the One whom the Father had glorified. When the Holy Spirit came He would not only bring much needed support to them but His presence on earth would in itself be evidence of certain facts. He would be sent from a victorious Man, who had overcome the world, defeated Satan, and established righteousness. He would come in power and His presence in the world would be witness to it of sin, of righteousness and of judgment. The world was guilty of refusing the Son of God, who in righteousness returned to the Father. This showed the true character of the world and of its prince who was judged. The Spirit of truth would be the power against the world. He would come alongside His own to help, bearing a testimony of truth that the world would feel and know. He would be unseen, but by and in His own there would be a witness that none could resist or ignore.

If He witnessed against the world He would be the minister of God to His own. He would give the capacity to receive and guide them into all truth. He would bring the present truth from the glory and speak concerning things to come. (What rich fulness the Lord in His love would have His own to receive and know!) For He would reveal the Son in His glory, and the results of His exaltation. The Spirit would glorify the Son, taking of the things of the Son and making His own to know them. The fulness of the things of the Father are the Son’s, and He would show them to His own.

(The author of this series of articles wishes to remain anonymous) Christ's Greatness in the Epistle to Laodicea (4) (Continued from page 277)

After the solemn verdict that the Lord as the righteous Judge had to pronounce against the assembly in Laodicea (Revelation 3:15-17), Christ presents Himself as the great Counsellor. In our days there are multitudes of counsellors, often with good intentions (but not always), trying to bring in man's remedies, which are doomed to fail. In a day when man has an abundance of resources, as the people in Laodicea had, one easily becomes self-complacent, self-sufficient, self-righteous, etc. Therefore, it is of utmost importance to be open to the resources that God makes available to us. Already in the apostle Paul's days there was a need to distinguish between two different orders of resource: man's wisdom and God's wisdom. The first order rejects the second, but the second, linked with Christ as the wisdom and the power of God, is constantly exposed to perils and temptations, namely that something of the first order will compromise it, and this in a subtle and deceiving way. In 1 Corinthians 1:1-31; 1 Corinthians 2:1-16 we read many valuable lessons concerning this potential danger and we learn how the apostle, led by the Spirit of God, deals with such a challenging situation. I recommend a careful study of those chapters.

Before we meditate upon the character of His counsel, and the remedies and resources which the Lord makes available to the longing soul, it is good to look first at the Lord Himself, the great and best Counsellor. In a day when, humanly speaking, there is no more hope for Israel, God introduces Immanuel (Isaiah 7:14 f; Isaiah 9:6 f) who brings His answer to the problems and sustains a weak remnant that relies on Him and enjoys His company (Immanuel means "God with us"). One of His many names is Counsellor. Is it not our experience that as long as we seem or think to manage for ourselves, we do not really turn to the Lord for help? This is what the soul in Romans 7:1-25 has to learn, as far as the way of practical righteousness with God is concerned: to really surrender to God and to His resources.

It has been a need, and often a lack in every phase of the church's history, to turn to God's Counsellor and to His resources. Studying the book of Judges, I was struck to notice in Judges 2:1-23 and Judges 10:1-18 how a constantly recurring cycle is described: (1) sin and rebellion; (2) God's discipline, His dealings in retribution, bringing His people into bondage under the yoke of the enemy; (3) repentance, as they confess and abandon their sins, and cast themselves upon God; (4) followed by public restoration and (5) concluded by rest. Thus God forced them as it were to pay attention to His counsel. However, God looks for willing hearts (John 7:17), as He found for instance in Rebecca in Genesis 24:5. The remnant that returned from the Babylonian captivity was encouraged by God's prophet Zechariah to rebuild the temple, as he drew their attention to the Branch or Sprout (Zechariah 6:12 f). Their eyes were also directed to a future day of glory, when the true King will rule upon Jehovah's throne in Jerusalem and He shall be a Priest upon His throne, "and the counsel of peace shall be between them both." Even with regard to the millennial reign of righteousness and peace, the Word presents Him as the Counsellor. Will He not always be God's prophet who reveals His mind and counsel, even in the blessed context of His public reign?

God's will, purpose, counsel

Let us now think for a moment about God's counsel in Ephesians 1:11, which is according to His will and for His own pleasure. Ephesians 1:1-23 presents three dimensions of God's will: past

(Ephesians 1:4 f), present (Ephesians 1:9), and future (Ephesians 1:11)! It was a special feature of Paul's ministry that he could reveal the whole counsel of God (Acts 20:27) which was realized in time, and expressed in the members of Christ's body on earth, according to God's will or purpose (1 Corinthians 12:11). In connection with our new birth we read in James 1:18, "Of His own will begat He us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of His creatures." In Hebrews 6:17 the author of the epistle shows how God's blessing for His people is according to the promise of God who cannot lie, who does not change His purposes at random and who confirmed everything by an oath. To this He adds the further security of showing and giving them free access to His throne (Hebrews 6:18 ff; Hebrews 10:19 ff).

It is a blessing to become more acquainted with God's purposes and counsels, and to learn His sovereignty (Romans 9:19 ff), as well as His ways (Romans 11:32-36). How striking it is to read in this context: "who hath been His (God's) counsellor?" (Romans 11:34). The same word is used (now as a verb) by our Lord in Revelation 3:18, where He counsels us! Should we then not listen?

Centred in Christ The foundation of our salvation is also linked with God's purpose and counsel, centred in Christ and in His sacrifice, whereas at the same time, in an unfathomable way, man's responsibility is maintained: "Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain." This passage in Acts 2:23 should be compared with 4:28 where God's hand and counsel is emphasized and with 5:38f in the same book. We find a beautiful Old Testament example in David who served the will (purpose) of God in his own generation, and in this there lies a challenge for every believer who has a heart for God's will (Acts 13:36).

Christ, God the Son, has the same authority as God the Father (John 5:1-47), and He reveals the Father to whomsoever He wills (the same verb for purpose or counsel. Matthew 11:25-27). The same passage continues to underline man's responsibility (vs. 28-30): wonderful balance and unity of Scripture! Luke 10:22 is another example of this unsearchable harmony. These passages underline Christ's greatness as Son, while taking the place of a humble Man, subject to the purpose, counsel, or will of the Father, as in Gethsemane (Luke 22:42). What an Example and Model!

God's will and man's The greatness of God expresses itself in giving man a place of responsibility in which he can do his own will and follow the counsels of his own heart. However, the human will needs to submit to God's will and counsel (cp. 2 Peter 3:9). In 1 Timothy 6:9 Paul shows that believers who purpose to become rich, fall into temptation and into a terrible snare. The verb for counsel (without the preposition sun, which is added in Revelation 3:18) is used by Paul to express his healthy desires for believers or for himself, to give counsel for their functioning and well-being in the house of God (1 Timothy 2:8; 1 Timothy 5:14; Php 1:12; 2 Corinthians 1:17). Luke 7:30 underlines man's responsibility regarding God's counsel as linked with His ways with the Jews. In John 18:39 the same verb for counsel is used with respect to the people's will toward their Messiah.

I underline these different aspects, because the Lord's counsel to Laodicea has been rejected by the majority of Christians, but should be heeded by us even though we may form a very small remnant. The word counsel implies the idea of common sense (Luke 14:31), sometimes wise, sometimes not (see Acts 27:12; Acts 27:42 f). Let us be wisdom's children and pay attention to the

Lord’s counsel. Man’s counsel — and God fully maintains his responsibility, also when it concerns believers — will be considered and evaluated ultimately by God (see 1 Corinthians 4:5). Joseph of Arimathea, an honourable counsellor (Mark 15:43; Luke 23:50 f), is a reflection of something we find in Christ in perfection (cp. Isaiah 9:6) and which the assembly in Laodicea was lacking. Finally I underline that there is a close connection between God’s pleasure, desire, will and counsel, on the one hand and man’s will on the other (2 Peter 3:9; Ezekiel 33:11), as well as with the mystery and wonder of Christ’s sacrifice for sin, summarized in Isaiah 53:10!

A. E. Bouter (To be continued, if the Lord will) The Blessings of a Broken Heart and a Contrite Spirit

God clearly shows us in His Word the mind and attitude of heart that is well-pleasing to Him. There are several Scriptures where the Spirit of God tells us what kind of behaviour pleases the heart of God and what blessings He has promised where there is such an attitude. It is our purpose in this article to meditate upon four passages in the Old Testament that show the attitude which is suitable to everyone of us in our days. When such an attitude characterizes our behaviour we shall enjoy the seven promises that God gives in connection with this mind that is so pleasing to Him.

“The LORD is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart; and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit” (Psalms 34:18): The mind and attitude that God desires to see in us and which is mentioned in each of the four passages we are considering is described in the following terms: our spirits and our hearts should be broken, contrite and humble. Our whole being, our whole attitude of heart is humbled in the presence of God. We submit our will completely to the will of God. We feel deeply our own failure and mourn the sorrow and poor condition of the people of God. Not only will we, weep and mourn certain days (Nehemiah 1:4), like Nehemiah, but we will also continue in prayer, as did that faithful servant of the Lord. “And confess the sins of the children of Israel, which we have sinned against Thee: both I and my father’s house have sinned. We have dealt very corruptly against Thee, and have not kept the commandments, nor the statutes, nor the judgments which Thou commandedst” (Nehemiah 1:6-7). When this is the way we approach our God we shall find His promises fulfilled in our lives. The first two of them are mentioned in our verse:

1) God is near to us

If the Lord sees such a broken heart, He says to such: “I am near.” The disciples on their way to Emmaus asked the Lord: “Abide with us: for it is toward evening, and the day is far spent” (Luke 24:29). Considering the condition of His testimony on earth, don’t we have to say, “it is toward evening” and the day of grace is “far spent”? Is there not the same desire in our hearts, to ask: “Lord, abide with us, be near to us.” This verse shows that the attitude of a broken heart has the assurance of His nearness.

2) I will save When we see such a lot of sorrow and so many problems and trials, how do we react? Are we looking for a “solution” in a carnal manner? We won’t find one. On the contrary — we may make things worse. But perhaps, like the apostle Paul, we are at the point where “we are perplexed” (“seeing no apparent issue.” JND Trans. 2. Cor. 4:8). If in such a situation we really have a contrite spirit before the Lord then He will save us, He will show us the way so that we can add, like the apostle, “but not in despair” (“but our way not entirely shut up.” JND Trans.). The Lord will show us a way. This may not be the easy way — but we will have the certainty that it is His

way.

“The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, Thou wilt not despise” (Psalms 51:17):

There are two further blessings in this verse:

3) A sacrifice, acceptable to God The verse quoted above is preceded by the words: “For Thou desirest not sacrifice, else would I give it: Thou delightest not in burnt offering” (5: 16). Several passages in the Old Testament show that God did not delight in sacrifices that were offered in a wrong attitude of mind. A few quotations will illustrate this. “Hath the LORD as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams” (1 Samuel 15:22). “Will I eat the flesh of bulls, or drink the blood of goats? Offer unto God thanksgiving; and pay thy vows unto the Most High” (Psalms 50:13). In Malachi, where the low condition of the people of God was very serious, God said plainly, “I have no pleasure in you, saith the LORD of hosts, neither will I accept an offering at your hand” (Malachi 1:10). Against this background we can remember that in Psalms 51:1-19 God says that there is sacrifice which He will accept — the contrite attitude of a broken spirit. Not only should the body of the believer be “a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God” (Romans 12:1), but our right attitude of heart is also most precious to Him.

4) I will not despise you The kind of attitude we are considering is one that the world despises. Those that gather to the Name of the Lord Jesus alone, perhaps here and there literally “two or three,” and who humbly mourn the humiliating condition of the Christian witness, are often in the eyes of the religious world only a poor, despised testimony. But the Psalmist could say, such a “broken and a contrite heart, O God, Thou wilt not despise.” And is not His approval what we should really value?

“For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones” (Isaiah 57:15):

God introduces Himself as the high and lofty one, whose Name is Holy. And when He says that He dwells in the high and holy place, inhabiting eternity, we can easily understand this. He is the Holy One, “dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto” (1 Timothy 6:16). Solomon rightly asked the question, “But will God indeed dwell on the earth? Behold, the heaven and heaven of heavens cannot contain Thee” (1 Kings 8:27). Do we not bow in worship and adoration as we go on and read of another dwelling place of God?

5) I will dwell with you

“I dwell... with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit.” God promises His presence and fellowship. The Lord Jesus said to His disciples: “If a man love Me, he will keep My words: and My Father will love him, and We will come unto him, and make Our abode with him” (John 14:23). Connecting these two verses we could say that where our love to the Lord manifests itself in obedience to His Word in the right attitude of mind and heart we will experience this personal communion with the Father and the Son. “And truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ. And these things write we unto you, that your joy may be full” (1 John 1:3-4).

6) I will revive This intimate fellowship of the soul with God results in joy and revival. If God promises to revive, faith can say confidently with the Psalmist: “Thou, who hast shewn us many and sore troubles, wilt revive us again” (Psalms 71:20. JND Trans.). “Though I walk in the midst of trouble, Thou wilt revive me” (Psalms 138:7). The means God uses to revive us is usually His Word: “I will never forget Thy precepts: for with them Thou hast quickened me” (Psalms 119:93). This very personal encouragement in fellowship with God will further the desire in our hearts that the whole people of God may be revived, and therefore we pray, always considering our own weakness and failure, “O LORD, revive Thy work” (Habakkuk 3:2).

“But to this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at My word” (Isaiah 66:2):

Here we have an added characteristic of the mind that God looks for: one that “trembleth at My word.” We have already seen that the Word revives us. Yes, we may rejoice in the Word “as much as in all riches”; “as one that findeth great spoil”; “for they are the rejoicing of my heart” (Psalms 119:14; Psalms 119:162; Psalms 119:111). But on the other hand it is the holy Word of God that speaks with authority to our hearts and consciences. Are we “trembling” at His Word, and endeavouring to order our lives according to it? Or do we try to adjust God’s Word to our behaviour when we have to some degree already departed from it?

7) I will look to you So the Lord says, if there is the broken heart and the contrite spirit acknowledging the authority of My Word, then I will look to you with divine approval. “The eyes of the LORD are upon the righteous, and His ears are open unto their cry” (Psalms 34:15).

Let us once again broaden our view from our personal situation to the collective testimony for Him and the place where He has set His Name. Even Solomon, the king, had the desire that God would look at this place: “Now, my God, let, I beseech Thee, Thine eyes be open, and let Thine ears be attent unto the prayer that is made in this place” (2 Chronicles 6:40). Let us listen to God’s answer to Solomon’s prayer: “Now Mine eyes shall be open, and Mine ears attent unto the prayer that is made in this place... and Mine eyes and Mine heart shall be there perpetually” (2 Chronicles 7:15-16). Not only My eyes and My ears, says the Lord, but also My heart is at this place where the saints are gathered to My Name. This is surely a thought to revive us in these last days.

Michael Vogelsang Afflicting The Soul

(2 Peter 2:8) This article is based on the story of Obadiah, the man who served king Ahab of Israel. It provides a striking warning for all believers in our day. The reader is asked to consider 1 Kings 18:1-46 prayerfully before reading what follows. As an introduction we will recall the time when Ahab came to power. Following the division of the kingdom He was the seventh king to ascend the throne of Israel, after the death of his father Omri. He was married to Jezebel and established the worship of Baal under the influence of his idolatrous wife. He built the temple to Baal’s name and persecuted the prophets of God. We read that he wrought evil more than all his former fellow-monarchs (1 Kings 16:30; 1 Kings 16:33). He even allowed his wife to kill the prophets of the Lord. Such a condition in Israel called for a response from above, and God sent the prophet Elijah to meet the prevailing apostasy. He went to the king and told him of the drought that would be in the land. A period of famine followed and the king’s reaction was not one of seeking the Lord in time of trouble. Only when the famine became severe did the people and king

appear to realise how evil a thing and bitter it is to forsake the Lord God and worship idols, as we will see further on. The scene changes and brings us to the subject we are considering. Ahab had a governor or steward who ruled over his house and contrary to what we might have supposed he was a pious person, for Obadiah “feared the LORD greatly” and did fear Him “from my youth” (1 Kings 18:3; 1 Kings 18:12). The proof was that he “took an hundred prophets, and hid them by fifty in a cave, and fed them with bread and water” (18:4). We see here an upright man seeking the welfare of these servants of God, and therefore dealing righteously with them in the midst of the idolatrous people and rulers. Such behaviour was worthy of reward: “Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these My brethren, ye have done it unto Me” (Matthew 25:40). However, there was a serious shortcoming. What really shocks us is that he remained faithful to king Ahab. He was the steward of his house and under obedience to the king’s commands. How he obtained this position we are not told. It seems that outwardly he pretended to follow Baal while inwardly he feared the Lord. This fear of the Lord was shown in relation to the faithful prophets but hidden from the king and people.

Far from acting positively for the interests of the people and turning to the God of their fathers, Ahab only thought of feeding his animals. He commanded Obadiah to look for green pastures and water for the horses and mules so that he would not have to destroy some of his beasts. He did not care about the people, any more than he cared about the prophets. This selfish man was characterised by weakness in the face of the influence of his wicked wife and it resulted in enmity towards God.

After king and servant separated from one another (5: 6), Obadiah encountered Elijah. This was a meeting between a true servant of God and one who was thoroughly compromised by his association with the wicked king. The contrast between the true character of separation from evil, seen in Elijah, and the hesitation and fear that marked Obadiah, is very clear. Obadiah anticipated a stern rebuke from the prophet. Falling on his knees he said: “Art thou that my lord Elijah?” (5: 7). He had been leading a double life and knew Elijah was morally much greater than he was. Elijah did not rebuke him in an open way, but clearly disapproved of his behaviour. To the prophet, Obadiah was just a servant of Ahab: “go, tell thy lord, Behold, Elijah is here” (5: 8). These words were not welcomed by Obadiah and the answer he gave shows how he drew back from a mission which was likely to provoke the king’s anger: “What have I sinned, that thou wouldest deliver thy servant into the hand of Ahab, to slay me?” (5: 9). Elijah was an outlaw who had disturbed the king (cf. 5: 17) and Obadiah had met him. Might not the king and Jezebel suspect what Obadiah had managed to keep hidden from them for so long: that he really feared the Lord? The king himself had been looking for the prophet so long that a release of news about Elijah now might mean death for Obadiah. Ahab would be waiting for food, not for this news! Obadiah was unwilling to deliver the message because of his lack of faith in the God that could keep him from the hand of the king. In this faithless attitude he was unable to accomplish the task. His faith had become dull because of his allegiance to the king. A bad conscience prevented him from having free fellowship with God. Unlike Elijah, he had no confidence that the Lord would protect him against the actions of Ahab, and was not in a fit condition to speak in the Name of the Lord. In order to avoid danger and death, he simply refused to do as he was directed. He tried to excuse this refusal by referring to his own past good deeds: “Was it not told my lord what I did when Jezebel slew the prophets of the LORD, how I hid an hundred men of the LORD’s prophets by fifty in a cave, and fed them with

bread and water?" (5: 13). This action was commendable but by speaking to the prophet about it he tried to justify his false position. His dilemma was the result of the position he was in. He was governed by what was expedient rather than by divine principles. In contrast to Obadiah's unwillingness, Elijah declared that he would go and show himself to the king. This was the firmness of a servant of God who delighted to carry out his Lord's will (5: 15; cf. Isaiah 6:8). There is also the contrast between Obadiah's life of comfort and luxury in the kings house, and that of the prophet by the brook Cherith, in the house of the widow of Zarephath and in the desert. Elijah had no other comfort except the Lord's company but he had chosen the best part! (cf. Luke 10:12; 2 Timothy 1:12).

It would be well for a moment to focus our attention on the matter of the believer's service. There is little doubt that Obadiah tormented his righteous soul day by day, because of his continuing association with Ahab and seeing what went on every day in Israel. When Lot lived in Sodom two angels were sent to destroy it. Likewise this steward had contact with a divinely sent messenger, Elijah, and through the prophet's faithful witness he was confronted with the reality of his association with the evil king. Whether he forsook this evil link we are not told. His remaining where he was would have involved a continuing loss of privileges which can only be enjoyed by those who are found in separation from evil. The Christian cannot serve two masters as Obadiah tried to do, "... for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other" (Matthew 6:24). If we attempt such a thing we shall be drawn into the world and come under the power of its prince. The world passes away and all its lust, and in the end it will be destroyed by fire sent down from the Lord (2 Peter 3:10 b). Let us therefore turn away from worldly sin and set our hearts and eyes upon heaven and the One who is there. Remaining in false associations will do us no good but only lead to affliction of soul.

D. Sanz What Manner of Man is This? The Lord Jesus is never recorded in the New Testament as giving expression to a sense of humour or taking part in any foolish jesting. We have God revealing that He will laugh and have the sinful heathen in derision, but that is altogether different to attributing "a good sense of humour" to the Lord Jesus. This is more than Scripture allows, and the circumcised heart should confine itself to the facts that Scripture gives and not give place to fleshly notions or speculations regarding the Christ of God that are all too prevalent in Christendom today. The Word of God shows that in this world the Son of God was an outcast, the Man of sorrows and the one acquainted with grief. He was here, sowing in tears, weeping over Jerusalem and all who had fallen victim to Satan's subtlety. Strong crying and tears marked His course. Scripture shows Him as a sociable Man, serving all and being available to every one who was in need. He served the poor and weak. His ministry was to do good and to deliver. His oral ministry was of such quality that common people heard Him gladly. The inexpressible sweetness of His words is degraded by thoughts of Christ telling jokes. No trivial utterance left His lips, nor was any joke ever told by Him. He warned His hearers that they would be judged for every idle word spoken. Matters of eternal weight and importance were the subject of His speech — all that the Father gave Him to speak. There was first hand knowledge of heavenly things and these and like themes comprised the subject matter of His conversation. No man on earth ever walked in such a narrow path as the Lord Jesus Christ; and none had such a large heart as He. He was the Blessed (Happy) God, yet here a mourner and a homeless stranger among the sad and weary. The joy He brought was full and lasting; it was not expressed in a fleeting jest. May He give us

grace to speak worthily of Himself in terms found in Scripture. If we truly love His all-glorious and all-beauteous person, we cannot be indifferent to His glory and honour. There is no such thing as neutrality in divine things. It is wrong to reduce His spotless, yet true, humanity to what is found among the fallen sons and daughters of Adam. A careful, reverent and sober consideration of the Gospels will keep us from believing such defective and irreverent ideas. Further help can also be found in Christ-honouring literature. Among the most readable and reverent meditations of His life on earth, is J. G. Bellett's, "Meditations on the Moral Glory of the Lord Jesus."

E.N.C.

Extract The Lord illustrated that word that is among us, 'in the world, but not of the world' — a form of words which, I suppose, has been derived from what He Himself says in John 17:15 : "I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil". He illustrates this condition all through His life; for He was ever in the world, active in the midst of its ignorance and misery, but never of it, as one that shared its hopes or projects, or breathed its spirit… But again… He would not gain his disciples after the poor way of amiable nature. Honey was excluded from the offerings made by fire as well as leaven. The meat offering had none of it (Leviticus 2:11); neither had Jesus, the true meat offering. It was not the merely civil, amiable thing that the disciples got from their Master. It was not the courtesy that consults for the ease of another. He did not gratify, and yet He bound them to Him very closely; and this is power. There is always moral power when the confidence of another is gained without its being sought; for the heart has then become conscious of the reality of love… Attention, if it be mere attention, is honey, and how much of this poor material is found with us! And we are disposed to think that it is as well, and perhaps we aim no higher than to purge out leaven, and fill the lump with honey. Let us be amiable, perform our part well in the civil, courteous, well-ordered social scene, pleasing others, and doing what we can to keep people on good terms with themselves, then we are satisfied with ourselves and others with us also. But is this service to God? Is this a meat offering? Is this found as part of the moral glory of perfect man? Indeed, indeed it is not. We may naturally judge, I grant, that nothing could do it better or more effectively; but still it is one of the secrets of the sanctuary, that honey was not used to give a sweet savour to the offering.

J. G. Bellett (From "The Moral Glory of The Lord Jesus Christ," pages 19, 22, 23)

I purposely use the present tense, because this is what God did in the past, what He does at present and what He is going to do in a coming day of great distress. Furthermore, both passages presuppose the mystery of the Incarnation, as revealed in the New Testament. Notice also that this is one of the many passages in Scripture where peace and righteousness are intimately linked together.

We find here in the text of the LXX in the word "willing" the same root as used in purpose or counsel. In contrast to God's counsel (Acts 2:23), there is man's counsel and the plot to kill the Messiah (Matthew 26:4), together with Lazarus whom He had raised from among the dead (John 12:10). The same hatred and plot were seen with regard to Paul (Acts 9:23). As the climax of man's counsel, Caiaphas emphasized that his counsel would be profitable for the people (John 11:53)! The Greek text of the O.T. uses here the same verb for God's pleasure as we are discussing.

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Tabernacle, Not Made With Hands (1) “A greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands...” (Hebrews 9:11) “For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands,...” (Hebrews 9:24) The expressions in these verses are similar to those we considered in connection with “circumcision made without hands,...” (Colossians 2:11). The contrast with regard to circumcision was seen to be between what was outward and what was inward; the inward replacing the outward. Romans 2:28-29 explains this. In our present study it will be seen that the permanent replaces the temporary.

Tabernacle Made with Hands In Hebrews 9:1-28 a little is said about the tabernacle in the wilderness. Verses 1-5 give a brief description of the Holy place and the Holiest of all, and the furniture that was found therein is referred to. It must be remembered that the instructions were given by God to His servant Moses. Earlier, in Hebrews 8:5, quoting from Exodus 25:40, it says: “See, saith He, that thou make all things according to the pattern shewed to thee in the mount.” The holy places made with hands are said to be figures of the true, that is, the tabernacle Moses produced on earth answered exactly to the pattern shewn him on the mount. It is much to the credit of Moses that it is said: “And Moses verily was faithful in all His house, as a servant,...” (Hebrews 3:5). Faithfulness becomes servants, whether we think of Moses in his day, or ourselves in our day. Paul writes in another place: “Moreover, it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful” (1 Corinthians 4:2). The Production of the Holy Places Made with Hands

Moses had the overall responsibility of producing and constructing the tabernacle. When it was finished and erected it is said: “So Moses finished the work” (Exodus 40:33). But Moses wasn’t alone in this. Two men were called to make the various parts of the building. The Work of Bezaleel and Aholiab Of the first it is said: “And I have filled him with the Spirit of God, in wisdom, and in understanding, and in knowledge, and in all manner of workmanship” (Exodus 31:3). To Christians it may seem strange to consider men filled with the Spirit in order to give craftsmanship and skill, but so it was. “To devise artistic work — to work in gold, and in silver, and in copper, and in cutting of stones, for setting, and for carving of timber — to work all manner of work” (Exodus 31:4-5, J.N.D. Trans.). The artistic ability was given by God. We recognise that the Holy Spirit gives spiritual power, altering our lives and enabling us to offer spiritual sacrifices, but in Exodus the things produced were tangible. Yet, though made with hands, Divine power was needed. This should not really surprise us, because all the things Bezaleel made were types of Christ. It says in Exodus 37:1-29; Exodus 38:1-31 :

“And Bezaleel made the ark...” (Exodus 37:1) “And he made the mercy seat...” (Exodus 37:6) “And he made the table...” (Exodus 37:10) “And he made the candlestick...” (Exodus 37:17) “And he made the incense altar...” (Exodus 37:25) “And he made the altar of burnt offering...” (Exodus 38:1) “And he made the laver of brass...” (Exodus 38:8)

What typical value is in these seven items of tabernacle furniture, all pointing to Christ in various aspects! It is little wonder that the filling of the Spirit alone imparted the skills to produce them. With regard to us today it is said of the Comforter, the Spirit of truth: “He shall glorify Me: for he shall receive of Mine, and shall shew it unto you” (John 16:14). It is only in the power of the Spirit of God that likeness to Christ may be seen in us. We are to walk in the Spirit. Guidance into the truth is also in that same power. So even though the vessels made by Bezaleel were produced by hand, were tangible and lifeless, Divine power was exercised in the making of them as being figures of the Lord Jesus. The Women Involved in the Work

Mention is made of the women who played their part. It is interesting that with them the heart is mentioned. “And all the women that were wise hearted did spin with their hands, and brought that which they had spun, both of blue, and of purple, and of scarlet, and of fine linen. And all the women whose heart stirred them up in wisdom spun goats’ hair” (Exodus 35:25-26). What a scene of activity is seen here in producing the tabernacle. Would that there was more of this heart work in our day, seeking to promote the interests of our Lord Jesus among His own. Not Made with Hands In dealing with the expression “not made with hands...” as found in Hebrews 9:1-28, the section from verse 11 to 14 dwells mainly on the inadequacy of the Jewish sacrifices contrasted with the completed offering of the Lord Jesus. In the section from verse 24 to 28 the emphasis seems to lie upon the present position of Christ in “heaven itself...” In all, the day of atonement is never far away from the writer’s mind. “Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by His own blood, He entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us. For if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh; How much more shall the blood of Christ...” (Hebrews 9:12-13). In these two verses, “the blood of goats and calves...” (5: 12) and “the blood of bulls and of goats...” (5: 13), reference is clearly to Leviticus 16:1-34, the chapter that is central to that book. Also, “and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean,...” has obvious reference to Numbers 19:1-22, which is central to that book.

Summing it up, the best result achieved is given: “sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh...” Even these chief offerings were totally inadequate to deal with the heart and conscience. A Greater and More Perfect Tabernacle In verse 11 reference is made to: “a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands,...” We have considered the tabernacle made with hands, set up in the wilderness. It is said to be a pattern of things in the heavens, but it was set up on earth as suitable to an earthly people. Now, because Christ has come and redemption has been accomplished, there is a heavenly sanctuary, suitable to a heavenly people. It is “not made with hands...” We have come to the heavenly things themselves.

G. Bell.

(To be continued, if the Lord will) Christ Our Refuge “There is a Place by Me” (Exodus 33:21) A place near God

We live in a day when people seem to have less and less time for one another. Very often children or unborn children are not wanted, young people have trouble finding their place in society, and an increasing number of elderly people live in difficult circumstances. We are reminded of the words, “There was no room for them in the inn” (Luke 2:7). Although it should not be like that, even we as believers may show the same wrong attitude and act in a worldly way towards children, young

people or elderly people. Therefore we need to ask ourselves whether we really have room in our lives for our fellow believers and to receive one another, just as Christ also received us, to the glory of God (Romans 15:7).

Anyway, it is a great blessing to know that God always has a place for us, a place of perfect security and complete safety. This place is found by Him, or near Him. There is peace and quiet, protection from dangers, and eternal safety, for nothing can harm us in the presence of God. The natural man does not know this place by God, for he has turned his back on Him and has gone out from His presence. Our eyes must be opened so that we see this place, which is only possible by faith. Therefore God said to Moses: “Behold, there is a place by Me, and thou shalt stand upon a rock...” (Exodus 33:21). The eyes of our spiritual understanding must be enlightened. Then we will realize the great things which God has done for sinners in order to save them and bring them into His holy presence, and we will take refuge with God Himself (cf. Ephesians 1:18; Ephesians 4:18). The Rock of ages

It is a wonderful thought that God Himself has prepared this place of security for us. We had no right to it, for we were children of wrath and could not come into God’s holy presence. How did God prepare this place near Himself? He did it by laying a sure foundation in the finished work of the Lord Jesus on Calvary’s cross. This enables us to stand before Him. Our place near God has been prepared by Christ. This is exactly what we see in type in the second part of this verse in Exodus 33:1-23 : “And thou shalt stand upon a rock” (Exodus 33:21 b). Just as Moses was shown a place on the rock, we have found a sure foundation in Christ, the Rock of ages. He is the Rock that offers solid ground to mortal man, to the children of dust. He is the One upon whom our faith can build, both personally and collectively. For the church of the living God is built on this chosen Stone. When we come to Him in faith we receive a new and incorruptible life, “the life of the Rock of ages.” And as living stones we are together being built up a spiritual house (Matthew 16:16-18; Matthew 21:42; John 1:42; John 5:21; Ephesians 2:20-22; 1 Peter 2:4-6). The rock was the only safe place for Moses, for otherwise he would have been consumed by the glory of God. There is some important teaching in Scripture about God as the Rock. In Deuteronomy 32:1-52 Moses repeatedly spoke about God as the Rock of His people: He was the Rock of their salvation, the Rock who begot them and who fathered them (vv. 4, 15, 18, 30, 31). This picture is also often used in the Psalms. God was the Rock in whom David trusted, and whom he blessed as the God of his salvation (Psalms 18:2; Psalms 18:31; Psalms 18:46). In Him he found a safe place in times of trouble: “In the secret of His tabernacle shall He hide me: He shall set me up upon a rock” (Psalms 27:5). Psalms 31:1-24 (vv. 2-3), 40 (5: 2), and 61 (vv. 2-4) also speak about this place of shelter on the rock.

It is evident that all these passages refer to God Himself as the Rock where David found security and safety. The New Testament believer occupies the same place. For as Christians we rest in God, through our Lord Jesus Christ. Our eternal safety is founded on His finished work. And Christ is also the Rock on which the church is now being built. In the cleft of the rock

It does not stop at this, however, for Moses was not only given a place on the rock but even in the rock. God said to Moses: “And it shall come to pass, while My glory passeth by, that I will put thee in a clift of the rock, and will cover thee with My hand while I pass by...” (Exodus 33:22). God put Moses in a cleft of the rock, and covered him with His own hand. This is a beautiful picture of our

position in Christ. And it is God Himself who grants us this place in Christ (1 Corinthians 1:30-31; 2 Corinthians 1:21-22). As believers we are no longer seen in the first man, Adam. Just as Moses was put in the cleft of the rock, we have been united with Christ. In this way we have found a place of perfect safety before God, a place where we are covered by God's own hand. All of this is God's work ("I will put thee in a cleft of the rock..."). As Paul tells us: "For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works..." (Ephesians 2:10). It is His free and sovereign grace, as revealed in Christ.

I would also like to point to the fact that the cleft rock not only gave shelter and safety, but also provided God's people with water during their journey through the wilderness (Exodus 17:6; Numbers 20:7-11). The Israelites drank of a "spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ" (1 Corinthians 10:4). A river of water flowed out of the rock to quench their thirst. This is typical of the streams of living water, the Spirit poured out from on high (Isaiah 44:3). Christ is the Rock that was struck with the rod of God's judgment, and His sufferings and His atoning death opened up an inexhaustible fountain of blessing to us (John 4:10-14; John 7:37-39; Acts 2:17-18; 1 Corinthians 12:13). A divine dwelling place So the important lesson of Exodus 33:21 is that there is a place of shelter in God's presence, a place near God. It is a place given by God Himself to this end. The Hebrew word for "place" in this verse is very common in the Old Testament. In the book of Deuteronomy it is used to designate the place of worship that Israel was to seek in the Promised Land. In this place, which the Lord would choose, the people would come to meet Him and rejoice in His presence. We also have a God-given place of meeting, for it is His desire that we should meet around His beloved Son. Christ is the Centre of our worship and we come to God through Him. So we worship the Father in spirit and truth, and we rejoice in His presence. As Christians we also have the blessed hope that God will grant us a place in His own glory (Romans 5:2; 1 Thessalonians 2:12). God has prepared a place for us near Him. He thought of us before the foundation of the world, and predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself (Ephesians 1:4-6). Christ obtained this place for us by His redemptive work. He is our heavenly Head and our Representative in the glory, for God has made us accepted in the Beloved. This is our present position in Christ, realized by faith. When we think of the glory that is still to come, we also think of the place which the Lord Jesus has prepared for us in the Father's house. There are many mansions in that heavenly home, as He told His disciples in John 14:2. When He had finished His work on earth He went back to the Father. Thus He opened up the way for us to heaven, and He promised us: "And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto Myself; that where I am, there ye may be also" (John 14:3).

"There is a place by Me" — how wide is the scope of these words! They speak of our position in Christ before God, a place of perfect security and safety. They also speak of our place in God's presence here on earth, the dwelling place where He chose to make His Name abide. Finally, they refer to our heavenly hope: a place has been prepared for us in the Father's house, where we shall enjoy eternal rest.

Hugo Bouter. The Sonship of Christ (2) (Continued from page 9) The Sonship of Christ as Seen in His Pathway

We have seen that the nature of the Son is deity. We have seen that He has an eternal relationship with the Father and that this relationship is a relationship of love. Each of these

hallmarks of His Eternal Sonship were seen in the Son in this world. In John's Gospel chapter five, having healed the impotent man on the Sabbath day, the Lord was confronted by the Jews. In verse 17 we have the words of the Lord Jesus Himself: "But Jesus answered them, My father worketh hitherto, and I work." Verse 18 tells us what we are to understand from these words. It is not merely what the Jews inferred from them, but what John, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, wrote: "Therefore the Jews sought the more to kill Him, because He not only had broken the sabbath, but said also that God was His Father, making Himself equal with God." This passage shows that the incarnation did not change the nature of His Sonship. Just as He was not one whit less God after the incarnation than before it, so His Sonship too was unchanged by it1 (See footnote on next page). John 10:1-42 shows this just as clearly. The Lord says: "I and My Father are one." He is of the same nature, of the same essence, as the Father. The Jews knew very well what the Lord was claiming and they accuse Him of blasphemy, "Because that Thou, being a man, makest Thyself God" (John 10:30-33). As proof of His Divine and Eternal Sonship the Lord there refers to the fact that He was sanctified and sent2 by the Father into the world, and that as having come into it He did the works of His Father (John 10:34-39). These works showed that as the Son He has the nature of God in all its fulness. In John 5:1-47 we read that: "The Father loveth the Son, and sheweth Him all things that Himself doeth," and "What things soever He doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise" (John 5:19-20). As the Son He could be shown everything that the Father was doing, and as the Son He could do the same things Himself. But there is one work in particular which shows that the nature of the Son is deity: He gives life to the dead. "For as the Father raiseth up the dead, and quickeneth them; even so the Son quickeneth whom He will" (John 5:21). It is this attribute of Deity that Paul refers to in Romans 1:1-32 in proof of the Divine Sonship of Christ: He is "Marked out Son of God in power, according to the Spirit of holiness, by resurrection of the dead" (Romans 1:4 — J. N. D. Trans.). The Lord Jesus has the nature of God in all its fulness, and as the Son He also has an eternal relationship with the Father. This relationship with the Father characterised the Son as come into the world. It didn't begin when He came into the world, and neither did it cease then. The relationship continued without interruption. On only one occasion in the Gospels does the Lord address God, and that is on the cross: "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" (Matthew 27:46; Mark 15:34). At all other times He addressed God as His Father and this known and enjoyed relationship with the Father was the home of His heart. He referred to it in His first recorded words in this world. Mary and Joseph found Him in the temple and Mary mistakenly reproved Him: "Son, why hast Thou thus dealt with us? behold, Thy father and I have sought Thee sorrowing" (Luke 2:48). Was Mary forgetting that while legally Joseph's Son, the Lord Jesus had been born "before they came together"? (Matthew 1:18). The Lord answered with words to Mary's conscience: "How is it that ye sought Me? wist ye not that I must be about My Father's business?" (Luke 2:49). The Father had sent the Son and the Son had come down from heaven, not to do His own will, but the will of Him that sent Him (1 John 4:14; John 6:38).

1The incarnation was considered in an article by Mr. W. R. Dronsfield which appeared in the January/February 1994 issue, pages 193-196. Copies of that article are available on application to R. Wall, whose address appears on the back page.

2The sending of the Son was considered in the previous article in this series. His last words upon the cross were addressed to the Father. While the Son was in the world, the Father who had sent

Him had been with Him. He had not left the Son alone, because the Son had done always those things which pleased the Father (John 8:29). Now that the work was done, and in the unclouded enjoyment of that same eternal relationship, it is to the Father that He sends away His spirit. “And when Jesus had cried with a loud voice, He said, Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit: and having said thus, He gave up the ghost” (Luke 23:46). The Lord had been hanging on the cross for six hours, yet shortly before those words were spoken He had been able to declare, “It is finished,” with a loud voice (Mark 15:25; Mark 15:34; John 19:30). How was this possible? Mark tells us that: “When the centurion, which stood over against Him, saw that He so cried out, and gave up the ghost, he said, Truly this man was the Son of God” (Mark 15:39). In John’s account of the crucifixion we are told that “He delivered up His spirit” (John 19:30). He had power to lay down His life and power to take it again. Even in the circumstances of His death His glory is manifested, and it is the glory of the Son. This relationship between the Father and the Son was and is a relationship of love. As being one with the Father He can say: “All things that the Father hath are Mine” (John 16:15). Yet as the incarnate Son all things are given to Him by the Father. That the Father gives Him all things is a proof of the eternal love of the Father for the Son: “The Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into His hand” (John 3:35). In John 5:1-47 it is this eternal love of the Father for the Son that leads the Father to show the incarnate Son all things that He is doing: “For the Father loveth the Son, and sheweth Him all things that Himself doeth” (John 5:20). This love for the Son is also seen in the various ways that He is described. He is the Father’s “beloved Son” (Matthew 3:17; Matthew 17:5; Mark 1:11; Mark 9:7; Luke 3:22; Luke 9:35; 2 Peter 1:17), “The Beloved” (Ephesians 1:6), God’s “own Son” (Romans 8:3; Romans 8:32), and the Son of the Father’s love (Colossians 1:13). The Sonship of Christ in Relation to the Jews The Sonship of Christ was a central issue with the Jews. We have seen from John’s Gospel chapters 5 and 10 how He pressed it upon them in plain words. Later, in the counsel of the Jews, the high priest adjured Him by the Living God to say whether He was the Christ, the Son of God (Matthew 26:63-64; Mark 14:61-62; Luke 22:70). His answer was “I am” (Mark 14:62). The Lord also pressed His Sonship upon the Jews in parables. In Matthew 21:1-46 He speaks about a certain householder who planted a vineyard. It is a picture of Israel nationally, planted by Jehovah (Jeremiah 2:21; Jeremiah 11:17). When the time for fruiting drew near servants were sent to receive of the fruit. Some were beaten, some were stoned and some were killed. Last of all the householder sent his son, saying, “They will reverence my son” (Matthew 21:37). In Mark’s Gospel it is added that: “Having yet therefore one son, his wellbeloved, he sent him last unto them” (Mark 12:6). But those to whom the son is sent reject him and as a consequence they are themselves rejected and judgment falls upon them. In Matthew 22:1-46 there is a parable that is only recorded in that chapter. A certain King makes a marriage for his son. Those first bidden to the wedding refuse the invitation and others fill up their place. Matthew’s Gospel repeatedly contrasts the dispensations of law and grace and this change of dispensation is shown to hinge on the rejection of the Son. At the end of Matthew chapter 22 the Lord refers to prophetic Scripture. When He had answered the contrived questions of the Pharisees, Herodians and Sadducees, He confounds the Pharisees with a question of His own: “What think ye of Christ? whose Son is He?” He refers to Psalms 110:1-7, and they cannot answer how, if He is David’s Son, David should call Him his Lord, saying, “The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit Thou on My right hand, till I make Thine enemies Thy footstool” (Matthew 22:41-46; Mark 12:35-37; Luke 20:41-44; Psalms 110:1).

What was the outcome of this presentation of His Sonship to the Jews? His claims to Divine Sonship were utterly rejected. On the basis of His confession in the counsel of the Jews He was condemned to death (Matthew 26:65-66; Mark 14:63-64). When He was taken to Pilate the Jews said: “We have a law, and by our law He ought to die, because He made Himself the Son of God” (John 19:7). He was mocked as He hung upon the cross. Those that passed by reviled Him, “wagging their heads, and saying... If Thou be the Son of God, come down from the cross” (Matthew 27:39-40). “The chief priests mocking Him, with the scribes and elders, said... He trusted in God; let Him deliver Him now, if He will have Him: for he said, I am the Son of God” (Matthew 27:41; Matthew 27:43). If, as the Son of God, He has the nature of God in all its fulness, had He not power to come down from the cross? If He has an eternal relationship with the Father and this relationship is a relationship of love, would He not be delivered? Those that mocked Him supplied the answer, though they did so in unbelief: “He saved others, Himself He cannot save” (Matthew 27:42). As the Son He had power to lay down His life. This commandment He had received of His Father, and on this account the Father loved Him, because He laid down His life that He might take it again (John 10:17-18). This really brings us to another point. Since the coming of the Son of God into the world, all blessing hinges upon receiving Him as such. This was true of the Jews when the Lord was here. The man in John 9:1-41 who was born blind, had his eyes opened and worshipped the Lord Jesus as the Son of God. He typifies the remnant of the Jews (John 9:35-38). We see the same thing with Saul of Tarsus. When “There fell from his eyes as it had been scales... straightway he preached Christ in the synagogues, that He is the Son of God” (Acts 9:18-20). This testimony to the Jews as to the Sonship of Christ was continued in the epistle to the Hebrews. And the eyes of the remnant will be opened to this Personal and Eternal glory of Christ after the church is taken to heaven. At the beginning of John’s Gospel we read of three days. There is one day, and then “The next day” (John 1:29; John 1:35), and then “The day following” (John 1:43). The spiritual bearing of these days is this. The ministry of John the Baptist and of the Lord on earth is connected with the first day. What marks the second day are the features of Christianity. Christ is known as the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world and as the Son of God who baptises with the Holy Spirit (John 1:29; John 1:33-34). But what characterises the third day is the opening of the eyes of the Jewish remnant to the Divine glory of the Lord Jesus, even in the face of their long prejudice against Him. Like Nathanael towards the end of John 1:1-51 they will confess Him as the Son of God and the King of Israel (John 1:43; John 1:47-49).

R. F. W.

(To be continued, if the Lord will) Zion’s King (2) (Continued from page 26) Zion’s King at the Second Coming In the second part of this article we are glad to sound the note, “Jesus is coming again”; “the stone which the builders disallowed, the same is made the head of the corner” (1 Peter 2:7). This time, when He comes, it will be with clouds, and with great power and great glory, testimony to which is borne by many Scriptures. It will be in His own glory, the Father’s glory, and the glory of the holy angels (Luke 9:26). Authority is one thing, power is another, and this King has both. He will come, amid His other glories, as Israel’s Deliverer. “Rejoice greatly, daughter of Zion; shout, daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, thy King cometh to thee: He is just, and having salvation...” And when He comes, whose right it is to reign, He will send forth His angels and they shall gather out of His Kingdom all things that offend, and they that do iniquity (Matthew 13:41). The fan is in His hand, and He will throughly purge His floor. The wheat will be gathered into the garner, and

the chaff will be burnt with fire unquenchable... This theme however is so grand and extensive that it is helpful to have some framework. As a lead into this wonderful subject we suggest Romans 14:17 where we get the three features of the Kingdom selected by the Holy Spirit: righteousness, peace and joy. These are the features of the Kingdom, but they take their character from the King and this is the area upon which we would like to meditate.

Righteousness The word righteousness, in various forms, occurs almost 30 times in Matthew. This King's throne is established in righteousness (Proverbs 16:12). It is righteousness that exalteth a nation and this King loveth righteousness and hateth iniquity (Proverbs 14:34; Psalms 45:7; Hebrews 1:9). Righteousness is the girdle of His loins, and faithfulness the girdle of His reins (Isaiah 11:5). Even His enemies acknowledged this: "And they sent out unto Him their disciples, with the Herodians, saying, Master, we know that Thou art true, and teachest the way of God in truth, neither carest Thou for any man; for Thou regardest not the person of men" (Matthew 22:16). His judgments are unerring, His eyes, like a flame of fire, piercing even to the secret intents of the hearts. He will discern and distinguish between wheat and tares, faithful and unfaithful servants, wise and foolish virgins, sheep and goats (Matthew 13:24-25). Needless to say He will strike terror into the hearts of His adversaries. His enemies shall lick the dust but His good and faithful servants will rejoice (Psalms 72:9). "Henceforth," says the apostle, "there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love His appearing" (2 Timothy 4:8). True it is that every knee shall bow to Him (Php 2:10). There will be a rod of iron (Revelation 12:5; Revelation 19:15), and some will render feigned obedience (Psalms 18:44 -margin). In this connection a sinner being 100 years old shall be accursed (Isaiah 65:20). But He will also be, as in the types, a Shepherd King, for He shall deliver the needy when he crieth; the poor also, and him that hath no helper (Psalms 72:12). What a day that will be! A King shall reign in righteousness (Isaiah 32:1)!

Peace Not only in His day will the righteous flourish, there will be abundance of peace so long as the moon endureth (Psalms 72:7). He will make wars to cease to the end of the earth (Psalms 46:9). Men will beat their swords into ploughshares and their spears into pruning-hooks (Isaiah 2:4). There will be neither enemy nor evil occurrent (1 Kings 5:4). They will not hurt nor destroy in all God's holy mountain (Isaiah 11:9). There will even be peace in the animal kingdom (Isaiah 11:6). But what of Himself? He is the Prince of Peace (Isaiah 9:6)! We often notice the difference between peace as defined in the dictionary and peace as we find it in the Bible. In the dictionary peace is the absence of war and this is what men look for. In the Bible however peace is the possession of adequate resource to meet every contingency, a very different thing. The peace of God which passeth all understanding, keeps hearts and minds through Christ Jesus, even when the circumstances are adverse. The God of peace also will bruise Satan under our feet shortly. It is a favourite appellation of our God. He is described as "the God of peace," no fewer than 6 times in the New Testament. Nothing can disturb His steadfast throne, even an uprising at the close of the 1000 years reign. Fire will come down and devour the adversaries. "When He giveth quietness, who then can make trouble?" (Job 34:29). He is the Prince of Peace.

Joy

"Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is He that cometh in the Name of the Lord" (Matthew 21:9)! This was the language of the multitude at His first advent. So it will be at the second (Psalms

118:26). “Lift up your heads, O ye gates; and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in. Who is this King of glory? The Lord strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle. Lift up your heads, O ye gates; even lift them up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in. Who is this King of glory? The Lord of hosts, He is the King of glory. Selah.” The joy of God’s earthly people can best be described in the words of Scripture. “We were like them that dream. Then was our mouth filled with laughter, and our tongue with singing: then said they among the heathen, The Lord hath done great things for them. The Lord hath done great things for us; whereof we are glad” (Psalms 126:1-3). The Hallelujah-Psalms give the picture, and some of the prophetic Scriptures excel in beauty. “The ransomed of the Lord shall return, and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads: they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away” (Isaiah 35:10). Jerusalem, the city of the great King, beautiful for situation, will be the joy of the whole earth (Psalms 48:2). Even the boys and girls will be playing in the streets (Zechariah 8:5). But what of the King? “The King shall joy in Thy strength, O Lord; and in Thy salvation how greatly shall He rejoice! Thou hast given Him His heart’s desire, and hast not withholden the request of His lips... His glory is great in Thy salvation... Thou hast made Him exceeding glad with Thy countenance” (Psalms 21:1-6).

God’s earthly people will be betrothed... no more Forsaken and Desolate but Hephzi-bah and Beulah... and as the bridegroom rejoiceth over the bride, so shall the King rejoice over Israel (Isaiah 62:4-5). And not only will He then be seen as Son of David but also as Son of Man, His dominion from sea to sea, and from the river to the end of the earth. He shall have the dominion and the glory. “And there was given Him dominion, and glory, and a Kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve Him: His dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and His Kingdom that which shall not be destroyed” (Daniel 7:14).

Such is the righteousness, peace and joy of the Kingdom, and of the King, Zion’s King, the One so soon to come. But what of ourselves? Let us remind ourselves that the Lord Jesus Christ is never called King of the assembly. In the present day of grace those who know Him as Saviour know Him in much nearer relationship. We are not subjects of a King. We are members of His body, bone of His bone, flesh of His flesh, shortly to appear as His bride and His wife. He is our Lord and Head, and the Bridegroom of the bride. When He reigns, wonderful grace indeed, we shall reign with Him. In the types, sometimes the wives are associated with their husbands in exaltation, like Eve with Adam, Rebecca with Isaac, and Asenath with Joseph. Sometimes however the wives have to share the rejection of their husbands, like Zipporah with Moses, Leah with Jacob and Abigail with David. This brings to us a warning. Only in the measure in which we suffer with Him shall we also reign with Him; but what an encouragement this should be to us not to be offended in Him. Let us share His reproach and be found waiting, working and watching for His soon return, Zion’s King, the Bridegroom of the bride. Even so, come, Lord Jesus!

D.W.P. From Our Archive The Revelation of the Father (1) For the understanding of Bible references to things like eagles we have to remember that we are dealing with days before the modern paraphernalia of rock climbing, and in every eagle story the idea of it belonging to a region inaccessible to all natural powers is never very far away. In Isaiah 40:1-31 it talks about the youths fainting and being weary, but then we read that, “they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles...” In Revelation 12:1-17 where the mother of the child is given the wings of a great eagle to fly into the wilderness there is again the idea that by

its power the eagle has access to, and has its home in, a region that is inaccessible even to the greatest powers of men. In considering “the face of a flying eagle,” we remember then that the eagle soars in a realm inaccessible to men, but the fact that holy Scripture does also speak of the face of an eagle indicates that although its home is in a region so far removed, yet it does present itself close to man.

There are two passages which speak either about the flying eagle or the face of an eagle. The first is in Ezekiel 1:1-28, and in this particular case the cherubims had each one four faces. It is a description, some of it very difficult to present to the imagination, of these creatures that formed part of the sustainment of the divine glory. “As for the likeness of their faces, they four had the face of a man, and the face of a lion on the right side; and they four had the face of an ox on the left side; they four also had the face of an eagle.” The other passage is very similar in many ways. It is in Revelation 4:1-11, once again about the living creatures that are connected with the throne of God and its administration. It says in verse 7 of the four beasts, the four living creatures, “The first beast was like a lion, and the second beast like a calf, and the third beast had a face as a man, and the fourth beast was like a flying eagle.” It does seem quite plain that we are to understand by these four figures the four representations of the Lord Jesus given in the four Gospels and although from ancient times there have been all kinds of disputes as to which they are, generally speaking, Christians have always understood that the eagle represented the Gospel of John. Now I would like to begin with this idea that the principal feature of the Gospel of John is that it presents to us the Lord Jesus Christ whose home was in a region quite inaccessible to the mind or any power of man, but who came to earth to make it known. In this sense this Gospel is the Gospel represented by the face of an eagle or by a flying eagle.

If we look at the first verse, we already find ourselves face to face with a region that is inaccessible. “In the beginning was the Word.” This represents eternity to us as nearly as it can be grasped by us even when our minds are renewed by the Holy Spirit. In this whole prologue to the Gospel of John we have to draw an extremely careful distinction between what was, what existed, generally speaking unchangeably existed, and what began to be or began to be something that it was not before. We will notice verse 14 where it says the Word became something that He was not before. He continued to be the Word but the Word became something that He was not before and that is flesh. But in the first verse, it is very different. “In the beginning, the Word was,” the Word existed. In other words, if we can take our minds back to the moment, perhaps only in imagination, when all things began, not only did it begin through this Person, the Word, but He already existed. And taking our stand upon the absolute limit of the shores of time as we can know it, we find ourselves gazing out over the sea of eternity. There immediately we have the very definite indication that this Person belonged to a region concerning which the human mind unaided can know absolutely nothing.

Now we had no knowledge at all of the region spoken of in the opening verses of John’s Gospel until the Word of God came. There were one or two hints in the Old Testament, such as the statement in Isaiah 57:15, “For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, and whose Name is Holy: I dwell in the high and holy place, and with him that is of a contrite and humble spirit...” There is this vast stretch of eternity, out there beyond the reach of the human mind, and we are brought knowledge of it. But not only are we brought knowledge of it, which of itself would be an empty thing, but we find very soon that it is given a content and that content

brings us very quickly to part of our theme. “The Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.” We have read of the Word that He existed in the beginning, He existed with God and He was God, and it is absolutely necessary to make such statements. But here we find something the Word became: “The Word became flesh and dwelt among us.” The apostle John’s mind goes back to his youth when he was one of that band of disciples who were with the Lord Jesus Christ. A little lower he says, He “dwelt among us,... full of grace and truth,” and after the parenthesis in verse 15, “And of His fulness have all we received, and grace for grace,” or “grace upon grace.” Looking back over all the years that had intervened John recognised and testified to the fact that nothing but wave upon wave of divine grace had come to him from the fulness that was in the Word made flesh. The statement, He “dwelt among us, (and we beheld His glory,...)” indicates that there was time for the eye to linger and to take account of all that was passing before it. We beheld and admired His glory. But what was that glory in the exact statement of this verse? I am partly retranslating and partly paraphrasing when I say it was “... (... the glory as of an only begotten from the side of the Father,) full of grace and truth.” I suppose the brackets are quite correct. The Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, (...) full of grace and truth. But, of course, it is what is between the brackets that we are particularly concerned with because we are told that He came, when He became flesh, from being at home with the Father. That is what gives substance, meaning and glory to the concept of eternity that we have here. And in the end we will see it gives not only glory but eternal love, and the very fount of eternal love, to the concept. As their eyes lingered upon Him and they heard His words, they recognised and realised that this was the only begotten from being at home with the Father, full of grace and truth. I don’t want to suggest for a moment that the Lord Jesus Christ ever ceased to be in the bosom of the Father, but there was a sense in which He left the glory that belonged to that place. He was the only begotten and He was coming forth from His glory with the Father.

Verse 18 is the verse which next speaks to us of the Father. “No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him.” John’s Gospel has a vital place in the distinctive New Testament part of the blessed self-revelation of God which occupies the whole of Scripture. A central theme is the revelation by the Son of the Father’s Name, and a mere inspection of the contents compared with the Synoptics confirms that this revelation of the Father occupies a unique position in John. In this verse 18 taken together with verse 14, we meet the opening note of this transcendent theme, the knowledge of the Father. Christendom appears largely to ignore the immensity of the step forward immediately apparent in John’s opening page when compared with the, in themselves, tremendous steps by which God made Himself known in the Old Testament. This opening note presents to us, not God’s power as in the Name El Shaddai, Almighty God, nor the foundation elements of God’s character, as in the Name Jehovah, but it presents to us His affection. And this is seen at first embracing the everlasting object of His delight, the only begotten Son. This quality of eternity which belongs to the Father’s bosom, is indeed connected here with the Person who is there. Matthew first noted His Sonship of God at His baptism. Luke goes further back and notices it at His birth. But John goes farther back still even to the unmeasurable, unspeakable distance of eternity and declares His Sonship in the bosom of the Father. The Lord Jesus is the firstborn Son, and in this He has companions: He is the firstborn among many brethren. But as the only begotten Son He is alone from eternity. The first is Sonship in manhood, the second is Sonship in deity. At this moment the

phrase “which is” must be taken account of. These two small words might with sufficient accuracy be translated, “the One who is.” In such a context only the most exalted meaning is to be considered, and there is no doubt what that meaning is. This is the Name used in the Greek Bible in Exodus 3:14 when the presence is so solemn that Moses is commanded: “put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground.” God commissions Moses to be His messenger to Pharaoh. Moses asks for God’s Name and God said unto Moses: “I am the One who is. Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, the One who is hath sent me unto you.” Here is the divine mystery. The One who lay in the bosom of the Father was Himself the Eternal God. The only begotten Son and the bosom of the Father are co-eternal. When it says here that “the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him,” it is perhaps the simplest of the statements that are made about this unveiling part, the great central part, of the mission of God’s only begotten Son. We are told by the Lord’s prayer in John 17:1-26 to which we will come afterwards, God willing, “I have manifested Thy Name unto the men which Thou gavest Me out of the world.” Then we have the declaration of Psalms 22:1-31, “I will declare Thy Name unto My brethren.” But this one is the simplest of all for it means to “tell the whole story.” When you have Cornelius telling the messengers the story of the dream that he had had, and the apostle Paul telling the church at Jerusalem how God had worked by him amongst the Gentiles, and the disciples from Emmaus coming back and telling what had happened to them, it is the same word. It means, “tell the whole story” and that is exactly what the Lord Jesus Christ came to do. He came to say all that could be said, to say all that had to be said, to say all that must be said, in order to make God known and set the knowledge of Him in a light accessible to us by the Spirit of God. It was in the bosom of the Father that He was and therefore it is as the Father that He declares Him and that gives its character to the pages that follow. It is the whole story of the Person whom the Son came to reveal in all His glory and love and that is the Father.

Now I want to turn aside for a moment to read chapter 12 verse 44 to the end. You might wonder for a moment why I should take this leap while we are in the middle of considering John 1:18. A moment’s thought will show us that these verses occupy a very special place in the structure of the Gospel of John. The public ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ closes with the words of the Lord in verse 36. “While ye have light, believe in the light, that ye may be the children of light. These things spake Jesus, and departed, and did hide Himself from them.” Now that is the end of the story of His public ministry and the remaining verses of this chapter are the Holy Spirit’s commentary, the Holy Spirit’s explanation, of the significance of the public ministry. That commentary is in two parts. First of all, from verse 37 down to verse 43, we can see that the Holy Spirit is commenting upon the staggering fact that so few people believed in Him. He takes two passages from Isaiah to explain that it was to be expected as a matter of fact, that it was prophesied, that few would believe and the reason would be that their hearts were hardened. Yet for those whose eyes were enlightened and who did believe, the remainder of the part we read, verses 44 to the end, presents to us the real essence and quality of what they received who believed. They were put in touch with the Father. The Spirit of God’s comment upon the public ministry is that those who heard Him had this great thing done for them. It was great to know the Son but we understand that a person who would be satisfied — I must be extremely careful here — who would be satisfied with knowing the Lord Jesus, would not have gone to the conclusion that holy Scripture in the words of the Lord Jesus presents. Why? Because they haven’t known the Son unless they have been taken by Him to the Father. Unless they have explicitly seen the

Person of the Father in Him, and they have heard the Father speaking in Him, they have not really known the Lord Jesus and what He came to do. So this tremendous truth is set before us that the purpose of the public ministry was to put those who heard and believed in touch with the Father. Only so would a person fully know the Son, because He came for this purpose to make the Father known.

Well, when all the story is told, there is a great deal more about the blessedness and the wonder of the Person of the Son Himself. There is a great deal about what the Son does and what the Father does. There is a great deal about what the Lord Jesus Christ personally is to those who believe in Him. But in the end it comes down to this, that if we really have heard and believed, then we have been put in touch with the Father. I wonder if our souls have really been in the realisation of this, that it is only if we are consciously in touch with the Father that we have received the ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ and the full end of believing.

Now let me return again to verse 35 of chapter 1. Two of the disciples of John heard him speak and they followed Jesus. They were following Him and He turned to them and said, “What do you want?” They said, “Master, where dost Thou live?” and He said to them, “Come and see,” and they came and they stayed with Him for the rest of that day. Now that is a simple story and there is absolutely not a word about it to give us an assurance, if we feel we need an assurance, that it has another meaning. But could anyone doubt that in the setting of the first chapter of John we are being invited to come and see the dwelling place of the only begotten Son in the bosom of the Father? As we follow through in the pages of the Gospel of John seeking to gather up the details as far as it may be permitted to us, the Lord Jesus Christ declaring, manifesting; perhaps declaring in the first part of the Gospel, perhaps manifesting in the latter part of the Gospel; then we are surely following the invitation of the Lord Jesus Christ when he said, “Come and see.” I suppose that there are very few young people who won’t say, when they hear a title such as has been announced, “This is too deep for me.” But let us never forget that in that portion of holy Scripture most explicitly addressed to the babes in Christ, the babes in the family, the Holy Spirit says by this same writer John, “I write unto you, little children, because ye have known the Father.” I represent to myself that that means it is absolutely natural for the most new-born babe in the things of God to turn to God in prayer and to say “Father.” The very first step upon that line is what we are invited to take when the Lord Jesus Christ says, “Come and see.” Every new-born babe in the family has started with the knowledge of the Father and if only we will heed these words, and keep on coming and keep on seeing, then we shall indeed know where He dwells and we shall dwell with Him. We shall be able to understand what the apostles mean when they say, we want you to have a sharing of fellowship with us and truly our sharing is with the Father and His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

J. S. Blackburn.

Christ’s Greatness in the Epistle to Laodicea (2) (Continued from page 14)

“These things says the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God” (Revelation 3:14). Who is this Amen who is at the same time witness and beginning? He is the most wonderful Person in the universe and is speaking to His church. In these verses written to Laodicea we see the Lord in various relationships, for example:

1. As the Beloved addressing the objects of His love;

2. As the Son of the Father speaking to God's family;

3. As the Lord giving direction to His servants;

4. As the Teacher instructing His disciples.

Why does He present Himself in these ways? Is it not that, because of these unique features, He is the only One who qualifies to be the true Judge? His searching eyes are examining the whole spectrum of the Christian testimony! Does He not see that, despite high pretensions, His church has really forsaken the truth, or even worse, abandoned Himself? In His great love He wants to draw the attention of the individual believer to Himself, even when the overall picture is quite hopeless. "Laodicea" means something like: "people's rights," or "the people speak or decide;" in other words: democracy. This spirit lures man into placing his "rights" and personal "ideas" above the rights, words and verdicts of the Lord Jesus, who is God Himself, the Amen, blessed for ever.

We must realise that He is "the Amen." This does not merely mean "may it be so," as when a prayer or a discourse is concluded. No, it really means that when the Lord has spoken it is so. There is no shadow of a doubt left. When He has decided something, it is true and it stands. Even though man may seek to change God's purposes, He will see them through. Finally, the Name "Amen" also suggests a link with the concluding phase of the history of the church. Furthermore, the "Amen" is intimately connected with the truth of God. In the Hebrew this is quite clear, as Isaiah 65:16 shows, the God of truth being the God of Amen. The word/Name Amen might be linked as well with another Hebrew word which has the same letters (a.m.n.) and which means "artificer" or "nursling," as in Proverbs 8:30. Thus Mordecai brought up (nourished — same word) Hadassah (Ezra 2:7). This is an interesting thought because it fits in with what Christ is as the Chief Executive of God's creation, who will bring things to pass. Therefore in the four characteristics suggested earlier, He uses these qualities to nurture (as in nursling) and build up His church. In the text of the New Testament and especially in John's writings, we find many times "verily, verily" or "amen, amen." Using those words, our Lord confirms the truth of His remarks. A helpful reference is 2 Corinthians 1:20, read together with the notes in the Darby version. Thus Christ as the great Amen is the embodiment, the manifestation and confirmation of God's truth. Is He not the Amen who reveals what He is in Himself1: "I am... the truth?" (John 14:6). He declares the truth and maintains it to God's glory, even today when the truth has been (or is being) given up. How great He is!

According to 1 Timothy 3:15 the church has the great privilege and responsibility of being the pillar of the truth. This means that God considers her to be the public supporter and witness of the truth. However, she is never supposed to usurp a position in which she would decide about the truth. Nevertheless, this is what has happened: the church has placed herself above the truth, to sit in judgment upon the Word of God, instead of being ruled, lead and judged by it. Today the Lord Jesus in the glory is the perfect expression of God's truth (Colossians 2:9). This He was here on earth (John 8:29), when the Fulness of the Godhead dwelt in Him (Colossians 1:19). As He was on earth, and is now in heaven, He speaks from the glory, as the perfect Communicator of God's truth. In both capacities (the Word incarnate as well as the glorified and exalted Son of man) He, the great Amen, addresses Himself to Laodicea. Do we listen when He speaks? Do we say amen

to the “Amen?”

Summary on the great Amen

All that God is, is found and expressed in Him who is the glory of God (See Hebrews, which explains the Old Testament in this respect, and Ephesians which links God’s purposes with Him.

1Already in the Old Testament we find that the Angel of Jehovah, God’s representative (messenger), is Jehovah Himself.

Nothing can be added, as Colossians shows — we are complete in Him; Colossians 2:9). Our unity and union with Him is the secret of this dispensation. Furthermore, in the Amen there is stability. All things change, but in Him there is what is absolute and solid, and what He says is sure and reliable. Therefore He is also the embodiment of the truth (2 Corinthians 1:20) and the confirmation of the truth (as was the case when He was on earth: John 14:6). In 1 John 1:2 we meet Him as the word of life: the expression and communication of the truth in view of its present enjoyment. It would be edifying to study the link between the Amen and the Logos.

Some examples of verses with amen lead to the conclusion that the word amen is used: to accept a task; conform to the will of God (1 Kings 1:36; Nehemiah 8:6); to confirm the personal application of a divine threat or curse (Numbers 5:22; Deuteronomy 27:15 ff); to attest the praise of God in response to a doxology (Psalms 41:13; 1 Chronicles 16:36); to express agreement, to confirm a vow (Nehemiah 5:13; Jeremiah 11:5); to respond in worship (at the end of 14 doxologies in the New Testament epistles); as a concluding wish, a claim that binds (Jeremiah 28:6). Being the Amen (the truth, John 14:6), our blessed Lord revealed God’s thoughts. 25 times in John’s Gospel statements are introduced by saying “verily, verily” or “amen, amen.” John 8:1-59 confirms that He is what He declares and He declares what He is! Thus Christ is also the true witness of the truth and martyr (same word), because of the present condition of the world system. Therefore He is at the same time our perfect example and model. In Revelation 1:7 the word amen follows closely the word yes. Thus we have seen God’s yes in 2 Corinthians 1:20, followed by an amen. Both are expressed in Christ and Paul could add his own yes and amen “for glory to God.” Today we listen to the Lord’s voice saying “Yea (yes), I come quickly.” Do we answer “Amen; come, Lord Jesus”?

A. E. Bouter.

(To be continued, if the Lord will) “The Sermon on the Mount” (10)

Ye are the salt of the earth; but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be salted? It is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men (Matthew 5:13) In the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5:1-48; Matthew 6:1-34; Matthew 7:1-29), Matthew 5:13-16 represents a kind of insert. In these verses the Lord Jesus speaks about the position of His disciples in the world. When He says “ye,” He does not only mean His disciples or future leaders in the Kingdom of God, but, as in the preceding beatitudes, all His disciples at all times and therefore also us!

Here the Lord Jesus uses two illustrations: salt and light. Both are so commonly known that they do not need further explanation to be understood and yet, as is the case with almost all illustrations in the New Testament, a few considerations are appropriate. The nature of salt is to be salty and the characteristic of light is to shine. But in spiritual life nothing comes automatically!

Sadly, it happens far too often that divine power is hindered or concealed by our fleshly actions. It is for this reason that we get so many exhortations in the New Testament. But without the new life in us these exhortations would not be of any use. This is why the Lord does not say, “Ye should be the salt and the light,” but, “Ye are the salt of the earth,... the light of the world.”

Salt In ancient times salt was the most important agent for seasoning and preserving foods. Salt is pungent, bitter; but it keeps what is good and prevents corruption. In the Old Testament, the “salt of the covenant” had, on God’s order, to be added to all sacrifices (Leviticus 2:13). Thus salt is a clear symbol of the sanctifying, keeping power of God which should be expressed in us. We are not sugar or honey, but the salt of the earth. If we witness mockery concerning divine things at school, at work or in other situations and we do not ignore it, but reprimand the scoffers in the right way, and if we do not laugh at certain jokes, then we are the salt of the earth. Often our mere presence will exercise a moderating influence on unbelievers. Two further passages make clear that this “salt” should not be confounded with human pungency or even cutting remarks. The Lord says in Mark 9:50 to His disciples: “Have salt in yourselves, and be at peace with one another.” Paul writes to the Colossians: “Let your word be always with grace, seasoned with salt.” (Colossians 4:6) Grace and peace therefore are not opposed to salt but complementary to it.

Salt is ordinary and commonplace, but it has a strong effect. This is not easily noticed outwardly, but takes place more in secret and in the long term. We might consider it useless to be the only ones in our surroundings who take a stand for the things of our Lord, but let us remember: “Ye are the salt of the earth!” In contradistinction to the following verse, the Lord says: “Ye are the salt of the earth.” “Earth” is not the same as “world.” The Greek can mean “land” as well as “earth,” and here it seems to point to the scene where witness is borne to God. Firstly this was Israel, to which the disciples belonged. But then we can see in it also the wider sphere of the testimony to God in Christianity today, which in its broadest scope corresponds to the Kingdom of the heavens. Here where the light of the gospel and the truth of God shone brightest, the greatest apostasy of all times will take place in the future. This the Lord points out with his following words.

Useless

“But if the salt have become insipid, wherewith shall it be salted? It is no longer fit for anything, but to be cast out and to be trodden under foot by men.” The salt known in ancient times did not have the purity of modern salt. In particular the salt gained from the Dead Sea contained considerable amounts of minerals. If the salt got too wet, 1:e. when it was stored for a long time under wrong conditions, the salt could be washed out. Thus the salt became “insipid” because only the useless ingredients remained, which were then cast out to be carelessly trodden under foot by men. The Lord speaks in this passage of the position of the disciples in the Kingdom of God. Salt is a picture of the influence going out from the testimony to the holiness of God. Somebody whose testimony does not have this power is useless. For this reason Jerusalem, the city that rejected its own King, will be trodden under foot by the nations (Luke 21:24). And Christendom, which for centuries possessed the tidings of grace and salvation in Christ, will apostatise from God and come under His judgment. This passage does not deal with whether or not a born again Christian can be lost. God’s Word does not leave this question open. He who believes on the Son of God has eternal life. And nobody can or will seize out of His and the Father’s hand those to whom He has given eternal life. (John 3:36; John 10:28-29). An admonition The words of the Lord contain a serious

admonition for each one of those who belong to Him. Is not our spiritual life and our witness often “insipid’’ and without power? Then we are, practically speaking, useless for the Lord! We are like the salt that has lost its taste and power. If we do not have fellowship with our Lord daily, by prayer and the reading of His Word, our spiritual life will be dry and without joy and power.

If we think we have always to be only gentle, patient and nice, the power of the salt will be lacking in us. There are situations in which we have to take a decided stand for our Lord and for His rights, even if this causes offence. We have already pointed out that in such moments grace and peace should not be forgotten. But the greatest danger is conformity to this world. Lot, the nephew of Abraham, was a believer who settled down in the godless town of Sodom. When at the end he wanted to warn his sons-in-law of the threatening judgment of God he was in their eyes “as if he jested” (Genesis 19:14).

Some Christians think one could gather from this verse that we have to get together within Christendom and its organisations, or even with the world, and actively work together. By this means, it is said, we are able to exercise, to a greater degree, a Christian influence on the government and its legislation, and on our fellow men. But this is not meant by the words of the Lord Jesus, “Ye are the salt of the earth.” Our influence on our surroundings and our testimony for the Lord does not work through numerical strength, but through our moral behaviour in separation from evil (cf.Romans 12:2; 2 Corinthians 6:14-18; 2 Corinthians 7:1; 2 Timothy 2:21; Hebrews 13:13). On the other hand, our necessary separation must not degenerate into unspiritual isolation, because then we cannot be what we should be: the salt of the earth.

Arend Remmers.

Psalms 119:1-176 (12) (Continued from page 18) 9. TETH — A SNAKE The meaning of this letter is uncertain. It is generally thought to signify “a serpent” (Arabic: “tet”), to which it has a resemblance in figure in several Phoenicio-Shemitic alphabets. Others make it something like: “rolled or twisted together,” from the Arabic root “tih,” or perhaps it is the Egyptian “tôt” meaning hand. Its numerical value is nine. It may signify “Opposition” whilst there is goodness present. For instance, tabeal means “The goodness of El,” which was the name of the opposing king in Isaiah 7:6.

Verses 65-72: The Word of God Strengthens in Adversity Let’s count our blessings!

Verse 65: Tohv...“...good, goodness, kindness of God...”

“Good Thou hast done with Thy servant...,” is the literal rendering in Hebrew. When you feel depressed count your blessings! We often sing that hymn: “Count your blessings, name them one by one, and it will surprise you what the Lord has done.” This is an excellent therapy for discouragement. In verse 67 he speaks of having been afflicted. He has learned that even when the Lord deals with us in discipline we can give thanks and say afterwards, “Thou hast done good with Thy servant.” Jacob saw this in his experience. In Genesis 42:36 he says: “...all these things are against me.” In 45:27: “the spirit of Jacob their father revived...,” and in Genesis 48:15 : “...God, before whom my fathers Abraham and Isaac did walk, the God which fed me all my life long, unto this day...” Jacob realises the “nevertheless, afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness...!!” (Hebrews 12:11). This verse in Psalms 119:1-176, “Thou hast dealt well with Thy servant,” is an answer to the prayer he prayed in verse 17: “Deal bountifully with Thy

servant...” Can you look back and thank the Lord for everything?

Good may be the enemy of the best:

Verse 66: Tohv...“Good (judgment teach me)...”

He prays for discernment (judgment). Sometimes this may signify a “spiritual sense of smell,” or “taste;” but here it has the sense of taste for judgment, discernment, reason. Paul prays for the Philippians in chapter one verse 10: “That ye may approve things that are excellent,” or as the N.I.V. puts it: “... so that you may be able to discern what is best...” For the believer it is not a question of refusing sin or sinful things, but of discerning what is profitable and constructive, and what is not. Good judgment and knowledge are essential for spiritual growth. “... but solid food belongs to full-grown men, who, on account of habit, have their senses exercised for distinguishing both good and evil” (Hebrews 5:14). Now this kind of spiritual discernment does not come to us automatically, as we learn from the verse in Hebrews 5:1-14. It comes with practise. That is why the writer begins this verse 66 with: “Teach me...” Are we willing to be taught?

Discipline results in experience Verse 67: Tehrem...“...Before (I was afflicted)...”

God has been dealing with him (verse 65), and now he can give thanks! Let us take encouragement from these words in Hebrews 12:5 : “... My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of Him: For whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom He receiveth.”

How many parents there are today, even Christian parents, who do not discipline their children according to the Scriptures. They think that it is unkind to punish a child and to correct it, or to give it corporal punishment when necessary. This is of course Freudian philosophy but not Biblical instruction. It is actually a lack of love that does not correct and guide a child when it goes wrong, or when it must be compelled for its own sake. The result of the discipline the Psalmist had accepted was that he could say: “... now have I kept Thy word.” Had there previously been resistance or rebelliousness on his part? The necessary discipline that had followed had brought forth that peaceable fruit of righteousness and for this he is thankful. Can we thank the Lord for discipline?

All things work together for good Verse 68: TOHV ATA...“Thou art good...”

God can never do anything that is not good and beneficent! He is good in His essential nature, and therefore whatever He does must be good! Do we doubt this? Romans 8:28 gives us these wonderful facts about God’s unfailing purpose: a. “all things work together for good (Beneficent) b. “all things work together for good (Active) c. “all things work together for good (Inclusive) d. “all things work together for good (Harmonious)

It is God’s purpose to conform us to the image of His Son. His discipline in our lives has this one aim, to make us more and more like His Son.

Evil is always plotting Verse 69: TAH-PHALU...“... have forged (against me)...”

Here we have the first mention of the adversary. It is in connection with verses 69 and 70 that we see the need for the enabling of the Word of God by strengthening us in adversity, as the title over

this section points out. Satan is called “the accuser of” the brethren, as well as “a liar, and the father of it.” Those who are his children of course bear the same characteristics and are said in this verse to “...have forged a lie...” against the godly man.

Let us never be surprised when this happens to us. However, if they are occupied with forging lies, let us who love the truth be occupied with the Word of God. The verse here helps us as it continues: “... I will keep Thy precepts with my whole heart”

Spiritual cholesterol kills!

Verse 70: TAH-PHASH...“...without feeling (fat as grease)...”

“Without feeling, like fat, is their heart,” is the literal translation. A fat heart is a slow heart, that might finally be brought to a halt and die. Cholesterol is a killer for the body as well as for the spirit!

Believers are certainly not children of the evil one, but regrettably they may sometimes be like the unregenerate in their behaviour. For instance, there are believers who are never on time, who are always late at the meetings for prayer or Bible-study or edification or worship! Do you know about them? They lack spiritual energy. It seems that the round of meetings is a real burden to them. They go through the motions, but their heart is not in it. They need our prayers that they may be revived and energised and healed from their spiritual “fat heart.” May we be characterised by a fervent spirit, serving the Lord whole-heartedly! The hidden blessings of affliction Verse 71: TOHV-LI...“...for my good (I was afflicted)...” The writer to the Hebrews tell us: “Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless, afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby ” (Hebrews 12:11). This is not easy to accept, especially when we are actually going through a trying period in our lives. The apostle Paul had learned to glory in his infirmities! He could say that when he felt utterly weak, then he was made strong by the strength of the Lord. And so it is always. The Psalmist also sees the positive side of affliction: “... that I might learn Thy statutes.” Nothing is lost in the school of faith in which we are all enrolled as believers. And this thought leads me to the last verse of this section:

There is no gain but by a loss Verse 72: TOHV-LI...“...better to me (the law of Thy mouth)... To say “There is no gain but by a loss,” means that in order to gain spiritually we must be willing to loose first. This principle is explained by the apostle Paul in the letter to the Philippians: “But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yea, doubtless, and I count all things but loss, for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ” (Chapter 3:7-8). In this verse 72 we have contrasted thousands of gold and silver and the law of Thy mouth. The Psalmist chooses the law, 1:e. the Word of God. What do we choose? Remember in the introduction I said that the meaning of the word “Law” is: a divine instruction concerning our conduct and our character. The root meaning is “to guide.” The writer would sacrifice anything, such as gold or silver, if only he might have the guidance of God in his life, if only he may know the will of the Lord for every step of the way!

I summarise this section as follows:

Verse 65: What God does is good Verse 66: What God teaches is good Verse 67: When God afflicts it is for our good Verse 68: God is good Verse 72: God’s Word is good To know this is to be best armed for the fight in a day of adversity and opposition.

C. Bruins.

(To be continued, if the Lord will)

Vol 03 - Truth & Testimony Vol. 3, No. 3, 1995.

Truth & Testimony Vol. 3, No. 3, 1995.

Sin, Humiliation, Judgment Judges 19:1-30; Judges 20:1-48

Grievous sin had been committed in Israel, shocking and revolting to every ear that heard it. Nor was any tribe allowed to remain ignorant of, or indifferent to this defiant challenge against the holiness of the God of Israel. It was a matter of such vital consequence as to involve the entire Nation. But let us carefully note the matters that led up to the awful event, for it is these things that manifest the careless, unprofitable state of soul that characterised the Nation as a whole, and which are so sadly repeated in the present history of our own dispensation of the grace of God. Evil had been allowed to gradually creep in unchallenged and senses had become dulled to it, until by a sudden, shocking exposure we learn the results of the laxity that leaves the roots of evil unjudged.

1. First of all, the Levite was one particularly separated from his brethren for the service of God, a teacher and example of the people, responsible to perfect holiness in the fear of God. Yet no conscience of the people seems to raise any question as to the unholy alliance of the Levite with a concubine. What shall we say of this indifferent state of the people? Can it be that such an example was pleasing to them? And what shall we say of the questionable alliances of our own day? — not perhaps with low forms of gross evil, but with that which is respectable enough in the world's eyes, yet which compromises holiness and manifests a heart not thoroughly faithful to "one husband" — our own faithful Lord and Saviour? "Let us search and try our ways, and turn again to the Lord" (Lamentations 3:40).

2. However, we find the concubine adding greatly to the confusion by her sinful conduct (Judges 19:2). Do we not discern here how our own careless ways may embolden another to stoop to more serious evil? We may indeed lament it too, but how thoroughly do we judge ourselves concerning it? Would we dare to disclaim all responsibility in such matters? Such cool complacency is the sure forerunner of more solemn disclosures.

3. Let us also observe the mere friendly, gracious spirit in which the Levite recovers his concubine (5: 3). Not that we should object to grace, but where is the salt with which it should be seasoned? — the holiness so necessary in searching the poor woman's soul and restoring her in heart to the Lord by means of her own true self-judgment? This, sad to say, is painfully lacking. Indeed, we might ask, how could the Levite possibly do such vitally important work when it is evident that he himself was not a self-judged man?

4. Nor is there a shadow of encouragement in the attitude of the girl's father. Instead of showing a broken and contrite spirit as before God, and a seriously humble and quiet state of soul which in such circumstances was only becoming, he is quite indifferent to the shame of it all, and complacently covers it over with merry-making and false fellowship. The Levite too is fully subservient to this mere social vanity until he could stand it no longer (vv. 4-10). God forbid that

we should ever accustom ourselves to indulging in such idle social pleasure; but how much more disgusting on an occasion of serious import! Yet this is not an uncommon thing.

5. Now in Gibeah, where there is no-one to show them hospitality, they are finally entertained by an old man, a sojourner from mount Ephraim. How much like the wicked city of Sodom this city of Israel had become! When determined wickedness raises its head, let us consider how this old man, who has settled down in the evil city, can only think of conciliation as a means of meeting the evil. He is ready to sacrifice his own daughter, thus imitating the faithless folly of Lot (vv. 22-24). But this was not within his rights. Nor is it within our rights to make any compromise whatever with evil. Still, if we are linked with it, it makes cruel demands on us, requiring that we surrender what really belongs to God. “Ye that love the Lord, hate evil” is the divine decree (Psalms 97:10). If we hated evil we would not in any way connect our name with it nor show it the least consideration. How can we dare consent to the slightest evil in order to avoid (as we hope) a greater evil? Are we so foolish as to suppose that we can subdue evil by allowing evil? But who does not discern that this is widely practiced in present day Christian profession? Where is our faith in the living God, whose power alone is able to meet the challenge of sin? What can satisfy the holiness of our Lord except our thorough separation from the evil and firm stand against it? If these are lacking, then however we may plan, compromise, and manipulate things, evil will eventually overwhelm us. What salutary, searching considerations for our souls. May they cast us truly upon God in unfeigned humiliation.

6. However, the faithless, craven Levite sacrifices his concubine to save his own neck. The evil manifests itself in all its horror, breaking out in cruel violence and moral corruption such as even in Sodom had been hindered by the angels, but in Israel is allowed to go to its awful extent of iniquity. At least, if we do not discern in the former things the low and defiled state of Israel, yet certainly none would raise a doubt as to the repulsive wickedness of this act of the men of Gibeah. It is a matter in which all that heard it were of one mind: such evil must be judged. But is this all? It is to be feared that too often the people of God regard it so, and the prevailing feeling here is simply that of indignation against the offenders. Yet in reality how much deeper does the whole matter go. We may in fact regard it as an undeviating principle that every such shocking exposure among the people of God should bring us all to our knees in sober, real self-judgment, before ever we take part in judging the evil. Can we, for instance, wink at those things that preceded this outbreak? Could the nation Israel rightly regard itself as clear of evil when they were required to act in this solemn case? Not by any means. The sin was Israel’s sin, and it manifested a corrupt internal state that also required judgment. The Nation must be brought to feel it as the guilt of the Nation, not merely of the individuals. So too, in the church of God, an occasion of such guilt is an occasion demanding the self-judgment of the church as a whole, the self-judgment of all who may have any knowledge of, or connection with it. Compare 1 Corinthians 5:2. But a still darker complication arises (Judges 20:12-17). When the tribe of Benjamin is asked to deliver up the guilty for judgment, they ignore the demands of righteousness and take up arms to defend the wicked offenders. Such is the awful power that evil wields that complicity with it is quite unhesitating and bold. Let us not underestimate the formidable power of evil, which it has gained by being tolerated, harboured and cherished in secret over a period of years. It may lead many unwary souls with it, perhaps many unwilling to believe or investigate the actual facts. Let us take care that our sympathies are not linked with the wrong camp.

Israel must act: there is no alternative. Yet twice they are defeated, with a great loss of men. True, at first they had inquired of God as to what tribe should lead in the battle, and God had answered, “Judah,” which speaks of the spirit of praise in contrast to mere indignation. But it was not a real waiting on God for complete guidance. How serious a lesson for our own souls! The second time they weep before the Lord, and ask, “Shall I go up again to battle against the children of Benjamin my brother?” The Lord answers, “Go up,” for there could be no altering the fact that they must judge the evil. But they lacked the consideration of “how” to go up, that is, in what spirit, and with what resources. Hence, when beaten the second time, their weeping now is attended by fasting and offering burnt offerings and peace offerings before the Lord (vv. 26-28).

There is nothing like a humble, proper appreciation of the offering of the Lord Jesus Christ to give us a right perspective of what evil is, and to enable us to judge it rightly as before God. The burnt offering reminds us that the glory of God was supremely involved in this matter, glory which can only be rightly vindicated by the sacrifice of the holy Lamb of God. The peace offering speaks of communion with God and with one another, which had been so rudely violated, and which is secured only by the same blessed sacrifice of Christ. Why do we forget this most vital of all touchstones when faced with matters of so great consequence? This is God’s resource for meeting evil, and we must seek grace to share God’s thoughts if we are to know the victory which He gives “through our Lord Jesus Christ.” Along with this the fasting would speak of the simple, real judgment of the flesh in ourselves, which is only properly accomplished as we view ourselves in the light of the death of our Lord. Self-confidence invariably forgets such resources, and will invariably fail. May we turn from our pride and cling to Him whose grace and power are blessedly manifested at Calvary: He cannot be supplicated in vain.

Yet the solemn work of judgment must be finished. Evil is determined to fight to the end and before Benjamin is subdued thousands have fallen, both in the guilty tribe, and in Israel. Terrible was the cost of securing righteousness, but it must be done. Can we dare to be less firm with manifested evil today, under the specious plea of how many may be adversely affected by a definite, unequivocal stand against wickedness and complicity with wickedness? True indeed that God will require of us a chastened, broken spirit in dealing with it, and specially since our own low state of soul, our careless indifference, is all too sadly involved, but God’s glory is far more important than the outward peace of His people. If we are broken for a reason of this kind, it is evident we need to be broken.

Again, however, let us press the fact that this was no mere isolated case of evil, but one which revealed the downward trend of the nation Israel. God would have the conscience of all the Nation in exercise, not merely to judge the grossly guilty, but to judge the deep roots of evil in their own hearts. No mere angry retribution is allowed, and before judgment they must be made to feel the reality of their own link with the evil, in speaking to God of “Benjamin my brother.” Shall we not today seek grace from our holy Lord and Saviour to let these things burn into our hearts, that we may be fully with God both in the stand we take, and the becoming spirit of humiliation with which we take it?

L. M. Grant. The Life of David (10) David’s Influence in the New Testament (Continued from page 29)

Having looked at many references to David in the Old Testament, not by any means every reference, it is interesting to see that his influence was not exhausted in that portion of God's Word. The New Testament has rich and instructive references to David and not surprisingly mainly in connection with the Lord Jesus, his great and glorious Son. The New Testament, as translated in our excellent Authorised Version, commences with the statement, "Book of the generation of Jesus Christ, Son of David, Son of Abraham" and closes with the Lord Jesus saying "I Jesus... I am the root and offspring of David, the bright and morning star" (Matthew 1:1; Revelation 22:16). David's chief honour is not that he was the warrior king of Israel, or the sweet Psalmist. His honoured and dignified place as witnessed by these quotations from the New Testament stems from his association with Jesus, God's King and Son. The genealogy of Jesus Christ in Matthew 1:1-17 establishes indisputably the fact that He is the true Son of David. There are many interesting and solemn features connected with the genealogy, but its main interest for our study is that it shows the descent from David the king (5: 6), to Joseph the son of David (vv.16 and 20), and thence to Jesus Christ. The King has arrived as a little Babe and the Spirit of God in accurate and legal precision shows that the Babe is none other than the promised Seed of David (Isaiah 9:6-7 and Isaiah 11:1-10). Long centuries have elapsed since God made a covenant with David, a covenant which could not possibly be fulfilled in a mortal failing man, but the One has arrived in whom God's purposes and covenant with David will eventually be fulfilled (2 Samuel 7:1-29). David is long since dead but his name is to be perpetuated in Jesus Christ, the Son of David. Note how the oft repeated term "begat" is dropped in verse 16 and is substituted with "of whom." The change is to show that Jesus was not born of human generation. He was conceived in Mary's womb by the power of the Holy Spirit of God (vv. 18-23).

Matthew 9:27-31

Chapters 8 and 9 of the Gospel by Matthew display the powers of the kingdom exercised by Jesus the King, the Son of David. Death, disease and demons had to bow before His omnipotent power. David the king of Israel could subdue Philistines, Amonites, Moabites and rebels of his own nation but he was powerless to deal with death, disease and demons. The power of Jesus was infinitely greater than the power of David and brought blessing and comfort into the lives of afflicted people. Well might we sing "Wondrous heart and healing hand." Two blind men pleaded for mercy from the Son of David and obtained it. This was a partial fulfilment of Isaiah 35:5 and Psalms 146:8. The passage in Isaiah 35:1-10 anticipates the universal sway of the Messiah, the Son of David. The land of Israel particularly will redound with the fame of the power of Jehovah exhibited in the Messiah. But that time had not yet arrived. Jesus did not seek public acclaim. Well He knew the dark days that were before Him. The cross at Golgotha would show how unreliable was public acclamation. Until the appropriate time arrived for the display of the Kingdom for a thousand years the Son of David continued in His humble but powerful witness as to who He was. For references to a similar though later act of healing by the Son of David see Matthew 20:29-34, Mark 10:46-52 and Luke 18:35-43. There are some differences in these accounts when compared with Matthew 9:27-31, but they are substantially the same. Have ye Not Read what David Did? Matthew 12:1-8 The reference to, "At that time," at the beginning of Matthew 12:1-50 is significant. It was a time of indifference toward the ministry of Jesus. It was a time of His rejection. In the previous chapter the cities of Chorazin, Bethsaida and Capernaum had shown callous indifference to His wonderful works of power. Consequently Jesus pronounced the dire punishment that awaited them in the

future. Disappointed but not dismayed, He referred the matter to His Father and thanked Him for the ongoing blessing to others. In chapter 10:5-6 Jesus instructed His disciples to go only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel, but now He issues an invitation to all. The King was rejected by His subjects so He widens the sphere of invitation for all to come to Him for relief and blessing. It is in this context that Jesus challenged the Pharisees with the statement, “Have ye not read what David did when he was hungry, and they that were with him?” David, the anointed of God and the lawful king of Israel, was in rejection because of the hatred and opposition of Saul, the deposed king of Israel. David and his men went to Nob, to Ahimelech the priest, and obtained from him the shewbread to satisfy their hunger. Strictly speaking they ought not to have eaten it as it was the food for the priests, but the kingdom was in disorder and the king in rejection. The disorderly circumstances warranted the irregular conduct. (1 Samuel 21:1-6). The Lord used that incident involving David to counter the criticism of the Pharisees. They attempted to enforce their Sabbatical laws ignoring the fact that the Nation was in a state of disorder. The Romans were the masters of the country, proof of the Nation’s unfaithfulness, and what was yet more solemn, the King was treated with indifference and rejection. It wasn’t wrong for the disciples to satisfy their hunger. David had done that for his followers. It was a powerful rebuttal of the religionists and they had no answer to it. Little did David realise that when he asked for the shewbread for himself and his followers, the Messiah, about eleven centuries after, would commend his action and use it to justify the action of His disciples. Praise God that at the Judgment Seat of Christ every man and woman who is faithful to God shall have praise from God. They perhaps forgot what they did for God but God never forgets what is done for His interests (1 Chronicles 4:5; Hebrews 6:10). Is this Man the Son of David? Matthew 12:23-32 From the Old Testament Scriptures the godly Israelite had his hope centred in the coming of the Son of David. Ezekiel 34:1-31; Ezekiel 37:1-28 promised Him as Shepherd and King. Isaiah 11:1-16 looked forward to a reign of blessing and justice, and specifically Isaiah 35:5 stated that the eyes of the blind shall be opened and the ears of the deaf unstopped. When a crowd of people saw with great amazement the Lord Jesus healing a blind and dumb man possessed with a demon they exclaimed, “Is this man the Son of David?” The evidence before their eyes answered their question. Jesus of Nazareth was indeed the promised Son of David. But how blind were the proud Pharisees. Because of their blindness they committed a terrible sin. They attributed to Satan the power that Jesus exercised in healing the stricken man. The kingdom power was in expression before their eyes but they had no faith to perceive this. Envy and animosity are blinding features. Satan’s power had been curtailed and his captive delivered from his grasp by the Lord Jesus. The Pharisees were powerless to help the poor man but they were ready to slander the One who had healed him. Mark 3:30 shows how evil was their allegation. They claimed that Jesus had an unclean spirit. How awful! The Holy Son of God, anointed and sealed with the Holy Spirit, having an unclean spirit? Unthinkable! The humble Son of David could forgive, as the son of Jesse had often done, but to speak injuriously against the Holy Spirit was a sin of unpardonable gravity. It was blasphemy of the worst possible kind (See Hebrews 10:29 — insulting the Spirit of grace). The totally unjust charge was another feature in the accumulating guilt of the Jewish leaders. That guilt finally brought upon the Nation God’s just government and wrath after Jesus was crucified. Israel’s moral condition was illustrated in the condition of the demon possessed man. Satan’s power had produced blindness (unable to perceive their Messiah) and dumbness (unable to respond to God in praise and thanksgiving) Is this man the Son of David? The answer is a resounding “Yes.” A Gentile Woman and her

Daughter Blessed by the Son of David. Matthew 15:21-28

How stern and distant the Lord Jesus appeared to be when a Gentile woman appealed to Him as “Lord, Son of David.” She appealed to the Lord to heal her demon possessed daughter. Jesus never answered her. He acted as if He had not heard her plea for help. That was strange behaviour by the most accessible of men, the Man Christ Jesus. Was He hard and unfeeling? No! He was most kind and compassionate and ever ready to help those in need. Why was He silent? The cause was her mode of address to Him. She and her daughter as Gentiles had no claim upon the Son of David. Her persistent cries for help upset the disciples and they requested that Jesus dismiss her from them. Jesus, according to the prophecy concerning Him, (Matthew 2:6), replied to His disciples that His mission was to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. Persisting, the woman came to Him and bowing to Him cried simply, “Lord, help me.” Surely the Lord would respond to that simple but earnest prayer? But He didn’t, and indicated to the woman that she had no claim on the blessing that belonged to the children of Israel. “Quite so,” she replied, “but dogs get crumbs from their masters tables,” which meant, “I know I have no claim to the blessing that belongs to Israel but I and my daughter are needy creatures. Imake a claim on Thy mercy” (See Matthew 12:21 and Romans 15:9). Such an appeal could not be refused and the woman’s great faith was rewarded with the healing of her daughter. Jesus the Son of God revealed Himself as a true Son of David.

David the son of Jesse had many Gentiles in his army. There was Zelek the Ammonite, Uriah the Hittite, Jithmah the Moabite and Ahimelech the Hittite (1 Chronicles 11:39; 1 Chronicles 11:41; 1 Chronicles 11:46; 1 Samuel 26:6). There were also six hundred Gittites (from Gath in Philistia) led by Ittai the Gittite (2 Samuel 15:18-22). David reminded Ittai that he was a foreigner and advised him to return to Absalom. Ittai point blank refused and expressed his loyalty and allegiance to David. Eventually, David rewarded Ittai for his faithfulness and made him a commander over a third of his army (2 Samuel 18:2).

There is a certain analogy between the stories in Matthew 15:1-39 and 2 Samuel. David was rejected by many in Israel and Jesus was rejected by many in Israel. Ittai was a foreigner and the woman and her daughter were Gentiles. David didn’t encourage Ittai and Jesus didn’t encourage the woman. Ittai was persistent and the woman was persistent. Ittai’s loyalty was rewarded and the woman’s faith was rewarded. The blessing of the Gentile woman and her daughter ante-dated the time when Jew and Gentile, without any national distinction, would be blessed in one body in Christ (Ephesians 2:15-19. See also John 10:16).

F. Wallace.

(To be continued, if the Lord will) Tabernacle, Not Made With Hands (2) “A greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands...” (Hebrews 9:11) “For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands...” (Hebrews 9:24) (Continued from page 35) “He entered in once”

It is by virtue of His own blood that Christ has entered into the Holiest of all. He has gone in permanently. When Aaron entered the Holiest of all in the tabernacle in the wilderness it was on a temporary basis, and only once a year did it take place. The expression “by His own blood” is significant. In verse 25 reference is again made to the day of atonement which was year by year. Referring to the required offerings of that day it says “with blood of others.” There was no

permanence connected with those offerings. How beautiful to contrast these with “His own blood” by which He has entered in “once,” never to be repeated. Added to this is the obtaining of an “eternal redemption.” There was no thought in the Old Testament of an eternal redemption. It is only by the Lord’s death that this has been effected. There is therefore a setting aside now of the inadequate offerings of the Old Testament times.

One of the most striking verses in the whole of the Epistle to the Hebrews is verse 14 of our chapter: “How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?” The first thing to take our attention is the involvement of all three Persons of the Godhead.

(a) The blood of Christ.

(b) The Eternal Spirit.

(c) The Living God.

We have already commented upon the blood of Christ as obtaining an eternal redemption. In the Old Testament offerings there was always the distinction between the offerer and the offering. But here is shown the perfection of His sacrifice, in that He “offered Himself without spot to God.” The priests who offered were failing men and the offerings themselves were inadequate. With regard to Christ’s offering, how perfect it was! It was “without spot.” In all His life there was no flaw. As we often meditate upon that perfect pathway we are reminded of the meal offering described in Leviticus 2:1-16. It was of fine flour, mingled with oil and anointed with oil. Frankincense was put thereon which was all burnt, speaking of that which ascended to God as a sweet savour. There was to be no leaven in the meal offering. No taint of sin was found in Him. The offering of Himself tells of His devotion and obedience to God to the end.

We have already noticed that the very best that could have been secured by the sacrifices under Judaism only brought about, “the purifying of the flesh.” But in this verse we are dealing with the result of the Lord’s sacrifice which is so much greater: “How much more shall the blood of Christ... purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God.” The offering of Himself “to God” may suggest the work of Christ as it is presented in the burnt offering, that is, for God’s pleasure. We ourselves having a purged conscience and sin having been fully dealt with once for all, point to the work of Christ as the sin offering. In the light of this perfect offering, works must be seen as dead works. Perfect liberty is now ours to serve the living God; serve here meaning worship. The Holy Spirit being referred to as the “Eternal Spirit” emphasises the unchangeable and abiding results of the finished work of Christ.

Into Heaven Itself (Hebrews 9:24-28)

“For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us” (5: 24). Of the three appearings referred to in this section, the first is His appearing in the presence of God for us, that is, “heaven itself.” This place is in contrast to the “holy places made with hands” that are now set to one side.

Looking at all three appearings, we see that these are past (5:26), present (5: 24), and future (5: 28). If we had been writing we would have commented upon them in this order. However, the

apostle as being inspired by the Holy Spirit gives first place to His present appearing. It is obvious that this is pre-eminent. It is a signal truth, belonging to our day, that Christ has entered heaven itself permanently as man.

Christ Our Representative Before God

“Now to appear in the presence of God for us.” The two words “for us” assure us of His place as our representative before God. In Exodus 28:1-43 a full account is given of the garments of Aaron, the High Priest. Upon each shoulder of the ephod there was an onyx stone. Upon each stone six of the names of the children of Israel were engraved: all twelve names were upon his shoulders. “And Aaron shall bear their names before the Lord upon his two shoulders for a memorial” (Exodus 28:12). The shoulders speak of strength. They speak of Christ’s ability to represent us in God’s presence, maintaining us there in a perfect acceptance.

There was also a breastplate in which were set twelve different precious stones, and the breastplate was securely attached to the ephod. “And the stones shall be with the names of the children of Israel, twelve, according to their names, like the engravings of a signet; every one with his name shall they be according to the twelve tribes” (Exodus 28:21). These types from the Old Testament serve us well as illustrating the meaning of the expression “for us.” The breastplate speaks of the love of Christ. We cannot refrain from another quotation from this wonderful chapter: “And Aaron shall bear the names of the children of Israel in the breastplate of judgment upon his heart, when he goeth in unto the holy place, for a memorial before the Lord continually” (Exodus 28:29). There is no doubt as to our acceptance before God, neither is there any diminishing of His strength and love toward us. Notice the words, “upon his heart.” We are continually and always there.

Christ’s Past Appearing

“But now once in the end of the world (age) hath He appeared, to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself” (Hebrews 9:26). When the ages had run their course the Great Redeemer appeared. None other could take up this momentous task. To “put sin away” points to the Lord’s work as making “propitiation.” The day of atonement again comes to mind. On that day the blood of the bullock and the blood of the goat were taken into the Holiest of all and sprinkled upon the mercy seat once, and seven times before the mercy seat. In type this points to the Lord’s work as a propitiation by which God has been glorified and His justice vindicated. It is in virtue of His blood and its value to God that sin has been put away. Indeed, such is its value that ere long all taint of sin will be put away for ever. In verse 28 of Hebrews 9:1-28 another reference is made to the Lord’s offering, conveying to us the thought of substitution. “So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many.” It is not a matter here of the putting away of sin but of bearing “the sins of many.” On that same day of atonement, described in Leviticus 16:1-34, the blood was taken within the veil into the Holiest of all. Then followed that which typified the substitutionary aspect of the Lord’s death. “And Aaron shall lay both his hands upon the head of the live goat, and confess over him all the iniquities of the children of Israel, and all their transgressions in all their sins, putting them upon the head of the goat, and shall send him away by the hand of a fit man into the wilderness” (See Leviticus 16:1-21). What a beautiful illustration this is of Him who “bear the sins of many.” This aspect of the Lord’s death refers to those who have availed themselves of His offering and know that their sins have been forgiven. In both verses in Hebrews 9:1-28, verses 26 and 28, the word

“once” is emphasised, cancelling out the Old Testament offerings.

Christ’s Future Appearing

There is a third mention of the English word “appearing” and in this case it is future. “And unto them that look for Him shall He appear the second time, without sin, unto salvation” (5: 28). Writing to converted Jews, there may very well be an allusion to the time when the Lord Jesus will appear to the remnant of Israel. It is of interest to note that the Greek word here translated “appear” is different from the other two. The actual word is “optomai” and is that from which we get our English word “optics.” He is coming to be seen. And it is to them that look for Him that He will appear. There is a reminder here of Zechariah 12:10 : “and they shall look upon Me whom they have pierced.” Whether this is the correct explanation or not, we should all be looking. This is not the rapture but His appearing when He will be seen by all. Everyone of us should “love His appearing” (2 Timothy 4:8).

G. Bell.

Psalms 119:1-176 (13) (Continued from page 64) 10. YOD — HAND In Phoenician and Samaritan writing as well as on the coins of the Maccabees this letter presents the figure of a hand rudely drawn. In the Aethiopic language it has the name of “yaman” (1:e. “right hand”). In Hebrew it is called “yod,” from the Hebrew word “yad” which means “hand.” This is seen in the shape of the letter which looks like a hand pointing from right to left. Similarly, the Hebrew language is written from right to left.

“Yod” is also the smallest letter of the Hebrew alphabet, like our English “i.” In the Greek the letter jota (which is printed the same way as the English “i” except it has no dot), is also the smallest letter. Do we not have an important lesson here? Man is so very insignificant in spite of all his boastfulness. Nevertheless, with his ten fingers on his hands, and his ten toes on his feet, he is responsible to God. We have then the idea of responsibility in this letter, the numerical value of which is ten.

We all remember what the Lord Jesus said in Matthew 5:18 : “For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled.” The Lord was referring to the letter “yod” of the Hebrew alphabet, which in the Greek “jota” is spelt with a “t.” It therefore becomes “jot.” The letter “jod” is spelt in Hebrew simply “jd.” Thus the letter is made up, written from right to left, “daleth-jod.” We have already learned that “daleth” means “door.” So the two letters together spell this thought: a hand is pointing to the door. The Lord Jesus is the Door into salvation for poor sinners. The tittle is seen in the Hebrew letter “beth,” which means “house.” Under that letter I pointed out that the letter has a foundation line which protrudes a little and this looks like a little edge. This little edge is called the tittle, and it is this which keeps the house from being swamped. Taking all this together we get this message: The Father’s house will never pass away, it stands firm and is superior to whatever man tries to achieve.

Verses 73-96. Spiritual Maturity through Daily Meditation* Section Ten.* Verses 73-80: “The Word of God Shows Me My Responsibility” No evolution but creation!

Verse 73: YAH-DAK...“Thy hands...” In Isaiah 43:6-7 we read the following: “bring My sons from far, and My daughters from the ends of the earth; Even every one that is called by My name; for I

have created him for My glory, I have formed him; yea, I have made him." It is clear from this that the Bible teaches creation, not evolution. a. As to our spirit God says: I have created him. b. As to our body God says: I have formed him. c. As to our soul God says: I have made him.

Job adds to this: "Thine hands have made me, and fashioned me together round about; yet Thou dost destroy me" (Job 10:8). Let God be true, and every men a liar. Let me study the circulatory system, plasma, the nervous system, the brain, the eye or any other part of the body... "give me understanding...," and I will know that God created me, and that I am a responsible intelligent human being answerable to Him.

Those who are genuine Verse 74: YAHREHK..."They who fear Thee (reverence)..."

Here we have the encouraging influence coming from a tried but steadfast believer. Others can see how he has come through trials,

*Correction The three previous articles in this series should each have included the general heading: "Our Immense Spiritual Riches." The article on the letter Zain was section seven; that on the letter Cheth was section eight and the last article on the letter Teth was section nine. We apologise for these omissions. The main headings and sub-headings being used are set out in pages 89-90 of Volume 2. and perhaps intellectual doubts and he becomes to them a source of gladness. The apostle Paul speaks of this in Php 1:14 : "And many of the brethren in the Lord, waxing confident by my bonds, are much more bold to speak the word without fear." They had seen how Paul could rejoice in the midst of persecution and trial, and how he had hoped in the Word of the Lord. How do others see you and me? What kind of an example or influence are we in our surroundings? Whether we are conscious of it or not we are an influence for good or for bad. We are therefore forcibly reminded of our individual responsibility to be a help and blessing and not a hindrance. If we are genuine and sensitive to the Holy Spirit's guidance, we shall be an encouragement to many.

We must be positive Verse 75: YAHDAGT..."I know (perceive, am aware)..."

Speaking about being an influence for good in our surroundings, here we have it expressed more precisely in the way I have headed this verse — we must be positive!

Negative influences are destructive and a hindrance to the progress of the saints. First we must be positive in our attitude towards the Lord and the ways in which He deals with us: "Thou in faithfulness hast afflicted me." How emphatic the writer is: "I know, O Lord, that Thy judgments are right..." What He decides is for our good! Once we are sure that His way is best for us, we accept it and can be happy in it. Think of Paul again in prison writing to the Philippians (Php 1:14). Satan is baffled by such believers! He cannot handle that kind of attitude!

Now follow five "let's"

1. Let His kindness enfold you Verse 76: YAHINI..."Let be I beg Thee, Thy mercy..." The Lord gives grace, and helps in time of need. When we need strength and enabling for the tasks He gives us, His grace is abundant. However, should we fail or come short, then His mercy is there to lift us up. He restores and sets us upon our feet and encourages us to start again!

Like the Psalmist we can pray this prayer: “Please let Thy mercy be for my comfort...” (literal rendering). We are so vulnerable, so frail, so weak, so insignificant, but He knows our frailty! That is why we need Him to enfold us in His arms. What comfort to a little child it is to be enfolded in his mother’s arms when he has fallen.

2. Let His mercy comfort you Verse 77: YABOHNI...“Let come to me (Thy mercies)...”

Here a Visitor is invited who is expected to bring what we so desperately need at the moment. There has been failure. I have failed in my responsibility. I am conscious of defeat and am discouraged. I hesitate to come to Him, but He is already “on the way” to me to lift me up and comfort me.

Notice He brings tender mercies! Let me quote the words of a saint (G. Horne): “The mercies of God are “tender mercies;” they are the mercies of a father to his children, nay, tender as the compassion of a mother over the son of her womb. They “come unto” us, when we are not able to go to them. By them alone we live the life of faith, of love, of joy and gladness. And to such as delight in His law, God will grant these mercies, and this life; He will give them pardon, and, by so doing, He will give them “life from the dead.”

3. Let Him keep me humble Verse 78: YABOHSHU...“Let be ashamed (the proud)...”

Let me repeat this question once more: What kind of people are we? What kind of impression do we give to others? What kind of influence do we spread around us? Positive? Are we like the Lord Jesus? Or are we rather superior, rather haughty, rather obnoxious? Do we give others cause to oppose us in any way? The Lord Jesus Christ could say: “They hated Me without a cause” (Psalms 35:19; Psalms 69:4; John 15:25). How then could those “proud” who deal perversely, be made “ashamed”? Surely, when they find no real reason to criticise or condemn us for anything inconsistent, or anything repugnant in our lives? When they see our good works they must give glory to God! “Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven” (Matthew 5:16).

4. Let His winsomeness clothe me Verse 79: YESHEEVLI...“Let turn to me (fearers of Thee)...” This certainly is a Christ-honouring prayer! We do not seek to attract people to ourselves but to our Lord Jesus. But our lives must therefore be winsome. This winsomeness is what the early Christians displayed at Jerusalem: they had “favour with all the people” (Acts 2:47).

There are believers whose lives are upright, whose doctrine is absolutely correct and transparent like ice, but sometimes unfortunately just as cold. It is a cold kind of correctness and there is very little that is warm or attractive about them. Not so these Spirit-filled believers at Jerusalem. We are responsible to proclaim Christ by our lips and by our lives. He should be manifested in our lives and that is what makes others who fear Him turn to us and walk in fellowship with us.

5. Let my heart be true Verse 80: YAHI...“Let (my heart be blameless)...” This seems to be the key verse of this section. What a prayer this is! Here is the literal rendering: “Let my heart be blameless in Thy statutes so that I may not be ashamed.” There are the “perverse” in verse 78, yet might there not be a measure of hypocrisy in any one of us? Pretending to be so pious and spiritual on the outside yet not totally yielded to the Lord Jesus? It is only when the Holy Spirit fills and directs and guides us that we shall be kept blameless. Then we shall not be ashamed before

our own consciences, before the world's scrutiny, or ashamed in a coming day before the judgment seat of Christ.

Cor Bruins.

NOTICE If the Lord will, the next part of the series on Laodicea will appear in the next issue "The Sermon on the Mount" (11)

Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid. Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven (Matthew 5:14-16)

One of the two characteristics of true disciples of the Lord in Matthew 5:13-16 is light: "Ye are the light of the world." In our daily lives we are so dependent on light that everyone will understand the meaning and the importance of this expression. Light is synonymous with brightness and clarity, with seeing and recognising, but also with warmth and life. Think only of the source of light on which all the life on our planet depends, the sun. Without this light everything would be dark, cold and dead.

God is light In the Bible, light is often mentioned in connection with God. We read in Psalms 36:9 : "in Thy light shall we see light," but when the Lord Jesus was teaching His disciples in Matthew chapters 5-7, the simple but striking words: "God is light," were not yet known. John, one of the disciples, would write them decades later (1 John 1:5). The nature of God cannot be described in a shorter or clearer way. That God also dwells "in the light which no man can approach" emphasises His absolute purity, holiness and glory even more (1 Timothy 6:16). God's light is a wonderful light. It is a light that brings life. In contrast, darkness in the New Testament always characterises sin and distance from God. When the Lord Jesus said to His disciples: "Ye are the light of the world," He Himself was still the true light here. The eternal Son of God, the effulgence of His glory and the expression of His substance, had come into the world as the light in order to reveal God (cf. John 1:4-9; John 8:12; John 9:5; John 12:46).

Everyone who accepts Him in faith is now brought out of darkness into God's marvellous light. Furthermore, instead of darkness, he is now light in the Lord (1 Peter 2:9; Ephesians 5:8).

Ye are the light The depth of the meaning of the word "light" was certainly not yet known to the disciples when the Lord said to them: "Ye are the light of the world," but they could understand that He meant their testimony in the world. While salt works invisibly and internally, light is visible afar off.

"A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid." Whether an enemy was planning an attack or a traveller was seeking accommodation, a city on a hill in Israel would be visible for everyone — during the day by the bright shining of its white walls and buildings, and by night by the lights of the houses. Thus the walk of the disciples of the Lord ought to be a light in this world, seen by everyone.

"Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house." The relatively small oil-lamps of ancient times, thousands of which have been found in the rubble of excavation sites, could only give poor light. Therefore they were, individually or in groups, put on a lamp-stand which was either suspended from the ceiling, fixed to

the wall, or stood on the floor. The candlestick of the tabernacle, which had seven branches, was one of those lamp-stands. In this way the best possible distribution of light was effected.

How absurd it would have been to put such a light under a bushel, 1:e. to hide it! A bushel was a vessel of approximately 2 gallons capacity used to measure corn. If one had put it over a lamp it would not only have hidden the small flame and thus made it ineffective, but would, in the long run, also have smothered it. In Mark 4:21 the Lord Jesus mentions, besides the bushel, also the bed. Both would hinder the shining out of the light. Does not this contain a two-fold warning — on the one hand of business (the light under the bushel) and on the other of laziness and sleep (the light under the bed)?

Let your light shine

Like the city on the hill, the light should be visible to everyone. “Let your light so shine before men.” This light is the disciple’s confession of his Lord. By this it becomes evident to whom he belongs. Let us therefore confess Christ everywhere and in all circumstances. When we go out to a restaurant, do we confess by giving thanks before the meal without embarrassment, that we belong to Him, even if those at other tables continue their conversations loudly or show their disdain? Sometimes unbelievers ask for our opinions regarding worldly entertainments like the cinema, theatre or discotheque, or on topics such as homosexuality, relationships outside marriage or abortion. Do we then confess the Lord, or do we give evasive answers? Are we friendly, helpful, peaceable and righteous in our dealings with colleagues, neighbours and other people? In this way we can let our light shine before men. “Do all things without murmurings and reasonings, that ye may be harmless and simple, irreproachable children of God in the midst of a crooked and perverted generation; among whom ye appear as lights (heavenly lights) in the world, holding forth the word of life” (Php 2:14-15 J.N.D. Trans.). To let our light shine means that as well as our spoken testimony for our Lord in the world, our new nature and our position as children of God are expressed by our behaviour.

Good works

“Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.” The Lord Jesus does not speak in these verses of the preaching of the gospel for the salvation of the lost. The entire “sermon on the mount” does not deal with this, but with the Christ-like walk of the disciples of the Lord. Although the people of this world are mentioned frequently, it is not the purpose of the “sermon on the mount” that they may receive blessing or be led to the Lord, but that the character of the Kingdom of God may be expressed in His disciples.

Here, the good works are the fruit of the working of divine light in the soul. If we let our light shine, good works will also be connected with it. But they are not the focus of our attention here. In this world many good works are being done by different individuals and groups. For example, the Red Cross and other organisations providing humanitarian aid have, especially recently, been able to do much good to needy people. If we as children of God purpose to do such good works, we are not necessarily a testimony to our Lord. He wants us to be a testimony to Him. Therefore He does not exhort us here to do good works, but to let our light shine. We should not think of “our” works, but of Him. Good works will then be the result. The apostle Paul speaks of the fruit of the light which is in all goodness, righteousness and truth (Ephesians 5:9).

"... And glorify your Father which is in heaven." If good works bear the character of heavenly, divine light, then people will not say, "What a good person this is," but rather they may be led to glorify God. If the light shines, the actions will be seen as in connection with this light. This is the first time in the New Testament that God is called "your Father." The Name "Father," standing for God, occurs also in the Old Testament but it does not refer to the personal relationship of an Israelite to God. Jehovah was the Father and Israel, the nation, was the son (cf. Exodus 4:23; Deuteronomy 32:6; Isaiah 63:16).

Only when the Son of God came to this earth to reveal the Father could believers be brought into this wonderful relationship of children and receive the spirit of adoption by which they cry: "Abba, Father." For this it was necessary that the Lord should die and rise again. After His resurrection he gave Mary Magdalene the wonderful message: "but go to My brethren, and say unto them, Iascend unto My Father, and your Father; and to My God, and your God" (John 20:17). This was, at the time of the "sermon on the mount," yet future. Nevertheless, the Lord speaks to the disciples already of "your Father which is in heaven," although they knew neither the basis of this new relationship — the work of Christ — nor its intimacy and power through the Holy Spirit.

Arend Remmers. The Sonship of Christ (3) (Continued from page 43) The Sonship of Christ and Christianity The Gospels by Matthew, Mark and Luke are largely occupied with the ministry of the Lord Jesus outside of Jerusalem and Judaea. They record the animosity of the religious leaders toward Him and also trace out the stages in His rejection by the common people. As this rejection becomes more and more apparent a new work comes into view. If He is rejected as the Christ it is upon Him as the Son of God1 (see footnote on page opposite) that this new work is founded. In answering the Lord's question, "But whom say ye that I am?" Peter confesses, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but My Father which is in heaven. And I say also unto thee... upon this rock I will build My church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it" (Matthew 16:15-18). John's Gospel is more concerned with events in Jerusalem and Judaea. In this centre of Judaism He is rejected from the outset and we are occupied with this new work from the beginning (John 2:18-21; John 3:14-16; John 4:23-24; John 5:23-25; John 6:53-57; John 7:37-39 etc.). We might well call John's Gospel the Gospel of Christianity.

John's Gospel was written that we might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that, believing, we might have life through His Name (John 20:31). Eternal life is connected with the knowledge of God, who is made known to us as the Father by the Son (John 17:3; 1 John 1:2; 1 John 5:11). This revelation of God is brought before us in John's Gospel chapter 1 where we read that "No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him" (John 1:18). This verse shows that there are Divine Persons within the Godhead and that these Divine Persons are in relationship with one another: they are Father and Son. Furthermore, this relationship is shown to be a relationship of love. The only begotten Son is in the bosom of the Father. This is how God is declared to us. It is not what God became, but what He has always been. The Holy Spirit is not mentioned here because it is objective revelation. He works in our hearts to give the capacity to receive the revelation (John 3:5-8). The revelation itself is of God the Father by the Son. This revelation is at the very heart of the gospel. God is "in the light" (1 John 1:7). He no longer dwells in the thick darkness which concealed Him before Christ came (Exodus 19:9, J.N.D. Trans.; 1 Kings 8:12; Psalms 97:2). It is in this light that

our sin is exposed. There is at the same time the manifestation of all that can be known about God, and the manifestation of the truth about ourselves. Yet God is revealed as One who loves us and who provides for the need which He shows to exist. The Father sends the Son to be the Saviour of the world. (1 John 4:14). It was in this that the love of God toward us was manifested, because that God sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him (1 John 4:9). And when expressing the love of God to the world it is not said that God gave the Son of man, but that He gave His only begotten Son (John 3:14-15). He gave the One who was the eternal and always worthy object of His love and delight.

1In the parallel passages in Mark 8:27-38; Mark 9:1 and Luke 9:18-27 He is confessed as “the Christ,” but there is no reference to His being the Son of God or to the building of the assembly

Those that believe on the Son have eternal life. They receive it when they receive Him, for “He that hath the Son, hath life; and He that hath not the Son of God, hath not life” (1 John 5:12). He is “that eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us” (1 John 1:2).

Just as the initial receiving of eternal life is bound up with the receiving of the Son, so growth in the divine nature is connected with the knowledge2 of the Son. In 1 John 2:1-29 it is this that marks the fathers, those who are spiritually mature. They know the Son, the One who is “from the beginning” (1 John 2:13-14). The gifts given by an ascended Christ have the same end in view: “Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect (full-grown) man” (Ephesians 4:13). There can be no advance from this knowledge, as the two references in 1 John 2:1-29 show (Verses 13 & 14). It is knowledge that is gained as we keep company with Him. Like the disciples of old we can see where He abides (in the Father’s bosom), and abide with Him (John 1:38-39). We can contemplate His glory, “a glory as of an only begotten with a father” (John 1:14 — J.N.D. Trans.).

2In Matthew 11:27 we read, “All things are delivered unto Me of My Father: and no man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal Him.” The Greek word for “knoweth” is the same in both places (epiginõsko). Since the Father, who is not incarnate, can be known by those to whom the Son reveals Him, it does not seem that the Lord is here referring to the impossibility of the creature comprehending God (1 Timothy 6:16). Rather, it is the incarnate Son who cannot be comprehended — it is impossible for us to understand how Deity and Humanity can be united in His Person. This is a great mystery (1 Timothy 3:16). Such verses as these should not be used to deny or oppose what is revealed (Matthew 16:16-17). The same word (epignõsis) is used in Ephesians 4:13, “Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ.”

These and other verses show that the Sonship of Christ has a vital bearing upon everyday Christian living. It is certainly not an abstruse point of doctrine with which we need not concern ourselves. This is also seen in Galatians 2:20 : “I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me.” The law did not give life and because of what we are according to the flesh, it was really a ministry of death and condemnation (2 Corinthians 3:7; 2 Corinthians 3:9). It set no object before the soul, apart from the obedience which it required, and it imparted no power in order that that obedience might be rendered. The verse here in Galatians

2:1-21 shows that these three things are connected with the Son of God. Paul had received Christ, the Son, and life in Him. And the Son of God was the constant and sustaining object of his faith. The love of the Eternal Son of God was set on him, and Paul had a deep, present, consciousness of it. He had given Himself for Paul and having Him before his soul he was furnished with the power that enabled him to live such a victorious and exemplary Christian life. The One who came from heaven and gave Himself for Paul and for every believer, is coming again. The life of faith will then be at an end. Are we waiting for His coming? The believers at Thessalonica had “turned to God from idols, to serve the living and true God; And to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come” (1 Thessalonians 1:9-10). Is there not a parallel between this verse and Galatians 2:20? The other references to the second coming in this epistle all speak about the “Lord Jesus Christ” or “the Lord” (1 Thessalonians 2:19; 1 Thessalonians 3:13; 1 Thessalonians 4:15; 1 Thessalonians 5:23). He has absolute authority and we are accountable to Him, but the reference in the first chapter seems to lay particular stress upon the Person who is coming. The love of the Son for them was such that there was no question of their being left in the world when the day of the Lord should be present (2 Thessalonians 2:2, J.N.D. Trans.). He had delivered them from that coming wrath. Having Him as their object and hope, the One in whom the love of God and of the Father had been so perfectly manifested, they were kept in peace. We know from the second epistle that it was this hope that the enemy sought to shake, but Scripture clearly teaches that the saints will be caught away from the world before the hour of trial comes upon it (1 Thessalonians 4:16-17; 1 Thessalonians 5:2-5; 2 Thessalonians 2:1-8; Revelation 3:10). In his epistles John shows a similar concern for those who were in danger of being deceived. It was not deception connected with wrong teaching about the timing of the day of the Lord, but what is even more serious, deception flowing from wrong teaching about the Person of Christ. Does not the apostle John insist upon the vital nature of the doctrine of Christ? In his first epistle he especially warns the little children. “Who is a liar, but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist, that denieth the Father and the Son. Whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father: but he that acknowledgeth the Son, hath the Father also. Let that therefore abide in you, which ye have heard from the beginning. If that which ye have heard from the beginning remain in you, ye also shall continue in the Son, and in the Father” (1 John 2:22-24). In these verses we have again the same elements that we have seen before. He is the Christ, the Son of God and of the Father. Like the Thessalonian believers, the little children that John addressed knew that Antichrist was coming (1 John 2:18 a) but he warns them that, “even now are there many antichrists” (1 John 2:18 b). What constituted them antichrists was the denial of the truth as to Christ’s Person. They professed themselves to be Christians while at the same time denying the revelation of the Eternal God that has come to us in the Son. The safeguard of the little children was to abide in the teaching of the apostle’s concerning Him. They were to receive no new, no novel teaching about the Person of Christ. The Unction (the Holy Spirit) which they had from the Holy One (the Lord Jesus) would enable them to continue in the Son and in the Father (1 John 2:20; 1 John 2:24). In his second Epistle John writes to “the elect lady.” She too was vulnerable. It was not the man, but the woman who was deceived by the serpent and John writes that “many deceivers are entered into the world” (1 Timothy 2:14; 2 John 1:7). It was the doctrine of Christ that was to be the touchstone, and if those who professed to bring something brought not that doctrine she was not to receive them into her house: “Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth

in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son. If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed: For he that biddeth him God speed, is partaker of his evil deeds." (2 John 1:9-11). In closing let us call to mind again how the Sonship of Christ is interwoven with every strand of Christian truth. It is by the Son as such that God is revealed to us. "The only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him" (John 1:18). We receive this revelation when we believe the gospel and the gospel of God concerns "His Son Jesus Christ our Lord" (Romans 1:1-3). Believing the gospel we are delivered "from the power of darkness," and translated "into the Kingdom" of God's "dear Son" (Colossians 1:13). Those so translated form part of the church that Christ is building on the unshakeable foundation of His own Person as "the Son of the Living God" (Matthew 16:15-18). While that building continues we are waiting for God's Son from heaven and while we wait it is our portion, like Paul, to live by faith, "the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me" (1 Thessalonians 1:10; Galatians 2:20). It is clear from these and many other passages that the Sonship of Christ is not peripheral to Christianity. Indeed, how can anything that is so vitally bound up with His Person be peripheral? To maintain that it is so is to depredate His glory and to manifest that Laodicean spirit which is such a dishonour to Him. Christianity is centred in Christ, the Christ of the Scriptures, and any false idea we have of Him is not only fatal in itself, but will also (eventually) show itself in a wrong idea of Christianity, and in wrong practice (1 Corinthians 15:33). May the Lord grant us a deepening appreciation of His glory and the desire to be faithful to His Name.

R.F.W.

Extract Were you to apply the directions given for judging immorality to fatal error touching our Lord's person, you would have a very insufficient measure of discipline. False doctrine does not touch the natural conscience as gross conduct does. Nay, you may too often find a believer drawn away by his affections to make excuses for those who are fundamentally heterodox. All sorts of difficulties fill the mind where the eye is not really single. Many might thus be involved who did not themselves hold the false doctrine. If I accept the principle of dealing with none but him who brings not the doctrine of Christ, it will not do; for there may be others entangled by it. What is any individual, what is the church even, in comparison with the Saviour, the Son of the Father? Accordingly, the rule laid down by the Spirit for vindicating Christ's person from blasphemous assailants or their partisans, is infinitely more stringent than when it is a question of moral corruption, be it ever so bad.

W. Kelly — Lectures on the Gospel of Matthew, page 324. From Our Archive The Revelation of the Father (2)

John 4:20-24 (Continued from page 53)

It is obvious that I shall only be able to touch the text of this Gospel here and there. The alternative would be to spread my remarks over every part of the Gospel and I feel by doing that the essence of what I particularly want to try to bring out would be largely lost. So without attempting to expand the relations of the various parts of the Gospel to each other, except in one or two special cases, it will only be possible to touch those verses which outstandingly are those which bring before us the revelation of the Father. In John 12:1-50, at the end, we have the end of the Lord's public ministry. His words in verses 44-50 give the Holy Spirit's commentary upon that ministry. What follows was

spoken in the inner, intimate circle of the upper room with the door closed and the Lord Jesus surrounded by His disciples. Outside there was the bitter enmity which He had encountered and which was to bring Him to the cross. Inside were the blessed Saviour and His own and they were supping with Him and hanging upon His every movement and word. There is a great deal of difference between the utterances of the Lord Jesus Christ, even relative to His revelation of the Father, amongst those who needed awakening, and the intimate disclosures and communications of the upper room. Nevertheless the Spirit of God in the first part of that summary and commentary in John 12:1-50 indicates the amazing fact that so few believed and yet so it was foreseen by the prophets. But those who did believe, what was the quality of what came to them? Well, nothing less than this. They were put in touch with the Father. This is what happened to the woman of Samaria. We are told that hearing the Lord Jesus they heard the Father, and seeing the Lord Jesus they saw the Father, and believing in the Lord Jesus they believed in the Father. He said that the Father had given Him commandment what He had to say. All these things that we have been touching upon are what the Father commanded Him to say. In that commandment is eternal life. In reflecting upon, in meditating upon, in seeking to feed heart, mind and spirit upon these the words of the Son — this is eternal life.

Now let us cast our eyes upon this passage of very special interest in the fourth chapter without in any way attempting to go back over the story. The woman introduced the question of worship. It seems to me extremely unlikely that to a woman still in spirit dead and far from Him, such immense disclosures and basic teaching about the true worship would have been made. There must have been, it seems to me, in those seconds perhaps, the reception of that water that Jesus could give springing up into everlasting life. She said: “Our fathers worshipped in this mountain.” The king of Assyria had deported the whole population of the northern kingdom of Israel and the Samaritans were the direct descendants of those who took their place. They had thought it wise to placate the god of that country, and so they began to imitate the worship of the Jews. They had the five books of Moses in a version which is still called the Samaritan Pentateuch. This was the Samaritan worship and it was a spurious worship of the God of Israel. Now the Lord Jesus Christ says here, considering Himself for the moment as a Jew, He says, “we know what we worship: for salvation is of the Jews.” There was a contrast between what was all the time an entirely spurious worship and something which was instituted by God to be the worship of the real God who made all things and had revealed Himself to His people as the God of Israel. But of course at a stroke the Lord Jesus Christ puts clean out of court these two kinds of worship that belonged to a place. He substituted the worship of the Father in spirit and in truth and said, “the Father seeketh such to worship Him.”

Now the introduction, without any special explanation of the introduction, of the Name “the Father,” is the point about which I would like us to reflect together for a few moments. Let us first of all consider this other contrast, and that is the contrast between the worship of the Father and the worship which formerly had quite rightly gone on in Jerusalem, and that was the worship of Jehovah the God of Israel. In this contrast between the knowledge of Jehovah and the knowledge of the Father is the very essence of the contrast between Israel and the church, between Judaism and Christianity. It must be manifest to us all that what concerns the Name under which God has made Himself known to His people must be a matter of the greatest possible interest to the people of God in every age. The Names under which God revealed Himself to the patriarchs and to

Moses in Israel were in the highest degree a matter of strength and comfort and light to the people who received these revelations. When God said to Moses, “I am El Shaddai: walk before Me, and be thou perfect,” attention was specially drawn to the power of God who had revealed Himself to Abraham to sustain him in his pilgrim pathway. Later, in Exodus 6:1-30, we read that “I appeared unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob, by the Name of El Shaddai; but by My Name Jehovah was I not known to them.” There God made Himself known by a new Name according to the needs of the formation of a Nation who would be God’s people and amongst whom there would be worship of God. Then we only have to reflect upon the way in which the Name Jehovah proliferated itself into those compound Names to see that the experience of the people of God, the strength of the people of God, the victory of the people of God, was largely involved with their learning by experience as well as by the instruction of the prophets, the content of the Name Jehovah.

I love to think of the ministry of Elijah in this connection. How his whole soul was devoted to the restoration of the people Israel to the knowledge of the true God, Jehovah, the God of Israel, and to His worship. But, if we look at the last verses of Exodus 33:1-23, we are told as plainly as language could speak that this was not the end of the process of the self-revelation of God. Moses prayed, “shew me Thy glory” and God said, “I will make all My goodness pass before thee, and I will proclaim the Name of Jehovah before thee; and... thou canst not see My face; for there shall no man see Me... and thou shalt see My back parts.” Could words speak more loudly of the fact that there was still more to be revealed? The last secrets of the divine nature were not revealed either in the Name El Shaddai, or even in the Name Jehovah which dominates all the rest of the Old Testament. Why is it that when we turn over from the last verse of Malachi to the first verse of Matthew, the Name Jehovah, for all the wonder it has been to the people of God, vanishes like the stars in the sunshine. Why? Because immediately the Lord Jesus Christ began to speak of that Name, that wondrous Name, in which the last secrets of the divine nature are made known. A Name never to be superseded as the others had been superseded.

It is an interruption, I know, and perhaps it would be better not to have such an interruption, but I feel absolutely bound to repeat a simple statement that I have often made before. It is that since the essence of the contrast between the Name Jehovah and the Name the Father contains the essence of the contrast between God’s relationship to His people Israel and His relationship to the church, then those who refuse to see the distinction between Israel and the church will not see the immense difference and distinction, the all important difference for a true Christianity, between the former Names of God and the Name of the Father. Well, John Calvin did not distinguish between Israel and the church for all he was a mighty man of God in many things, and for all his teaching on many things was very wonderful. He was a man raised up of God, yet he fell short as it says in the letter to Sardis, “I have not found thy works perfect before God.” When Calvin wants to deduce from holy Scripture instruction for the church of God he is just as happy to get it from Amos as he is from the epistle to the Romans. And since the teaching of John Calvin is still dominant in evangelical circles, this truth of which we are now speaking is not known. Of course they will say, “We know very well that God is our Father and we are His children,” but this is a world away from realising that the Father with the Son there in eternity at last make themselves fully known. The dominant central truth of the Christian faith is ignored and it is not known in evangelical Christendom. When we get such benefit as is to be got from the writings of some people of this

class, let us ever remember that on this point they will certainly lead us astray. I remember the shock which came to me when I was reading Campbell Morgan on John 17:1-26. He comes to the passage which we shall be considering on another occasion, “Holy Father, keep through Thine own Name those whom Thou hast given Me, that they may be one.” Now, says Campbell Morgan, a great man of God in many ways and a very clear teacher in many ways, “What is the name of God? God has only had one name and... it is Jehovah.” Well, the book almost fell out of my hands. It is so absolutely staggering that it is difficult to persuade people that it is true, but it is true. You can search the hymn books used in the evangelical circles until now and you will find practically nothing about the knowledge of God as the Father. Much less will you find the whole world of supreme divine truth regarding the Father’s love for the Son and the special way in which we, the children of God in this immensely privileged age, are being called to share the Father’s pleasure in His well-beloved Son, and to have and share for ourselves, the manner in which the Father has loved the Son. So let us strive to understand, let us try to have in our hearts this wonderful truth, the revelation of the Father’s Name. Let us strive to guard it as one of those things that in the last days are to be guarded according to what the apostle Paul said to Timothy in the second epistle that he addressed to him.

Now I want to speak for a few minutes about the content of the Name of the Father because for all that we speak about things which are indeed the subject of holy ground, yet we are certainly called evermore and always to reflect upon the meaning of such a Name to us. It is a matter that might immediately strike us with surprise that when the very last secret of eternity about the revelation of God is made known, it should be brought with a Name that is familiar to us. When we come to the last secrets of God, it is in a Name which is written in every human heart, “Father.” In Ephesians chapter 3, “For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,” the J. N. Darby Translation continues by saying, “of whom every family in the heavens and on earth is named.” Now I suggest, and it can be no more than that, but it certainly commends itself very strongly to me personally, that what the passage really means is this: “I bow my knees unto the Father of whom all fatherhood in heaven and earth is named.” In other words, the whole concept of fatherhood comes by the fact that God made man in His image. God made man with the concept and experience of fatherhood and sonship so much a part of his established constitution that when that secret comes to be told, we find that in our nature and in our being has been written beforehand the means whereby the word immediately means something to us. Now we are here at a point when it is very wonderful indeed to seek to have an intelligence of the things that God has revealed. I am sure that you will feel with me that when we come to the end of this verse 23 we have the very throbbing outreach of the heart of the Father: “the Father seeketh such to worship Him.” When the Son of God came forth He uttered two expressions of a seeking God. “For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost;” and we must say nothing to take away from that tremendous urge that brought Jesus from heaven to earth to seek and to save by Calvary. But beyond that seeking and beyond that saving there lies that other request, and how much we are in danger of making little of it. We ignore so often this tremendous reach out from the heart of God to your heart and mine by the Spirit, the renewed heart capable of response to God: “the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship Him.”

J. S. Blackburn.

Vol 03 - Truth & Testimony Vol. 3, No. 4, 1995.

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Proving God's Will

If we are to know the will of God, nothing can compare with considering the blessed Person of our Lord Jesus Christ. He could say in perfect truth, "I come to do thy will, O God" (Hebrews 10:9). Is it possible for God's will to be done on earth when everywhere men's wills are set in bold defiance of God, with rebellion, confusion and corruption gaining the ascendancy in every nation? The answer is beautifully seen in the lowly Man of sorrows. He was faithful, obedient and devoted to the will of God in every detail of His life of simple, steadfast faith. This was shown supremely in His offering Himself in sacrifice on the cross of Calvary, that God might be glorified in the salvation of innumerable sinners. What an object to draw the heart of every believer to be deeply desirous of doing the will of God in his own short life on earth! His Will in the Greatest Things Can we know the will of God? In many things, yes; but we can only know this absolutely as it is revealed in the Word of God. For instance, we can know absolutely that every true believer has been predestinated to the great blessing of sonship, "according to the good pleasure of His (God's) will" (Ephesians 1:5). Also, concerning the church of God, "now hath God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased Him" (1 Corinthians 12:18). His Word declares this and therefore we may know it as being absolutely the will of God. Similarly, many other great blessings of God are declared in His Word as given to believers. He has revealed that it is His own will that has decreed such great blessing for us. We rightly rejoice in the majestic glory and grace and beauty of a will so full of goodness. His Will as to Our Conduct On the other hand, God has expressed His will in His Word as to many things that have to do with our practical daily lives. Do we rejoice in His expressed will as to what our conduct should be? We may know these things absolutely also, as for instance, "this is the will of God, even your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication" (1 Thessalonians 4:3). Many other Scriptures show us clearly what kind of conduct is right and becoming. Let us be well acquainted with these portions through reading and meditation. Certainly in all of these things we may know what the will of God is, for God has declared it. The Lord Jesus knew the will of God, but more than that, He did the will of God. We need therefore a word from His own lips, "If any man will do His (God's) will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God" (John 7:17). If we desire to know the will of God let us first seriously test ourselves as to why. Do we want to find out whether it is acceptable to us or not? Or do we really desire to practise God's will? Of course God knows our motives. When the remnant of Israel came to Jeremiah to ask him to enquire of God, they told him they would without fail obey God's Word when it was given them (Jeremiah 42:5-6); but God knew that they dissembled in their hearts (5: 20) and only intended to obey if it suited their thoughts. If we do not have the honest intention of doing the will of God, or at least of being willing to do it, then we shall never be given the firm conviction of the teaching of God's Word. If we desire to do His will we shall know of the doctrine, that is, the teaching: it will be vital and real to us. His Will as to Personal Experiences

There is an area in which God has not specifically expressed His will in Scripture and which is yet a matter of concern to every believer. This has to do with our experience — not questions of moral right or wrong but rather of what to do in relation to particular matters: whether to buy or rent a house, whether to move to another place, whether to visit a certain place or certain people, whether to buy a certain car, whether or how to help a certain person in need, and many other such things. There are some who are often very positive in regard to these things, saying, for instance, that they know it is God's will that they go to a certain place. But if Scripture does not say so they do not know this beforehand. Why should they tell others they know it? This is only pride in their supposed powers of discernment. We are warned in James 4:13 that all such boasting as this is evil. Time will prove whether it was God's will or not.

Romans 12:2 is most helpful in giving us a right perception of the will of God: "be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God." Which is better, to know the will of God or to prove it in experience? Certainly the latter! But how may we prove it? On the negative side, by not conforming to the world: on the positive side, by being transformed by the renewing of the mind. The world's principles as to wise action are always those of expediency, material benefit, and present comfort. If one is offered an attractive job with good salary a long distance from an assembly, he will likely accept it quickly if he is conformed to the world. If he is transformed, he will honestly put the Lord's interests first, for his renewed mind is reasoning from the Lord's viewpoint. Then he will prove the good and acceptable and perfect will of God. This is the vital principle. If our minds are in this way renewed we shall be accustoming ourselves to learning the Word of God. When learning the will of God in greater things, these lesser things will also find us more discerning as to His will. As we read it, God's Word will often be seen to apply in certain cases of concern, for our instruction and encouragement, especially as our hearts are exercised to learn.

If we must make a rapid decision as to the "yes" or "no" of a certain matter it is wise to judge ourselves thoroughly so as to be content with either answer. Then lay the matter before the Lord. He may be fully depended on to give calm peace in regard to the decision to be made. He may in fact give no peace whatever in regard to the opposite decision. Yet even then we should not say we know what the will of the Lord is in reference to the matter; but we may have confidence in Him that He will see that we prove His will in experience.

If a matter gives exercise for some time, the Lord may allow this to keep our souls stirred with some real sense of dependence on His mercy. This calls for constant prayer as well as reading His Word with the matter of exercise in mind. In many cases certain things in the Word will be so impressed on the heart as to indicate what the will of the Lord may be; and one may therefore be at rest in the calm confidence that the Lord will definitely lead. It is the servant's place of childlike faith.

Let the believer always have this simplicity of confidence that the Lord may be fully depended on to lead him rightly. This is far from bold self-confidence, just as it is far from the impatience that acts as in a panic. For God is calm and deliberate in the carrying out of His will and faith in Him will give quiet calmness too.

If we desire to know the will of God, let us much more desire to do it, and therefore prove the preciousness of it in daily experience.

L. M. Grant.

Prayer (1) In Romans 8:28 there is the following statement: “we know that all things work together for good to them that love God...” For a long time I wondered exactly what “all things work together for good” might mean. In recent years I have realised that the “all things” are not only the pleasant events that occur in our lives but also those things which become a burden or trial. We feel it is a blessing when the burden is gone, and we can look back and review what has happened and appreciate how the Lord has brought us through. But there is also great blessing to be gained if in those same situations we put the burden or trial into the hands of the Lord and leave it there for Him to deal with. It is with these thoughts in mind that I would like to consider several Scriptures which highlight some aspects of the value of prayer and indicate how committed and energetic we need to be in our prayer life. In Acts 2:42 we have a familiar verse: “they continued steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.” I would like to view the verse as giving four equal foundation stones. With these and the confidence that Romans 8:28 would produce there is a basis that will enable us to prove day by day that “all things work together for good to them that love God...” In the midst of difficulties we are sometimes unable to see the good and need faith to believe what the Word of God says. In such circumstances the prayer foundation stone needs to be in constant use. With the above in mind I would like to consider the subject under the following headings: Our role model The pattern for prayer The need for public and private prayer Does prayer work?

How much effort do I need to make? Who to pray for?

What about my burdens? Our Role Model

There are many Scriptures which bring the Lord Jesus before us as a dependent Man. We read of Him rising up a great while before day in order to go out and pray (Mark 1:35). We read of Him on a mountain, continuing all night in prayer (Luke 6:12). On another occasion, having cast out the demon which the disciples were unable to cast out, He taught them that mighty works are only achieved through prayer and fasting (Matthew 17:21). In John 17:1-26 we learn something of the quality of the prayer life of the Lord Jesus. It was the Man who was here who prays while at the same time the chapter shows that this Man is the Son. In verse 9 He says: “I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for them which Thou hast given Me; for they are Thine.” If we study the word “pray” in this verse we will see that it has the force of someone desiring or demanding something of another who is His equal. In the prayer of this chapter we are listening to a Divine Person, the Son, addressing the Father. Here the Lord is interested solely in His own, those who also belong to the Father, and not in the world in general. In verse 15 the same intense desire is expressed in the prayer that His own be kept from evil — that which is the character of the world. The Lord does not ask that His own may be taken out of the world, but that they might be kept safe from its evil. In referring to “this present evil world” Paul also reminds us that this is its character (Galatians 1:4). I wonder if we sometimes forget what this world is really like, our spiritual senses being dulled. We become friendly with the world, which is something James warns us against very strongly: “the friendship of the world is enmity with God” (James 4:4). If we live as the Lord desires, this will not hinder but rather enhance the impact of our gospel preaching. A separate life-style is a vital dimension of the witness to the truth of the gospel. The gospel of the grace of God saves eternally and for the remainder of our lifetime in this world.

Finally, from verse 20 we learn that it was not only the apostles that the Lord had in mind but you and me as well. “Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on Me through their word.” Here in this powerful, demanding prayer to the Father, the Lord also looks down through the years to you and me. What a blessed thought that we were in the mind of the Lord long before we were saved. His desire is that we might be preserved until He comes for us. As we think of the need to pray for the preservation of the saints today, of the scope of our prayers and the strong intensity in which effective prayer is to be made, could we have a better role model than our Lord Jesus Christ? We will see later on from other Scriptures how this example was lived out in the lives of saints. If the Lord Jesus Christ was in this matter an example for them, He is no less such for ourselves today. Let us follow the example given and be a praying people. The Pattern for Prayer In Matthew 6:9-13 we have a pattern for prayer. This portion is not only well known amongst the saints but also in the world by those who have a religious interest, even though there may be no reality. When the Lord gave this example He was not asking His own to repeat the prayer parrot-fashion. The Lord guards against this in verse 7 by saying that we should not use vain repetitions as the heathen do. There are many religionists in the world (so-called Christians and non Christians) who do this very thing.

What can we learn from this pattern for prayer? In verse 9 we surely get a strong indication that when we address Divine Persons there must be an appropriate recognition of this fact, reflected in the language that we use. Scripture shows that there is a distinctive way of addressing a Divine Person which is entirely different to the trend of this world. The world attempts to remove all distinctions by treating everyone, including God, like the person next door. Regardless of how near we have been brought to God there is still an infinite difference and there will be even in heaven, where the saints will cast their crowns down at the Lord’s feet. The pattern here in Matthew 6:1-34 brings before us the need for reverence.

Verse 10 reminds us of the need to be interested in what God is going to bring about in this world and of the vital importance of being obedient to His will.

Verse 11 reminds us of the importance of being thankful for what God provides for us day by day. This can be testing, especially when we need to give thanks in the canteen at work or in other public places, and have no other Christian support! However, I would not limit our thankfulness to the daily provision of food. Every step of the pathway is an opportunity to be thankful.

Verse 12 shows the need to keep in touch with the throne of grace.

Verse 13 is another opportunity to be thankful as we seek to be preserved. This reminds us of the prayer in John 17:1-26 already mentioned. Additionally we are brought to consider the One to whom we pray, touching upon His rights, His greatness, His power and His ability. This pattern for prayer is true whether we are praying to God, the Father or our Lord Jesus Christ. The Need for Public and Private Prayer

Before we leave Matthew 6:1-34 let us consider verse 6. Here the Lord indicates that there are occasions when secret private prayer is required. In the setting of the chapter it is contrasted with those who performed public prayer to impress others. The pattern outlined in verses 9-13 was being totally ignored. But we need to be alone in prayer in order to bring our individual exercises and concerns to the One who can answer our prayers. Secret prayer may also be a shared

exercise, involving husband and wife or a family, but what is prayed for in secret may not necessarily be suitable for articulation in the public prayer meeting.

If we turn to Acts 16:13 we find there a place “where prayer was wont to be made.” This was obviously public prayer. Godly Jews gathered for prayer on the banks of the river. Everyone would know about it, including those people of the city who possibly went to the riverside to wash their clothes. If you had asked in the city where the prayer meeting was you would have been told to go down to the river on such and such a day. How is your local prayer meeting? The people of your area may or may not be aware when prayer meeting night is but are we aware and a supporter of it? Let us not be uncommitted to the local public prayer meeting or where prayer is made in the open air just before the preaching commences, or on any other occasion.

D. G. Pulman.

(To be continued, if the Lord will) The Branch In the Old Testament many names are used to speak of the Lord Jesus: The Holy One, My Servant, etc. In Isaiah 4:2-6 we find another name for this blessed Person who was to come to the nation of Israel: “The Branch of the Lord.” This description is very different from that which we find in Isaiah 53:1-12, “... despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief.” Here we read of One who is beautiful and glorious and excellent and comely. He is portrayed as a Redeemer for His people Israel, as we find so plainly described in Matthew’s Gospel. In that Gospel we read of His rights to the throne of David. The first chapter establishes His rights to that throne and the angel was able to tell Joseph that He would save His people from their sins. Although He was despised and rejected by His own people, the Lord Jesus could still promise His disciples that they would have a part in His future kingdom. Although the Nation as a whole rejected our blessed Lord, there were those that could look on to the day when they would have high positions in His future kingdom. In Jeremiah 23:5-6 we read more about the future kingdom of the righteous Branch who would reign and prosper and also execute judgment in the earth. The Lord Jesus warned His disciples to be watchful and spoke in many parables of the future judgment which has been delivered into His hands. Although the disciples must have been staggered when they saw their Master taken captive and crucified, their sorrow was turned into joy when they saw Him in resurrection and received the commission to teach and preach in His Name. In Zechariah 3:8 we read again of the Branch. He is there called “My Servant, the Branch.” This is fulfilled as Mark describes the faithful service of the Lord Jesus. In the first chapter we read: “Behold, I send My messenger before Thy face,” and John the Baptist prepared the way for Him as “One mightier than I... the latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to stoop down and unloose” (Mark 1:2; Mark 1:7). As we know, Mark writes in detail of the works, the miracles and healings of our blessed Lord, the Perfect Servant of Jehovah. His ministry began with the voice from heaven: “Thou art My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased” (Mark 1:11). The divine record finishes with the fitting climax: “He was received up into heaven, and sat on the right hand of God” (Mark 16:19). In Zechariah 6:12 we read: “Behold the Man whose Name is the Branch... and He shall build the temple of the Lord... He shall bear the glory, and shall sit and rule upon His throne; and He shall be a priest upon His throne: and the counsel of peace shall be between them both.” This reminds us of the sacred record of our Lord’s perfect manhood as described in the Gospel according to Luke. There we have the details of His birth and His childhood, including the words spoken to His mother: “wist ye not that I must be about My Father’s business?” (Luke 2:49). There too we read of His appearance in resurrection to His disciples. He is

building a spiritual house today but the prophecy of Zechariah will be fulfilled in Him in a future day (Matthew 16:18; 1 Peter 2:5). In Jeremiah 33:15 we read: “In those days, and at that time, will I cause the Branch of righteousness to grow up unto David; and He shall execute judgment and righteousness in the land.” The name given to the Branch here has its fulfilment in the Gospel of John — Jehovah-Tsidkenu, “the Lord our righteousness.” “He was in the world, and the world was made by Him, and the world knew Him not,” John tells us (John 1:10). In the midst of the hypocrisy all around Him, He was ever faithful and true. In the midst of moral darkness He was the true light. The Lord Jesus Himself said: “the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son” (John 5:22). Later on He says: “The Father... hath given Him authority to execute judgment also, because He is the Son of man” (John 5:26-27).

R.E.A.Retallick. From Our Archive The Revelation of the Father (3) John 14:1-9; John 14:23; John 15:9-11; John 16:5-7 (Continued from page 96) The main part of what I have in mind to say this evening is connected with a concept which is absolutely central to all the writings of John but particularly it is central to this upper room discourse. It is the concept which centres in the one original word which in these chapters is translated by the four English words, abide, dwell, continue and remain. Just as we are considering how the Lord Jesus, the only begotten Son, came from that realm inaccessible to all human powers, the eternal dwelling place of the Father and the Son, so the things that John deals with in his writings and above all the things that the Lord Jesus speaks to us about in this discourse, they are the things that remain, the things that abide, the things that last, the things that continue. The dwelling place that is put before us is a dwelling place that is not a temporary dwelling place but a dwelling place of perfect love and light and glory for all eternity.

Nobody has ever surpassed the thinkers of the Greek world that preceded John, in the powers of the mind of man alone, and they were ceaselessly questing for something permanent under the ever changing flux of the things on the surface. They said, truly there must be something real, that is the real essence of true existence, and the test was that it should be something that is lasting. It is against a background like this, of hopeless aspirations of a glimmer of a possibility, with no realisation at all of a fulfilment, that the Lord Jesus Christ speaks in these chapters to the disciples and to us. The apostle emphasises again and again that the things about which he writes are the things that remain. These are the things that are lasting. This is a permanent dwelling place of love and light and glory. Is not that a glorious concept to underlie all that he has to say?

Now two of the passages before us have two separate aspects, or perhaps three, depending on the way you look at it, of this idea of the permanence of the things of the Spirit, the things of God. But before coming to this main theme I would like to say a word or two about a statement in John 13:8. The remonstration with which the Lord Jesus Christ deals is the protestation of Simon Peter against his feet being washed. Without spending time going into the detail about feet washing I want to emphasise this statement: “If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with Me.” For the time being I do not want to think of this in the negative sense; the circumstances in which he would have no part with Him. The Lord Jesus Christ was washing his feet and the Lord Jesus Christ will wash our feet if we permit Him to do so. He is our Advocate with the Father and one of the great results of that work is that we might have part with Him. What meaning does your heart put into that expression that this took place that Simon Peter and the others might have part with Him? What was His part? What was that which was really His joy, the delight of His heart and from

which His spirit was never absent? It was His fellowship with the Father. It was His oneness with the Father. It was His rejoicing in the Father. The Father was His portion just as Jehovah was said to be the portion of the psalmist in Psalms 16:1-11. And it is that we might have part with Him that He performs this feet washing act. How very important it is that we should be brought ourselves to the reading of God's Word with the express purpose of putting our hearts, spirits and minds, into the hand of the Saviour that we might be cleansed by that Word day by day. He knows far better than we what we need. He can take that Word and apply it to us and the purpose of it is that we might have part with Him. No one could doubt that to have part with Him in the setting of these chapters is to be brought into the greater knowledge of the Father and the Father's Name.

What impresses me very strongly indeed about the passage in John 14:1-31 is that we have been thinking about that region, inaccessible to all human powers, which is the eternal home of the Father and the Son. The Son ever dwelt in the bosom of the Father and He was the One therefore who could declare Him. That region inaccessible to man has been made accessible by the knowledge that has been brought to us by the Lord Jesus Christ and the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven. Is it not wonderful to hear the very words of the Lord Jesus Christ that this is the home of the Father and the Son? "In My Father's house are many permanent abiding places." Is it not something which is wonderful beyond all expression that we are not talking about some abstraction of profound and difficult meaning? All that is contained in the idea of the Father's house, the Father's home, is here. As much as to say, "there is a special room for each one of you and if it had not been true, I would have told you." No wonder that the Lord Jesus Christ says, "Let not your heart be troubled." Faith in God, faith in Me, would bring you to this knowledge that there is a home in heaven where the Father dwells and the Son dwells and I am going to prepare a place for you. There is very little said in this discourse about the sacrifice of Calvary and that precious blood by which we are being prepared for that home. But let us never forget that, as far as I read it, this supper was continuous with the supper of the Synoptic Gospels, when the Lord Jesus Christ took the loaf and the cup which spoke of His body given and His blood shed. All this is sure and settled ground when the Lord Jesus comes to speak to them like this and they therefore understand that they themselves are being prepared. Unworthy though they be in themselves and sinful, they are being prepared for that home. The Lord Jesus Christ has gone to that home to prepare that place for them and it is His presence there as a Man in heaven that is preparing the place, the permanent abiding place for every one of His own. It is our everlasting dwelling place because it is the Father's home, and the Lord Jesus Christ says, "I will come again, and receive you unto Myself; that where I am, there ye may be also." Now that is not given to comfort us in the face of death but it was given to comfort the disciples who had a towering missionary enterprise in front of them — to go out into the world and turn the world upside down. It was life and service and strife that was before them and they could go out to this from the upper room. It was the place where their hearts were forever founded in absolute certainty of their oneness with the Son and of being found in the Father's home. Now when it says here in verse 2, "In My Father's house are many mansions," that is one of the few cases where the word that I have explained to you as having different translations in English, is given a translation outside of the four that I have mentioned. It really is a dwelling or abiding place. "In My Father's house are many dwelling places." It rather looks as though what the Saviour had in mind as the picture was the temple, which strangely to our ears sometimes He called His Father's house, although it had to be cleansed by Him. He said: "Make not My Father's house an house of merchandise." In His

Father's house here in John 14:1-31 the dwelling places have the quality of permanence. It is dwelling with the Father and the Son and the love, light, joy, and glory of which these chapters speak.

Now by contrast with this and alongside it, is it not very wonderful to come down to verse 23: "If a man love Me, he will keep My words." He will treasure and guard them in his heart and let nothing rob him of these words, for in them is eternal life. But the Lord Jesus Christ said, "If a man love Me, he will keep My words: and My Father will love him, and We will come unto him, and make Our abode with him." We are comforted by the knowledge that we are going onward with certainty to the Father's house. That is verse 2. But the Lord Jesus Christ says, in the meantime, if you love Me and keep My words, My Father and I will come and dwell with you. We will make Our dwelling place with you. This is not something that is done regardless of our behaviour, but only if we keep His words. What could surpass this? Sometimes young people say, "This is doctrine. We don't want doctrine, we want practice." My dear brethren, old and young, if we have driven a wedge between doctrine and practice, it is not a wedge that is found in holy Scripture. The closeness of our hearts to God the Father and the realisation of His love for us is something that gives us the strength through which the disciples did such great things for God. This should make us seek with all earnestness to keep the words of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is not wasted time to pour over these words and try by the Spirit of God to understand them so that we may keep them. We love Him, we keep His words and the Father and the Son make their dwelling place with us. In between verses 2 and 23 we have this very striking statement where Philip makes a request in verse 8. "Philip saith unto Him, Lord, shew us the Father, and it sufficeth us." There was more he wanted to see and to know and to experience but in the meantime he was quite certain of one thing: that to know the Father would suffice. He felt he had not got there. He wanted to grasp the Saviour's words and to get there because he realised that when he did get there it would suffice him. It is really the full knowledge of the Son because we shall never, never fully know the Son until we reach the point towards which He seeks to bring us and that is to know the Father. To see the Father, to realise the Father, to know the fact that He has loved us and made us one with His Son. This will and does suffice us. In chapter 15 there is another aspect of this thought of the permanence of the things that belong to the Father and the Son. John 15:9 says, "As the Father hath loved Me, so have I loved you: continue ye in My love. If ye keep My commandments, ye shall abide in My love; even as I have kept My Father's commandments, and abide in His love." Now it is a very strange thing that the translators have changed the word there. It does not much matter whether we make it the one or the other but it will help us to understand it if we make it the same. "As the Father hath loved Me, so have I loved you: live ye in My love." Live in it. Remain in it. Grow in it. "If ye keep My commandments, ye shall live in My love; even as I have kept My Father's commandments, and live in His love." Here you see there is a certain sense in which this is tracking the theme to its source. I cannot possibly dwell upon what the chapter teaches about fruit bearing but there is one cardinal fact about the right understanding of this. That is that bearing fruit and keeping His commandments are the same thing. There is no other way of keeping His commandments except it comes as fruit. That does not mean it comes so naturally we do not need to care about it. We all know that if the ground is left to itself it does not bear the fruit we want. Fruit bearing demands the greatest diligence and care in the nurture of that plant. Now in this chapter the Father is the husbandman and He does certain things in order that we might bear more fruit. Then it goes on to speak about keeping His commandments, and bearing fruit is the same thing. I

will illustrate this by the well-known passage about the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23). The fruit of the Spirit is love, therefore love is a fruit. But the Lord Jesus Christ says, “This is My commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you” and therefore love is a commandment. Here the Lord Jesus Christ is explaining how He lives in the love of the Father. “If ye keep My commandments, ye shall live in My love; even as I have kept My Father’s commandments, and live in His love.” The Lord Jesus kept His Father’s commandments. He lived His life in obedience to God the Father and He lived in His love. Now He says, If you keep My commandments you will live in My love. One of the great purposes of this upper room discourse and the prayer that follows is to establish the disciples in the fact that the place that He occupied on earth as the sent One of the Father is the same as the disciples place relative to Him who had sent them. As the Father loved Him so He loves us. As He kept His Father’s commandments and lived in His love so we, if we keep His commandments, will live in His love. That is another aspect of this permanence of the dwelling place that we have for our spirits and our hearts. While we are living here in this evil world we can live in the Father’s love and we do it by keeping His commandments.

Now in closing I will say a word or two on John 16:1-33. In John 7:1-53 the Lord said, “Yet a little while am I with you, and then I go unto Him that sent Me. Ye shall seek Me, and shall not find Me: and where I am, thither ye cannot come.” There is indicated the most deadly doom for those who opposed Him: “Where I am, thither ye cannot come.” In John 13:1-38 almost the same thing is repeated to the disciples and they found it something very difficult to understand: “Little children, yet a little while I am with you. Ye shall seek Me: and as I said unto the Jews, Whither I go, ye cannot come; so now I say to you.” But when it comes to Peter in John 13:1-38, He says: “Whither I go, thou canst not follow Me now; but thou shalt follow Me afterwards.” Now in John 16:5 the Lord says, “Now I go My way to Him that sent Me.” He was going away to the Father and the fact that He was going away to the Father was the answer to the mystery that surrounded these words. “And none of you asketh Me, Whither goest Thou?” In these verses there are three words used for “going away.” It is another case where a very close study is helpful. But the word in that verse is the mere fact that He was going to depart, He was removing His presence from them. “Now I go My way to Him that sent Me; and none of you asketh Me, Whither goest Thou? But because I have said these things unto you, sorrow hath filled your heart.” Because you are imperfectly informed about the truth of the situation, you regard My going away as loss. You regard My going away with sadness. “Nevertheless I tell you the truth; It is expedient for you that I go away.” The point about that going away is that it is expedient to you that I rob you of the absolute benefits of My presence with you. “For if I go not away, the Comforter will not come.” The word there for “go... away” means that He is going away with an object. He is going away to do something that is a complete answer to their present problems. And therefore it was expedient that He went away to the Father because the greater blessing of the coming of the Comforter and all that He would do for the disciples would be theirs because He went away.

We have touched two or three principle themes out of these chapters concerning what they say for us about the declaration of the Father’s Name and the great purpose is that we might have part with the Lord Jesus Christ. Let us pray that more and more, on the one hand we will read His Word so that it might be the means of the Saviour’s cleansing us from daily defilement, that we might be fitted for His Word and His presence, and on the other hand that we might treasure these

wonderful words spoken in the inner circle of that upper room so that we might have part with Him.

J. S. Blackburn.

“The Sermon on the Mount” (12)

Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled (Matthew 5:17-18) The teaching and works of the Lord Jesus were so entirely different from those of the scribes and Pharisees that some of His audience might have thought He would put an end to everything they had known as Jews. The Lord counters these thoughts in this passage of the “sermon on the mount,” only recorded in Matthew’s Gospel, in which He speaks about the law (Matthew 5:17-48). THE LAW OF SINAI

Before entering upon the contents of these verses, I want to occupy you briefly with the term “law,” which often occurs in the Old as well as in the New Testament. Apart from meaning “human rules or orders” (Daniel 6:8; Romans 7:1-2) the word “law” occurs in the New Testament meaning “the legal principle” (Romans 7:21; Romans 8:2). Also, in view of the divine law in the Old Testament, there are differences in meaning.

1. The law of Sinai (Acts 7:53; Galatians 3:17).

2. The five books of Moses (the Torah), according to an old division, the first of the three parts of the Old Testament (Luke 24:44).

3. The entire Old Testament (John 10:34), several times also called the law and the prophets (Matthew 5:17; Matthew 7:12; Matthew 11:13).

God gave the Sinaitic law to His people Israel after their liberation from Egypt. With its juridical, ceremonial and moral commandments it was from the beginning meant for that people only (Deuteronomy 4:8; Romans 9:4), just as the Old Covenant was only made with Israel. Christians often overlook this fact. The law of Sinai was a God-given system of claims on, and promises for, His earthly people. The moral laws were, so to speak, God’s minimal claims on natural, unregenerate men. The ceremonial laws regulated the worship and service of the people and were at the same time a shadow of things to come which became reality in Christ (Colossians 2:17; Hebrews 10:1).

Since the law was from God, it was holy and just and good (Romans 7:12). If the Israelites had been able to keep it, it would have led them to life and righteousness (Leviticus 18:5; Deuteronomy 5:29). But this was impossible since natural man lacks the power to fulfil God’s claims. Thus the law could only bring knowledge of sin without imparting the power to overcome it (Romans 3:20). It revealed sin and this led to death and condemnation (Romans 7:10; Romans 8:3). The Lord Jesus took upon Himself the curse of the law when He died upon the cross. In this way He has redeemed from its curse all those who believe in Him. Every believing Jew is therefore no longer under the curse of the law (Galatians 3:13), and he is also free from the law because Christ is the end of the law for righteousness (Romans 6:14; Romans 7:4; Romans 10:4; Galatians 3:24-25).

It is contrary to God’s revealed will if Christians put themselves under the law. Usually they do not mean the whole law including its judicial and ceremonial orders, but only its moral

commandments, 1:e. the 10 commandments. For the observance of these the reason given is that a Christian is not allowed to kill, steal, etc. But a believer will avoid these and all other sins, not because he observes the law, but because he has received a new life and possesses the Holy Spirit as a source of strength which enables him to go beyond the minimal requirements of the law.1

Yet again and again it is taught in Christendom that although the law was given to the people of Israel, it is still valid for all peoples and therefore also for Christians, since God would not operate a double standard for mankind. Apart from Matthew 5:17-48, Scriptures such as Deuteronomy 4:5-8, Isaiah 2:2-3 and Romans 3:19 are quoted as reason, but, among other things, history and prophecy are being mixed up. God is unchangeable in His nature but His relationships to men are not at all times and in all circumstances the same.

DESTROY — FULFIL In Matthew 5:17 the Lord Jesus spoke to those belonging to the earthly people of God. His disciples and the multitudes of men surrounding Him were Jews. The kingdom of heaven had been promised to the “sons of the kingdom.” Therefore He first turned only to this people (Matthew 15:24). As we saw when considering the beatitudes, we can apply His words also to the present time of “the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven.” But we must not forget that the Lord Jesus first of all addressed only His own people, to whom God had once, at Sinai, given His law.

“Think not that I am come to make void the law or the prophets; I am not come to make void, but to fulfil” (Matthew 5:17). The preaching of John the Baptist, the forerunner of Christ, and his call to repentance, as well as the words of the Lord Jesus Himself, announced something completely new. But this did not mean that everything that preceeded this had become invalid. The law and the prophets (1:e. the entire Old Testament) were not destroyed by Christ. Quite the opposite, He was come to fulfil them. “Fulfilling” does not only mean obedience to the Word of God, because this could only have referred to the law, and not to the prophets. “Fulfilling” therefore means here “to confirm” and “to bring to fulfilment.” The entire Old Testament testified of Christ and He was its fulfilment (John 5:39).

1The fact that the literal fulfilment of the fourth commandment, which demands the observance of the Sabbath, is not required, is a peculiar inconsistency of Christian supporters of the law. This shows that one does not want to put oneself completely under the system of the law, but in this point resorts to the grace of God.

IOTA AND TITTLE

“For verily I say unto you, Until the heaven and the earth pass away, one iota or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law till all come to pass” (Matthew 5:18; cf. Luke 16:17). In this verse the Lord Jesus speaks only of the law. This does not, as in verse 17, mean the five books of Moses, but the commandments of the law of Sinai.

Heaven and earth will pass away after the end of the thousand-year reign of the Lord Jesus (2 Peter 3:11). Then there will be a new creation with new heavens and a new earth (2 Peter 3:13; Revelation 21:1). But before this, during the millennium, Israel as a people will be accepted again by God on the ground of the New Covenant (Jeremiah 31:31-35; Ezekiel 36:24-27). God will put His law into their inward parts and write it on their hearts, and Israel, in contrast to previous times

as well as today, will be happy to observe it. Also the instructions for the feasts and the sacrifices will again be followed. But instead of being apart and separated from the nations, as previously, Israel will be the centre and model for all peoples (Isaiah 2:2-4; Zechariah 14:16). The iota is the smallest letter of the Greek alphabet (like the yod in Hebrew), and the tittle is a hook-shaped mark which in Hebrew distinguishes various letters which would otherwise be the same. If according to the words of our Lord not even the smallest parts of the written law will pass away, how much less the instructions once given by God! What a testimony to the verbal inspiration of this part of the Word of God, the Bible! Nothing of the law will pass away until it has been fulfilled in the millennium in a way that has never before been the case in the history of Israel. The words “till all be fulfilled” (cf. Luke 21:32) point to the future time of the glorious reign of Christ as King, in which all the Old Testament prophecies will be fulfilled and all the words of the law will be observed.

Arend Remmers

NOTICE If the Lord will, the next part of the series on Psalms 119:1-176 will appear in the next issue The Tongues of Men and of Angels 1 Corinthians 13:1 The languages of men are many. Most, but not all, have the Word of God translated into their own tongue. How did all these languages come into existence? They are the consequence of God’s judgment at Babel when “the Lord did there confound the language of all the earth: and from thence did the Lord scatter them...” (Genesis 11:9). In Genesis 10:5 we read: “By these were the isles of the Gentiles divided in their lands; every one after his tongue...” It is here that the word “tongue” first occurs in the Bible. The Hebrew word used is “lah-shohn” (Strongs No. 3956) and is translated tongue and language. The words used refer to ordinary speech. But what about angels — what language do they speak? If we suppose that they have a separate tongue, as some have deduced from 1 Corinthians 13:1, we may be sure that they would have only one language. Which of the angels were judged by God at the plain of Shinar? It was only fallen mankind who could conceive the notion of building “a tower whose top may reach unto heaven;... lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth” (Genesis 11:4). Clearly, angels did not need to reach unto heaven and neither were they judged with confusion of their tongue! But are we sure they do not speak another language? Reflect a little on their purpose. The word ev-angel-ist has at its root the word angel, meaning messenger. Angels are messengers. Their task was to bring messages from God to men and women. A brief review of some Biblical examples will demonstrate this point clearly. Read Genesis 16:1-16, where an Angel1 spoke with Hagar. What language was used? Of course it was one Hagar understood. In Exodus 3:1-22 the Angel of Jehovah spoke with Moses from the midst of the burning bush. He had no trouble in understanding what was being said to him. Now read Judges 13:1-5. When Manoah and his wife were told of the birth of their son Samson, what language did the Angel use? Was His exalted message readily understood by this rural couple? Of course it was. The narrative shows they spoke together with the Angel. In 2 Kings 1:3 Elijah is addressed by an angel. The words he used are recorded and we can understand with our rational faculties what was said. An angel also spoke with the prophet Zechariah (Zechariah 1:9 ff.). These Old Testament conversations were evidently all conducted in Hebrew and were comprehensible conversations when normal human language was used. We read of no mutterings or incomprehensible gibberish coming forth from the lips of angels. If you turn to Isaiah 8:19 you will find a very dubious group chirping and muttering. Scripture records that there is no light in them. In the New Testament angels are again found bringing their glorious messages to surprised but

comprehending hearers. We have no alternative but to conclude that they were spoken to in Aramaic or Greek. Zechariah, Joseph and Mary well understood the holy communications that reached their ears in Matthew 1:1-25; Matthew 2:1-23 and Luke 1:1-80; Luke 2:1-52. Acts 8:26 furnishes another example in Philip being told to go toward the south, to the way that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza. Cornelius presumably was addressed in Greek by the angel (Acts 10:3). In Acts 12:7 the sleeping captive, Peter, is spoken to by an angel.

1It would seem that the Angel of Jehovah in Genesis 16:1-16, Exodus 3:1-22 and Judges 13:1-25 is Jehovah Himself. In Mr. Darby's translation the "A" of "Angel" is capitalised. In none of these instances, nor in any others in the Bible, will you find angels uttering ecstatic, unintelligible sounds. How does this all square-up with what is found in the modern charismatic movement? Apart from Satan having the power to mimic real languages, it appears to me that the generality of tongues speakers are deceived by some phenomena found in ecstatic religious ceremonies. Of course Satan is behind the deception, for he is the father of lies (John 8:44). Claims to apostolic power and gifts arose in the church at Ephesus, evidently at the turn of the first century. The apostles had nearly all been called home and perhaps only John was then alive. The Lord commended the Ephesian assembly in their correct judgment of these pseudo-apostles. "Thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars" (Revelation 2:2). The renowned researcher into religious cults, A. J. Pollock, threw out a challenge that there should be a reliable test made of the reality or otherwise of the claims of the Pentecostal systems. He suggested "that a number of able Christian linguists should be invited to listen to these tongues. In the main, we believe, they are gibberish. They are not real languages at all. We have been told that in some cases where real languages are spoken, the persons speaking have rolled out floods of obscenity. In that case the tongue is clearly Satanic, for the Scriptures repeatedly speak of unclean spirits." (from "Modern Pentecostalism, Foursquare Gospel, Healings and Tongues: are they of God?" published by Central Bible Truth Depot, London 1945). His suggested test has been proposed to various "angel" tongue speakers but none have accepted the challenge for fear of demonstrating that their so-called tongue has no linguistic structure at all and a marked lack of complex creatorial order found with true language. My conclusion is that the modern claims are generally false but if a known tongue is uttered the evidence I have been able to evaluate is that it would not be from the Holy Spirit but an unclean demon. Far from having the tongues of God's angels we see men deluded by fallen angels. Since the revelatory gifts have ceased,2 we may regard modern tongues speakers as false prophets. This is also consistent with our other conclusions.

If you have fallen into the trap, it will be best to repudiate the false gift and confess the matter to God without delay. The unclean spirits will not merely deceive but will also defile those persons who have spiritual fellowship with them. The danger is great and we must not underestimate the powers of darkness to intrude even among those professing to be outside the religious world.

E.N.C.

2cf. 1 Corinthians 13:8 and James 1:25 to see the use of "perfect" in relation to the Word of God. See also Hebrews 2:3-4 to confirm the interpretation of Mark 16:17-18, that the special sign gifts were to confirm that the new dispensation being introduced was of God.

"Whoso boasteth himself of a false gift is like clouds and wind without rain." (Proverbs 25:14)

“Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world.” (1 John 4:1) The Life of David (10) David’s Influence in the New Testament (Continued from page 73) The Entry into Jerusalem of Jesus, the Son of David, the King of Israel.

Matthew 21:1-17; Mark 11:1-11; Luke 19:28-44

It has been calculated that the period from the time when Nehemiah requested from king Artaxerxes the freedom to return to Jerusalem to rebuild the destroyed city and its walls, until the entry of Jesus, the Son of David, into Jerusalem, covers 69 weeks1 of Daniel’s prophetic vision (Nehemiah 2:1-8; Daniel 9:25). “Messiah the Prince” of Daniel 9:1-27 is the Son of David, Jesus of Nazareth in Matthew 21:1-46. The prophecy of Zechariah 9:9-17 was partially fulfilled in the lowly way that He entered into the city. (Note the difference in Revelation 19:1-21 when He comes riding upon a white horse). It was not fulfilled in its entirety because Zechariah’s prophecy foretells the blessing of Israel and the Gentile nations and the judgment of the opposers of God. Note in Zechariah 9:9 that salvation is mentioned. That is omitted in the quotation in Matthew 21:1-46. The time for Israel’s salvation had not yet come.

Outwardly it appeared to be a triumphant entry. A great crowd rapturously welcomed the prophet from Nazareth. The enthusiasm reached a very high pitch. Clothes and tree branches were strewn in the path of the Son of David. Expectancy was rife among the people. “Blessed be the coming kingdom of our father David” (Mark 11:10). The time of release had come. The Roman yoke would be broken and Israel would be free. The glowing prophecies of their prophets were about to be fulfilled. Hosanna (Save now) was the cry to Jesus. Alas, the time had not yet arrived. Daniel’s prophecy indicated that Messiah would be cut off (a sacrificial expression) and have nothing. This was fulfilled when Jesus was rejected by the leaders of the Nation and crucified. Thus Jesus’ reign over Israel and that Nation’s blessing were put in abeyance. David, the son of Jesse, knew the joy and dignity of being anointed king of Israel. He also knew the bitterness of rejection by the people he was anointed to govern before he exercised the power of an undisputed monarch. His greater Son knew that in a fuller way than David ever did. But eventually, like David, his greater Son will subdue all His enemies and be undisputed ruler of the whole earth.

1 69 weeks of years — 69x7=483 years

While Jesus is described as meek in Matthew 21:1-46 there are features of power exhibited by Him. Creatorial power is seen in Him sitting on an unbroken colt (Mark 11:2; Mark 11:7). Kingly power is expressed in ridding the Temple precincts of evil practices, and just judgment on a fruitless Nation is figuratively seen in the cursing of the fig tree. Note too how Jesus quoted David’s Psalms 8:2. “Yes; have ye never read,” was a rebuke to the chief priests and scribes. Of all the people they should have known what David wrote. Empty religion often neglects the sources of its faith but Jesus appreciated what the children said. It was in stark contrast to the silence of the leaders except in objections. Children’s appreciation of Jesus, the Son of David, should never be despised.

If Therefore David Call Him (the Christ) Lord, How is He his Son?

Matthew 22:41-46; Mark 12:35-37; Luke 20:41-44 The Pharisees were unable to answer the hard question that the Lord Jesus put to them. They agreed that the Christ (the Anointed) was of

David's seed. They also agreed that Psalms 110:1-7 is a Messianic Psalm and that in verse 1 David had referred to the Lord as his Lord. How then was the Christ David's son and at the same time his Lord? The two statements appeared to be contradictory. It was an enigma to them. They could not answer the question and Jesus did not enlighten them. The answer was standing before them but they did not have faith to perceive it. Perhaps they would agree that Jesus was the Son of David. That was easily established. He was the son of Joseph who was a son of David (Matthew 1:20; Luke 3:23). They could not understand and would not believe that Jesus was the Lord referred to in Psalms 110:1. The truth of the matter lay in the incarnation of the Son of God who was the Anointed of God (Acts 10:38; Matthew 3:16). The Anointed was standing before them, come of David's seed according to flesh (Romans 1:3; John 7:42). Jesus was David's Lord, an affirmation of the Deity of Jesus. He was also a Son of David, an indication of His true humanity. Note that Jesus never suggested that He was not of David's seed. He knew that He was. The question that He submitted to the Pharisees was a test and they failed the test. The time was future when Jesus would be seated at God's right hand in glory. This incident in Matthew 22:1-46 reveals David's influence. His psalm was used by the Lord Jesus to silence the proud Pharisees. The Lord Jesus credits David with speaking by the Holy Spirit's power and inspiration (Mark 12:36). He was among the many writers in the Old Testament who were inspired by the Holy Spirit (1 Peter 1:11; 2 Peter 1:21).

David was one of the five persons who spoke of Jesus as "My Lord." The others were Elizabeth, Mary of Magdala, Thomas the apostle and Paul the apostle to the Gentiles (Luke 1:43; John 20:13; John 20:28; Php 3:8). Praise God that we who are believers in Jesus can say along with Paul, "To us there is... one Lord, Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by Him" (1 Corinthians 8:6).

Bethlehem (House of Bread), the City of David.

Luke 2:4; Luke 2:11

Two places in the Bible are called David's city: Jerusalem and Bethlehem. David captured Jerusalem from the Jebusites and the stronghold of Zion was called David's city (1 Chronicles 11:4-9). When David died he was buried in his city (1 Kings 2:10). There are numerous references in the books of Kings and Chronicles to Jerusalem the city of David, but it is upon a small town called Bethlehem that our attention is focused.

Bethlehem in Judah was a favoured town. It was honoured by being known as David's city. It was marked out for specific honour in the prophecy of Micah 5:2 : "And thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, little to be among the thousands of Judah, out of thee shall He come forth unto Me who is to be Ruler in Israel: whose goings forth are from of old, from the days of eternity." The Ruler of Israel (not David or any other merely human king), the Eternal God become flesh (come of David's seed), was to be born there. Great cities are mentioned in the Bible: Ur of the Chaldees, Nineveh, Babylon, Jerusalem, Rome, and many others, but they were all passed by. The little town of Bethlehem was chosen for the coming into the world of God's beloved Son.

Bethlehem was important in the life of David, the son of Jesse. His great-grandfather Boaz, his grandfather Obed, his father Jesse and he were all born there (Ruth 2:4; Ruth 2:11; Ruth 4:17; 1 Samuel 16:1; 1 Samuel 20:6). It was there that Samuel the prophet and judge of Israel anointed

him to be king in the place of the unfaithful and rejected king Saul (1 Samuel 16:1-13). That was high honour for David. It was in his own town that David looked after his father's sheep and did his duties faithfully (1 Samuel 17:15; 1 Samuel 17:34-35). This remarkable blend of royal dignity and lowly service in David was later seen in divine perfection in the Son of God. The incident involving David's three mighty men enacted at Bethlehem expressed the devotion they had towards him. When David expressed a desire to have a drink of water from the well in Bethlehem, his men broke through the ranks of the enemies, the Philistines, and brought the water to their leader and king. David, greatly touched by their courage and devotion, would not drink the precious water, but poured it out to Jehovah as a drink offering. A dangerous mission successfully accomplished was finalised by an offering to Jehovah (1 Chronicles 11:15-19). The greatest thing that ever happened in Bethlehem was one of the most astounding events in the history of time. The prophecy of Micah 5:2 was fulfilled when Emmanuel (God with us) was born there. It is impossible for the human mind to understand the wonder of the incarnation of the Son of God. The believing and reverent soul accepts the plain but profound statements of Holy Scripture. Reasoning gives way to worship. The Word became flesh (John 1:14). The fulness of the time was come and God sent forth His Son (Galatians 4:4).

Throughout the world numerous places have plaques fixed to houses or walls announcing to any who are interested that great persons, famous or infamous, were born there. See Psalms 87:4-6. Those who have visited the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem will remember that in the grotto where it is claimed Jesus was born there is a silver star on the marble floor. On the star is the inscription "HIC DE VIRGINE MARIA JESUS CHRISTUS NATUS EST" (Here of the Virgin Mary Jesus Christ was born). However interesting that may be, the intelligent believer in the Lord Jesus bows in worship because the incarnation of the Son of God commenced a series of events which culminated in His atoning death on Golgotha's hill in Jerusalem. David's city, celebrated in song and prose, will always be remembered as the place where Jesus, the Son of David, was born. The birth of Jesus did not go unnoticed (Luke 2:1-20). Just as David had done many centuries before, shepherds were caring for their flocks. Suddenly all was bright with glory and an angel of the Lord announced to the frightened shepherds a most wonderful message. A Saviour had been born to Israel in David's city. He is Christ the Lord. The sign for them to see was a babe wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger. The sign of Isaiah 7:14 was now fulfilled — Emmanuel had arrived. After the angelic message was delivered a multitude of heavenly beings made heaven ring with praises and glory to God. The shepherds immediately made their way to the city of David to see what had been made known to them from the Lord (Jehovah). They found the Lord of Glory as a little babe. He was lying in a manger: strange place for the Creator of the universe. His parents, Joseph and Mary, affectionately caring for the infant Jesus, were also seen by the shepherds. The shepherds were uniquely blessed to have seen such a sight. Their witness of what they saw created wonderment that has never ceased. The shepherds glorified and praised God. That too has never ceased.

About two years after this great event wise men from the east, presumably Gentiles, were guided by a divine arrangement to a house where Jesus was with His mother. The crowds of people that were in Bethlehem for registration in the census had gone (Luke 2:1-3). Now there was accommodation available for Jesus and His mother. The wise men came with their gifts of gold and frankincense and myrrh. Perhaps they represented the riches of their countries. The figurative

meanings of the gifts is certainly significant — gold representing the Deity of Jesus; frankincense, the sweet odour to God of His perfect pathway; myrrh, the sufferings of the cross. Whatever meanings we attach to these gifts, one thing is evident: they were worthy gifts from Gentiles to the One who was born King of the Jews. The evil king Herod and the proud religionists made no effort to seek out the King that was born, to worship Him. Herod did want to know where He was but in order to kill Him. The religionists were indifferent. They knew their Scriptures but they had no heart for their Messiah. The ways of God are past finding out (Romans 11:33). A Roman emperor gives a decree for a census to be held in his empire (Luke 2:1-2). Joseph, a son of David, takes his pregnant wife Mary to the city of David to be registered (Matthew 1:20; Luke 2:3-5). Mary gives birth to a baby boy (Luke 2:6-7). Micah 5:2 is fulfilled and Isaiah 7:14 also.

F. Wallace.

(Further articles in this series to follow, if the Lord will) Christ's Greatness in the Epistle to Laodicea (2) (Continued from page 56) (2) "The faithful and true witness" The way the Lord presents Himself to John in Revelation 1:1-20 encompasses His different attributes and glories as Priest, King and Judge, referred to again in the seven epistles of chapters 2 and 3. But in the last two letters, especially in verses 7 and 14, we find several new elements. This shows that despite all the public failure, it pleases the Lord near the end of the history of the church here on earth to present Himself to His people in a special way. He desires to draw their attention to Himself and to His own character.

If we had visited Laodicea we might have been struck by the material prosperity apparent in the magnificent and highly organised church services. Perhaps there were eloquent speakers, wonderful seminars and big audiences — in short, something for everyone. However, what was essential was missing. The Lord was outside of it all and they didn't even know it! Should the church not be in the scene where her Beloved is rejected, for the delight and satisfaction of her Bridegroom and Master, and under the approval of God's eye? When the church here on earth has failed to be a faithful and true witness, the Lord Himself draws the attention of the church to its unfaithfulness. The Lord Jesus is the true Master of the house and He likes to delegate many tasks to His disciples. When they follow His instructions the servants have fellowship with Him in these various forms of service. Thinking of faithful witnesses, the Greek word can be translated "martyrs" as well. Many saints come to mind: men like Stephen (Acts 7:1-60), Paul (Acts 20:1-38), Timothy and the long list in Romans 16:1-27. However, even in their days there were believers who forsook the true veterans of God's testimony. There is no difference today. But when these believers fail, attention is drawn to the Lord. He will never compromise, whereas the church is guilty of this. He will never negotiate truth, neither be misled by outward appearance (compare 1 Samuel 16:1-23). He was always ready to pay the price for His faithfulness. The need for reality

God wants to see truth in the inward parts (Psalms 51:6), as well as reality in our words and actions. This was no longer the case in the assembly at Laodicea in John's days and neither is it in our days. The Lord is the true Witness. We could connect this also with what we saw in regard to His Name "Amen." God is looking for truth in His children, not only on Lord's day, but in all the different areas of our lives. Why? In order that they may be His representatives in this world, as was the case with the Lord Jesus when He was walking here. This truth should also come out in our relationships and activities within the context of God's assembly. It would lead too far away

from this study to go into the many passages which speak of this point (of truthfulness, reality, faithfulness). Let us conclude for now that despite the failure in the public testimony as it has been entrusted to the hands of men, the Lord Jesus always maintains what is needed for the glory of God. Again, how great He is!

Faithful and true The first qualification, “faithful” (connected in the Greek with the word faith1 or belief, and also with obedience), reminds us that the Lord is a reliable witness. He exercises His present function as Witness in true dependence upon and in communion with God. Did He not do this also in His walk and in the race of faith on this earth? (Hebrews 12:1-3). Is it not because of a lack of faith and of dependence that the church has failed? The other qualification, “true,” emphasizes His personal integrity as well as His loyalty to the truth of God, as Romans 15:8 explains in such a marvelous way. Psalms 45:7 confirms that He did it because of His love for God’s rights: there we find His motive. Thus our Lord Jesus was prepared to become the true Bondman down here for the truth of God (Php 2:1-30). Another passage which comes to mind is Luke 22:24-27. The church on earth has failed but our Lord in heaven remains a true Servant. He maintains the glory of God in testimony in His people here on earth, as He did this during His walk through this world. This is what we find in the epistle to Laodicea.

1It is striking to see that Moses said of his generation that they lacked faithfulness, Deuteronomy 32:20; the word amen (see above) is used in this context!

It is remarkable to see how the New Testament writers were prepared to take the place of bondservants of God and of Christ. This character of bond-service is entirely lost in Laodicea. They want to rule instead of serving (compare 1 Corinthians 4:8). How appropriate then to be brought back to the true Bondservant who presents Himself in all His glories to attract our hearts and to challenge our consciences. Are we willing to take the place of a bondman as well? The Lord’s and God’s faithfulness2

2About 600 verses in the New Testament contain a noun or a verb linked with our word faith or believe. Such features in God should be seen in the believer today. In the Old Testament the Hebrew word for truth is often translated with faithful(-ness). The New Testament puts special emphasis on the faithfulness of God. In view of the needs of God’s people in the wilderness, 1 Corinthians 1:9 links the present fellowship of His Son Jesus Christ our Lord with the faithful God who called us. Against the background of a failing and unfaithful people our attention is drawn to the One who controls all circumstances and leads us through trials (1 Corinthians 10:13). During the riot at Ephesus Paul experienced God’s compassions and after this he could again write to the Corinthians about God’s faithfulness (2 Corinthians 1:18; “true” in King James Translation). Thus we could trace God’s faithfulness through the New Testament: He is faithful (Hebrews 10:23; Hebrews 11:11) and abides faithful (2 Timothy 2:13).

It is especially to be noticed that our Lord in His walk on this earth was characterised by faithfulness. Revelation 1:5 speaks of Him as “the faithful witness,” referring to His walk on earth, whereas at present He is “the firstborn from the dead,” and in a soon coming day he will be seen as “the prince of the kings of the earth.”3

3In Revelation very often things are composites of three, e.g.: past, present, future; features of the Divine Trinity; glories of the Lord in three categories.

Today in the glory (2 Timothy 2:13) and as presenting Himself to John and to us (Revelation 3:14), He is faithful. Not only a faithful High Priest (Hebrews 2:17), or Servant (Hebrews 3:5; Hebrews 8:1 f), or Advocate (1 John 1:9; 1 John 2:1 f), but also as this great Witness today (Revelation 3:14), in contrast to the condition of the Christian profession. Of course, His people on earth should be faithful, as Timothy was (1 Corinthians 4:17), and so many others have been through the grace of God. The suffering church in Smyrna is challenged to be faithful (Revelation 2:10). In the deviation in Pergamos, Antipas remained faithful (Revelation 2:11). In the future, when appearing to this world, the Lord will be seen as the Faithful and True (Revelation 19:11). What a privilege then for believers today to follow Him in faithfulness!4

4 See also the seven references about the faithful in the book of Proverbs: Proverbs 11:13; Proverbs 13:17; Proverbs 14:15; Proverbs 20:6; Proverbs 25:13; Proverbs 27:6; Proverbs 28:20.

A. E. Bouter (To be continued, if the Lord will) News from the Field

Nigeria

"Many, O LORD my God, are Thy wonderful works which Thou hast done, and Thy thoughts which are to us-ward: they cannot be reckoned up in order unto Thee: If I would declare and speak of them, they are more than can be numbered" (Psalms 40:5) That verse reflects some of our feelings and gratitude for what the Lord has done during the three months we were able to spend in Nigeria, a country with more than one hundred million inhabitants. Approximately forty percent are Moslem and the rest bear the name of Christians. In the south where most of our assemblies are located, the Christian population is in the majority. Denominationalism is one of the tools used by the enemy to blind eyes to the all-sufficiency of the Lord Jesus. But we are thankful that the Lord has His people there and that the light of the gospel and the testimony unto the Name of the Lord Jesus continue to shine forth in a country full of violence and corruption. The love of our dear brethren which we experienced was heart warming. The fellowship with God’s people living in very difficult circumstances has brought us to a deeper understanding of the verse in 2 Corinthians 4:17 : "... our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." How wonderful to let the light of the coming day shine upon our present pathway. The Lord provided a comfortable room for us in the Guest House of a local college in Yaba, Lagos. The location was used as our base and provided the opportunity to receive many brothers and sisters for counselling and fellowship. A brother from one of the assemblies functioned as our driver in his own vehicle. This enabled us to visit the assemblies almost every night of the week, in the five assemblies in Lagos and in the new assembly in Akute near Lagos, in Ogun State. We were happy to see that all the assemblies are continuing to grow not only in number but also in depth. Of course, much teaching and practical admonition is needed. In this large city of 12 million people the fields are white to harvest. Our brethren are active in open air gospel preaching and tract distribution. We were able to help exercised brothers and sisters in starting children’s work in several assemblies. The teaching material we were able to bring from Canada was well received. It was a pleasure to see so many children come under the sound of the gospel. One assembly was able to rent a store to be used as a meeting hall. Until January of this year they had come together in the home of a brother and sister — a one room apartment. The new assembly in Akute was also able to rent a room (partly furnished) which will be made suitable for assembly purposes. In February we had the joy of welcoming brother and sister David and Ruth Campbell. Their visit was

short but very encouraging. They were only three full days in Nigeria but we were still able to arrange two extra meetings and the brethren were happy to meet the Campbells and to enjoy the ministry of our brother.

March 4 was another memorable date. We could hold our first "National Conference." Brothers and sisters from all eight of the assemblies in Nigeria were able to attend. Approximately 275 people came together. Ministry was given on "How... to behave... in the house of God" (1 Timothy 3:15). We were thankful for the good response, as many expressed their appreciation for the practical teaching. May the Lord give the increase. From March 25 to April 7 we had the visit of brother Siegfried Nick. He had visited Nigeria several times in the past and his experience as a missionary in Africa was very helpful. We were able to visit believers in the Afam, Port Harcourt area and in Calabar twice. Both times we travelled by air to the nearest airport and then by road to the homes of the saints. On each occasion a Nigerian brother accompanied us. Brother Nick could travel with us on our last trip. Further, we could visit the saints in Abuja, the new capital of Nigeria. A little group of about 15 believers come together for prayer, Bible Study and ministry. Three of the believers came into fellowship in Lagos, which is about a one hour flight from Abuja. At this time they have not started the breaking of bread in Abuja. With brother Nick we also visited Kaduna, where brother David Fasanya resides. We have been in contact with the literature work of "Word of Truth" and the assembly there since 1976. The Lord has not opened the way for practical assembly fellowship. However, we were given the opportunity to minister the Word one evening at a special meeting, to which a large number of people came to hear the Word of God. The final weeks were spent in Lagos. In spite of the heat, the frequent blackouts and water shortages, the Lord sustained us and gave us good health and daily strength to carry out our task. To Him be the glory!

We thank you all for your support in prayer and in practical fellowship. It is because of this that we were able to make this visit, which was our fourth to Nigeria. For the last two visits we were able to travel together. To be there as a couple proved to be very beneficial in the contacts with brothers and sisters. We developed a deep love and affection for the dear people of God in that country. It seems that we have obtained a large Nigerian family besides our own children and grand-children in North America.

We were touched to see approximately 20 brothers and sisters at the airport who came to say goodbye on the evening of our departure. They begged us to return soon. This we leave with the Lord. Please continue to pray for the Lord’s people in Nigeria. The Lord preserved us from harm and sickness, even though an attempt was made to overthrow the military regime during our stay. It failed, but many were executed without a trial as a result. On the way home we made a stopover in Holland to visit relatives and to make contact with several brethren interested in the work of the Lord abroad. How good it was to meet the brethren of our home assembly, who have supported us and were with us in prayer. To God be all the glory! With warm love and greetings in the Lord Jesus, Klaas and Helga Rot .

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Sanctification (1)

There are three major branches of ministry: doctrinal, practical and devotional. What I have to say is mainly doctrinal but with practical implications. My message can be summed up in three statements.

1. God is holy.

2. God makes those who are His holy.

3. God expects and requires those who are His to be holy. In a word I want to say something about sanctification, which is almost, though not perhaps exactly, the same as holiness. God is inherently, intrinsically holy. He is pure, He is clean, and He is different to every other person. He is apart from all else and from all other persons and we need to bear that in mind. Anything or anyone else that can be deemed to be holy in the sight of God must take on in measure this particular characteristic that God Himself has totally, and be clean, pure, and altogether apart from any pollution or contamination. Then, having considered that, we shall look at positional sanctification; what God has made all those who are believers on the Lord Jesus. We will look at Scriptures where God says that He has set such apart for Himself. Then, finally, we shall consider the third element, what we know instinctively to be true, that those whom God has set apart positionally as to status before Himself, He requires to be sanctified, practically set apart (morally) from others in the world who are not His. This is practical sanctification.

1. God is holy

First of all then, does Scripture support the statement that God is holy? It is prophetically said of the Lord Jesus in Psalms 22:1-31, in His holy Manhood, that in that terrible moment of abandonment He cried “My God, My God... Thou art holy” (Psalms 22:1; Psalms 22:3). The prophet Isaiah in chapter 6 says, “Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts” (Isaiah 6:3). Perhaps it is because of this statement, repeated in Revelation 4:1-11, that God is spoken of as a thrice holy God. God is a triune God, three distinct Persons, one God. When we come to the disciples’ prayer in the Gospels the Lord Jesus encouraged the disciples on earth, taking account of God in heaven, to seek that His Name might be “Hallowed,” holy, sanctified (Matthew 6:9). When we come to Peter’s first epistle, Peter says, “He which hath called you is holy” and again he says, “Be ye holy; for I am holy” (1 Peter 1:15-16). And then in Revelation again, “Thou... art holy” (Revelation 15:4). We do well to test our fundamental statements of Christian truth against the plumb line of Scripture. In this matter of holiness or sanctification we must start with this basic premise, well founded in Scripture, that God Himself is set apart from all others. When we look at these instances in Scripture we will find that it gives substance to any other conclusions we come to.

God has revealed Himself as a triune God — Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Accepting that God as such is holy, is it right to say from Scripture that the Father, as such, the Son, as such and the Spirit, as such, are intrinsically, inherently sanctified or holy? In seeking to answer this question as to the Father, we need go no further than the prayer of the Son in John 17:1-26. Speaking to the Father, His Father, He said, “Holy Father.” If there is only one Scripture, provided it is established as Scripture and, as far as we can tell, an accurate translation, we do not need more than one. The Father is holy, the Father is sanctified, for the Lord Jesus expressly said, “Holy Father.” When we come to the Lord Jesus personally we find that His holiness is borne witness to by the three major writers of the epistles: John, Paul and Peter. John says of the Lord, “In Him is no sin” (1 John 3:5). That is a negative way of asserting His absolute holiness and personal sanctification. There was nothing in Him that sin could appeal to, or that the devil himself could use to bring about His apparent downfall. Intrinsically, inherently, He is the Holy One. He revealed Himself in the address to Philadelphia as “He that is holy, He that is true” (Revelation 3:7). That was John considering the Lord Jesus in His intrinsic, personal worth. When we turn to Paul we read that God “Hath made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin” (2 Corinthians 5:21). Not only was there no sin in Him, but He knew no sin. There was nothing that ever entered His holy mind that was of sinful character for He was perfectly holy, through and through. Peter gives us the last necessary touch. Not only inherently, not only in the thoughts that passed through His mind, but in action too He was absolutely pure and holy. Peter says of Him, “Who did no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth” (1 Peter 2:22).

Now here we have to take account of something slightly different. When we read Scripture we learn of things that are true of the Lord Jesus in Himself, without reference to anyone or anything else. But then we come to statements of Scripture which tell us what He is relative to us and positions or conditions into which He has voluntarily entered on our behalf. I mention this because there are some Scriptures about the sanctification of the Son of God which we wouldn’t otherwise understand unless it was in that relation. Remember John 10:36, “(The Son) whom the Father hath sanctified, and sent into the world.” Taking our original statement that to be sanctified is to be set apart to God, we have here in John 10:1-42 the Lord’s statement that the Father set the Son apart for the express purpose of coming into the world that we might have life through Him. It was not for any need of His own or because of any requirement upon Him. It was on our behalf because it would ultimately lead Him into the work that He did at Calvary for our blessing. It was for that purpose that the Father sanctified the Son and sent Him into the world. The Son then was sanctified by the Father. When we get to the Son’s prayer in John 17:1-26 He uses this term again in that positional way: “I sanctify Myself” (John 17:19). He was going to set Himself apart from earth and go to heaven and take up a position in manhood that He had never before had in manhood. This again was to lead to blessing for us. He sanctified Himself in leaving the world and going back to the Father and this was a positional sanctification. One way of distinguishing between things which differ is to say that sanctification is to be set apart for the service of God, dedication is rather to be given up to the service of God and consecration is to have the hands filled in the service of God. All three terms were and are, of course, true of the Lord Jesus. In that comprehensive verse at the end of 1 Corinthians 1:1-31, speaking of the Lord Jesus again, the apostle Paul said, “Who of God is made unto us,” among other things, “sanctification” (1 Corinthians 1:30). He is the epitome of sanctification and unless we are in Him and of Him we cannot enter into this blessing of sanctification. How many blessings we have which are only

available to us because we are in Christ! Sanctification is one of them. Lastly, in the epistle to the Hebrews 2:1-18, “He that sanctifieth (the sanctifying One) and they who are sanctified (the sanctified ones),” — they owe their sanctification to Him (Hebrews 2:11). He is the sanctifying One because He Himself personally and positionally was set apart to the service of God and that is why He came into the world.

God, as such, is sanctified, holy. The Father, as such, is sanctified, holy. The Son, as such, is sanctified, holy — on His own behalf and also that we might be blessed. The Spirit is characteristically so for He is the Holy Spirit. The reference to the Father as “Holy Father” is rare. I do not know of a Scripture which uses the appellation “Holy Son” or “Holy Lord” although the term would be valid. The holiness of the Spirit of God seems to be particularly guarded. In the canon of Scripture almost always, unless there is a special reason, we learn concerning the Spirit that He is the Holy Spirit. And in the opening salutation of that fundamental teaching epistle, the epistle to the Romans, we learn that the Lord Jesus gave evidence of His deity and His holiness in raising dead ones, and that even that was according to the “Spirit of holiness” (Romans 1:4). Everything that the Lord Jesus did in the days of His flesh was in the power of the Spirit and in particular in the power of the Holy Spirit. That safeguard is there that, in case we are in any doubt, the Spirit is the Spirit of holiness. In Genesis 2:1-25 we are given the first reference in Scripture to the term sanctification or holiness. In the Old Testament we find that things as well as persons are set apart for the particular purpose of serving God and there is something special involved in each case. God rested on the seventh day and blessed it and sanctified it. Now this shows the character of what sanctification is. God said of the seven days, one is going to be special. It is set apart that God might rest in it with His creatures in the celebration and in the blessing of the work that had been done on the other six days. So the seventh day was hallowed — it was made holy to God — and He Himself set it apart. Many things in the Old Testament, such as the furniture and holy vessels in the tabernacle, the firstborn in each family in Israel, and the officers of the law, were sanctified to God, set apart, and committed to the service of God. This is not vain repetition. When we come to New Testament Scriptures that speak about sanctification we need to understand that sanctification gives an entirely new basis for living. It is to be set apart and utterly devoted to the service of God and not a term to use lightly.

E. Brown.

(To be continued, if the Lord will) The Sin of Miriam and her Restoration (1) (Numbers 12:1-16) Miriam’s sin The account of the journey of the people of Israel from Egypt to Canaan contains many valuable lessons for the church of God in the present dispensation. We too are a pilgrim people but we are on our way to a better, that is, a heavenly country. We find Israel’s deliverance from Egypt in the book of Exodus, while the book of Numbers describes their journey from Mount Sinai up to and including the conquest of Transjordan. The book of Numbers particularly speaks about the failures of God’s people during their journey through the wilderness. Israel failed to listen to God’s Word, failed to submit to Moses’ authority, failed to take possession of the Promised Land, and so on. In this respect the complaint that God uttered in Numbers 14:22 is particularly striking: they “have tempted Me now these ten times, and have not hearkened to My voice.” Time and again the grumbling people were punished by God but it all seemed to be of no avail. The people died a miserable death in the desert and therefore it was a new generation (with the exception of Joshua and Caleb) that entered the land of promise. Man in the flesh, who was tested

by the law, could not please God and had to be born again. Every attentive reader of this Bible book must come to this conclusion and no doubt this is one of the important lessons that God wants to teach us here. In Numbers 12:1-16 the spirit of rebellion that dominated the people also seemed to take control of Miriam and Aaron, the sister and brother of Moses the man of God, who had both been used by God and had played an important part in the exodus from Egypt. Apparently Miriam contributed most to this rebellion against Moses, but Aaron was far too willing to listen to her and therefore their confession is put in the plural: “Alas, my lord, I beseech thee, lay not the sin upon us, wherein we have done foolishly...” (5: 11). What was the reason for Miriam’s slander? We read that Miriam and Aaron spoke against Moses because of the Ethiopian woman whom he had married (5: 1). Is one not allowed to talk about the marriage of one’s own brother? Of course this is allowed but what is important is the manner in which you talk about it! Miriam did so in a negative way and thus became guilty of slander. She disapproved of Moses’ marriage and thus damaged his position and good name. This is not said in so many words but can be clearly gathered from the context. This means that Miriam opposed Moses’ course of action and therefore she turned to Aaron for support. Together they then said: “Hath the LORD indeed spoken only by Moses? hath He not spoken also by us?” (5: 2). “And the LORD heard it,” says the next sentence. Let us remember that, when we feel we have to say something about our fellow brother or sister! There is a Witness who hears our conversations, who knows our thoughts and even knows what is at the bottom of our hearts. We cannot hide anything from Him. So it is not without reason that the apostle James so seriously warns about the dangers of the tongue, which can be full of “deadly poison.” With our tongue we bless God, and with it we also curse men, who have been made in the similitude of God (James 3:8-9). This is a serious evil and when somebody persists in it it will ultimately lead to their exclusion, for a railer should be put away from ourselves as a wicked person (1 Corinthians 5:11-13). In 1 Corinthians 6:10 Paul says that a reviler is among those who will not inherit the kingdom of God. Such a person is considered to be among “them that are without.” Unfortunately, things can reach this stage when somebody will not keep their tongue under control through the power of the Holy Spirit (this self-control is also a fruit of the Spirit: Galatians 5:19-23).

Put out of the camp This is what happened to Miriam as we see in type in this story. She had not hesitated to speak against Moses and therefore she had to be put out of the camp as a leper. In the book of Numbers outside the camp is the place of all unclean persons (see 5:1-4; the lepers are mentioned first in those verses). It is the same in Leviticus 13:1-59; Leviticus 14:1-57, where we find the laws concerning leprosy and the cleansing of healed lepers. A leper was unclean as long as he had the plague: “... he shall dwell alone; without the camp shall his habitation be” (Leviticus 13:46).1 (See footnote on opposite page). The remarkable thing is that with Miriam it was apparently a form of leprosy in an advanced stage. The Lord’s anger was aroused against Miriam and Aaron and immediately Miriam stood there “leprous, white as snow” (5: 10). This complete whiteness was, according to Leviticus 13:13, precisely the condition for being pronounced clean again! This means that Miriam was stricken by God’s judgment, yet right away a proof of His grace could be observed — grace that had her restoration in mind. She was completely leprous, no doubt about that. She had to be put outside the camp as an unclean person and she had to cry out that she was unclean (Leviticus 13:45). But it was not forever. God wanted to receive her again after she had been shut out of the camp seven days (Numbers 12:14).

I think that this period of seven days (which was also common for other cleansing ceremonies, see e.g. Numbers 19:1-22) refers to the complete measure of repentance required for a godly restoration. Similarly, a work of regret and repentance had to take place with the person excluded in Corinth before he could be received again in the midst of the believers (2 Corinthians 2:7). Godly sorrow had produced “repentance to salvation not to be repented of” (2 Corinthians 7:10), both in his heart and in the hearts of the Corinthians who had first tolerated the wicked person in their midst.

Removing a wicked person from the midst of the believers, shutting a leper out of a clean camp, should therefore always take place with the hope of restoration. Priestly attention and care are necessary to be able to determine what stage the “leprosy” (which is an outstanding image of sin in a manifest form) has reached. When the leper has been completely stricken with the disease, then the typical lesson is that the person excluded no longer expects anything from himself and recognises that nothing good dwells in his flesh (cf. Romans 7:18). In other words, a work of regret and repentance can be observed in him. As soon as that has been established the person involved can be restored and brought back to his former place among the believers.

After seven days, Miriam was allowed to re-enter the camp. She was “received in again” (5: 14). So this is a striking example of the excommunication of a wicked person, but also of the restoration of the offender. We cannot deal lightly with sin. God wants us to enforce discipline but at the same time, in His grace, He wants to prepare the way for a complete restoration. Miriam had to wait outside the camp for seven days before she could be re-admitted. But it is very striking to read that the people within the camp also waited for seven days until she had joined them again: “... and the people journeyed not till Miriam was brought in again” (5: 15). She waited outside and the people waited inside until the work of restoration had been accomplished!

1Here the camp was the dwelling place of the people of God, as recognised by God. He was in their midst as the Holy One and the Just, and they were encamped around the sanctuary of God as a holy and righteous people. As soon as the camp was defiled by idolatry, the place of the faithful was, with Moses “without the camp, afar off from the camp” (Exodus 33:7). Similarly, after the rejection of the Messiah the place of the Hebrew believers was with their Lord “without the camp” (Hebrews 13:13).

Let us then notice Moses’ attitude which also has much to tell us. No doubt Moses was grieved about the sin of Miriam and Aaron (who as an older brother should have known better but who also played a dubious role in the story of the golden calf). What then was Moses’ reaction to this act of rebellion against his authority as the man of God? He kept silent and committed it to Him who judges righteously (1 Peter 2:23). The only thing that we read here about Moses is that he “was very meek, above all the men which were upon the face of the earth” (5: 3).

Moses was not naturally humble. He had learned this humility in the school of God. By nature he was a quick-tempered man. He killed the Egyptian and even in his old age his hot temper flared up again, when in his indignation about the rebellious people he started striking the rock instead of speaking to it (Numbers 20:1-29). Here in Numbers 12:1-16, however, Moses reminds us of the One who said to His disciples, “... learn of Me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls” (Matthew 11:29). As disciples of Christ, as students who are brought up in His school, we have to react in this way when we have become the object of slander. That is what

our personal attitude should be, although in such matters there is also a common responsibility of the church according to Matthew 18:15-20. We even see here that Moses prayed for his sister with a view to her restoration: “And Moses cried unto the LORD, saying, Heal her now, O God, I beseech Thee!” (5: 13).

Hugo Bouter.

(To be continued, if the Lord will) Strong Encouragement for a Weak Remnant or A Change of Perspective

“I will fill this house with glory... The latter glory of this house shall be greater than the former, saith Jehovah of hosts...”

(Haggai 2:7; Haggai 2:9 — J. N. D. Translation) In Ezra chapter 3 we read of shouts of joy mingled with weeping (Ezra 3:10-13). A remnant had returned from captivity in Babylon and the builders had laid the foundation of the temple. Apparently there were contradictory feelings about this event but both were acceptable to God: rejoicing over His mercy (5: 11) and weeping over a condition so much inferior to their more glorious past (5:12). But however justified both reactions were at that time and however suitable the condition of soul from which these feelings arose, it is a sad fact that the building of the temple ceased soon after (Ezra 4:24). Haggai and Zechariah prophesy in this situation and the work is resumed (Ezra 5:2).

It is striking that the prophet Haggai, in encouraging the feeble remnant, does not attempt to reproduce either of the two reactions described above. Being occupied solely with what has already been wrought would carry a danger of boasting in accomplished achievements (although it was the Lord who had wrought it). Haggai refutes any such thought at its very root by his question: “Who is left among you that saw this house in her first glory? and how do ye see it now? is it not in your eyes in comparison of it as nothing?” (Haggai 2:3). A realisation of the nothingness of their work was necessary to counteract any tendency to boast in it. On the other hand, Haggai does not suggest that this fact should lead to weeping but, surprisingly, he immediately continues to say “be strong... and work (5: 4). This exhortation is neither based on help received so far (cause of rejoicing in Ezra 3:1-13) nor on a comparison between their present condition and past glory (cause of weeping in Ezra 3:1-13). The prophet brings before them a two-fold encouragement based on neither of these two elements. Firstly, he points to present resources (the Lord with them, His Word and His Spirit — vv 4-5). Secondly he draws their attention to future glory in a very distinct and remarkable way. The promises, “I will fill this house with glory” (5: 7) and, “The latter glory of this house shall be greater than the former” (5: 9, J.N.D. Trans.), provide the key. They link the present work of the feeble remnant with the future glory. Their present building may be much inferior to Solomon’s but it is linked with one that will be superior to Solomon’s. Their present temple may not be filled by the cloud of glory but it is linked with one that will be filled by even greater glory. The link is so close that Haggai identifies both by stating that “this house” will be filled with glory and that the future glory of “this house” exceeds the former. By viewing the temple in their “day of small things” (Zechariah 4:10) as identified with the millennial glory-filled temple Haggai exalts the present work to a very high level. This new perspective provides a most powerful encouragement to continue the work. It was therefore perfectly suited to Haggai’s aim.1

Today, if we compare the testimony given to the assembly as God's dwelling place (Ephesians 2:22) to the powerful start of this testimony in Acts 2:1-47; Acts 3:1-26; Acts 4:1-37 we can only conclude it is "as nothing" in our eyes. But this should not stop us from working in the house of God (1 Corinthians 3:10. See also passages on "edification" such as Ephesians 4:12; Ephesians 4:16; 1 Thessalonians 5:11; Jude 1:20 etc.). On the contrary! We can rely on present resources (all three of which are available to us in a much fuller sense than in Haggai's day — Haggai 2:4-5). And then, being entirely aware of our present weakness we should not despise what is (however small) a testimony to the Lord and His assembly. Rather, we should regard it as a link between a powerful beginning (Acts 2:1-47; Acts 3:1-26; Acts 4:1-37) and a glorious future (Ephesians 5:27). By adopting this perspective, even today, God's people will be encouraged to "rise up" and once again begin to "build the house of God which is at Jerusalem" (Ezra 5:2). And in this sense we will be "prospered through the prophesying of Haggai the prophet..." (Ezra 6:14).

M. Hardt.

1Ezra reports the feelings of the remnant (Ch. 3). Zechariah, on the other hand, gives us God's thoughts about the work undertaken (esp. chs. 1-6). Haggai provides help to overcome (internal) obstacles among the remnant and encourages them to resume the work. The Life of David (11) David's Son in the Gospel by Luke

If Isaiah 9:6-7 in the Old Testament describes the greatness and glory of the One who will sit on David's throne, Luke 1:26-35; Luke 1:67-80 in the New Testament provide the same instruction in different features.

He Shall be Great (5: 32)

If the angel had said, "He is great," he would have been correct. Jesus is the great God (Titus 2:20). The angel's declaration was about a babe to be born in David's house. The Son of David was to be great. In His manhood He was to manifest a greatness that superseded all the great men of the Old Testament. David was incapable of curing his sick son, or raising him to life when he died (2 Samuel 12:15-23). Jesus, his great Son, raised a young man to life and those who saw the miracle glorified God and said, "A great Prophet has been raised up amongst us" (Luke 7:11-17). When the woman whom Jesus met at Sychar's well asked Him, "Art Thou greater than our father Jacob," the answer is "Yes, He is" (John 4:6-30). Jacob provided natural water to allay bodily thirst. Jesus supplied living water to satisfy spiritual thirst. When the Pharisees asked Jesus if He was greater than Abraham, the answer is "Yes, He is." He existed before Abraham was born (John 8:53-59). The day will dawn when Jesus will implement the promises made to Abraham. Abraham built altars and made sacrifices. Jesus is the ante-type of an altar and a sacrifice. Matthew 12:6 presents Jesus as greater than the Temple (vv. 22-29), greater than Satan (5: 41), greater than Jonah, and in verse 42 greater than Solomon. Great Prophet, Priest and King and great enough to subdue the forces of evil. Jesus is truly great. The great salvation that Jesus secured (Hebrews 2:3) was great for three reasons:

1) Because of the Person who accomplished it.

2) Because of the far reaching effects for untold millions of people. The church, Israel and the nations, the cleansed earth are all beneficiaries of the great salvation.

3) In it was manifested the greater love that Jesus spoke about in John 15:13.

After the work of salvation was accomplished and Jesus was placed in the tomb, the victory of resurrection saw the great Shepherd of the sheep rise out from amongst the dead. “Death could not hold its prey.” In ascending to God’s right hand Jesus was glorified and is described in Hebrews 4:14 as the great High Priest. Israel had High Priests but never a great High Priest like Jesus, the Son of God. When Jesus comes to establish His kingdom and to sit on David’s throne, He will come in great glory and in great power (Matthew 24:30; Mark 13:36). During the Kingdom He shall be great unto the ends of the earth and will be the Peace (Micah 5:4-5). How solemn to consider that on the day of final judgment this great and glorious Person shall sit upon a great white throne (not David’s) and dispense righteous and unerring judgment. Praise God that because we have received blessing through the great salvation we shall never stand before the great white throne. In closing this section we might well use the language of the Old Testament in relation to Isaac and apply it to our Saviour and Lord. “And the man became great, and he became continually greater, until he was very great” (Genesis 26:13). The Son of the Highest (5: 32)

David’s Son is none other than the Son of the Highest. This Name indicates the great dignity and power of the One who in relationship with God, and in nature Himself God, will fill the throne of David. Melchisedec is described as the priest of the Most High God, and also as King of righteousness and King of Salem (Genesis 14:18; Hebrews 7:2). Abram, the Friend of God, is referred to as Abram of the Most High God who made him independent of a king’s offer of wealth (Genesis 14:18-24). In Daniel 3:26 Shadrach, Meschach and Abednego are addressed by King Nebuchadnezzar as “servants of the Most High God.” God, the Most High, had a remarkable priest; a friend in whom He could confide; and servants who were faithful to Him. But a Son, and such a Son, is nearer to the heart of the Most High God than ever priest, friend or servants could be. David unfortunately had sons who were unworthy of him and many who filled his throne were a disgrace to his name, but the Son of the Most High will fill David’s throne with superlative worth for the glory of God. There will be an accurate representation of God in His righteousness and power. This will involve the overcoming of Satanic power and influence. A picture of this victory is seen in the healing of Legion, the man possessed with many demons. In Mark 5:1-26 and Luke 8:26-39 demons recognize Jesus of Nazareth as the Son of the Most High God. The possessed man had been in torment and every effort to curb his violence and misery had proved ineffective. But Jesus, in Divine power, ordered the unclean spirits to leave him. They obeyed a command they could not disobey. The result for the man was marvellous. He obtained peace and clarity of mind and suitably clothed he became a testimony to the amazing power of God. He became a mouthpiece to proclaim the greatness of Jesus. There is much Satanic influence abroad in the nations today. The ruler and god of this world, Satan, has permeated every strata of society. His corrupting influence is obvious everywhere. Politics, philosophies, religion and all well-meaning organisations are impotent in the face of Satan’s power. Every failed effort to curb evil seems to give it more energy and power. Will there ever be a solution to the power of evil? The answer is “Yes.” When the Son of the Most High sits on the throne of David illimitable, omnipotent power will overwhelm the forces of evil and Satan himself, and the world will be liberated from its bondage. When that takes place, and it will, there will be glory to God and a testimony rendered to the greatness of Jesus (Romans 8:18-23). The Son of God No pen is adequate to describe the greatness of the Son of God. His greatness is set forth in the Holy Scriptures in an abundance of testimonies. Every

feature of true Deity and true Manhood is expressed in Him. The angel's announcement to Mary the virgin expresses in precise language how great He is. He is not conceived in Mary's womb by human generation. He is conceived by the power of the Highest and the Holy Spirit. In this mysterious and profound transaction the unique glory of the Son is carefully guarded. When born He is to be holy. Not a vestige of Adam's fall is connected with the birth of the Son of God into this world. He was intrinsically holy. He was born holy and lived a holy life without a stain of evil. As the Holy One made sin He accomplished the work of redemption that sinners might be made holy. How well He did His great work! As the reference to the Son of God is in the passage where David's throne is mentioned it may be appropriate to refer to passages where the Son of God is mentioned in relation to the coming Kingdom.

Nathanael's testimony to Jesus in John 1:49 is a beautiful recognition of this greatness. No doubt inspired by the Spirit of God Nathanael exclaimed, "Rabbi, Thou art the Son of God, Thou art the King of Israel." What a Son for God! What a King for Israel!

There are four glimpses of the coming Kingdom in the New Testament. All point to the unique greatness of the Son of God (Matthew 17:1-8, Mark 9:2-8, Luke 9:29-36 and 2 Peter 2:16-18). In each of these pictures of the future Kingdom, the Father's voice draws attention to His beloved Son. There will be great and illustrious persons taking part in the administration of the Kingdom, but towering above them all will be God's glorious Son. David was well nigh heart-broken by the selfish rebellion of his son Absalom and his eventual death but God will be satisfied completely with the reign of His well-beloved Son. "The pleasure of Jehovah shall prosper in His hand" (Isaiah 53:10).

It is the Son who shall subject all things to God's will in the Kingdom. The Kingdom over which the Son of God shall reign shall never deteriorate or be diminished. No enemy is powerful enough to overthrow it. No internal dissension shall undermine His authority. Psalms 2:1-12, which presents the Son/King, portrays Him ruling with a rod (sceptre) of iron. Evil shall be effectively curbed which will make way for righteousness to be paramount. Empires and dynasties come and go for various reasons. The Son shall hand over His Kingdom to His God and Father, that God — Father, Son and Holy Spirit — may be all in all. God cannot be anything less than all. The triumph of His counsel and purpose is that He will be all in all created beings for all eternity (1 Corinthians 15:24-28). In Hebrews 1:8 the Son is addressed as God. His throne is to last for ever — no breakdown for one thousand years (Revelation 20:1-6). His upright sceptre will assure that righteousness reigns. Wonderful assurance for faith! One said aptly many years ago: "He died to remove what He hated in order to maintain what He loved." The Dayspring The dayspring or sunrising is the harbinger of a new day. It was a new day in Israel's history when David, the son of Jesse, the warrior king, ruled undisputed over Israel and the adjoining nations. Unfortunately, that victorious time was eventually forfeited because of the unfaithfulness of the nation of Israel. Through the long years of Gentile domination over Israel, broken briefly by the revival depicted in Ezra and Nehemiah, the Nation longed for deliverance from its enemies. Their prophets foretold that light would come which would dispel the darkness and despair of their bondage (See Isaiah 9:1-7; Isaiah 60:1-3; Isaiah 60:15-22). Zecharias thought that these prophecies and many more were about to be fulfilled in the One born in David's house. John, his son, was to be the prophet of the Highest to introduce the Messiah to Israel (Acts 13:24-25). When Jesus was presented to Israel, the Nation through its leaders refused to acknowledge Him. They rejected Him and crucified

Him. There was no doubt about that. Matthew 4:14-16, a quotation of Isaiah 9:1-2, was a partial fulfilment of the prophecy. As Israel's day turned into darkness it must wait until a coming day for the complete and literal fulfilment of the ancient prophecies and promises. That the light of another world had dawned in the coming of Jesus was borne out in His own words in the Gospel by John (John 1:1-4; John 1:9; John 3:19; John 8:12; John 9:5; John 12:35; John 12:46). How sad that except for a few, the light was refused. The darkness didn't apprehend the light and men loved darkness rather than light (John 1:5; John 3:19-20). They still love darkness in modern times. However, after the death and resurrection of Jesus, divine light in all its brilliance became available for all who believe in Jesus and His wonderful redemptive work. That light streams from the face of the exalted and glorious Son of God (2 Corinthians 4:4-6). Peter describes the light as marvellous and so it is (1 Peter 2:9). John in his epistle said "the darkness is passing and the true light already shines." Paul, Peter and John are united in informing us that for the believer in Jesus darkness has been dispelled and divine light is shining, not to expose, but to bring into sharp focus the great things that love and light have secured for the children of light. The Horn of Deliverance

Horns in Holy Scripture symbolise power. Two passages will suffice to prove this. In Revelation 17:12-13 there are ten horns which are crowned with royal diadems. They depict ten powers that give their power and authority to the beast which is the revived Roman power. Zacharias in his great prophetic utterance by the Holy Spirit blessed the Lord God of Israel for raising up a horn of deliverance or salvation in the house of David His servant. No doubt Psalms 132:17-18 was in his mind as he uttered these words. There the Psalmist said, "There (in Zion) will I cause the horn of David to bud forth... His enemies will I clothe with shame." Zacharias was expectant that that prophecy and many more like it were about to be fulfilled in the babe that was to be born in David's house. Sadly that was not to be. Jesus in His public life of service for God manifested His power in a great variety of ways. Satan's power was broken in the lives of many. The dead were raised, demons were cast out and many forms of illness were healed. The versatility of the power of Jesus brought blessing into the lives of many. Matthew 4:23-25 presents the gospel of the King, the Son of David, and gives an epitome of the great service of Jesus. Did Israel embrace its opportunity to have deliverance through the horn that God had raised up? No. The envy of Israel's leaders, and the blindness of the unrepentant Nation refused to acknowledge the rightful claims of the Messiah and eventually crucified Him. Israel's deliverance, so vividly described in the prophetic Scriptures, was put in abeyance and awaits the great day when its omnipotent Deliverer will come from Zion. He will deal with their ungodliness and set them free from their enemies (Romans 11:26-28. See also Zephaniah 3:14-20 and Isaiah 11:1-16; Isaiah 12:1-6).

Many centuries have passed since Jesus was rejected and crucified by Israel and Rome. In this period the delivering power of Jesus has been experienced by millions of people in almost every nation in the world. Eternal salvation is theirs because of their deliverance from the power or authority of darkness (Hebrews 5:9). The Father accomplished this great work of deliverance because Jesus broke the power of Satan when He died and rose triumphantly from the dead (Colossians 1:12-14). Paul testified in 2 Corinthians 1:9-10 that day by day deliverance was experienced by him and his companions as they served God. Many can testify to the same deliverance. "The Lord knows how to deliver the godly out of trial" said Peter (2 Peter 2:9). Jesus is an all-the-way-home-Saviour. Praise God, He has delivered us from the coming wrath that will sweep over the world after the church is caught up to glory (1 Thessalonians 1:10; 1

Thessalonians 5:9). The Great One — the Son of the Highest — the Son of God — the Dayspring — the Horn of Deliverance, such are the glories of the One who will sit on David's throne. The Lord Jesus, because of who He is, will bear all these glories with the perfect distinction that belongs to each of them. He will bring glory to God and to Israel and the nations. How infinitely great He is!

F. Wallace.

(The final article in this series is to follow, if the Lord will).

Christ's Greatness in the Epistle to Laodicea (2) (Continued from page 126) (3) "The beginning of the creation of God" (Revelation 3:14)

It has intrigued me many times why the apostle Paul in his epistle to the Colossians refers so often to Laodicea. In order to find the answer would it not help if we understand the character of this letter written to the saints at Colosse? It is a declaration of the greatness and the pre-eminence of Christ, who is the Eternal Son on the one hand and the Firstborn on the other. His greatness is presented and defended in this epistle but is also to be demonstrated in the lives of the believers. The Colossians were in danger of practically giving up the Head because of the influence of gnostic teachings. They promoted so-called higher or deeper knowledge, or 'super-knowledge' we would say today. But in reality they were adding to Christ and thus taking away, diminishing, if not entirely robbing Him of His glories. Laodicea probably found itself in a similar situation. Paul presents Christ's greatness to the Colossians as the answer to their needs and as the remedy to the enemy's attacks. Therefore in Laodicea the Lord Jesus takes upon Himself the task of the Witness because the assembly had utterly failed to be faithful. He also presents Himself as "the Beginning of the creation of God." In introducing Himself in this capacity to them, they (or at least some of them) would be restored to first love. They would realise what Christ actually means to God and to the believer. Is it not the purpose of Paul's writings to show that Christ is the Wisdom of God, that all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are found in Him? In a similar way, though even more pronounced, the apostle John does this in his writings. To counter the same errors and false teachings John goes back to Him who was in the beginning and to that which was from the beginning. In other words He introduces the One who is all-sufficient, who was and who is and who will be, the Same. This remedy is applied by the Lord Himself in Revelation 3:1-22. He is no longer presented in His greatness by His apostles: He presents Himself in all His greatness to the believers in Laodicea, and we may add to us and to the believers in our days. What an impact it would have if we were impressed by the greatness of the Person who speaks to us! Could there be someone greater than the "Beginning of the creation of God?"1 Inside or outside Could there be somebody who would be able to replace Him? In Laodicea they were (are) so pleased with themselves that they did (do) not even think of the Lord! They did (do) not even realise that He was (is) no longer among them, that He was (is) "outside!" Do we see Him as the Author, the Originator, the Starting point of God's ways; the Beginning and therefore the Object and Goal of God's counsels? Do we worship Him as being the Head of the new creation, who is the Head also of God's family? He is our life, the hope of glory, and in Him all God's treasures of wisdom are to be found. In Him the glories of the new creation are and will be displayed for ever and ever. He will be the expression of God's glory in an undiminished way for eternity. He will fill the universe with His glory (Ephesians 4:10) because He is all and in all (Colossians 3:11)! This is true reality. This is "My Lord and my God" (John 20:28). Is there anybody left to compete with Him? Does He have

any rivals? However, the enemy always tries to rob Him of His glory, or put Him in the shade of something else. Although our blessed Lord can never lose His inherent glory, He can lose it as far as our testimony for Him is concerned. Therefore let us watch and be vigilant.

Once more “The beginning of the creation of God” This does not mean at all that He was created as the first and highest of God’s creatures. Nor that He is an emanation of the Godhead. No! Colossians 1:16 clearly shows that all things in relation to the first creation are through Him, made in the power of His Person and also for His own glory. Please compare this with John 1:3; John 1:10; Hebrews 1:2 and Revelation 4:11. The passage in Proverbs 8:1-36 which speaks about God’s wisdom, cannot be used to suggest Wisdom is God’s work in creation. On the contrary, it was always there in God Himself, from the beginning (Proverbs 8:23). As in Colossians 1:1-29, this passage brings out Christ’s greatness as the (Eternal) Wisdom of God, as He is also the Eternal Word and the Eternal Son.

1See further the comments on Christ as Chief on the next page.

Furthermore, concerning the new creation, the Word of God confirms the greatness of Christ as the Creator and therefore the Head or Beginning of the new creation. He is its Author, Originator, Chief Executive, Firstborn and Centre. Just commenting on the expression “the Firstborn,” I suggest this to be a title of honour. The firstborn in Scripture speaks of special privileges and rights and eminence in position. “The Firstborn” is also an indication of Him who, by His death and resurrection, has introduced the believers into this new realm of the new creation. See further Colossians 1:18; Colossians 1:13; Colossians 2:10. Can you find a greater Person than the One who could do this? The new creation

Passages like 2 Corinthians 5:17; Galatians 6:15; Ephesians 2:10; James 1:18; Revelation 21:1; Revelation 21:5-6; Revelation 22:13 and others are very helpful to see more of His greatness with respect to the new creation. In this context I underline especially 2 Corinthians 5:17 (new associations), Galatians 6:15 (a new rule), Ephesians 2:1-22; Ephesians 4:1-32 (anew morality) and Colossians 3:1-25 (a new system of knowledge). The same Scriptures show the practical implications with regard to our position as Christians before God and men. Meditation upon these passages will lead us to worship Him who is the Beginning, Object, Centre and Head of God’s new creation. Considering His ways (Romans 11:1-36) and His works, whether in creation, in redemption, or in judgment, will lead to worship and so it will be in heaven. How great He is!

Christ as Chief The three titles the Lord uses in Revelation 3:14 are intimately linked together. Our Lord is God blessed forever and therefore also the Amen. But at the same time the Amen is seen in Him as Man who is in obedient response to the divine Amen. Our Lord Jesus came to do God’s will: this was His Amen. This implied for Him, as we have seen, suffering and rejection. Nevertheless He was the Faithful and True witness and still is today. The third expression (beginning, ruler or chief) is derived from a verb that means to rule or to begin. The noun indicates primacy in time (beginning) and/or in rank (ruler, chief). In these titles dimensions of past, present and future are always present, because He is the Alpha and the Omega. The gnostic teachings in Colosse (and perhaps in neighbouring Laodicea) caused Paul to emphasize especially Christ’s greatness.2 Firstly with regard to the first creation (Colossians 1:15-17) and secondly in connection with the new creation, on the basis of His death and resurrection (Colossians 1:18). John uses the same expression in John 1:1 f (beginning) with regard to the Word, as he uses to

refer to Christ as the Head of the new creation in Revelation 3:14. Finally there is another Greek word, derived from the same root as the Name Chief or Beginning, that conveys the idea of ruler and dominion. This word occurs in Acts 3:15; Acts 5:31; Hebrews 2:10 and Hebrews 12:2, where we meet our risen and glorified Lord as the great Author, Leader and Prince of life, salvation and faith.

2Notice in Colossians 1:18 also three titles: Head, Beginning, Firstborn.

A. E. Bouter.

(To be continued, if the Lord will) From Our Archive The Revelation of the Father (4a)

John 17:1-26 (Continued from page 111)

If we are concerned with the revelation of the Father and His love, then this chapter is the very centre of the matter. The Name Father occurs in the New Testament some 255 times and of these practically a half are in John's Gospel. Although there are only six explicit occurrences of the Name Father in chapter 17, we obviously have to take account of the fact that every "Thee" and every "Thou" is a direct reference to Him, which brings the number to at least 50 times.

We are all familiar with the beginning of the chapter in which the Lord Jesus Christ says, "The hour is come." Whenever a moment of extreme portentousness is concerned we find such words coming from Him. "His hour was not yet come," or here now, "The hour is come." It has long and generally been recognised by those initiated in the things of God and the ways of holy Scripture that the Lord Jesus Christ is taking His place here in this prayer with the cross behind Him. "I have glorified Thee on the earth: I have finished the work which Thou gavest Me to do." Iconnect this very strongly with a later part of the passage where the Lord Jesus says: "I am no more in the world... I come to Thee." For a long time I thought that this meant the Lord Jesus Christ was coming to the Father in the prayer. But simple reflection on the passage makes it very clear that this is not what the Lord Jesus Christ means. He means: "These are in the world but I am leaving the world and I am coming to Thee, back to the place which I have left." Therefore it becomes very important that before He left the world He should leave on record such words as these which present the very last thing that is to be said. "And now come I to Thee; and these things I speak in the world, that they might have My joy fulfilled in themselves." How absolutely amazing that this prayer should have been heard by the apostles so that by the Spirit it could be remembered and written down. Our apprehension will change from time to time but it should be amongst the words that are treasured and hidden in the heart, and if we keep these words then our joy in the Father and in the Son will indeed be fulfilled.

"The hour is come;" the Lord Jesus says, "glorify Thy Son, that Thy Son also may glorify Thee." What follows seems to make it very plain that while there are few explicit requests made in this prayer, this is the first one: "Glorify Thy Son." The purpose is "that Thy Son also may glorify Thee." This is to be taken with the statement "I have glorified Thee on the earth: I have finished the work which Thou gavest Me to do." In other words the Lord Jesus Christ is praying that He might be taken to the place that belongs to His glory, so that from that new position He might continue to glorify the Father but in an entirely new way. He has glorified the Father and above all we know that He has glorified the Father in the work of Calvary. This needed His coming from heaven to earth, but now He is praying that He might be restored to the glory so that He might glorify the

Father in a new way.

Now what does “glorify” mean? I have for many years represented it to myself to mean something like this: “To make the real excellence of a person known to others.” I am convinced the idea of it being made known to others is essential to the thought. The original word first of all, before it began to have its Bible use, means “opinion.” In other words, the view, the opinion of people is very important to the meaning of it. The Lord Jesus Christ, the Word, the Son, had come from heaven and upon earth He had glorified the Father in all that He had done but now He was going to glorify the Father from His place in heaven. How was He going to do that? If I were slightly to amplify the second verse I would put it like this: “Glorify Thy Son that Thy Son also may glorify Thee inasmuch as Thou hast given Him power over all flesh in order that He might give eternal life to as many as Thou has given Him.” I haven’t said very much about eternal life but here we have come very close to the heart of the matter about what is eternal life. Brethren have said that this is not a definition. If we think of a definition as something that absolutely and entirely includes every facet of the matter being defined then perhaps it would be wrong to expect anywhere that there would be a definition of eternal life. But I am sure holy Scripture does not afford us a greater one than these words in this chapter. “This is life eternal, that they might know Thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom Thou has sent.” It seems to me that we are being told in this verse that eternal life is the life that belongs to the Father’s house. The life in which the Father and the Son lived together in that eternity where they were at home together — the life of pure delight, the life of eternal love, is what is eternal life. No wonder that we are told that if we have imparted to us eternal life, then this is the knowledge of the Father, the only true God, and Jesus Christ His sent One. Oh what a wonder that we are given the life which is capable of entering into relations which a chapter like this describes. Apart from this there could be no answer to the last prayer of the chapter, “that the love wherewith Thou hast loved Me may be in them, and I in them.” Therefore the thing that is standing at the very portal of this prayer is that He might be put in the place where in a new way He may glorify the Father, by making Him fully known in the sense that He gives eternal life to as many as are given Him.

What is the Name of the only true God? The Name of the only true God is the Father. The blessed Son and the Spirit are one with Him. The Son eternally begotten, the Spirit eternally proceeding. But the Name of the only true God is the Father. This is confirmed in 1Corinthians: “though there be that are called gods... But to us there is but one God, the Father” (1 Corinthians 8:5-6). The disciples are given, and all those who were to believe on their Lord were to be given, this wonderful life in the power of which they can know the only true God.

I want to dwell on this word “true.” What does it mean that He is the only true God? Was not Jehovah the true God? Was not El Shaddai the true God? Was not the most High God, possessor of heaven and earth, the true God? In one sense they were all Names for the one true God but in another sense the Father is the Name of the only true God because only, and this is one of the tremendous things that we have tried to see, only in the Name of the Father is God fully revealed. That is what the word “true” seems to mean. Whenever you have it in this Gospel especially, you have it plainly meaning the fulfilment as distinct from the promise. You have it meaning the perfect and complete as distinct from the partial. We begin with “the true Light.” Well, John the Baptist was a light from God but he was not the true Light. It means that in a partial sense he was a light but in the full complete and final sense, Jesus is the One who could say, “I am the Light.” There was “the

bread of God." The manna was the bread of God was it not? Indeed it was but it was not the true Bread because it was entirely superseded when the Lord Jesus Christ came and said, I am "the true Bread." He said in chapter 15: "I am the true Vine." Well, several parts of the Old Testament are devoted to explaining in the most touching language how Israel was the vine or the vineyard. In Psalms 80:1-19 we have the story of how God cultivated it and so it would go on until the One came who He had made strong for Himself, and when He came He said, "I am the true Vine." Was not Israel the vine of God? Indeed they were, but the true Vine entirely superseded them in the sense of being equipped and able to bring forth fruit which would glorify the Father. So we have the meaning of the word "true" prepared for us beforehand by those examples. The deepest secrets of the heart and life of God were made known when the One came who spoke of His Father as the one true God. Eternal life is not an earthly thing because it really and certainly consists in the knowledge, not of Jehovah, not of Almighty God, not of the most High God, but it consists in the knowledge of the only true God, the Father. The knowledge of the Father is wrapped up with the real meaning of eternal life and the real possession of eternal life. But then it goes on to say, "that they might know Thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, Thy sent One." Now in such a context it must indeed have a wonderful meaning almost tantamount to expressing the very deity of the Lord Jesus Christ. This is a concept which takes us right back to the prophet Isaiah. In Isaiah chapter 6 the Lord said: "Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?" and Isaiah says, "Here am I; send me." Isaiah became the first sent one; not the sent one of the Father, but he became the first sent one of Jehovah, the God of Israel. Iwould also allude to that beautiful passage in the eighth chapter of Isaiah when he was referring to the greatest message that he had brought from Jehovah to His people. It was a message to awaken them, a message to restore them to Himself that they might learn His mercy and His grace, but they refused it and so Isaiah said, "Forasmuch as this people refuseth the waters of Shiloah" (the sent One) "that go softly, and rejoice in Rezin and Remaliah's son; Now therefore, behold, the Lord bringeth up upon them the waters of the river, strong and many." Even back in Isaiah's day there was something very special about his being the sent one and the waters of Shiloah flowed softly, with a sweet and loving voice of God's mercy and lovingkindnesss. How much more is the word full of meaning when it refers to the Father's sent One? In the Gospel of John 9:1-41 when the man who was born blind has clay put upon his eyes and the Lord Jesus Christ sends him to wash in the pool of Siloam (which means "sent"), it is the truth of the Sent One coming down here to be, as it were, as the water upon the earth. It was the means whereby sight was given to his blind eyes. So again and again we have this concept of the Father's Sent One. When we read later in this chapter 17, what is it that the disciples have believed, what is it that the world is going to believe, what is it the world is going to know? It is that the Father sent the Son. This is something supremely important for us to receive into our hearts and for us to meditate upon — it is eternal life. "That they might know Thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, Thy sent One." You cannot get beyond this, that the Lord Jesus Christ is giving to those who the Father has given Him, eternal life. This is His present way of glorifying the Father because in that life is the knowledge of the Father, the only true God and Jesus Christ His sent One. In verse 6 the Lord Jesus says: "I have manifested Thy Name unto the men which Thou gavest Me out of the world." Now to say that He had manifested the Father's Name means that He had set it in a clear light. He had made the knowledge of it available to those who had eyes to see. In the first part of the Gospel we read of those who had not eyes to see. Their hearts were hardened and their eyes were blind. In the very words following that explanation

of the blindness of Israel it says, “he that hath seen Me hath seen the Father.” This is to be taken together with the fact that He has given to His own eternal life that they might fully make their own that manifestation that He has made of the Father’s Name.

J. S. Blackburn.

(To be continued, if the Lord will)

Prayer (2) (Continued from page 103) Does Prayer Work?

We will all answer “yes” to this question. However, I wonder if we always like the answers that are given to our prayers? From the following Scriptures we will see that the answer is sometimes “no,” sometimes “yes” and sometimes “wait.” We shall also see that we are not always given to understand why the answers are as they are. In 2 Corinthians 12:9 we find Paul is given a “no” to his prayer. A serious affliction affected Paul and with exercise and effort in prayer he looked for relief. But the apostle was brought to realise that his burden was to remain in order that he might gain a fuller and richer appreciation of the grace of the Lord. There was to be an increased demonstration of the power of Christ in Paul’s life through enduring and triumphing over the affliction. The answer came: “My grace is sufficient for thee.” Like Paul we must learn that God has a better way forward and it may not be the way we expected. Such a learning process may not be easy. In Acts 12:3-16 there is the account of Peter’s release from prison by an angel. His deliverance was a matter of earnest prayer on the part of the saints. Herod had taken the apostle James and killed him in order to please the Jews. However, when the determined prayers of the saints were answered there was unbelief that God had answered with a “yes.” Are we ready for when the answer comes and is it in line with what we have requested? In Acts 16:6-10 Paul and his companions were prevented from moving in various directions by the Spirit of God. This would certainly have led to exercise and prayer. There was a time of waiting, for it was not until the vision was given that a clear direction was communicated to Paul and the others. Similarly, in Psalms 73:1-28 we find Asaph deeply troubled by the prosperity of the wicked. It is not until he went to the place of prayer (verse 17 — the sanctuary of God) that the answer could be given. Then he was given understanding as to the end of the wicked. Sometimes God asks us to wait for an answer or for understanding. In these Scriptures as in others to be considered we find that the word used implies effort and perseverance associated with continuous prayer. Clearly, to be a praying people requires energy and patience.

How Much Effort do I Need to Give? At the beginning of 1 Corinthians 7:1-40 we find Paul considering the relationship of husband and wife. He indicates that the natural desires associated with marriage are not to be lightly denied, except in connection with burdens and exercises where both need to be involved in prayer and fasting. The husband and wife consent for a time to refrain from a physical relationship, in order that they might give themselves wholly to determined prayer. Even necessary food is forgone in order that prayer may be made without distraction. This shows what a powerful activity prayer is when seeking to gain the resources available from God. In Romans 12:12 we have the expression, “continuing instant in prayer.” Persevering is the thought that is emphasised; not giving up till the answer comes. From the context of the verse we see that this prayerful attitude is a feature of the Christian life-style. In order to have time to pray we may need to give it priority over other things in our busy day. This takes effort, and interest and concern for others and for Christian things. This will be an opposite kind of life-style to that which marks the

unbeliever. When we say we will pray for someone or something, do we? And for how long do we do so?

Colossians 4:2 reminds us of the same requirement to “Continue in prayer” but also tells us to “watch in the same with thanksgiving.” We are to be awake and vigilant and looking for the answer to come. We are to be a people who expect their God to answer. I am reminded of Elijah, a man of like passions to ourselves, who prayed that it might not rain. The answer came and it didn’t rain for 3½ years. At the end of that time Elijah was used to prove to the nation of Israel that Jehovah was the only and true God. He defeated the false prophets of Baal. God consumed Elijah’s sacrifice with fire and then Elijah prayed for rain. He prayed and watched. He sent his servant to look for the rain clouds. Did Elijah give up when the servant reported that nothing was happening — that there were no clouds to be seen? No, he told his servant to go and look again seven times. He prayed, and watched and it did rain the same day. The verse in Colossians 4:1-18 also reminds us that when the answer comes we are to be thankful.

Finally, in 1 Thessalonians 5:17 saints are encouraged to “Pray without ceasing.” The answer may be a long time in coming but we are not to give up. We are to continue in those exercises we have committed ourselves to. It may be that no one else but our God is aware of the burden that we carry. There is to be the washing of the face etc., so that we appear to others not to have any particularly deep concerns, and this because the issue is with the only One who can bring about a solution. Our part is to faithfully continue in prayer. Who to Pray For In 1 Timothy 2:1-2 we find that there are times when our prayers are to be very wide in their scope, embracing all men. And it is good to pray and give thanks for the government under which we live and for the other tiers of government and authority. It may be that some saints live in countries where those in authority misuse their power, but this is even more reason to pray that they might exercise their authority in a responsible manner. In many places in Scripture we are given instruction regarding specific prayer. In 2 Timothy 1:3 Paul reminded Timothy that he was constantly in the thoughts of the apostle and that he prayed for him night and day. It is always encouraging to know that others are praying for us. Sometimes it is not until we have experienced the Lord’s guidance and help that we discover someone was praying for us in those circumstances. Indeed, it may be many years before we learn that we have been the object of someone’s prayers, or perhaps we shall only discover this when we are with the Lord! We may not appreciate the way that the Spirit of God moves saints so that they are burdened and pray for others, but He does. Let us not suppose that a believer has to be in difficulty before we pray for that person. Let us seek out one or more that they may be the specific objects of our prayers, and let us make a long term commitment in prayer exercise, without them necessarily knowing about our exercise for them. Of course, it is right that at times we ask the saints to pray for us. In 1 Thessalonians 5:25 Paul asked the Thessalonians to pray for him and those that were with him. He was continually praying for others and he valued the prayers of others for himself and his companions. We find in Romans 15:30 that Paul asked the saints at Rome to pray for him, and that he was also praying for himself! “Brethren... strive together with me in your prayers to God for me.” There are times no doubt when we need to tell the saints about a situation, as Paul did here in chapter 15. However, Paul was exercised to pray himself in connection with what he thought was God’s will as to his service at that time. He wanted to go to Rome and then into Spain. Scripture does not record whether or not he got to Spain and his journey to Rome was no doubt different to what he had expected. From time to time we will

have exercises in our lives which demand prayer and which we can share with others, whom it will be right to ask to pray for us and with us.

What About my Burdens!

There is a wonderful verse in Hebrews 4:1-16 which reminds us that there is a place we can go to where we will find One who is able to provide healing balm of mercy and grace even to a situation that is beyond our control. “Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need” (Hebrews 4:16). There is One there who can both share the burden and perhaps relieve us of the burden. Let us be quick to approach this throne, the quicker the better, for we shall find there that unnecessary heartache is removed. There is One whom we can approach in fullest confidence; One who understands how burdened we are. In Matthew 11:28-30 we are also reminded that the Lord is more than willing to share the burden that we carry. In such situations saints who have taken His yoke upon them have found that our Lord does all the carrying and He puts His arm around us and provides the needed support as we journey on in the way. The lessons that I find in these two Scriptures are that the Lord wants us to bring our troubles to Him and to leave them at His feet. He does not want us to carry them away again. It is important that we believe that the Lord is able. As the hymn writer says, “What a friend we have in Jesus...”

D. G. Pulman.

NOTICE If the Lord will, the next part of the series on “The Sermon on the Mount” will appear in the next issue Psalms 119:1-176 (14) (Continued from page 82) 11. Kaph — the palm of the HAND The eleventh letter of the alphabet signifies “a wing” and it may also represent “the hollow of the hand.” This figure is found in the Chaldee alphabet and its form in the Hebrew is like the curve of the hand between the forefinger and the thumb, signifying the palm of the hand. Its numerical value is twenty. When it is prefixed to a word it has the meaning of “likeness, as, like as, as if” (this is similar to Arabic). It will not be far-fetched to suggest that we have here the idea of security. (In Isaiah 49:16 we read: “Behold, I have graven thee upon the palms of My hands; thy walls are continually before Me”). In the palms of His hands we are secure!

Verses 73-96. Spiritual Maturity through Daily Meditation Section Eleven. Verses 81-88: “The Word of God for My Security”

Only He can really satisfy Verse 81: KAH-LATAH...“...(is) being consumed (spent)...” This whole section speaks of danger from enemies! Verse 81: “My soul fainteth...”; verse 83: “For I am become like a bottle in the smoke...”; verse 84 “... them that persecute me”; verse 85: “The proud have digged pits for me”; verse 86: “... they persecute me...”; verse 87: “They had almost consumed me...” Conscious of being under attack, the writer seeks refuge with the Lord and His Word. His only hope is in the Lord, and so it is for you and me.

We cannot help ourselves; nor can anyone else help us. That is why we have this pathetic cry: “My soul is being consumed for Thy salvation...” (literal rendering). It is good to realise day by day what we sometimes sing in a hymn: “Now none but Christ can satisfy.” Have we found this secret yet?

We may fail, but He never will Verse 82: KAH-LAU... “Fail (do my eyes for Thy Word...)” Do we discern a note of impatience? “When wilt Thou comfort me?” Had he not been hoping in His word?

(5: 81). Why does not the Lord act quickly? “Hope deferred maketh the heart sick...” (Proverbs 13:12). Do not let yourself be discouraged by appearances. Peter said: “The Lord is not slack concerning His promise...” (2 Peter 3:9). We sometimes want to limit the Lord to our time. Sometimes we cannot see the reason for such and such a thing. But we should leave everything in His hands. He is never too late. We must learn to persevere in faith and hope and the study of His Word, and take our eyes off our circumstances.

I am nothing Verse 83: KEE...“For (I am like a wineskin...)”

He is really exhausted. The strain and stress have been unbearable. Of course Satan’s strategy is to wear us out! It was by the constant nagging of Delilah that Samson’s soul was “... vexed unto death...” (Judges 16:16). She wore him out.

It is necessary for us to get to the end of ourselves, to despair of our self-sufficiency. When we get to the end of our own resources, then we realise that our Father’s full giving has only just begun. When we feel empty like a bottle in the smoke, and our spiritual energy seems shrivelled up like a wineskin, when we realise our own nothingness, then we are ready for His fulness to be revealed on our behalf. How do you see yourself?

I feel under spiritual attack Verse 84: KAH-MEH... “As what (or Like unto what?)”

“How?” “When?” He is so full of questions in this verse. Is he complaining? He certainly seems impatient. Does he say: “Lord, when art Thou going to deal with these enemies?” Of course it is not Christian to ask for the execution of our enemies — rather we should pray for their salvation. But just for the moment, let us not forget that this Psalms 119:1-176 gives us the expressions of the faithful remnant of Israel during the great tribulation. We can understand therefore that they are wondering when the Lord will come to deliver them. Our enemies are not of flesh and blood but wicked spirits of darkness and spiritual powers. The day of their judgment is certainly getting near and they know it. That is why we see in our days such a world-wide manifestation of occult and demonic powers.

Yes, we are under attack. Yes, we are engaged in a spiritual warfare. Therefore we should put on the whole armour of God and resist, and, having done all, to stand and not fail or falter. The Lord is our strength and our security. The battle continues Verse 85: KAH-RAHLI...“...they have dug for me...”

Paul tells us in 2 Thessalonians 1:6 : “... it is a righteous thing with God to recompense tribulation to them that trouble you.” But that moment has not yet come for the New Testament believer waiting for the coming of the Lord Jesus. For the moment we must accept what the Lord Jesus said: “In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer: I have overcome the world”(John 16:33). The apostle Peter says: “Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you: But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ’s sufferings: that, when His glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy” (1 Peter 4:12-13).

All who will live godly will suffer persecution Verse 86: KOL...“All (Thy commandments...)”

It is good to remind ourselves that His Word and His promises are faithful. It is commendable to suffer persecution because we want to remain faithful to Him and His Word. Is this our intention

and determination? The apostle Paul wrote to Timothy: “Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution” (2 Timothy 3:12). In this verse we have: a. The intention to live godly: “... all that will live godly...” b. The secret power for godly living: “... in Christ Jesus...” c. The cost of godly living: “... shall suffer persecution.”

Accounted as sheep for the slaughter Verse 87: KAM-GAT...“...in a little while...(Almost!)...” The Psalmist says: “They had almost consumed me upon earth...” Yes, even believers are not spared tribulations or sufferings. No doubt when you or I are passing through a very difficult circumstance Satan may insinuate that the Lord has forgotten us and that He does not love us any more. The apostle Paul helps us in those circumstances when he writes to the believers at Rome who were also being persecuted. “Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?... Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors, through Him that loved us” (Romans 8:35; Romans 8:37). Satan may use circumstances to sow doubts in our hearts. But why should we doubt? Is not God for us? Did not God give up His Son for us? Did not God justify us? Did not Christ die for us? And does not the Lord Jesus intercede for us always? We have nothing to fear. We are absolutely secure.

More than conquerors Verse 88: KA-GHEHSEDAK...“...by Thy mercy (give me life...)”

“For I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Romans 8:38-39). What does it mean to be “more than conquerors”? I quote from the writings of another: “It may be that we do not ’conquer’ at all, but we do MORE: we wrest from defeat values that could never be gained by conquest: Enduring tribulation, we gain Hope which is not put to shame, Bearing persecution, we are demonstrating the meaning of true godliness. Suffering hunger, we are proving that man does not live by bread alone, but this is only possible through Him that loved us — through His grace.”

Jesus was crucified through weakness, and yet the cross released the greatest power to save!

Cor Bruins.

Chapter 30

Vol 03 - Truth & Testimony Vol. 3, No. 6, 1995.

Truth & Testimony Vol. 3, No. 6, 1995. The Corner Stone The subject of the Stone or rock will be a familiar one to many of the readers of this magazine. It oftentimes speaks directly of our Lord Jesus Christ, and in circumstances of pressure and crisis. For example, in Genesis 49:1-33, in Jacob's prophetic outline of the chequered history of Israel's responsible course, we learn of the Divine intervention in Joseph and we have the promise of "the Shepherd, the Stone of Israel" (Genesis 49:24). In the New Testament we have the precious words of the Lord Jesus Himself when He said, "And upon this rock I will build My church; and the gates of hell (hades) shall not prevail against it" (Matthew 16:18). The rock is Christ, the Son of the living God, not Peter as one of the popular modern versions assures us. Another Scripture that can be selected from the long list of references is Isaiah 26:4. "Trust ye in the Lord for ever: for in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength" (Mr. Darby gives "the rock of ages" for "everlasting strength"). What substantial steadying comfort in a topsy-turvy world! The present enquiry relates to the Corner Stone which, for many years, was a difficulty to the present writer. Where exactly in the building is this corner stone? Enquiries to builders and architects brought various replies and even the brethren and books which were consulted brought differing answers. The best I could get was from Morrish's New and Concise Bible Dictionary as "that which binds all together," without stating how or where. In recent years I came across the remarks of a Hebrew Christian of my acquaintance and his observations are offered for those who have shared my difficulty. The Scripture passages in question are as follows: (all these quotations are taken from Mr Darby's Translation)

"Therefore (the context has to be read) thus saith the Lord Jehovah: Behold, I lay for foundation in Zion a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner-stone, a sure foundation: he that trusteth shall not make haste" (Isaiah 28:16).

"For behold, the stone that I have laid before Joshua — upon one stone are seven eyes; behold, I will engrave the graving thereof, saith Jehovah of hosts, and I will remove the iniquity of this land in one day" (Zechariah 3:9).

"Who art thou, O great mountain? before Zerubbabel thou dost become a plain; and he shall bring forth the headstone with shoutings: Grace, grace unto it!" (Zechariah 4:7).

"The stone which the builders rejected hath become the head of the corner (1:e. the corner stone). This is of Jehovah; it is wonderful in our eyes" (Psalms 118:22-23).

"Jesus says to them, Have ye never read in the scriptures, The stone which they that builded rejected, this has become the corner-stone (lit. "Head of Corner"): this is of the Lord, and it is wonderful in our eyes? Therefore I say to you, that the kingdom of God shall be taken from you and shall be given to a nation producing the fruits of it. And he that falls on this stone shall be broken, but on whomsoever it shall fall, it shall grind him to powder."

(Matthew 21:42-44).

“It is contained in the scripture: Behold, I lay in Zion a corner stone, elect, precious: and he that believes1 on him shall not be put to shame. To you therefore who believe is the preciousness; but to the disobedient, the stone which the builders cast away as worthless, this is become head of the corner, and a stone of stumbling and rock of offence; who stumble at the word, being disobedient, to which also they have been appointed.”

(1 Peter 2:6-8).

Here are my friends remarks:

“In Isaiah the scornful rulers of Jerusalem with their self-chosen and self-confident policy are confronted with a stone laid by Jehovah in Zion. Their building is swept away by the coming storm but the stone will abide. It is called an ’ebhen bochan, which is rendered a “tried stone” (AV, RV and J.N.D. Trans.). But Delitzsch points out that bochan is active and means testing. Brown, Driver and Biggs agree in their lexicon, but in spite of this give it a passive meaning. The fact is that it is a testing stone. Isaiah never speaks of its being built on. It is a pledge of safety to those who believe in the day that “the shelter of lies” will be swept away.

1There is a footnote by J.N.D. on “believed” — trust in it, that is, the Stone, Christ. On (epi) implies reliance on; confidence in; the mind looking to another with trust. It occurs in this form only in Luke 24:25 and in the passages where Isaiah 28:6 is quoted in the New Testament — Romans 9:33; Romans 10:11 and here. This stone, rejected by the builders, the rulers of the people, appears again in Zechariah, after the exile caused by the false building of the pre-exilic rulers. We now find that it is a head-stone or topstone. This is a stone cut beforehand by the architect which not only as the last stone to be dropped into place, bonds the building together, but also, by whether it fits or not, tests whether the architects plans have been truly followed. We are not called on to judge how truly Zerubbabel built for his day and generation, because in Psalms 118:1-29 we find the fulfilment expressed in the prophetic perfect, but none the less future, because this Psalm is clearly Messianic.

Even so it is with the Lord Jesus Christ. The various forms of Messianic prophecy knit together divergent lines of Old Testament thought and mould them in a pattern whose final form may not be clear but which can be inferred. Bring in the fulfilment in Christ and drop it into place as the top-stone and the house is complete in all its portions and proportions. For the one who will work or expound without the thought of God’s Messiah, the testing stone has been laid by God in Zion. He will not be able to avoid it. “Whosoever shall fall on this stone shall be broken.” There is however a worse fate foretold for the man who in theory accepts the testing stone, but in practice works and expounds led by his own wisdom and will. When the top stone is hoisted to its place on the summit of his building, it will come crashing down and “on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder” (Matthew 21:44).”

These remarks have been a help to the present writer, both architecturally and in giving a more precise exegesis of the passages. The Jewish background of the author inevitably leads him to give emphasis to the Messiah. For us, I trust, the preciousness of Christ will appear in new lustre. The testing searching value of the Word and of Christ the corner stone seems particularly relevant for this day when there is so much shoddy building.

D.W.P.

Having Loved His Own Which Were In The World

John 13:1-17 The disciples had followed the Lord faithfully in all His journeys. They had left all to follow Him. But His hour had now come and He was to take His last journey and depart out of this world to His God and Father from whom He had come. This journey He had to take alone and leave His faithful followers behind.

They had followed Him because they loved Him. He was everything to them. But this chapter records that He deeply loved them and looked upon them as “His own.” Though He was leaving them He was not forsaking them. He would endear Himself even more to them before he departed and seek to draw each one closer to Himself. The will, the purpose and the work of God were committed to Him to complete. All things had been given into His hands. And even though there was one present who valued Him only for gain, yet such was the love and grace that filled His heart that He would not make him to be different from the rest of the disciples when He undertook His service.

He rose up from supper and having put aside his garments, girded Himself with a towel. In doing this He put aside His place as their Lord and Teacher and became a servant to each one. For one so revered by them to stoop down and perform so menial a task as washing their dirty feet was, indeed, a proof in itself of the love and tender feeling He had towards them. There was also demonstrated His willingness to go right down to the lowest level in order to meet their needs.

There was something else to be learned in the selfless act of the Lord. If the water He poured out and used removed the dirt and defilement, it also, together with the towel, set “His own” clean and at ease in His presence. There was to be no distracting element upon them. He would have them know comfort and rest.

How considerate, how caring, how understanding the Lord was, for they knew not the reason for this lowly service. In answer to Peter’s protest they learned that what the Lord did was necessary to the end He had in view — “Part with Me” (He does not here enlarge on these words). Peter learned that this washing was for the constant defilement caused by moving through this world.

Having taken His garments and His place again he spoke to them of the example He had given. Because He had done this service He had imparted to it a virtue, a beauty, a value, it never had before. It now expressed the deep love that He had for “His own” and this would draw them to Himself. If he was about to leave them He would attach them firmly to Himself. So much so that in heart, mind, soul and spirit He might take them with Him. His part would be their part for he would that they should have part with Him. Here, indeed, we have true love. Love, they would learn hereafter, that would cause Him to stoop lower than their feet when He would go into death, in order to make them His own by His blood. But at this moment He would cleanse them that they may know His present love for them. He also would have them happily following His example and wash one another’s feet, that the love expressed in care to them might fill them with love and care for one another. If His desire in so lowly a service was that they should have part with Himself, then they also, for their Lord and Teacher, should seek each others welfare in love that they might ever remain in the constant enjoyment of “Part with Me.” Truly it is written: “Having loved his own which were in the world He loved them to the end.”

How wonderful that we also, bought by His precious blood, belong to Him and also have part in that unique company that He calls “His own.” He has placed us there and being there we are objects of His love and care as were those gathered in the upper room that night. If the spiritual significance of feet washing was necessary for them, how much more for us today? If they could know the living experience of “Part with Him,” then that is the desire of the Lord for us today. May we desire for ourselves and for our brethren that each one of us may know a closer, richer part in having “Part with Me.”

(The author of this article wishes to remain anonymous)

Notice If the Lord will, the next parts of the series on Christ’s Greatness in the Epistle to Laodicea and Psalms 119:1-176 will appear in the next issue.

Sanctification (2) (Continued from page 132) 2. God makes those who are His holy Positional Sanctification

I want to speak now of the sanctification of believers. God has set us apart for Himself and has put us in a position which we were never in before that we might serve Him. When we examine Scripture we find that everything that is for the glory of God and the honour of the Lord Jesus, and everything that is for our blessing, is attributed distinctly and severally to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit. The Godhead is seen to be completely at one in everything that it does and this is as true of sanctification as it is of anything else. The opening verse of the epistle of Jude tells us that we are sanctified by the Father. And as well as being sanctified by the Father we are set apart to God by the work of the Son. The salutation to the Corinthians in the first epistle says we are “sanctified in Christ Jesus” (1 Corinthians 1:2) and in verse 30 of the same chapter we read that He “is made unto us... sanctification.” We are sanctified in Him. Chapter 6 underlines this when it says: “ye are sanctified... in the Name of the Lord Jesus.” The statements made in every teaching epistle take account of the background situation and the moral and spiritual history of those to whom the letters were addressed. The people of Corinth were so sophisticated in the world’s eyes, so clever, so cultured, but morally in the sight of God it was a dirty, polluted city. And it is to them that Paul says in chapter 6, after giving a long list of what they used to be, “but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the Name of the Lord Jesus...” (1 Corinthians 6:11). Whenever statements are made showing the immensity of the blessing that has accrued to us there is always somewhere in the immediate context consideration of the infinite price that has been paid that the blessing should be ours. So it is with sanctification. “Wherefore Jesus... that He might sanctify the people with His own blood, suffered without the gate” (Hebrews 13:12). The verses quoted relating our sanctification to the work of the Lord Jesus show that it is a work done for us and not a work done by us; an important distinction. We are sanctified by the Son as a result of a work that He has done for us. But then we come to sanctification by the Spirit. “That the offering up of the Gentiles might be acceptable, being sanctified by the Holy Ghost” (Romans 15:16). “Ye are sanctified... by the Spirit of our God” (1 Corinthians 6:11). 2 Thess-alonians and 1 Peter again speak of the sanctification of the Spirit, distinguishing between the work of Christ for us and the work of the Spirit in us (2 Thessalonians 2:13; 1 Peter 1:2). The work that has been done for us at Calvary was an objective work by the Son and it is made good in us by the Holy Spirit. Furthermore, very often with blessing the agent that is used is the Word of God. We are not surprised then to find that the Lord Jesus praying to His Holy Father that they might be sanctified,

prays, “Sanctify them through Thy truth: Thy word is truth” (John 17:17). Elsewhere we read, sanctified “with the washing of water by the word” (Ephesians 5:26). We find that even the things that are provided for the sustenance of our bodies are set apart for our use, “sanctified by the word of God and prayer” (1 Timothy 4:5). In every case there is that which is done specifically and deliberately, setting it apart for the service of God, even if it is for the maintenance of our bodies. This puts a great dignity even on the ordinary meal time. God has set the food apart for our use that we might be strengthened, we whom He has sanctified, set apart for His own service.

3. God expects and requires those who are His to be holy Practical sanctification

Let us now consider a few verses that direct us to a principal purpose of sanctification. The major epistles like Ephesians and Colossians all speak of this truth, that God has set us apart to present us to Himself unblameable and unreproveable according to His own absolute standard. That is something He has done for us that we could never do for ourselves — a tremendous consideration. We are intended to be and God has set us apart for the purpose of being a holy nation, that we might be available to Him to tell forth His praises to those who have never been brought into touch with Him.

We now come to the important consequence that if God has set us apart to be committed to His service, if the Lord Jesus has undertaken the work to make it possible, and if the power of the Holy Spirit is available within us that it might be so, we cannot escape the conclusion that it is incumbent upon us to give due answer in our practical lives. Here we come to our problem. We live in an unclean world and as we get nearer to the Lord’s coming it is even more true for our generation than it has ever been before. Is this not why we fear for children, grandchildren, and great grandchildren? How can holy, sanctified lives be lived in such an unclean world? Peter, who speaks about the last days, tells us we live in a murky, a squalid world (2 Peter 1:19). The last few verses of 2 Corinthians 6:1-18 and the opening of chapter 7 tell us, “touch not the unclean thing;... let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.” Notice that in that verse there is not just the negative matter of avoiding blatant, outward sinning and filth, but living lives devoted to the service of God in purity and holiness before Him — a very positive matter. “Put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness” (Ephesians 4:24). Deliverance from the world is the lead into living pure lives before God. Those young believers in Thessalonica were told, “this is the will of God, even your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication” (1 Thessalonians 4:3). 2 Timothy 2:15-22, are more words for the last days, our days in the 1990’s. There are statements such as: “shun profane and vain babblings.” The profane is the opposite to the holy and the sanctified. We have to avoid the common, the profane. We have to depart from iniquity. We read in verse 21: “If a man therefore purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honour, sanctified,” set apart for God, “and meet for the Master’s use...” Verse 22: “Flee also youthful lusts: but follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart.” What is inside governs the way that we act outside — calling on the Name out of a pure heart. “Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord” (Hebrews 12:14). 1 Peter is marked by two key words. It includes the term “suffer” or “suffering” more than any other book of comparable size and at the same time it uses the term “holy” as much or more than any epistle of comparable size. Paul said to Timothy, borne out by Peter’s epistles, “all that will,” he that sets himself to “live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution” (2 Timothy 3:12). Holiness

will lead to suffering but because it is done under the eye of God the Lord Himself gives the strength to endure it. Peter says, “as He which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation” (1 Peter 1:15). Is it required of us? Scripture says, “yes.” If God has set us apart for Himself our lives have to be set apart. They have to be different from what they were before and they certainly have to be different from those whom God has not set apart for Himself. The sanctified ones have to act in a sanctified way. Is it possible? Can it be done? How can we do it? First of all we need to accept the statement of Scripture. “Every man that hath this hope in Him (Christ) purifieth himself, even as He (Christ) is pure” (1 John 3:3). That is not an exhortation but a statement of fact that the measure of practical sanctification and purity in my life is the practical witness of the measure to which my hope is centred in Christ on high.

Now, we need to be encouraged. The bearing of that verse in 1 Corinthians 6:11, “ye are sanctified... in the Name of the Lord Jesus,” is that we have this on His authority. And we have the power, for the same verse says, “ye are sanctified... by the Spirit of our God.” There is the authority of Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit available to us that the purity that is inherently coursing through our spiritual veins might be seen in the lives that we live. As ever, the agent is the Word of God.

Scripture holds out a blessing on any occasion where the Word of God is read aloud in public. “Blessed is he that readeth,” the one who reads it aloud, “and they that hear,” the congregation, and in particular they that “keep those things,” that is the reader and the congregation who do so (Revelation 1:3). There is a blessing where Scripture is read and in particular where it is obeyed. This is an old principle which comes out early in Scripture. “Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed thereto according to Thy word” (Psalms 119:9). “Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path” (Psalms 119:105). We have considered the Son of God’s words in John 17:17, “Sanctify them through Thy truth: Thy word is truth.” We say to the little ones, we need to say it to each other, “read your Bible, pray every day.” Now we can say there is a purifying effect from the reading of Holy Scripture. As far back as Ezekiel 44:23 we get the words “they (the priests) shall teach My people the difference between the holy and profane, and cause them to discern between the unclean and the clean.” And what the priests did was to present the Word of God to the people. Paul writing to Timothy said words of almost universal application, “Meditate upon these things; give thyself wholly to them; that thy profiting may appear to all” (1 Timothy 4:15). There is great gain in considering what Scripture says and in bowing the knees before the Lord Jesus that the Scriptures might be opened to us and that we might display the positive, practical reflection in life of what we have seen in the Word.

Now I would like you to turn to 1 Peter 3:15. This is something of a climax in the teaching as to practical sanctification: “sanctify the Lord God in your hearts.” God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit have set us apart for the service of God. We have read that in order that we might be set apart, the work of Christ on the cross was necessary, and the power of the indwelling Spirit. But there comes the point where in responsibility we have to indicate whether or not we value what God has done on our behalf. 1 Peter 3:15 uses the very words that give us the only proper response. The Word says as it were, “It is now up to you. Sanctify the Lord God in your hearts.” By the time we get to this Scripture we are without excuse. We know that sanctification is all about being set apart and this verse, when it puts the sanctifying work to our account, is saying: “Set a special place apart in your heart, the best place, the chief place, the first place, and give that to the

Lord. Don't give it to anybody else: not to yourself, not to your spouse, not to your children, not to your work, not to your leisure. There is a place that is reserved for Him which is paramount to you in your existence."

1 Peter 3:15 is the object of sanctification. 1 Thessalonians 5:23 gives us the encouragement that we need to carry it out, "the very God of peace sanctify you." What comfort and composure to take account of all the sanctifying work of the blessed God for us and towards us and in us by the Spirit. And this comfort and composure are produced by the God of peace. This is a prayer that the very God of peace would sanctify in a practical way, "sanctify you wholly," through and through. He says, "I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body," and this is a descriptive term of what is involved in the entire person, the intelligent thoughts, the feelings, even the actions of the body, might "be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." There is a sense, Ephesians and Colossians show this, in which it is a certainty that we are to be presented blameless in the sight of God because of the work of Christ and the work of the Spirit originating in the heart of God. (This is what is involved in positional sanctification). But as to our practical sanctification the apostle here says to them fitting words that we do well to pray for ourselves at the end of any day, "the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ."

E. Brown. From Our Archive The Revelation of the Father (4b)

John 17:1-26 (Continued from page 152)

Now I must take you to verse 11 because the concept of the Father's Name comes very strongly here. "And now I am no more in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to Thee." The disciples are going to be in the world and the Lord Jesus Christ is leaving the world and going to the Father. If you were to make a concordance of John 17:1-26 you would find the next most frequent concept to that of "the Father" is that of "the world."

We all know that the world stands over against the Father. We have it in this chapter again and again. The world hated Him because He came on the part of the Father. According to the second chapter of John's first epistle: "If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him." If the love of the Father is not in the one who loves the world then we are given these instructions and these revelations for the express purpose that we may not love the world but that the love of the Father may be in us. In this setting they are still in a hostile world and the Lord Jesus Christ prays saying, "Holy Father." He is thinking of the uncleanness, the impurity of the world in which the disciples were going to be left, the world in which we live. "Holy Father, keep through Thine own Name those whom Thou hast given Me, that they may be one, as We are." In the Proverbs the writer says, "the Name of Jehovah is a strong tower: the righteous runneth into it, and is safe." Now for Israel the Name of Jehovah, the God of Israel, was like a refuge for them. When they were in it they were kept: they were guarded and they were safe. This prayer of the Lord Jesus Christ is bound to be answered and it is answered in our salvation. In the next verse it is put in contrast with being lost: "Those that Thou gavest Me I have kept, and none of them is lost, but the son of perdition; that the scripture might be fulfilled." If the Name of Jehovah is a strong tower and the Israelite fled into it and was safe, how wonderful that the Lord Jesus Christ says that the Name of the Father might be for us that which keeps us in circumstances where we are always open to the influence of the evil and impurity of the world that is around us. The Name of the Father, which is

the Name of the One that has made us His children, is the Name whereby the believer is kept and will not be lost. This is because the oneness that is prayed for in this particular verse is the oneness that is the inward life and unity of the disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ. The place the believer occupies in the world is the place that the Lord Jesus occupied in the world relative to His Father. “They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world” and in verse 18, “As Thou hast sent Me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world.” Now one of the things about the concept of their being sent is evidently, although there are two words in the original tongue used for being sent, there is evidently something about it of the ambassadorial quality. The ambassador of another country should be given the precedence of the head of state of the country from which he comes as the sent one. That the glory should have been given to the Lord Jesus Christ as the Father’s Sent One is revealed in this idea. As the Father sent Him into the world so, He says, have I also sent them into the world. This is one of the few explicit requests that we have from the Son to the Father regarding the men who had been given Him. “Sanctify them through Thy truth: Thy word is truth.” What can the word “sanctify” mean? I am not speaking about its use elsewhere. It obviously has a very special meaning in this place because in verse 19 we read, “For their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth.” In what conceivable sense could the Lord Jesus Christ say that He sanctified Himself? The basic idea of sanctification is “to set apart.” The only way in which we could possibly understand it is that the Lord Jesus Christ set Himself apart from the world by His bodily presence in heaven. “For their sakes I sanctify Myself” — I am taking a position so that I can be the object upon which their whole heart is set. “I sanctify Myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth.” The more that we learn of our oneness with Him in that place, the more we learn of the fact that we are in one bundle of life with the Father and the Son, the more we in heart, mind and spirit will be set apart also from that evil world in which we live.

“Sanctify them through Thy truth.” That is a very special thing — the Father’s truth. “As Thou hast sent Me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world. And for their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they also may be sanctified through the truth.” So these two statements: “Sanctify them through Thy truth” (verse 17), and “that they also might be sanctified through the truth” (verse 19) are the means whereby the hearts of the disciples may be taken away out of this world and founded on better and brighter things above and this will lead to a real sanctification.

Verse 20 is really the beginning of a new paragraph and the Lord Jesus explicitly extends His request from the eleven men who are before Him to all those down the ages who should believe on Him. What a mercy of God that these words occur in this prayer. We are unquestionably amongst those who afterwards have believed on Him through the words of these disciples and therefore, wonder of wonders, you and I explicitly find a place in these communications from the Son to the Father.

Now I must pass by the second request for unity in verse 21, “That they also may be one in Us: that the world may believe that Thou hast sent Me.” I suppose this is the unity manifested in the beginning of the Acts when brethren were together as one.

Then in verse 22: “The glory which Thou gavest Me I have given them; that they may be one, even as We are one: I in them, and Thou in Me.” I am not quite sure to what extent we ought to carry over this statement of the Gospel of John to the circumstances of the Revelation of John, but we

all know how exactly this statement of unity is exemplified in the holy city, the new Jerusalem. Just as you have the statement here in verse 23 about the future glory concerning which the Lord Jesus Christ is now speaking, “That they may be one, even as We are one: I in them, and Thou in Me.” The Father and the Son, and the Son and the saints, that the world may know. Now that is exactly parallel with what we have in the holy city, the New Jerusalem, in Revelation 21:1-27. God is the light of that city. There is no need of the sun or moon and there is no temple there. God is the light and the Lamb is the lamp thereof and the saints themselves compose that holy city that is illuminated by the eternal light of God shining in the Lamb. How close that is and how well it illustrates what the Lord Jesus Christ means here. The Father in the Son, and the Son in the saints, “that the world may know that Thou hast sent Me, and hast loved them, as Thou hast loved Me.”

Coming to the end of this chapter we can see that it moves on beyond the thoughts of that glory to which these verses undoubtedly take us. Verse 24, “Father, I will that they also, whom Thou hast given Me, be with Me where I am; that they may behold My glory, which Thou hast given Me: for Thou lovedst Me before the foundation of the world.” There we have absolutely explicitly what there was in that inaccessible, eternal world. A world that would never have been reached by human power or understanding at all, except the Son who knows that love came to make it known. He came from that eternal home, the place where there was love between the Father and the Son before the foundation of the world and, in the earlier verse, where there was glory that the Son shared with the Father before the foundation of the world. In the earlier part of the Gospel we trace the love that the Father had for the Son, but it becomes absolutely clear here that the Lord Jesus Christ is thinking above all things of the fact that: “Thou lovedst Me before the foundation of the world.” All crowns and kingdoms are conferred upon Jesus but they are all as nothing compared with the fact of His Father’s love. And in such a prayer as this that explicitly gets to the root of the matter, He desired nothing but to be again in that unclouded home where the Father loved Him before the foundation of the world.

We can well imagine someone saying: “But surely that love wherewith the Father loves the Son cannot be the same wherewith He loves me.” Yet, just as though to exclude any other possibility, that is precisely what the Scripture says. The last words of verse 26: “that the love wherewith Thou hast loved Me may be in them, and I in them.” Our measure is limited. How many an earthborne cloud arises to hide Him from our eyes! But we are told that the love is the same. The love wherewith the Father loved the Son is the love wherewith He loves the saints.

“O righteous Father, the world hath not known Thee.” Now there you see the world with all its pride and achievement, and it has had some achievements in the physical and mental sense. When you compare what has been achieved in the world with the Bible days one is absolutely staggered at what there is in man. But that world, with all its triumph, with all its frightful sin and cruelty and with all its darkness, that world is just passed by as a phrase in the sentence, “the world hath not known Thee.” Written over all the exhibits of history with all its kings and conquerors and empires, it just comes to this that the world is nothing in this setting. “The world hath not known Thee: but I have known Thee, and these have known that I am Thy sent One.” The world is a mere episode in the history of the real things that we are speaking about and we are brought to rest in the place where that love wherewith the Father loved the Son may be in us and He in us.

J. S. Blackburn.

2 Corinthians 3:5-18 (A Bible Reading at the Kilkeel conference in May 1995) The setting of these verses in 2 Corinthians is very important. In the first epistle the apostle had to deal with moral breakdown and disorder and many things had to be corrected. When he wrote the second epistle he was writing to an assembly that was repentant and self-judged and many of the matters referred to in 1Corinthians had been dealt with. Nevertheless, there did remain an outstanding difficulty which is going to come to light in chapter 10. His authority was being challenged. Against this background the matter of letters of commendation really set his own position clearly before the Corinthians and others, in contrast with these opposing judaising teachers. I think it is important to see how he dealt with these opposers because it is the Spirit's way at all times. He is able to speak positively of the blessings that belong to his ministry. He is able to speak of all the promises of God which are in Christ, yea and Amen (ch. 1), of the ministry of the New Covenant (ch. 3), and of the ministry of reconciliation (ch. 5). But all the time he is proceeding on positive lines to show what is real in contrast to what was brought in by these opposers. This helps in understanding the contrasts between the Old and the New Covenants which come out so powerfully in the parenthesis.

Liberty comes in at the end of the chapter and judaising teachers or teaching would tend to lead them into bondage. We should keep in mind that the giving of the law which is referred to in this chapter was the second occasion on which the tables were given. They came in with mention of God's mercy to thousands, not clearing the guilty, but with mercy for those that love God (Exodus 34:4-7). We might think of it as a mixture of grace and law and there are countless thousands of believers who really think it is right to have this mixture. They have started all right with Christ but they want the law to help them along a little. Now in spite of that the apostle still speaks about it as a ministration of death and a ministration of condemnation. There is no liberty along that line and I think this chapter has that relevance today with regard to those that would teach an admixture of the two things. The second epistle to the Corinthians is much more difficult to grasp in its contents and bearing than the first. The first deals more with outward questions whereas the second epistle acknowledges that the aim of the first has in a measure been reached. But there was this problem of the non-acknowledgement of the authority of Paul still lingering among the Corinthians. That is why the first seven chapters of this epistle deal with the ministry of Paul. He explains it and strives by any means to touch the hearts of his beloved Corinthians to bring them to acknowledge that he was a loving servant for them and not a hard patron. All the chapters, from one to seven, approach this subject from different angles and one of them is to set forth the difference between the Old Covenant, the law, and the ministry, as he calls himself and others ministers, of the New Covenant. He names the New Covenant in verse 6, and the Old Covenant or Old Testament in verse 14. The reading of the Old Testament means, in the first place, not the whole of the Old Testament as we understand it today, but in the first place it exclusively means the law, the five books of Moses, and that is what the Jew understood by it. New Testament ministry is in contrast with what was presented in the law. He says this in the short statements of verse 6, that He has made us competent as ministers of the New Covenant, not of the letter (and the letter is the law) but of Spirit. This verse has been widely misunderstood as if adhering to the letter of the Bible would bring death while adhering to the spirit of what the Bible says would be life giving. But that is very contrary to what is said here because the letter in this verse is the law. The law was these

letters engraven in stone whereas the spirit is the dispensation of grace which is characterised by the Spirit. It is not the sense here that by following the letter there would be a negative consequence but just the opposite. The Old Covenant was introduced in glory. This refers to the introduction of the law at Sinai. God put His seal upon that which is holy, just and good. The question might arise, “Is the New Covenant in regard to Christians because it is mentioned in the Christian writings in the New Testament?” A covenant is a contract which puts responsibilities on the two parties who make this contract, and the Old Covenant was a contract that God made with His people Israel. “If you follow My commandments I will bless you,” were the stipulations of this covenant. It was a covenant given by God and therefore it was, in itself, perfect. But the imperfection came in because of the sinfulness of the people who were unable to fulfil their part of the covenant, so that God in turn could not fulfil His part. That is why God will make a New Covenant with the same people. I don’t think that we can draw any other conclusion from the Bible than that the New Covenant will be made with the same people, with Israel. There it is a covenant where there are the same stipulations to be fulfilled by one party and blessing by another, only now the perfect Man has already fulfilled all the stipulations God could put on man. The Lord Jesus has done this on the cross of Calvary and therefore He says, “This is My blood, that of the New Covenant.” The stipulations have been fulfilled by the Lord so that only God’s side remains: blessing in abundance. The question then arises, “Why is the New Covenant mentioned with regard to Christians who do not belong to the people of Israel?” The answer is that the foundation work which is at the basis of the New Covenant, namely the work of Calvary, the same work, the same blood, was given for us. And although the covenant will not be concluded with Christians, we are in a much closer relationship with God, nevertheless the basis of our relationship is the same. That is why the New Covenant can be mentioned here. They were ministers of the New Covenant and this is a very special expression. Paul and others ministered the truth of this New Covenant without being members of this covenant. The pivotal point is the work and the Person of the Lord.

There are those that read Jeremiah 31:1-40 and they say that the New Covenant is made with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah. Then they read 2 Corinthians 3:1-18 and they say, Paul is speaking to Christians here so therefore Christians, the church, must be a continuation of Israel today. We know from Ephesians 3:1-21 that that cannot be true because we see there that the church is founded upon entirely different principles. We come into the blessings of the New Covenant in a spiritual way but it will be fulfilled in a literal sense at a future day. Lower down it says that “When it shall turn to the Lord, the vail shall be taken away” so that there is a future for Israel even seen in this chapter. Those same people that make the church a continuation of Israel see the New Covenant as the sum and substance of all our spiritual blessings. Our blessings are of New Covenant character, based on the blood of Christ, but there are other aspects of Paul’s doctrine. When he says, “Not of the letter, but of the spirit,” I take it he is referring to Christ. He is the spirit of it. He says lower down, “Now the Lord is that spirit.” I am reminded of the verse which says, “The testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.”

Looking again at verse 17 the King James and Mr. Darby’s translations put a capital “S.” Mr. Kelly puts a small “s” and if you read his ministry and that of Mr. Darby you find that they confirm what has been said, that the spirit of the New Covenant is Christ. In other words Christ is seen in all that Old Testament system and if you read a small “s” in verse 17 I think it overcomes a great number of difficulties. The word “Spirit” comes into verse 8 and Mr. Darby has there a capital “S” and I

would say that is right, “the ministration of the Spirit.” One of the essential features and characteristics of what we have today is that there has been a ministration of the Spirit. Not what the Spirit ministers but there has been the Spirit ministered to us. The Spirit of God is ministered to us as power. Could we summarise by saying: verse 6, “not of the letter, but of the spirit... (small “s”),”

“for the letter killeth, but the Spirit... (capital “S”),” verse 8, “How shall not the ministration of the Spirit... (capital “S”),” verse 17, “the Lord is that spirit... (small “s”)”, “and where the Spirit (capital “S”) of the Lord is there is liberty.”

It is wonderful to see that this Old Covenant, the law, which was from the beginning destined to end in failure, nevertheless began in glory, as it came from God. Paul calls it here “the ministry of death.” The people to whom it was given could not fulfil the laws of God and therefore the end was death and judgment upon everybody. That is why it is called “the ministry of death, in letters.” The letter is always here the commandment written or engraved in stone. I think that even in verse 6 in both cases it is meant that the letter is the commandment. We read about the light and holiness of God which so encompassed the mountain that not even an animal was allowed to approach when the law was given. It all began in glory by God’s presence yet still it was a ministry of death, not from God’s side but because man failed. Moses, when he was in the presence of God, was so influenced by this glory that his face shone, and he had to put on a covering because the children of Israel could not fix their eyes on his face. But this was something which was not lasting. It was only in the beginning of this Old Covenant that this glory of God shone in the face of Moses and we don’t read of any other servant whose face shone. We know that later on in Ezekiel this glory, even the presence of God, withdrew from the temple, and that ultimately everything ended in death. But it began in glory because it came from God. Then Paul says that if this covenant which ended in death, in misery and in failure, began in glory, “how shall not rather the ministry of the Spirit subsist in glory?” His argument is from the lesser to the greater. If we look to Calvary I dare say for the human eye there was no glory but still He was glorified on the cross more than in any other occasion on this earth. And this glory will continue and we will end, not in death, but on the contrary, we will end up in glory in the presence of God and in the presence of the Lord Jesus. It is in Him the glory of God shines, as he says later on in chapter 4 verse 6, “Because it is the God who spoke that out of darkness light should shine who has shone in our hearts for the shining forth of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.” So in our parenthesis we have these contrasts and I think this is the thrust of our reading today. There is death (verse 7) and condemnation (verse 9). That is one side of the picture. Then there is life (verse 6) and righteousness (verse 9). I think that gives an introduction to the contrasts between the two covenants. This section suggests that we are the recipients of four principal New Covenant blessings. There is life, power to accomplish God’s will, righteousness and lastly the glory that excelleth. The glory that excelleth is the knowledge of God in its fulness Then we might even get a fifth blessing which is liberty or freedom and which includes the thought of deliverance.

Four times we get the word ’annulled’ or ’done away’ in this section (verses 7, 11, 13, 14. In verse 13 the K.J.V. has ’abolished’) and that system of things has been put away. But what remains not only subsists in glory but it is surpassing in glory and it all shines in the face of the Lord Jesus. I think it helps to fasten on the word ’hope’ in verse 12 where the apostle says, “Having therefore such hope, we use much boldness...” This hope looks forward to the day when the New Covenant

will be implemented for Israel and when what is good to faith inwardly now will come into manifestation. The verse really crystallises the position of the Christian who looks forward to that final moment when this glory will be manifested. That was exactly my thought. We find here that a certain glory was ascribed to the law system. It was from the beginning meant to have an end yet we have to do with something which is eternal. The logical consequence is, if the ending thing began with glory and had a certain glory, how much more this eternal thing with which we are connected. But this glory is not yet visible. We possess it only in faith and therefore hope is introduced here. “Having therefore such hope, we use much boldness: and not according as Moses...” Why did Moses cover his face? He didn’t cover it when he came into the presence of God but when he came into the presence of the people. The people found the glory too overwhelming. But now Paul turns it round and says we do not cover our faces when we enter into the presence of God because we can look on the glory of God with unveiled face. The fact that the people did not want to see the glory of God reflected in the face of Moses was something which judged themselves. That is why God said as it were, “Now I will judge you and will take from you the possibility of seeing any of the glory because you did not want to see it.” Israel did not want to see the glory in the Old Covenant and that is why God says, “You cannot see it in the New Covenant.” That is what he says in verse 13. Paul was able to use great plainness of speech, and not as Moses. The children of Israel could not steadfastly look to what was the real end of the law, which is Christ. I connect this with the expression in Romans 10:4, “For Christ is the end (in view) of the law for righteousness...” Israel will discern the end in that day when the New Covenant takes effect.

Meanwhile there is a transformation going on in the saints so that we are being formed for His presence already. This is accomplished by occupation with Christ in glory in the power of the Spirit. The word “changed” is the same word as in the account of the transfiguration and in the 12th of Romans: “transfigured.” In our case it is a real inward moral change that is seen outwardly.

There is a sequence of change for the believer that begins with the work of the Spirit of God when new birth and quickening are effected. That is the initial work. Then there is the change that will take place in relation to the body at the coming of the Lord and that will be the final change. But in between there is this on-going change, a change from glory to glory. Could one say that by gazing at the glory of the Lord at the right hand of God we, as still on earth, are not being transformed into His glorious image but into His image as He was here on earth. Is not Stephen an example of that? He was gazing steadfastly up into heaven and as a result when he was stoned he manifested attributes of the Lord Jesus in His death.

Young people might ask, “What do you mean by gazing upon Christ and looking upon Him. How do I arrive at that in day by day experience?” You have to come back to the matters of reading the Word and dependence upon the Lord and communion. Those are the things that really get right down to the basic matter of looking upon the glory of the Lord. The Sin of Miriam, and her Restoration (2) (Numbers 12:1-16) (Continued from page 136) Prophetic lessons

We see Moses here as a type of Christ. He prayed for His enemies, even for those who stood up against Him and mocked Him: “Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do” (Luke 23:34). Just as Miriam was restored on the basis of Moses’ intercession, so the people of Israel were shown mercy because of Christ’s prayer on the cross. In the book of Acts we see how the way of

salvation and restoration was shown to Israel (cf. Acts 3:17). But there are more prophetic lessons in the story of Numbers 12:1-16. Moses is a clear type of Christ as the great Prophet, Apostle and Teacher of His people (Deuteronomy 18:15; John 5:46; Acts 3:22; Hebrews 3:1-6). Well then, if Moses is a type of Christ what does his marriage to a foreign woman have to say to us? The answer is obvious: Christ took a Gentile bride. Moses' Ethiopian wife was a stranger — she did not belong to the people of God. Yet this Gentile woman became the bride of Moses. Likewise, the church, which is now the bride of Christ, is made up mostly of believers from the Gentiles. We can also see Zipporah as such a type of the church (and similarly Asenath, the Egyptian wife of Joseph). The grace and love of God that have been revealed in Christ could not be limited to the Jews. The core of the gospel is that all men are equal before God. They are all sinners but God wants to bestow His grace on all. Jews and Gentiles are alike "dead in trespasses and sins" (Ephesians 2:1). God has made us alive together with Christ and has created one new man from the two. That is the church, which is the body and the bride of Christ, the habitation of God in the Spirit. This grace shown to the Gentiles, however, resulted in a breach with the people of Israel, just as Moses' love for his Gentile bride (temporarily) broke off his ties with Miriam. Christ was rejected by His own, His kinsmen according to the flesh (John 1:11). He had to endure such hostility from sinners against Himself (Hebrews 12:3), but He endured it in a patient and gentle way. He acted just like Moses, who resigned himself to the opposition from his relatives and left it in the Lord's hands. Israel's rejection of the Servant of the Lord, however, resulted in the Nation being set aside, just as Miriam's rebellion against Moses (who was God's servant, 5: 8) resulted in her being shut out of the camp. Because of their rejection of the Messiah, God has (temporarily) rejected Israel as His people. He has now stretched out His hands towards the nations and the Lord Jesus is joined with bonds of love to His Gentile bride. In this matter between Miriam and Moses, God Himself pronounced the verdict. Because of her sin she was put out for a certain period of time. Likewise, Israel has become Lo-ammi, Not-My-People (Hosea 1:9). Just as the cloud of God's presence departed from above the tabernacle when He had spoken to Aaron and Miriam (vv. 9-10), so God has now withdrawn from His people. The glory of the Lord has left the people of Israel and it will only return at the beginning of the kingdom of peace (Ezekiel 43:1-27). Miriam was shut out of the camp, outside the place of blessing in the presence of God. Similarly, wrath has come upon Israel as a rebellious people and the blessing of God's presence is now found in the midst of the church. But there is a glorious and gracious "until." Israel's rejection is not final. The story of Numbers 12:1-16 did not end with the sad message of Miriam's exclusion but with her restoration. God's wrath may have come upon Israel to the uttermost (1:e., fully), yet He is gracious and even in His wrath He remembers mercy (1 Thessalonians 2:16; Habakkuk 3:2). He determines the extent and measure of Israel's suffering, as He also determined the period of "seven days" of Miriam's exclusion. He will be merciful to Israel and comfort His people when her warfare is ended and her iniquity is pardoned (Isaiah 40:1-2). This serious story thus has a happy ending. As Miriam was received again (5: 14) and was cleansed from her leprosy, so also Israel will be received again as God's people (after the rapture of the church) and be cleansed from all ungodliness.

It was the apostle Paul, who suffered so much opposition from the Jews as he preached the gospel of God's grace to the nations, who revealed to us the divine mystery of Israel's restoration ("that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in." Romans 11:25-27). In this passage we find the gracious "until," the announcement of a time determined by

God in which He will restore the fortunes of His people.

Just as the Lord (as the One who heals His people) acted in favour of Miriam and healed her, so He will save His earthly people in a coming day. And He will save them not only from their enemies that oppress them from outside but also from their sins that accuse them inwardly. He took away the leprosy from Miriam and likewise He will turn away ungodliness from Jacob and will accept His people. They will be raised spiritually from death to life. Israel's rejection meant the reconciling of the world, for God stretched out His hands to all mankind and extended the word of reconciliation to both Jews and Gentiles. So what will their acceptance be but life from the dead (Romans 11:15)? Just as Miriam as a cleansed person was received again in the camp, so Israel will be received again by God as a nation that has been raised from its death sleep and has been cleansed from the sickness which branded it "as one dead, of whom the flesh is half consumed" (5: 12).

Some translations read that Miriam was to be "brought back," or "brought in again" (5: 14). The original meaning of the word seems to be "to gather," or "to collect." That is also the meaning of the word "receiving" in Romans 11:15. God will gather the people to Himself again, the Nation from which He had to hide His face for a certain period of time. He will bring them back to the place of blessing in His presence. That will mean a new beginning, a spiritual revival: life from the dead (cf. Ezekiel 37:1-28).

Let us meanwhile, as part of the church, be on our guard that we do not fall into the same error and rebel against Christ, our great Moses. Resistance against His authority, against His Word and Spirit, are characteristic features of the last days and will inevitably bring about God's judgment (cf. the epistle of Jude).

Hugo Bouter.

"The Sermon on the Mount" (13)

Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven. For I say unto you, That except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven (Matthew 5:19-20) CONTEMPT FOR THE WORD OF GOD The Lord Jesus had explained His own relationship to the law and the prophets in verses 17-18. The word He uses here, "Whosoever," now introduces a general and very serious appeal. The meaning of this verse is not easy to grasp. What are the "least commandments"? Does the Lord here differentiate between the moral law (the ten commandments) and the ceremonial law, or does he refer to the iota (A.V. — jot) and the tittle of the law (5:18)? And lastly, does He teach here that the law of Sinai is still valid for the Christian? Before we try to find answers to these questions we have to remember that the Lord Jesus here speaks to His own people and had not yet been rejected by them. When He said in verse 17 that He was not come to make void the law or the prophets but to fulfil, this must have consequences for His audience and the Jewish nation. But while the Lord Jesus said of Himself that He had come to fulfil the law and the prophets, He now speaks of practising the commandments.

Among the Jews there were teachers of the law who considered their own traditions more important than the commandments of God. He later said to them, the scribes and Pharisees, “Thus have ye made the commandment of God of none effect by your tradition” (Matthew 15:6). Just as He adds there: “Every plant which My heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up” (5: 13), He says to the Jews here that everyone who thinks he can do away with any of the law, which then was still valid, would be called the least in His kingdom. Comparing the two Scriptures we see that He speaks of mere professors who outwardly take a place in the kingdom of the heavens but have not really “entered in” (5: 20). At His appearing in glory these will be removed from His kingdom through judgment (Matthew 13:41). As long as the law was valid according to God’s will, 1:e. until Christ’s death (cf. Romans 10:4; Galatians 3:24; Ephesians 2:15; Colossians 2:14), it had to be observed by the Jews, as Deuteronomy 27:26 says: “Cursed be he that confirmeth not all the words of this law to do them.” The scribes, who counted altogether 613 commandments in the Old Testament, distinguished between what in their opinion were important and less important laws. The Lord also points out a difference when He calls the commandment to love God the great and first commandment, although He immediately puts the commandment to love one’s neighbour on the same level (Matthew 22:36-40). In Matthew 23:23 He accuses the scribes and Pharisees of leaving the more important matters of the law aside — judgment and mercy and faith — while putting great emphasis on applying the law of the tithes to such little things as garden herbs. The scribes and Pharisees thus, on the one hand set their human traditions above the laws of God, and on the other insisted on outward observance of the smallest details of the law. But the Lord distinguishes between the mere outward observance of the law and the attitude of the heart towards the commandments of God, which is far more important. It is the ordinances which commanded love towards God and one’s neighbour which especially show that it is impossible for natural man to lead a life that is pleasing to God and that not the law but faith is the only way to God.

We who are not under law but under grace and the leading of the Holy Spirit (Romans 6:14; Galatians 5:18) can receive spiritual exhortations from the Old Testament laws of God. “For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning” (Romans 15:4). But it is also possible that the Lord, when speaking here about “commandments,” was not thinking of the Sinaitic law but of His own new commandments which He was just about to announce in the “sermon on the mount.” Later, in Matthew 28:20, He told His disciples to teach what He had commanded them. Here in Matthew 5:19-20 He no longer speaks of the “law,” as in verses 17-18, but of “these... commandments.” They might still have seemed “least” to His audience, yet they were the guidelines for the behaviour of the disciples of Christ in the kingdom of the heavens. This explanation is supported by the words of the Lord in Matthew 24:35 : “Heaven and earth shall pass away, but My words shall not pass away.” The law may pass away with the end of the present creation (5: 18) but the words of the Lord shall never pass away. The end of verse 19 again shows the contrast with the scribes and Pharisees. The Lord later says of them: “All therefore whatsoever they bid you observe, that observe and do; but do not ye after their works: for they say, and do not” (Matthew 23:3). In Matthew 5:19 He links His promise to the agreement between actions and doctrine.

RIGHTEOUSNESS

“For I say unto you, That except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven” (Matthew 5:20). Since the time of the Babylonian captivity a large collection of interpretations and ordinances has been added by the Talmud, in addition to the law. In the New Testament these are called “the tradition of the elders.” The scribes were those best acquainted with the law and these human ordinances, whereas the Pharisees were their strictest observers. In Matthew 23:1-39 the Lord Jesus utters a sevenfold “woe” over these men and their behaviour which was marked by egoism and emphasising outward appearance (Matthew 23:5-7; Matthew 23:25-28. Verse 14 is omitted in the J.N.D. Trans.). They might appear pious and righteous before men but before God their attitude could not stand. This is why the Lord says here: “except your righteousness shall exceed...” Obviously He does not mean the righteousness of God which is imputed to those believing on Him. The Lord Jesus, in the “sermon on the mount,” does not preach the gospel to the lost, but speaks to His disciples. “Your righteousness” therefore is the practical righteousness shown in the lives of those who have been justified by faith in Him and who follow Him by doing God’s will (Matthew 7:21). This is practical righteousness and the only one that surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees. For the real, born again believer, to enter into the kingdom of the heavens means to be united with the Lord as a true disciple and to be owned by Him as such. The New Testament speaks at least 14 times of entering into the kingdom.1 Some of these Scriptures clearly indicate that this is something in the future, while others are not clear as to the time. But all of them show that entering into the kingdom is reserved for the true disciples of Jesus. Unrighteous persons shall not inherit the kingdom of God (1 Corinthians 6:9).

1 Matthew 5:20; Matthew 7:21; Matthew 18:3; Matthew 19:23; Matthew 21:31; Matthew 23:13; Mark 9:47; Mark 10:23-24; Luke 16:16; Luke 18:24; John 3:5; Acts 14:22; 2 Peter 1:11. A mere religious profession and the doing of certain “good works,” even if they leave a deep impression on other people, are not sufficient to be able to stand before God. But he who feels sincere sorrow for his sins and repents, who believes that the Lord Jesus has suffered for him and his sins the righteous punishment of God on the cross of Calvary, who then leads a new life in faith, following the Lord and being obedient to the Scriptures, he will be one of the righteous that shall shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of the Father (Matthew 13:43).

Arend Remmers. The Life of David (12) The Gospel According to David

“God’s glad tidings,” said Paul, is “concerning His Son (come of David’s seed according to flesh, marked out Son of God in power, according to the Spirit of holiness, by resurrection of the dead)” (Romans 1:1-4). Wonderful honour for David to find himself mentioned in such august company: God, His Son and the Holy Spirit. These are glad tidings indeed that present the operations of the Trinity for the blessing of mankind. Paul, in 2 Timothy 2:8, refers to his glad tidings. They too were concerning Jesus Christ, God’s Son (Ephesians 3:8). He exhorted Timothy to remember Jesus Christ of the seed of David who was raised from the dead. Paul was reminding his young brother in Christ, and his fellow-servant, that the power of God that raised Christ from the dead was available for all who were suffering for the truth of the glad tidings. It is important to remember that it was to a son of David that an angel of the Lord disclosed the wonderful news that the babe that was to be born to the virgin Mary was none other than Jesus, Jehovah the Saviour, who would save Israel from their sins. David is very much connected with the glad tidings.

David, being a prophet, was inspired to write about the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus (Psalms 16:8-11). Peter, full of the Holy Spirit, used David's words when he preached to thousands of Jews on the day of Pentecost in Jerusalem, David's city. The life, death and resurrection of Jesus constitutes the body and soul of the gospel message. The spotless and sinless life of Jesus was necessary for the presenting Himself as an offering to God. His abandonment and death on the cross at Golgotha was necessary to deal with sin and sins, the root and fruit. The resurrection was God's vindication of all that Jesus had accomplished for Him and others. Paul preached this bondage-breaking message (Acts 13:23-39). Note how he testified that Jesus was of David's seed. The death and resurrection of Jesus were central in Paul's preaching to the Corinthians and to the Athenians (1 Corinthians 15:1-4; Acts 17:31-32). Peter, in his preaching in the home of Cornelius, presented the same fundamental features of the glad tidings (Acts 10:36-43). Any preaching that omits or ignores these features is not the glad tidings of God (See Galatians 1:6-9).

What is the result of believing in God's glad tidings? Let David tell us. "Blessed (happy) they whose lawlessnesses have been forgiven, and whose sins have been covered: blessed (happy) the man to whom the Lord shall not at all reckon sin" (Psalms 32:1-2 quoted by Paul in Romans 4:6-8). For those who believe in Jesus regarding the truth of His death and resurrection for the forgiveness of sins happiness is the positive result. Happiness is an elusive thing in modern society. It is like a will-o'-the-wisp and sought for in fame, wealth, materialism, sport, the arts, and sad to say in disgusting and depraved pursuits. Whatever pleasure and happiness is found in these things is temporary (Hebrews 11:25; Romans 1:32). The forgiveness of sins through believing in the Person and work of Jesus brings lasting peace and happiness to the believer. There is no other provision for the forgiveness of sins. The Ethiopian eunuch went on his way rejoicing when he received forgiveness through the work of Jesus (Acts 8:27-39). He immediately showed his gratitude for his blessing by being baptised to the Name of Jesus. The Philippian jailer received the testimony concerning Jesus. He was saved and rejoiced with all his house (Acts 16:25-34). True and lasting happiness is found when there is repentance toward God, and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

David's glad tidings bring a warning to the careless and disobedient. Israel refused salvation in the Person of Jesus, the Messiah, and also the testimony of His servant Stephen (Acts 7:51-60). Consequently, God's just government operated towards them. In Romans 11:7-10 Paul quotes from Psalms 69:22-23 and shows how David invokes God's judgment on those who persecute His Servant and reject His offers of blessing. See verses 19-21 which refer to the sorrows and persecution of Jesus. Those who refuse God's offer of salvation through Jesus suffer the inevitable consequences of their folly. In 3:7-12 and Hebrews 4:7 Paul uses David's words in Psalms 95:7-11 to remind the Hebrew believers in Jesus that Israel refused to enter into the promised land because they hardened their heart against God and His promise. They were afraid of the powerful inhabitants of Canaan entrenched in their walled cities. Those who left Egypt and refused to enter Canaan perished in the wilderness journey of forty years. All perished except Joshua and Caleb because they wholly followed the Lord. A new generation arose that entered into the land under Joshua's leadership. The Hebrew believers to whom Paul wrote were in danger of turning away from their faith in Christ and being led back to Judaism. The spiritual approach to God was in danger of being superseded by the old ceremonial and material approach. Paul gives

them David's warning. "But harden not your heart. There will be serious consequences." The Lord Jesus in the parable of the sower warns His hearers about the danger of a hard heart. It is resistant to the seed of the Word and is open to the power of Satan and circumstances (Matthew 13:19-20. See also Acts 19:9 and Romans 2:5). The last appeal to the unconverted in the New Testament is in Revelation 22:16-17, where Jesus, the root and offspring of David, says, "And let him that is athirst come; he that will, let him take the water of life freely." Many people are thirsting after the putrid and stagnant waters of this temporary life. Oh that there might be a revival of interest in the living water that only Jesus can give (John 4:13-14). Israel forsook God, the fountain of living waters and hewed for themselves broken cisterns that could not contain water (Jeremiah 2:12-13). These ancient evils abound today but, praise God, the invitation to come and drink the living water is still available.

David's glad tidings can be summed up in the following features:

God the source;

Jesus Christ the substance;

Happiness the result of acceptance;

Judgement the consequence of refusal; An abundant supply of living water available for all who will come to Jesus.

F. Wallace.

(This concludes the series on the life of David) Hendrik L. Heijkoop. 1906-1995

Brother Hendrik Heijkoop was taken home to be with the Lord on Thursday 31st August. His body was buried on Wednesday, 6th. September in Winschoten, Holland. He was born in the Netherlands in 1906, the tenth child of a Godfearing family. In his teens he found peace with God after long and deep exercise. He early desired to serve the Lord full time in preaching and teaching the Word of God. The study of the Word was from then on his principle occupation and delight. He had a keen sense of what it was to be a steward of the wonderful truths relating to the assembly of God.

He became a successful accountant but used his free time to minister the Word of God among believers in the Netherlands and Germany. It was then the Lord used him for the eternal blessing of many, including my grandmother. My atheistic grandfather was also converted under his preaching and my mother and aunt likewise came to trust the Saviour through his ministry. My mother was baptised by him in a baker's dough trough. He told me once that at that time the Lord worked wonderfully for the conversion of very many in the North of Holland. Among my memories of him is his delight when a simple brother with an upright heart gave thanks to the Lord at the Supper. If he was present at a meeting he didn't take the lead but always waited on the Lord. Brethren expected him always to speak because of his gift but if the Lord had not given him a word he would say so and remain silent. I always found his contribution at the Winschoten conference rich and full of Christ and the prospect of the Saviour's near return. He was sometimes hard to translate but never short of spiritual and moral power in what he said. Hearers (and translators) could be easily moved to tears when he was setting before us the riches of God's grace and mercy.

Before and during the 1939-45 war years he exhorted the German brethren to retain their separation from German political life and to have no part in the persecution of Jews. His caring for a Jewish client during the early war years brought him into conflict with the Nazis. For this he was sent to one of the notorious concentration camps. He was in the Vught labour camp, near Eindhoven. Within days brother Heijkoop became gravely ill with a stomach complaint. He needed all his strength in such a place and cried to the Lord for help. He could not understand why he was suffering so much. His health gradually came back and he was put to work. The Lord granted him favour in the eyes of his captors and he became responsible for the production of Phillips electrical products (whose factory had been made the centre for slave labour). After some 18 months he came to the attention of an officer who recalled that he could not be found shortly after he had been incarcerated. Their plan had been that Heijkoop was to be liquidated (perhaps in Auschwitz, Poland). Again the Lord intervened and because of a strong appeal from Mr Phillips this death sentence was not carried out. Following this, one of Mr Heijkoop's clients from before the war asked his daughter's boyfriend, a young German officer, to try to secure the release of his accountant Mr Heijkoop. The young officer foolishly forged his senior officer's signature and secured the release of our brother. The young man paid for this with his life but the situation in German occupied Holland was such that brother Heijkoop was not rearrested.

It was in his first days of freedom, when he had nothing but the clothes he stood up in, that he distinctly heard the Lord indicate to him that now was the time to go forth in faith into the work. In due time the Lord provided not only for our brother, that he might be financially independent, but also that a vast literature work could be undertaken with wide ranging effect and blessing to many. The Lord gave him many opportunities to minister outside Holland, in North America (especially Canada), Spain, Switzerland and Germany. He also visited Britain in the 1950's. He relied much on the Spirit's guidance and would go about as directed by the Lord serving an itinerant ministry for the nourishment of Christ's own. He will be principally remembered for his service among the brethren as a teacher of the Word of God. On one occasion he told me that sometimes German brethren would come to him and apologise for the treatment he had received at the hands of the Nazis. His reply would be that they had nothing to apologise for. If they walked in the path of strangership, separated from the world and its politics, then there had not been a participation in the wickedness of the government of the day. But if any had supported the Hitlerite regime in any way they were certainly responsible and should confess it to the Lord at once. This to me was a clear illustration of why a good soldier of Jesus Christ should not get entangled with the affairs of this life. To participate in politics in any way brings responsibility of participation in another's sins.

He edited a Dutch periodical, 'Uit Het Woord der Waarheid' (Out of the Word of Truth) for over forty years and was the author of a number of books, perhaps the most well known title being "Beginning with Christ" (in other languages titled "Letters to Young Believers"). These books have been printed in up to 458,000 copies each and have been published or translated into Albanian, Bulgarian, Croatian, Dutch, English, French, German, Hindi Maiayalam, Norwegian, Punjabi, Portuguese, Romanian, Russian (9,000 circulated in the USSR before Glasnost), Spanish, Tagalog, Tamil, Telegu etc. He laboured to promote the broadest possible dissemination of Bibles (especially the excellent Translation by Mr Darby) and sound expository literature everywhere. When sectarians forbade the sale of their edition of Darby's collected writings to all but their own coterie, Mr Heijkoop arranged to have sufficient printed for all who might desire a set at a modest

price. At one time very few in Europe possessed a set but by the early 1980's most who were active in assembly life had one, as well as a copy of the Bible Treasury edited by William Kelly. The Eastern (then chiefly communist countries) and third world mission lands were so upon his heart that thousands upon thousands of books were poured in to them. He rejoiced to see the gospel of God's grace spread far and wide. Today very many are walking according to the truths which his books expound from Scripture. Alas, in some quarters some are turning aside from the truth. I recall how he had said to me that where the light had shone the brightest we now see the greatest departure and darkness. He was referring to Britain then but alas these words could now be applied to the Netherlands too. The last few years of his life were troubled with extremely poor health and his memory finally failed. He lived with his wife in the old peoples home run by brethren in Bonn, Germany. They had no children. His departure from this scene is accompanied by thanksgiving to the Lord for raising up such a gift and for releasing him from his worn and weak frame to be in Paradise. This is the briefest biographical sketch which shows only a little of what the Lord has given in this servant. May we be granted grace to follow the Lord in faithful obedience until His return for us all on the clouds. "Remember your leaders who have spoken to you the word of God; and considering the issue of their conversation, imitate their faith" (Hebrews 13:7). E.N.C.

Vol 03 - Truth & Testimony Vol. 3, No. 7, 1996.

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House, Not Made With Hands (1)

“For we know, that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens” (2 Corinthians 5:1) In the previous articles on the theme, “Without hands,” we have seen that the inward replaced the outward (circumcision) and that the permanent replaced the temporary (tabernacle). In this third article we shall see that the heavenly replaces the earthly (house).

What does the “house” mentioned in this verse refer to? Looking back over the previous chapter a lot is said about the body of the believer. It is described as an “earthen vessel(s)” (2 Corinthians 4:7); “our mortal flesh” (2 Corinthians 4:11); and “our outward man” (2 Corinthians 4:16). These three expressions describe the character of the body. The first emphasises that it is fragile. Some have paraphrased this as a “body of fragile clay.” The second points to its being subject to death. In the third it is shown to be a body which is affected by pressures from without. When the apostle writes, “but though our outward man perish,” and also of “our light affliction,” he seems to have in mind the way his physical body was being worn out in his service for the Lord. Reading Scriptures such as 2 Corinthians 11:1-33 it is not difficult to see why this was so.

Coming now to our chapter, the body is referred to as “our earthly house of this tabernacle.” Looking at this verse carefully certain contrasts are seen:

Tent Building Made with hands Of God Earthly In the heavens Dissolved Eternal The description of the body as a tabernacle-house suggests something temporary. It is not a fixed abode. No foundations are needed, only guy ropes and tent pegs. Furthermore, a tent is easily moved from one place to another. In contrast to this a building is permanent. It has foundations and it is meant to last.

One day the tent-house will be dissolved, for if the Lord has not come we shall die. But if this be the case we have a building of God, a house not made with hands. This refers to the resurrection body which we shall have at the time of the Lord’s return. We do not receive it at the time of the dissolution of the tent-house, as will become clear as we proceed. The tent-house is also described as “earthly.” The writer of the epistle is not dealing with moral issues here, but with the body which we now have and which is earthly in the sense of being suitable for earthly conditions. The “building of God” is said to be “in the heavens.” It will be a heavenly body, suitable to conditions in heaven. In contrast to the tent-house which is subject to death, the new body is said to be “eternal.”

Going back to the beginning of the verse, comment must be made on the expression, “we know.” The particular word used for “know” indicates conscious knowledge. There is certainty about it which produces an inward impression. It is because of this that there is the groan, the feeling how

contrary everything is here where we are in this tent-house. The word “groan” used here and in verse 4 is the same word used by the apostle in Romans 8:23. As being connected with a groaning creation he writes: “And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body.” The truth embodied in this verse is very close in teaching to 2 Corinthians 5:2; 2 Corinthians 5:4. However, in 2 Corinthians 5:1-21 Paul uses different terms. The earnest desire of the believer is “to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven.” The words “from heaven” mean not that our house comes down to us, but that it is “out of” as being heavenly in source and character.

There are three expressions in these early verses which call for explanation: “clothed upon;” “unclothed;” and “naked.” We will leave the third for the moment and turn our attention to the first two. The words “clothed upon” refer to the occasion when we shall receive our new body. This will be when the Lord comes for His saints. The second expression, “unclothed,” points to the intermediate condition of the saint between falling asleep and the Lord’s coming. There is no thought of the saint receiving the new body at the time of falling asleep, for this awaits the rapture. In the light of this verse 4 gives us the true hope of the believer: “For we that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened: not for that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life.” The hope of the believer is not the intermediate state. Later in this chapter more is said about this condition. It is described as being “absent from the body” and “present with the Lord” (5: 8). In other passages this state is said to be a happy one. I quote the familiar words of Php 1:23 : “For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better.” These sentiments do not in any way clash with 2 Corinthians 5:4, because the theme is different from Php 1:1-30. The principal thought here is the desire and groaning to be clothed upon with the “house not made with hands.” The closing words of 2 Corinthians 5:4 underline what is being said: “that mortality might be swallowed up of life.” In the unclothed condition the body returns to dust and corruption but when the Lord comes it will be raised.

“This corruptible must put on incorruption” (1 Corinthians 15:53). This will be true of all who “sleep in Jesus.” But in our passage in 2 Corinthians 5:1-21 it says that, “not for that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life.” This is because the eye of the apostle is not set upon the unclothed state, but rather the clothed state, when at the Lord’s coming we shall put on our house which is from heaven. This is in line with the second half of the verse quoted from 1 Corinthians 15:53, which says: “this mortal must put on immortality.”

It may be well to say here that while I have used the expression “new body,” it is new as to condition. The body sown (buried) is that which will be raised. “It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body” (1 Corinthians 15:44).

Clothed, Yet Naked

“If so be that being clothed we shall not be found naked” (2 Corinthians 5:3). The third of the expressions noted at the beginning of this article has given most difficulty in interpretation. It is a paradox. Looking at the two words in a natural way, they refer to two opposite conditions. The apostle had in mind those among the Corinthians who had only made a profession of faith. It is a very solemn warning. We must remember that all men must stand before God. The unconverted

will appear before Him at the great white throne. This must necessitate their having bodies in which to appear. But spiritually they are “naked,” with no fitness for the presence of God eternally. All who appear at that awesome throne are cast into the lake of fire. As far as the believer is concerned, being “clothed upon” is to have a body like Christ’s. Php 3:21 has taught us this: “Who shall transform our body of humiliation into conformity to His body of glory” (J.N.D. Trans.).

G. Bell.

(To be continued, if the Lord will) Having Loved His Own Which Were In The World (2)

John 13:18-38 In the former verses of this chapter we have the love of the Lord expressed in care for His own. In the verses that follow we have the feelings of that love made known, for the love that bore with Judas also confided in His own.

Judas Iscariot was chosen to be one of the twelve (John 6:70-71) but clearly he was not one of “His own.” Not only did the Lord’s love not possess his heart but there was no affection or true feeling for the Lord. He was ready to betray Him and only waited for the opportunity. The Lord knew all this and felt it intensely. Yet in love He bore with it, for He looked upon him at that moment as one of “the twelve.” The Scripture had spoken of him as the one who was near to the Lord, eating bread with Him, then lifting up his heel against Him. By this Scripture the Lord appealed to Judas, letting him know that He knew all this. Yet patient, suffering love did not reveal him to the rest of the disciples. The Lord did make known to them how deeply He felt Judas’ betrayal, but did not reprove him openly. How perfect was the Lord’s love! In bearing with him was there not an appeal to his heart and conscience? Was this not also seen in giving the sop to him after He had dipped it for him? Though unexposed to the other disciples, he received permission to go and do what his heart desired — to betray His Lord. He turned his back not only on His Lord, but upon the yearning love that bore with him, knowing fully what he was going to do. How terrible, how solemn the words: “and it was night.”

Yet if the Lord bore this in love, He also confided in His own, revealing His feelings so that they might feel with Him. Already He had made known a difference that there was among them: “and ye are clean, but not all.” He felt it keenly that there was one with Him who was also against Him, as foretold by the Scripture. He told His own, before the treachery of Judas was manifested, that they might have confidence in Him. Then He shared not only His foreknowledge but also the burden that lay upon His spirit because: “one of you shall betray Me.” This touched true hearts, for they were astonished that any one of them would do such a thing. The love that would not openly denounce the traitor made him known to caring and enquiring hearts. To know the intimacy of love one must be near and the Lord revealed His burden that He might draw them near. Simon Peter’s love for the Lord declared itself, for he could not rest till he knew who the traitor was. Coming by one nearer than himself he asked, “Lord, who is it?”

How wonderful a place this one had taken who was nearer than Peter. He lay on Jesus’ bosom as one whom Jesus loved, satisfied to be there and to rest in what he was to Jesus and of His thoughts about him. To know such a place is to know an intimacy that gives simple boldness. He leaned upon His breast and asked, “Lord, who is it?” He enjoyed the intimacy that kept nothing back. How readily love answered him! The token given to Judas made the answer known only to the enquirer, while not revealing his name to all. The love that confided in His own was as perfect

as the love that bore with Judas. The going out of Judas lifted the cloud from the Lord's spirit. Longsuffering love had borne with Judas to perfection and the testimony to this world was now complete: "Now is the Son of man glorified, and God is glorified in Him." Events would now take their course and the will, purpose and work of God would be brought to completion. Love would be perfected in His death and God would be glorified in Him. The One to whom God is indebted for glory, God Himself will glorify, and that without delay. Love, deep love to His God and Father, marked out His path which He was to tread alone.

He then makes known that He was to leave them and that at that time they could not go with Him. They will have one another, and their Lord, whom they dearly loved, gave them a commandment to love one another, "as I have loved you." The character, the purity, the fulness and the way of the Lord's love to them was to be stamped upon their love for one another. This was not sufficient for Peter. He asked, "Lord, whither goest Thou?" How strongly He was attached to His Lord! This was in response to the Lord's love to His own. Peter would not be separated from His Lord even for a moment. The question, "whither?" is followed by a "why?" How beautiful the desire: "I will lay down my life for Thy sake." Though he knew not the weakness of his "I will" yet the Lord valued Peter's love, and in love to Peter would make him to know his weakness. The Lord's love would make Peter's failure known to him beforehand, that he might have an increased confidence in his Lord.

(The brother who has written this series of articles wishes to remain anonymous) Psalms 119:1-176 (15) (Continued from page 160) 12. Lamed — AN OX-goad The name of this letter has the same meaning as "Malmed" — a goad (e.g. ox-goad), and this is the form the letter has on the Phoenician monuments. It also has various other meanings when prefixed to other words. Then it means "to, towards, unto, even to, into, as to, with regard to, on account of, concerning, about, of, on behalf of, for," etc., etc. It is a tremendously versatile letter indeed! An ox-goad is a stick with a prick by which the ox is directed. All the above meanings I have given indicate "giving direction." It is in teaching that the teacher gives direction to the pupil. The Talmud, which is a book of Jewish traditional teaching, means "instruction." Right in the centre of the word Talmud you can see two of the consonants of Lamed. The numerical value of Lamed is thirty. This letter has therefore the significance of "teaching us to go on to maturity."

Verses 73-96. Spiritual Maturity through Daily Meditation Section Twelve. Verses 89-96: "God's Word Helps Me Mature Spiritually"

We are sure of Him and His Word Verse 89: LA-GOH-LAHM..."For ever, (O Jehovah, Thy word)" In the first three verses we find words that indicate stability: "settled" (5: 89); "established" (5: 90); "continue" (5: 91). Growing in the knowledge of God and His will gives stability to our walk. We must go on to maturity in our spiritual lives and for this the Word is our daily food. "Thy word is settled..." and that Word settles the believer and makes him steadfast.

Today the Word of God is under attack and so is the Christian who believes it to be the absolute standard for his daily conduct. Are we convinced that the Bible is indeed the breathing of God, His inspired Word through which He is speaking to us? The Bible is an incomparable and unique Book. Dear friends, read it, study it, meditate upon it, memorise it, and your will grow in spiritual maturity.

Jesus never fails Verse 90: LA-DOHR...“...to (every) generation...” The writer is convinced of the certainty of God’s Word from the endurance of the heavens in verse 89. Now he assures us of this from his consideration of the foundation of the earth. The New Testament tells us concerning the blessed Person of the Lord Jesus Christ that He is “the same yesterday, and today, and for ever” (Hebrews 13:8). The Lord Jesus has said, “Heaven and earth shall pass away, but My words shall not pass away” (Matthew 24:35). This is the solid rock on which we stand, the right foundation for our spiritual maturity. Nothing can shake either the Person of the Lord or His precious Word. “Thou hast founded the earth and it stands still...” is the literal rendering from the Hebrew. What God does endures! Someone has said, “Every time you set your foot on the ground remember the stability of God’s promises.” This is a nice way to continue on our pathway to maturity.

If all are His servants, why not me?

Verse 91: LA-MISH-PAHTAK...“...according to Thine ordinances they continue...” The N.I.V. strangely says, “Your laws endure to this day...” But that is surely not the meaning. The “they” in our verse are no doubt the “word” in verse 89, and “the earth” in verse 90!! It is these: Word, heaven and earth, which are all His servants! If the Lord maintains and sustains these things, is He not able to sustain us? But also if the earth, heaven, hail, rain, wind, snow and all the elements are His servants, then how much more should you and I be His servants, as redeemed and intelligent creatures! These elements function in their appointed place “according to Thine ordinances...” and are in this way an example to us all as members of the body of Christ. We also have a special place where God has set us in the body of Christ in order to function according to His will. Are we conscious of this and ready to fulfil our functions? A crisis shows what we really are Verse 92: LO-LEH-Y...“Except...”

He had experienced affliction and come through. He therefore speaks from experience and looks back with gratitude. It was the Word that had sustained him in those trying circumstances.

How different is the experience of the Psalmist from that case described by the Lord Jesus in the parable of the sower: “And that which fell among thorns are they, which, when they have heard, go forth, and are choked with cares and riches and pleasures of this life, and bring no fruit to perfection” (Luke 8:14). Circumstances may show up our superficialities, or demonstrate that we are rooted and grounded in Him and His Word. Let us then daily delight in the reading and study of His Word.

Let us remember!

Verse 93: LA-GOH-LAHM...“Never (will I forget...)” When once we have experienced the truth of the Word of God in a particular circumstance or trial, we never forget! It is also a very good resolution to make! Another thing he never forgot was that when he passed through his trial and was so conscious of his own weakness, that then the Lord had quickened him. It is through the Word of God that we get this quickening in our spirits. “To be strengthened with might by His Spirit in the inner man...” (Ephesians 3:16). His words are spirit and life (John 6:63), and His words are words of eternal life (John 6:68).

I am not my own but His!

Verse 94: LAKA-ATA...“I am Thine...”

He does not say, “Save me and I shall be Thine,” but he asserts that he belongs to the Lord and needs saving still! The Hebrew is emphatic here: “I AM Thine!” Perhaps you ask how we can keep on asking to be saved when we have already been saved? The Psalmist says, “I am Thine, save me: for I have sought Thy precepts.” Of course the Old Testament saint knew nothing of what has been revealed to New Testament believers concerning the redemption of our bodies. They knew about soul/spirit salvation but not about glorified bodies! Paul describes this “final” salvation in Romans chapter 8: “we... groan... waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body” (verse 23). Peter calls this the “salvation, ready to be revealed in the last time” (1 Peter 1:5). “Salvation” therefore is a term which has a large meaning. There is salvation from/out of circumstances and this is what Paul refers to in Php 2:12 : “work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.” Peter contrasts temporal deliverances in their circumstances with the salvation of the soul, when he says, “Receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls” (1 Peter 1:9).

What can men do unto me?

Verse 95: LO-KAH-VAH...“For me waited (the wicked...)...”

Here we have a practical example of the salvation from circumstances we have been talking about in the previous verse! Here is the enemy: “The wicked have waited for me, to destroy me...” Certainly the Psalmist was looking to the Lord for salvation. But this had nothing to do with his soul’s salvation.

Satan has a well-developed strategy which he has acquired over thousands of years. He is an active adversary and tempter of the saints. He and his servants the demons often have to withdraw temporarily from their victim but will renew their attack at a more strategic moment: “have waited for me, to destroy me...” Let us not be deceived! If for the moment we have some respite from his attack this is only a temporary lull in the battle, to make us relax.

How do we overcome the powers of darkness? “I write unto you, young men, because ye have overcome the wicked one... I have written unto you, young men, because ye are strong, and the word of God abideth in you, and ye have overcome the wicked one” (1 John 2:13-14). These verses give us the secret; we can only overcome the enemy through the Word of God and when that Word is living in us and we live by it every day. If this is true of you and me then we can boldly say in the words of Hebrews 13:6, “The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man (or devil, or demon) shall do unto me.”

O, the wideness of God’s mercy!

Verse 96: LA-KOHL...“To all (perfection I have seen...)” To everything here on earth there is a limit, an end! Even the best of men are still sinners. Even the most perfect in this world still fall far short of God’s perfection. That is why the Psalmist has to say, “I have seen an end of all perfection...” But as to our knowing Him, there is no end! He is Infinite, we are finite. Paul had this desire to know Him: “That I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being made conformable unto His death...” (Php 3:10). The apostle John writes to the fathers, “ye have known Him that is from the beginning.” He repeats this statement twice because there really is no end to knowing Him. But they had grown from little children, to young men and now they were fathers. Here was indeed a growing into spiritual maturity.

“Thy commandment is exceeding broad,” continues the writer. It is the same when we climb a high mountain. The higher we get the more the view increases. On the top the panorama is breath-taking! So it is with the Word of God. It is an inexhaustible ocean of grace and wonders, a mine of jewels. There is no limit to the amount of confidence we can put in the Lord Jesus and His precious Word! “Let us go on unto perfection...” (Hebrews 6:1), and unto spiritual maturity.

Cor Bruins.

Crucial Occasions in the Book of Acts The four Gospels give a varied yet united testimony to the wonderful Person and history of the Lord Jesus Christ, His unique sacrifice at Calvary, and His resurrection and ascension back to heaven. This necessarily involves tremendous changes in God’s dispensational ways. Therefore Acts is a book of transition, showing the dispensation of law to be gradually and decisively replaced by the marvellous “dispensation of the grace of God” (Ephesians 3:2). We may well expect then climactic occasions to arise that have vital significance as regards the times in which we live. Here we consider some of the more outstanding of these.

(1) The Coming of the Spirit of God (Acts 2:1-47)

It was impossible that the Spirit of God could come to dwell complacently in any people who were under the law, “For as many as are of the works of the law, are under the curse” (Galatians 3:10). The Spirit could not come until Christ had died, been raised and glorified, as John 7:39 makes clear. But on the day of Pentecost, the disciples being together in one place, the sound as of a rushing mighty wind filled the house, accompanied by divided tongues as of fire sitting on each of them (5: 1-3). At the same time another miracle took place. Being filled with the Spirit of God the disciples began to speak in various languages. They were given by God the ability to speak their own thoughts of “the wonderful works of God” (5: 11) in a language previously unknown to them. Of course they knew what they were saying, for they were bearing witness to the resurrection of Christ. Many present were from foreign nations and at least 16 different languages were spoken by the various disciples (5: 8-11). The significance of this wonderful sign gift was to impress on people that God was now working to bring about an understanding between those previously foreign to each other. Jews were to be no longer the one nation with whom God was working, for the grace of God was now to go out to every nation under heaven, and to bring people from every nation together in a vital, living unity.

(2) Hypocrisy Among Disciples Judged (Acts 5:1-11) By grace, large numbers were brought at this time to trust the Lord Jesus and their faith and love was beautifully seen. Spontaneously they brought their own wealth to share it together, some selling land for this purpose, so that there was great joy among the disciples. However, one couple agreed together to sell land and give part of the price while saying they were giving all (5:2). This action was challenged immediately when Peter exposed their hypocrisy and both of them died by the chastening hand of God. So at the very outset of Christianity grace is seen to be a principle of serious holiness: grace will not tolerate falsehood. This is seen to be therefore a crucial matter.

(3) Selfishness Among Believers Met (Acts 6:1-7) This was not so serious a matter as that of Chapter 5, yet it was something that might develop most dangerously and the Spirit of God deals with it as an issue that cannot be ignored. Hellenists (Grecian Jews) complained that their widows were neglected in the daily ministration which was evidently supervised by local Jewish believers.

How easily factions may arise among believers because of such complaints, that may or may not have a clear basis in fact.

Yet this matter is beautifully settled. The apostles asked the disciples to select seven men of good reputation to take care of this distribution. How good it is to see that the Jews in Jerusalem were willing to have Grecian Jews appointed for this service, for their names evidently indicate that all were Hellenists! Those of Jerusalem were virtually saying, “If you don’t think you can trust us, we shall be glad to trust you.” This is a beautiful effect of known and enjoyed grace. Results are seen immediately too: “the word of God increased; and the number of the disciples multiplied... greatly” (5: 7).

(4) Israel’s Rejection of the Spirit’s Witness (Acts 7:1-60)

Stephen, one of the seven chosen, was moved by the Spirit of God in clearest testimony to the Lord Jesus. The Jewish leaders were bitterly antagonistic to him and finally arrested him, bringing him before their court. When he was accused he responded in a marvellous address that they were powerless to stop, for God was in it. He showed the Jews that in all their history they had always consistently refused the many overtures of God toward them and now had culminated this in their rejection of the Messiah of Israel, the Lord Jesus. But his faithful testimony had only the effect of embittering them more greatly against him, taking him out and stoning him to death. Yet no shadow of fear is seen in his death, but rather a faith and love that must have impressed itself on everyone who saw it when he prayed, “Lord, lay not this sin to their charge” (5: 60). This was another crucial turning point in the book of Acts. Christ had been rejected while on earth and now He is rejected by Israel when speaking from heaven by the Spirit of God. The witness of the Spirit of God to Him is thus also rejected. From this time Israel is seen as definitely set aside by God and the church takes Israel’s place as the vessel of public testimony. But Christ being rejected thus, the church is identified with Him in this same rejection. Still, this is no reason for discouragement, for we may have the same exultant joy as did Stephen even in his martyrdom for the Name of the Lord Jesus.

(5) Samaritans Received in the Church (Acts 8:5-17)

Philip, another of the seven, went to Samaria to preach Christ, with great blessing resulting. Generally the Jews had no dealings with the Samaritans (John 4:9), but the Lord Jesus had spoken to a Samaritan woman about the gift of the water of life and Philip was following His kind example. When the apostles heard of this work of grace, both Peter and John went down to Samaria and through the laying on of their hands the Spirit of God was given to the disciples there. This was another crucial change in God’s dealings and Samaritans were welcomed into the same fellowship as Jewish believers in Jerusalem.

(6) A Special Jewish Witness to the Gentiles

(Acts 9:1-19)

Saul of Tarsus was an enemy of the Lord Jesus, determined to blot out Christianity from the earth by the persecution and death of believers. But God had purposed that this man was to be the most zealous of all men in proclaiming the gospel of Christ. When he was on his way to Damascus to take Christians captive, the Lord Jesus stopped him and he was brought down “trembling and

astonished," to realise that Jesus is indeed the Son of God. What a transformation took place in that man's soul!

Yet God did not send him to his own people, Israel, rather he was sent to the Gentiles (Galatians 2:2; Galatians 2:8-9). This was another matter of crucial importance in God's present dealings. We may think it better that one preaches to one's own nation, but it is not always so. It was true for Peter but not for Paul. For Paul was given a special ministry to the church of God, in which it is insisted that "There is one body" consisting of all believers, both Jewish and Gentile. It was important that a Jewish apostle should press this truth upon Gentile believers, so as to bring both together in the unity of the Spirit to bear witness to God's love toward all.

(7) Gentiles Received into the Church of God

(Acts 10:1-48)

Paul was not the first apostle sent to Gentiles. Peter was given this honour, though he was specially the apostle to Jews. But God wanted him to realise that believing Gentiles were to be considered fully on the same level as Jewish believers in God's church. Both Cornelius and Peter were given visions indicating that they were to be brought together and that Peter was to give Cornelius the message of the grace of God in Christ. He did so, and while he was speaking the Spirit of God fell on the listeners (5: 44). How clear a proof this was to Peter that God accepted Gentiles also into the fellowship of the church of God.

(8) The Threat of Legal Bondage Faced (Acts 15:1-41)

Another crucial situation now faced the newly established church of God. God had wrought at Antioch to bring many Gentiles to the Lord Jesus and Paul had been a great help to them. There then came some Jewish men from Judea who taught the Gentile disciples that they must be circumcised as Jews were in order to be saved. Paul and others with him therefore went up to Jerusalem to face this most serious issue. There they came together with other apostles and elders and also found some who declared that Gentile converts must be circumcised and commanded to keep the law of Moses (5: 5).

Elsewhere Paul speaks of certain of these men as "false brethren unawares brought in, who came in privily to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, that they might bring us into bondage" (Galatians 2:4). Paul required a clear pronouncement from the apostles and elders of Jerusalem to settle this matter. The Lord answered clearly by the ministry of Peter, then of Barnabas and Paul, and finally by the pronouncement of James, that God had Himself settled the matter that the Gentiles should not be brought under such bondage. They should not be asked to be circumcised nor told to keep the law, but only reminded to "abstain from meats offered to idols, and from blood, and from things strangled, and from fornication" (5: 29). Thus the grace of God was left in all its pure reality and blessing. When the Gentile believers heard this they rejoiced over its encouragement.

Thus God, in His unfailing grace, has established the truth of the church of God in purity and faithfulness. Today we are to value every one of these cases of special significance and maintain them in godly integrity and faith.

L. M. Grant

Notice The next part in the series on the “Sermon on the Mount” will appear in the May/June issue, if the Lord will.

Christ’s Greatness in the Epistle to Laodicea (3) (Continued from page 148) “I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot” (Revelation 3:15) The Lord Jesus is the beginning (Chief) of the new creation and believers today belong to that creation. God desires in and by them to have a testimony concerning His coming new world, in the very world where things are organised for the glory of man and satan. The question therefore arises whether we are really representing God’s new creation, or promoting self and things that belong to the old creation, connected with failure and breakdown? The Lord Jesus is not only the Head of God’s creation, being God Himself, but He also speaks as the perfect Judge. He is omniscient (Romans 9:5) and knows everything about us, even the number of the hairs of our head. He is walking among the lampstands or candlesticks (Revelation 1:1-20; Revelation 2:1-29; Revelation 3:1-22). Is He not also that true light which the lampstands are supposed to give? He searches all in order to see how faithfully and effectively they are acquitting themselves of their tasks. Here He pronounces a terrible and condemning verdict. When we follow the course of church history in the seven epistles in Revelation 2:1-29; Revelation 3:1-22, we understand that with Laodicea we have come to the very end of God’s present testimony on earth. Although in our day Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia and Laodicea continue to exist contemporaneously, historically, as to the point in time when they started, they followed one after another. In Philadelphia there was a collective testimony to the blessedness of the Lord Jesus. However, in Laodicea we see what followed this. Instead of true satisfaction with the wonderful Christ, those bearing His Name become more and more satisfied with themselves. The apostle Paul describes this process in the beginning of 2 Timothy 3:1-17. A special feature he mentions there is that people will be lovers of self, more than lovers of God.1 Replacing zeal for the Beloved who is all, the Laodiceans lost their zeal for Him and became lukewarm and indifferent to the Bridegroom. What is our attitude to Him?

1It is remarkable that the concept of self-love, self-realisation, etc., has been developed in our generation.

“I would thou wert cold or hot”

Perhaps in days past the Lord had used meetings for edification through the Word to address this issue, but to no avail (1 Corinthians 14:3). He had also sent His labourers,2 or other servants. If John’s ministry has no effect on believers then they have reached a terrible condition. The Lord would rather see the believers in Laodicea like cold water, which is refreshing, or like hot water, which was used for medicinal purposes. In both cases others would benefit and the Lord would be pleased as well. Alas, this was not so in the assembly in Laodicea.

“So then because thou art lukewarm” As the Beloved the Lord Jesus was (and is today) waiting for a response, but in Laodicea He doesn’t find any. Perhaps they bring sacrifices of praise and sing spiritual songs or wonderful hymns, possibly with great emphasis on instrumental music and outward appeal, but they are like hollow forms. There is nothing that satisfies His longing heart. The Lord compares Himself here with somebody who would drink of the famous stream of healing waters in the area of Laodicea, but He has to spue it out.3 A parallel thought is found in the Old Testament when the Israelites had corrupted themselves with idolatry. The land spued them out, as it had done the Canaanites before them. There was no fruit for God, although He had been

waiting for so long (Leviticus 18:28; Leviticus 20:22; compare also Job 20:15 b). We may try to cover-up the real situation with all kinds of things but we cannot deceive the Lord (Galatians 6:7).

Because of the great emphasis on self-pleasing, self-advancement (see later), and pleasing one another, as the Pharisees used to do (John 12:43), there was a lack of zeal in Laodicea, as well as a tendency to compromise. This condition caused the Lord to say:

2I believe John, before his exile on Patmos, used to visit the assemblies around Ephesus when he stayed there.

3A six mile long aqueduct brought Laodicea its supply of water from the south; the water came either from hot springs and was cooled to lukewarm or came from a cooler source and warmed up in the aqueduct on the way.

“I will spue thee out of My mouth” The Lord’s message to Laodicea is urgent: I am about to spue you out. “I will” means that it is going to happen quickly and surely. The Lord Jesus speaks as the great Lover who does not find anything in Laodicea that can satisfy Him. Could we not conclude from this:

(1) that in Laodicea there were outward forms linked with Christianity but no real love for the Lord and (2) therefore He gives them up, because there is no evidence that any remedy will work.

Thus our Lord also speaks as the Judge and how solemn this is! The book of Revelation presents Him as the Judge (Revelation 1:1-20), even over the whole universe (Revelation 20:1-15) but first of all over the house of God (Revelation 1:1-20; Revelation 2:1-29; Revelation 3:1-22; cp. 1 Peter 4:17). Furthermore He speaks as a Physician.4 The condition in Laodicea is acute and the patient is about to die. The words “I will” (meaning “I am about to”) may also be indicative of His soon coming and imply a last warning.

4God acts as a Physician with regard to the sinner in Romans 3:19 f, and so does the Lord here with this assembly.

We will see more details about the Lord’s qualities and the remedy He puts forward, but let us pause here for a moment. Even when there was apparently no response to the Lord, He presents Himself in His greatness (as Lover, Physician, Judge, etc.). Does this not suggest that the Lord was and is still waiting for a response? He will get it from a remnant, be it ever so small. The idea of a remnant is found many times in Scripture. Where the whole people of God fail, God continues in His sovereign grace with a remnant. This is true for Israel (e.g. Isaiah 6:8-13; Isaiah 10:21; Isaiah 11:11; Haggai 1:12; Romans 9:1-33; Romans 10:1-21; Romans 11:1-36) and it is true for the church. Aremnant is not merely what is leftover, but represents what the whole people should have been and constitutes a link with what God gave originally.

Finally, I refer to Psalms 19:4-6. I suggest that the sun is a type of our Lord Jesus (cp. Malachi 4:2). In contrast to the lack of heat in the assembly at Laodicea the Lord Himself keeps His warmth and zeal. He is now glorified in heaven (God has placed Him there), and we may contemplate Him there in all His splendour (cp. the whole circuit the sun makes, Psalms 19:5 ff). He really wants us to do just that, in order that we may receive light and warmth and be(come) zealous. A Christian with real love for the Lord “up there” in the glory, is a Christian with spiritual energy “down here.” Furthermore, nothing is hidden from His searching eyes, not even in Laodicea with its nice

cover-ups. The Lord does not allow any compromise either. If there is one lesson to learn from this verse (Revelation 3:16) it is this: the Lord will not allow us to be His witnesses on our own terms; we have to be with Him on His terms. My mouth

What a contrast the Lord's mouth presents when compared with what the Laodiceans produced! From His mouth flow all sorts of blessings, for "The mouth of a righteous man is a well of life" (Proverbs 10:11). He cannot allow that we offer Him something that is not in agreement with that which comes from His mouth. As a dependent Man He relied on God's mouth, the Giver and Sustainer of life (Matthew 4:4; Luke 4:4). In His earthly ministry the Lord opened His mouth to teach and bless (Matthew 5:2 ff). And as the Revealer of secrets He opened His mouth as foretold by the prophet (Matthew 13:35). Compare also the reference to Levi's mouth in Malachi 2:6 ff as a type of Christ. In Luke 4:22 words of grace proceeded out of His mouth, revealing God in grace. Presently our Lord is crowned with glory and honour, and Ananias confirmed to Paul that he had been chosen to see the Righteous One and to hear a voice out of His mouth (Acts 22:14). How Paul drank in His voice and then dispensed from what he had received! In this he is a model for us, following at the same time the footsteps of the great Model.

However, from the same mouth proceeds judgment. He will execute Antichrist with the breath of His mouth (2 Thessalonians 2:8). In Revelation 1:16 John has a vision of the Lord as Judge and out of His mouth proceeds a sharp two-edged sword (5: 16). The Lord uses this first in relation to His church, in moral power against the opponents (Revelation 2:16), but also to smite the nations (Revelation 19:15). How it behoves us to be deeply impressed by His authority, in submitting ourselves to His claims. The introduction of Christ, at the very beginning of the book of Revelation, underlines the ongoing activities of the Holy Spirit on this earth, till the end of the dispensation, namely to glorify Christ (John 16:14).

A. E. Bouter.

(To be continued, if the Lord will) From Our Archive The Revelation of the Father (5)

John 20:1-23 (Continued from page 174)

I want to come to the story in John chapter 20, hoping that we shall see in it a culmination of what I have said before in this series of addresses. The first great feature of this story is the simple, burning, quality of the love for the Lord Jesus that moved Mary Magdalene. What will keep us right? What will take our steps in the right direction? What will bring us to the right place in the end? It is love to the Lord Jesus Christ which will do this and make us obey Him.

It is not easy to reconcile the opening words of this chapter in John with the resurrection chapters in the other three Gospels. All we can say is that Mary Magdalene was on the scene first, so great was her personal affection for the Lord Jesus. Before it was light and before, possibly, she came with the others, she was at the place. And when she came and found that His body was gone, she went back to tell the other disciples. "They have taken away my Lord," she said, and they came urgently enough, for they ran. But when they saw the evidence before their eyes that the body of the Lord Jesus wasn't there, they said, "He is risen from the dead." They were satisfied and went home. Health and home satisfied them, but not Mary. Her heart was wrapped up in one object only and that was Himself. So she lingered at the scene where last He was visible and she was looking into the tomb when she heard the message from the angels, and then the Lord Jesus Himself

spoke to her. She thought it was the gardener. Her whole heart was occupied with one Person. She didn't trouble to describe to the gardener who it was that she was concerned about. She simply said, "they have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid Him." She didn't stop to think she would be quite unable to carry the body of a dead man. She said, "You tell me where He is and I'll take Him away." These were the simple marks of a most ardent and concentrated attention upon the Lord Jesus Christ. Then eventually we read that although she did not know Him, He said to her, "Mary." He called His own sheep by name and she breathed out the reply, which isn't simply "My Master," but "My own Master." She simply breathed out the fact that she had found Him whom her soul loved and then and only then was her quest satisfied.

Now be assured that a love to the Lord Jesus Christ like this, that makes us all ashamed of ourselves when we read about it, is the one thing that will keep us right. It is the one thing that will make us linger day by day and year by year over His words so that we treasure them in our hearts. And if we treasure and keep His words, then we shall indeed live with Him and the Father whom He came to declare. I often think about the case of Elijah and Elisha. When the sons of the prophets said to Elisha, "Do you realise that your master will be taken up from your presence today," he declared his intention of following Elijah. Even Elijah tried to discourage him but he said, "as thy soul liveth, I will not leave thee." The one thing that kept him going to the place where a double portion of Elijah's spirit fell upon him was this simple principle of keeping near to Elijah. And it is that love to the Lord Jesus Christ that keeps us cleaving closely to Him and to His Word which will bring us safe home to the desired haven in the end. Well, when this revelation of His identity was made by the Lord Jesus Christ, He gave Mary Magdalene a message for the disciples. This is rather astonishing considering He knew very well He was going to meet with them that same day. It must have been that this message would brook no delay: "go to My brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto My Father, and your Father; and to My God, and your God." "Touch Me not," He said, for He was going to ascend into heaven where He would be with His Father and Mary would be in a very new way bound up with Him there. I read into this the very culmination of the wonderful sequence of details regarding the revelation of the Father by the only begotten Son. He ever dwelt in the Father's bosom and came to make that love known. I have often reflected upon the difference between the Lord Jesus Christ saying, "the Father" and, "My Father." When the Lord Jesus Christ says, "the Father," He is referring not to the Father's relationship with us but to the only true God, the One who dwelt in all eternity as the Father with the Son and the Holy Spirit. But when the Lord Jesus Christ says, "My Father," in the original language it is "the Father of Me." In other words it is not really a departure from the Lord Jesus saying, "the Father," but He is drawing special attention to the fact that He Himself is the Son of the Father. In this particular place He is saying to them, "the Father who is Mine is now your Father." He is saying that you and the disciples and all those who afterwards should believe in Me, are going to be wrapped up in the same bundle of life with the Father and the Son. What a culmination to all He had said to them! It takes us back to words uttered by Abigail at the end of the first book of Samuel, when she was dissuading David from the violence that would have been the deserts of Nabal. She said, "the soul of my lord shall be bound in the bundle of life with the Lord thy God." Although such wonderful revelations had been made, there never was imagined such nearness to God as was contained in this message which the Lord Jesus gave to Mary. It is no longer the Father only but "My Father is your Father and My God is your God" and we are all wrapped up in the same bundle of life together. We have read how the Father's Name has been made known and has forever

superseded, as the sun outshines the stars, the previous Names of Jehovah and El Shaddai. Is it possible that the majority of Christians never get a thought as to these details about the revelation by the Son of the Father? O yes, it is said in the Creed, “I believe in one God the Father.” But the fact that the Lord Jesus Christ has come to make known to us the secrets of that divine home of love; the fact that He has wrapped us up in the same bundle of life with the Father and the Son as a consequence of the work that He has done, this is a closed book to so many. O how privileged we are that these things have indeed been made known to us. The Lord Jesus Christ spoke to them of the Father’s house. It was the place whereof the everlasting and unchanging benediction was the peace and the joy and the love that must ever surround Him, the Father. The Lord Jesus said, “I go to prepare a place for you.” He had prepared them by His precious blood but He was going to heaven to prepare a place for them in the Father’s house.

Now what did that message do? It assembled the disciples together. If you look back again at the story in verse 18 it says, “Mary Magdalene came and told the disciples that she had seen the Lord, and that He had spoken these things unto her. Then the same day at evening, being the first day of the week, when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled for fear of the Jews, came Jesus, and stood in the midst, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you.” That message assembled them and in a certain and important aspect of the matter it created the assembly. Now, I wonder to what extent when we come together on the first day of the week in the Scripture pattern, it is something infinitely more than this, arising out of this fact that we are wrapped up in the same bundle of life with the Father and the Son. We have received that message and it has assembled us together and with the Lord in the midst we respond to Him. It is a very wonderful truth that we are reading here the fulfilment of the words in Psalms 22:1-31, when we come to the moment when the sorrow and the sob are over and the song of triumph begins. After those words of the Psalm which represent the resurrection cry, the Lord Jesus said, “I will declare Thy name unto My brethren.” I suggest that that promise, quoted in Hebrews, is fulfilled in this message sent by Mary Magdalene. He declared His Name unto His brethren, to those who were coming to share the life that belonged to that circle and who only on the resurrection side were made His brethren. It is in these words that the Lord’s promise of the Psalm was fulfilled and then following that, “in the midst of the church will I sing praise unto Thee.” In the pattern that John gives us, their mission to the world began immediately out of that gathering when they were assembled together by this message. He had shown them His hands and His side and there was in that the evidence of the identity of the Person who was there, with the Person who had suffered on the cross. I love to think of the loaf and the cup, of the Lord’s Supper, being for us the marks in His hands and in His side. He showed them His hands and His side and their hearts were moved to respond to Him, and it was out of that gathering on the first day of the week that He said to them, “Peace be unto you: as My Father hath sent Me, even so send I you. And when He had said this, He breathed on them, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost: Whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained.” Overlooking for the moment the special nature of this remission that is spoken of, we can say very generally that out of their standing in peace there arises the mission to go out into all the world. We must never separate the wonderful disclosures we have been considering, and the real joy for the heart that basks in the love of the Father, from the fact that these men were soon to be found out on the mountains of this world with the gospel of peace. They were soon to be found turning the world upside down. They knew from John chapter 16 that there was at last a power in them and with them adequate to

press the claims and to bring conviction to men and women of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is only with our hearts set like this that we really are in the spirit of the gospel mission that has been committed to us and how we all pray that we might be more and more awakened to it. It is contained in the following extract which puts the thing very well: “The Father, eternal and infinite fountain of love, had sent the Son who abode in that love, who was the Witness of that love and of the peace which He, the Father, shed around Himself, where sin had no existence. Rejected in His mission, Jesus, for a world where sin did exist, made peace for all by His blood, and now sent His disciples from the bosom of that peace into which He had brought them by the remission of sins through His death, to preach it in the world, and He gave the Holy Spirit to this end.”

Now I would like to make a reference to an important feature of the things we are speaking about and that is that it is almost certain that many young Christians will say, “All this is perhaps all very well but it is beyond us.” Now I would like to say that there is a terrible danger here. I think that no one who knows me would accuse me of lack of sympathy with work amongst young people and seeking to instruct them in the things of God and reach them. But there is a terrible danger, not only in the meetings but everywhere, that young people are being encouraged to grow up with the idea that they can live their own fellowship and their own Christianity and that there is a special kind for them. Consequently, they churn over things at their own level and never get outside it, and they never will realise what lies ahead unless that outlook is replaced. By all means, let the young people gather together but let them never forget how the disciples continued with one accord, steadfastly, in all the functions of the assembly! You can add what you like to that but never let anyone think that the real functions of the assembly, the teaching of the apostles, as well as the breaking of bread and prayers, can be displaced. All the children of God of whatever age group should meet together like this and then bit by bit they will grow up into what really does lie ahead in growth in the Christian life, whereas if they spend all their time churning over together they will never get outside their own level. At the same time, of course, we who are older should do all that we possibly can to consider them and to help them and to speak in ways that they can all understand. Above all we should present them the humility and the meekness and the longsuffering with which we are enjoined to strive to keep the unity of the Spirit.

J. S. Blackburn. This article concludes the series. Cassette recordings of the addresses are available from Mr. B. Wolfe, 2 Grafton Bank, Yetholm, Kelso, Roxburghshire, TD5 BS8, at a charge of £1 per tape plus postage.

Studies in the Book of Revelation (1) (The Plumstead Conference, April 1995) Revelation 7:1-17 By way of an introductory remark it can be said that “no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation” (2 Peter 1:20). It is impossible rightly to take up any Scripture without having in mind the relationship of that Scripture to very many other Scriptures. For example, it is impossible to understand the section we shall be looking at without some knowledge of Daniel’s prophecies, particularly the prophecy of the seventy weeks (Daniel 9:24-27), and other passages like Matthew 24:1-51. The Lord has come once as the Saviour, almost two thousand years ago. He was crucified, accomplished the work of redemption, but is now in heaven. He shall return, for He has promised it. His second coming will have two phases. The first is the rapture, the parousia, when He will take His own into heaven. It will not be seen by the world and the world will not realise it happens. This takes place between Revelation 3:1-22 and Revelation 4:1-11 of Revelation. It is not directly mentioned because the approach the Spirit of God takes to events is different in

Revelation. Then there will be a second stage of the Lord's second coming which is the epiphaneia, when the Lord comes back to earth with His saints. The first time He comes for His saints, the second time He comes with His saints in glory. In between those two stages of the Lord's second coming there will happen a series of events which essentially will take place in about seven years, though we don't know the precise time scale, and should not try to breach that secret. The seventh of the seven weeks — weeks of years — which will take place, is divided into two half-weeks, each of three and a half years. The distinction between the first three and a half years and the second three and a half years can be linked to that war in heaven referred to in Revelation 12:7-12. Michael the archangel and his angels will be warring against Satan and the fallen angels, and that will result in Satan being vanquished and thrown down to the earth and he will be furious. He knows that his days are numbered. This opens the last phases of the judgments. There will be another thing which happens at the same time. The image of the Roman beast will be set up in the rebuilt temple in Jerusalem, and this is the abomination which causes the desolation. The Jewish sacrifices and holy priestly service will be caused to cease. Those two events mark the beginning of the second half-week of Daniel (Daniel 9:27). I would think that the seals and the first trumpets take place in the first half-week of Daniel while the last part of the judgments, essentially the vials, will take place in the second half-week. I think the parenthesis of Revelation 7:1-17 takes place at least after the seals, but I would venture to say that the great tribulation is more in the second half-week of Daniel. And the second part of chapter 7 takes place after the tribulation because those saints have gone through the great tribulation and have been saved as the remnant of God. Chronologically it's very difficult to say.

I think it is important in these studies to leave room for differences of opinion and not to be too hard on one another if we do sometimes differ slightly in detail. Let's trust that the Lord will give us patience and that the Spirit will presently lead us into the position where we understand the Scripture a little better. For myself I think that the six seals are connected with the first half of Daniel's seventieth week and now we're coming to the more direct judgments which may possibly be connected with the introduction of the second half of that week.

Last night reference was made to the "beginning of sorrows" (Matthew 24:8) as covering the first three and a half years of the last remaining week, and the setting up of the abomination of desolation as characterising the second half of that last week. Iagree that here we are perhaps towards the end of the first half of Daniel's remaining week.

We might ask why the Holy Spirit did not put these things in a different way in the book of Revelation so that we can be sure how they will happen. But then our hearts would be occupied with events and not with a Person. In the paintings by Rembrandt you can see in the centre a very clear picture but away from the centre it is much darker and less clear. This was done with a purpose because Rembrandt wanted to fix our eyes on the centre of the picture. We have the same principle in the book of Revelation. The Holy Spirit wants to fix our hearts on the spiritual centre of the book of Revelation because it is the testimony of Jesus.

I think that the purpose of this book is also to teach us the thoughts of God, how He is governing the earth and people, how He is acting with His saints, and all these things have a moral basis. When we say that we are not to be harsh on one another about the chronology of events it is because God is not so much interested in chronology and history, but He has to educate our

minds and spirits according to the Word of God and this is very important. We have to focus on the Lord, but also to consider more generally His ways and thoughts and acts. There are things that we ought not to be harsh about, such as this question of the two half-weeks, but there are other things that we ought to hold to. I mean for example the distinction between the rapture and the appearing. It is clear that in the religious world, even the evangelical world, there is a strong tendency to refuse this distinction. Yet this distinction is very important because first of all it is the basis of the hope we have in waiting for the Lord. At the same time it shows that the world is bad and going on to judgment. There is hope for us but not for the world. This is based upon the distinction between the two parts of the Lord's second coming. This distinction also implies the fact that the flesh, the old nature, is definitely bad and cannot be improved. That is why the world is going to the judgment and is growing worse and worse because no improvement of the flesh is possible. The religious world cannot admit this so they prefer to think that the world probably will be improved in some way and that we are to contribute to this improvement. But having our hope in the heavens and not in an earthly improvement then we are not going to contribute to the policy of the world. In dealing with these chapters in Revelation we also need sound dispensational teaching and the heart of that is that there is a distinction between the church and Israel.

It is very important to make that distinction. Not only because of the doctrine itself but because if we don't make the distinction the expectation of the imminent coming of the Lord Jesus will be lost. Some teach that the coming of the Lord for His church is after other events, such as the tribulation or other things. But if we keep this distinction clearly before us then our hearts will be warmed up by the realisation that the Lord Jesus can come today.

There is an absolute distinction which is marked clearly between Revelation 3:1-22 and the following chapters. At this moment there is only one body of Christ comprising all redeemed ones from the nations and from Israel, as God's heavenly people. The double reference to Israel's national position as presently under judgment is, "not My people" and "no mercy." But God will begin His relationship with Israel again, through the tribulation, through sorrows, through sufferings, and finally introduce Israel into blessing. That is another part of God's dealings, but not a present part of them. The apostle says in Romans 11:1-36 that "blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in. And so all Israel shall be saved." At this point in the book of Revelation "the fulness of the Gentiles" has come in. When the Lord takes the assembly away that will be the end of the fulness of the Gentiles and God will begin to work again with His people Israel.

Up to Revelation 3:1-22 we are seeing the church on earth carrying God's testimony. In Revelation 4:1-11; Revelation 5:1-14 we are caught up to heaven and we enter upon a heavenly scene. In Revelation 7:1-17 we come back to events on earth. We see saints, having God's life and in relation with God's throne, but they are on earth, not in heaven. The distinction is extremely important. Our Lord will come for His church and we shall be with Him for ever. The parenthesis of chapter 7 shows us that afterwards there will be people who have not heard the gospel of grace but who will hear the gospel of the kingdom. We see numbers of persons here after the rapture of the church who will obtain the salvation which belongs to our God. However, those professors of the Christian faith who have perhaps often heard the gospel but have never really believed will no longer have the opportunity to do so.

“And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: That they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness” (2 Thessalonians 2:11-12). Those people who have refused to accept the truth no longer have the opportunity to do so. It is not those people who are referred to in chapter 7 of Revelation, but in chapters 6 and 7 the Spirit of God teaches us about several different companies of believers. In Revelation 6:1-17, in connection with the fifth seal, we find those souls under the altar who are the first post-Christian martyrs. They are counselled to have patience until they are joined by those who will know martyrdom during the great tribulation, and they form the second company of believers. Then there will be the sealed ones in the beginning of chapter 7. Then the multitude from amongst the nations in the second half of chapter 7, the fourth company. A fifth company is also found in Revelation 14:1-20 : the hundred and forty four thousand from Judah and Benjamin on mount Zion. So we have five companies of believers connected with the earth who have the Lord Jesus as their Saviour and eternal life.

One of the outstanding encouragements in reading the book of Revelation is to find that God has many other companies apart from the church. The church may have the chief place, the near place, but it isn’t everything, and if we go through this book there are various companies God picks for Himself, for His own joy and heart.

It is a very important principle that God always secures what is for Himself before judgment falls. This is exemplified right from the beginning. For example, Noah is taken into the ark before the flood comes and Lot is taken out of Sodom and Gomorrah before the cities are destroyed. The firstborn in Egypt are covered by the blood before the avenging angel goes through the land. Israel is taken through the Red Sea before the Egyptians perish. In New Testament times a remnant according to grace is saved: “Save yourselves from this untoward generation,” before the judgment falls with Titus in AD 70. Sometimes, in our contacts with Christians, we find those who are in doubt as to whether the church will go through the tribulation. There should be no question about this for He will save us from the hour of trial that is going to come upon the whole habitable world. That is in accord with God’s principle at all times that He secures what is for Himself before the judgment falls, and we are going to find this again in this chapter. From among the Jews first and then the Gentiles, God secures for Himself that which is for His own pleasure.

We can summarise this principle from Habakkuk 3:1-19 verse 2, “in wrath” He “remember(s) mercy.” We find a similar situation in Ezekiel 9:1-11. “And the Lord said to him, Go through the midst of the city, through the midst of Jerusalem, and set a mark upon the foreheads of the men that sigh, and that cry, for all the abominations that be done in the midst thereof” (Ezekiel 9:4). We have the same thing here in our chapter in Revelation 7:1-17. Before the devilish power (“the... winds,” — Revelation 7:1) has been loosed upon the earth there is a company which is sealed. In Revelation 9:1-21 verse 4 we read that “it was commanded them that they should not hurt the grass of the earth, neither any green thing, neither any tree; but only those men which have not the seal of God in their foreheads.” So we may conclude that with the seal we have here the idea of the property, the ownership, of God, and it has also the meaning of security. If God has put His seal upon a man and it is clear for everybody, it is in their foreheads, then even these devilish powers will not touch them. We have the same thing in our times in 2 Timothy 2:19, “The Lord knoweth them that are His,” and we are sealed, not by external things, but with the Holy Spirit, which He has given unto us (Ephesians 1:1-23; 2 Corinthians 1:22). When the Lord comes the

believers of the church period will be raptured. We will leave the earth and the Spirit will come with us. His presence on earth is one of the two points mentioned in 2 Thessalonians 2:1-17 as to why the wave of evil is restrained. So the seal or mark after the church period is not exactly the same as the Holy Spirit but it is something which constitutes God's mark. Ezekiel 9:1-11 shows that it is exactly the opposite of the mark of the beast. People will accept the mark of the beast to survive and that is the opposite of faith. This has a very important bearing for us now. Are we going to accept any touch of the world at this moment? No, we should not, regardless of the price we have to pay. In Revelation 14:1-20 the seal is collectively the Name of the Lamb and the Name of the Father.

Notice it is "the Name of His Father" (J. N. D. Trans.). This earthly company hasn't got the same relationship that we enjoy in the assembly today.

It is also in keeping with the fact that the saints are regarded as servants in this book. John is a servant, and even the place that the Lord takes is a subject place in the book of Revelation. Therefore you don't get anything said about "Our Father" as you have, say, in John 20:1-31. In verse 2 there is a reference to the angel ascending from the east. In the New Translation it is from "the sunrising." Does that show that before we start to think about these terrible judgments, God has the end in view? We are familiar with the words in Malachi 4:2, "the Sun of righteousness (shall) arise with healing in His wings." Victory is assured. Is it not blessed to see that the end is sure and certain? "He (shall) bring forth judgment unto victory" (Matthew 12:20). The very first mention of the east is in Genesis chapter 2 where we read that Eden was planted "eastward." It would seem that when man was placed on the earth God still had another world in view. And there is One in power, the Sun of righteousness, who is going to accomplish all that was in God's mind from the beginning. In Mark's Gospel it says that the women came to the tomb and it was the sunrising. There was a new day beginning on the other side of death. John says (1 John 2:8), "because the darkness is past, and the true light now shineth." Here in Revelation 7:1-17 we are nearing the fulness of the rising of the sun.

(To be continued, if the Lord will) News from the Field The State of St Lucia This is a Caribbean island between Martinique and St Vincent:

Area 619 sq. km Population 164,000 Capital Castries, Urbanisation 60% Language The official language is English but a French "Patois" and Creole are widely used.

Until 1803 this island was French. Towards the end of the last century carpenters from Barbados preached the gospel and an assembly was formed at Castries.

Visits of brethren from elsewhere have helped in the establishment of the few brothers and sisters. In 1948 a fearful fire destroyed four-fifths of the town, but the meeting room was spared. Several brothers who were unemployed found work as carpenters. Brethren from other islands continue to visit this little witness amidst a predominantly Catholic population. The brethren are active in assembly meetings, evangelism, Sunday school work, literature distribution and run a bookstore. On 13th September 1995 we received a letter from Albert Sandy, who works for the Lord on the island, giving us some welcome news:

"Greetings in the exalted Name of our Lord Jesus Christ, for whom we wait from heaven. It cannot be too long before the Great God, our Saviour, comes to rapture His waiting bride away. What a

glorious day that will be!

Thanks, brother, for your letter regarding the books you posted to me for use among the saints here. The post was rather quick. One box was received on the 22nd of August, one day before I proceeded to the Bible Camp in Trinidad. I attempted to respond to your correspondence then, but realised that all the books you mailed had not yet arrived. I'll be checking the Post Office in that respect. The booklet on the Sonship of Christ (by W.R. Dronsfield) deals with a current subject here, also on the Trinity, so that will be most timely. I'll let you know the outcome. The books received were distributed freely to the local saints. May the Lord enlighten and encourage the readers. The assembly at Castries is growing by God's grace. In the past 3 months eight took their place at the Lord's table and break bread. About four were baptised. Outreach work has its yield, some six steadfast young people, five of whom have been to Barbados and St. Vincent for Bible camp this summer. We value your prayers for preservation of the momentum at present, that we may be ever watchful and standing against all the enemy's attacks and wiles, in submission to God and all peacefulness among saints. Please do pray. While in Trinidad I spent some time with brother Mornix. He is doing fine but the meetings there need much prayer. Some young promising believers are being nurtured, but the business of Satan is evident. They need much prayer.

I have recently been looking for CHM's book on evangelization (letters to a friend of his, sharing his concern regarding attitudes of the Lord's people on the subject). How blessed to look and live for Him who will soon come and take His rightful place in this ungodly world. Even so come Lord Jesus." On 3rd October we received a second letter:

"..... another 3 boxes have arrived and were cleared with the balance of the books. Books received are Bibles, "The Son of God," "The Church Infiltrated" and many others. Thanks again, dear brother, we greatly appreciate this. We will make the books available to the beloved saints. Some of these titles may also be used in our outreach in the countryside.

We pray that through the help of these books and ministry, lives will continue to be enhanced. Do pray for the work here continually. Convey our love and greetings to the beloved saints of frequent contact with you."

St Vincent and the Grenadines

Area 389 sq. km Population 120,000 Capital Kingston, Urbanisation 35% Language English The gospel was brought to this island by brethren from Barbados and by brother William Glover, who arrived from Guyana about 1862 to set up in business. In 1896 a brother from England, Mr. E. B. Dolamore, a good friend of William Kelly, settled at Kingstown to serve the Lord and remained for 15 years. In 1930 brother W. H. Sewell from England and brother A. C. Pilgrim from Barbados devoted several weeks to visiting the assemblies. By God's grace and the visits of brethren from the adjoining islands and elsewhere, the assemblies have been strengthened. At present they number 10. The brethren are active in assembly meetings, conferences, Bible camps, evangelism, children's and youth work outreach, literature distribution and they also run a bookstore. On 8th September 1995 we received a brief letter from brother Pieter Boom, working for the Lord on this island:

"Thank you very much for the parcel with literature and Bibles. They are very welcome here for distribution. Everything arrived in good order. We thank the Lord for the service Chapter Two

provides and trust that He will use His Word for the building up of our 10 assemblies here (some are very small and weak). Please ask the brethren to pray for the assemblies here and for us, that the Word may prosper.”

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Truth & Testimony Vol. 3, No. 8, 1996.

Honouring our Head Corinthians 11:1-16

God anticipated that this particular Scripture would become a matter for contention and therefore Paul closes the subject by writing, “But if any man seem to be contentious, we have no such custom, neither the churches of God” (5: 16). Yet this is the Word of God and deeply important for the true blessing of all the church of God on earth. Paul has stated the truth and will not allow it to be a contentious issue. The truth of God is too precious and vital to be dragged down to the level of human argument.

Let us therefore approach such a subject with reverent, humble faith, desiring only that God will make His will clearly known and understood. We shall never lose by bowing to His own will but will prosper more greatly in spiritual growth and wisdom.

First, we must remember that 1 Corinthians is written, not to individuals as such, but “Unto the church of God which is at Corinth... with all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord” (1 Corinthians 1:2). Therefore what Paul is saying is to be taken to heart by the whole assembly as such. All the assembly will be affected by the obedience or disobedience of any individual in the assembly, so all should be concerned that individuals should bow to the authority of God’s Word. This chapter begins the subject of the assembly in its functions together and the first 16 verses are introductory. Verse 17 speaks of the Corinthians actually gathering together and that verse clearly connects with verse 2, for he praises them in verse 2 and says he does not praise them in verse 17. For in verse 17 he shows that in coming together they were exposing their own disunity. That disunity could be corrected by a true regard to the introductory verses 1 to 16. How important then that these preparations for gathering are closely observed! The assembly in Corinth is commended for keeping the instructions Paul had given them (5: 2) but there was a matter that needed to be specially called to their attention. He wanted them to understand that “the head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman is the man; and the head of Christ is God” (5: 3). It is certainly just as important to insist on this today as it was in Paul’s day, for its significance is much more vital than many want to realise. This is actually God’s order in creation, though the world ignores it. But if the church of God is to maintain any proper order it cannot ignore God’s order in creation. Some have imagined that this cannot apply to the Christian, since in Christ “there is neither male nor female” (Galatians 3:28). However, that Scripture has to do with the new creation and though the assembly is blessed now with all the spiritual blessings of the new creation, yet, as long as we are on earth, we are still in the sphere of the first creation. Our relationships as men and women are clearly those of the first creation, where God’s creatorial order still applies. For in glory there will be literally neither male nor female (Matthew 22:30).

“The head of every man is Christ.” This fact surely gives us no difficulty. But some do object to the clear, decided fact that “the head of the woman is the man.” This does not imply that man is better

than or superior to the woman but God has given him that place of headship. More than that, “the head of Christ is God.” Certainly Christ, as the eternal Son of God, is fully equal with God, yet as Man He is willing to recognise that God is His head. Should it be hard then for a woman to recognise man as her head, though she is equal with him? We should all see the great wisdom of God in this and bow with thankfulness before Him for it.

However, a man praying or prophesying with his head covered dishonours his head. His head is Christ: he is therefore dishonouring Christ. Why? The man is set by God in the place of authority and this is to be exercised under the headship of Christ. If a man in this case covers his head he is covering up Christ and in this way he dishonours Him. On the other hand, if a woman prays or prophesies with her head uncovered she dishonours her head. That is, she dishonours the man who is her head. In what way? She is virtually putting herself in the place that the man should have. That is sad dishonour. If she covers her head, she shows that her place is subjection to the man, which is right.

Some have wondered if this applies only if a woman prays or prophesies audibly, and if therefore she need use a head covering in the assembly because women keep silent in the assembly (1 Corinthians 14:34). Yet in the assembly meetings every person in the assembly is to participate fully in all the prayers and ministry and reading of the Scriptures, though most individuals usually participate inaudibly. A woman’s spiritual exercise of taking part without speaking is just as important as the man’s place in furthering the welfare of the assembly. This is too easily forgotten in our tendency to exaggerate the public place. Those who are behind the scenes have far more effect in the way a meeting progresses than we generally stop to consider. Other Scriptures confirm this lovely fact, such as Acts 1:14 where the disciples “all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with His brethren.” All were praying but certainly not all were praying audibly. Acts 4:24 says that the company there “lifted up their voice to God with one accord.” Again not every one would pray audibly but all prayed with one accord. This unity is beautiful. The same is found in Acts 12:12 : “many were gathered together, praying” for Peter who was in prison. The many were praying but we could not think that all were praying audibly. This instruction then clearly applies to assembly gatherings, though it is not confined to these.

Some also have said that since a woman’s hair is given her as a covering, this is sufficient. However, while it is true that God has given her long hair as a covering, He expects her, on this account, to also cover her own head, thus confirming her agreement with what God has done. Notice also how clearly Scripture answers this when we are told, “If the woman be not covered, let her also be shorn” (5: 6). Can this mean, “if a woman does not have hair, let her also cut her hair off?” The very question answers itself. The force of this verse is that if the woman refuses to cover her head then she might as well go all the way in refusing also what God has done in giving her long hair. But since it is a shame for a woman to be shorn or shaven, let her then cover her head. Honest simplicity of faith can only bow to the facts as God gives them.

“For a man indeed ought not to cover his head, forasmuch as he is the image and glory of God” (5: 7). As such he represents God and God is to be, not covered, but prominent. “But the woman is the glory of the man” and the glory of man is not to be prominent. For in creation the man was not from the woman, as has been true subsequently, but the woman from the man, as Eve was taken

from Adam's side. She was created for the man, for God had said it was not good for man to be alone. This was God's order in creation and therefore the woman should have the sign of authority on her head, that is, that she is under authority to her head, the man. It is added here, "because of the angels." Angels are vitally interested in the order God has prescribed in His creation and they care as to whether both man and woman are obedient.

"Nevertheless, neither is the man without (or independent of) the woman, neither the woman without (or independent of) the man, in the Lord" (5: 11). There is a unity in God's creation that is seen to be most beautiful when both man and woman keep their place and function as each is properly fitted to function. For though the woman came from man to begin with, yet since that time man has come through the woman. Both are given a dignity that is peculiar to each and both should act in the dignity that is becoming to the particular place God has given. This being the case the assembly is told to judge in themselves, is it proper for a woman to pray to God with her head uncovered? How could we ever dare to answer yes to this? And it is added, "Doth not even nature itself teach you, that if a man have long hair, it is a shame unto him?" In the world today things are so out of course that people cannot even discern this evident lesson from nature. But believers should have no difficulty with this. Also, if a woman has long hair, it is a glory to her. Nature teaches us this also, though it is often ignored, not only by unbelievers but sadly also by many believers. "For her hair is given her for a covering." This is what God has done, in effect telling the woman that it is her glory to be covered. Her willing consent to this will induce her to cover her head when prayer or prophesying is exercised.

We have been thankful to learn in recent months that a number of denominational churches have been awakened to a sense of failure in having ignored this Scripture, and the women have been stirred to wear head coverings in their gatherings. This is a refreshing contrast to the trend in the opposite direction.

It has been a concern to some that if a lady visits a meeting she may be offended because others are wearing head coverings while she has none. On this account some have not worn a head covering because of apprehension as to what the other may think. This is too bad. For always our obedience to the Word of God is the best possible testimony to anyone else. Compromise in this is disobedience. The visitor may rightly ask questions if she sees others wearing a covering. We know of a recent case where one asked such questions and this led to her conversion only a few days after and to the conversion of her husband also. Then in coming to meetings she willingly adopted the wearing of a head covering without being told to wear it. May our God and Father give grace that both the believing man and the woman may gladly accept the dignity of the honour with which God has invested each one and function willingly in that place. We surely know that God would love to see this rather than any contention about a matter that He Himself, in His great love and wisdom, has found necessary to bring to our attention.

L. M. Grant God's Dealings With Hosea In the Psalms we read, "Jehovah trieth the righteous" (Psalms 11:5, J.N.D. Trans.) and when we consider the persons whom He chose to carry out His plans we see that, to quote Job's words, He "doeth great things past finding out" (Job 9:10). For example, God promised Abraham that he would be the father of myriads of people and yet he and Sarah had to wait until they were old before they had a son. David was anointed in his youth by Samuel but for many years he was pursued by Saul. Jeremiah, called by God from his youth to

testify to kings, was imprisoned and even dropped into a pit and on one occasion his whole prophecy was torn up and thrown on the fire.

Hosea was also a faithful man but he had to experience terrible problems in his family life. He had to act as a living parable for the Jewish nation that had turned away from God. First he had to marry a worthless woman and then beget children whose names would be a constant reminder of the corruption and wickedness of his people. We can imagine how difficult this must have been for him but he faithfully carried out his commission. He might have reacted as Peter did when he received a vision of various creatures that he regarded as unclean. When he was told, “Rise, Peter; kill, and eat,” as a pious Jew he said, “Not so, Lord; for I have never eaten any thing that is common or unclean.” We know the divine answer: “What God hath cleansed, that call not thou common.” We do not read that Hosea questioned his commission. It was enough for him that it was the word of the Lord. Nevertheless it must have been a difficult task to carry out. The name of the firstborn was significant: “God scatters.” The ungodly northern kingdom was doomed. When next a daughter was born God told Hosea to give her the name of Lo-ruhamah, which means “not having obtained mercy.” The Lord explained the meaning of this name: as far as the northern kingdom was concerned: He could no longer show mercy. As we know, the Jews of the northern kingdom were eventually swept out of their land by the Assyrians and completely lost their identity. Nevertheless, the faithful God never lost sight of His people and to Hosea He revealed His eventual purpose for them. When a second son was born God told Hosea to give him the name of Lo-ammi which means “not My people.” It would have been disastrous for the nation if God had left them in that state. But Hosea was given a message from God, who is a God of mercy, and the promise was given to these undeserving people: “Yet the number of the children of Israel shall be as the sand of the sea.” In the second chapter of Hosea’s prophecy we read the message that was to be brought to these ungrateful people. It must have been hard for Hosea to tell the people that God would have to discipline His own nation but they were unfaithful and disobedient. Because He loved them He did not want them to follow the behaviour of the surrounding nations. He reminded them that He had brought them up out of Egypt and even now He was ready to forgive them for their idolatry and renew His covenant with them. The valley of Achor (“trouble”) would become a door of hope. God would remove all the idols that had been so damaging to their spiritual life and have mercy upon them. In Hosea 3:1-5 the prophet was reminded of his unfaithful wife and told to take her back again. It is pointed out that this wife’s behaviour was just that which the nation of Israel had done to their God. They would have to learn their lessons by bitter experience. “The children of Israel shall abide many days without a king, and without a prince, and without a sacrifice, and without an image” but eventually they would return to the Lord their God. The final appeal to this nation is given in the last chapter of Hosea’s prophecy: “O Israel, return unto the Lord thy God... say unto Him, Take away all iniquity, and receive us graciously.” From God’s side the prophet could give them a message of hope: “I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely.”

We do not know if Hosea himself saw the effect of his solemn warnings and entreaties. The final fulfilment of his prophecy is yet to come and the restoration of Israel will be glorious. Meanwhile we are able to see something of the love that God still has for His earthly people. We know that the day is coming when our blessed Lord, who was rejected by His earthly people when He was here on earth, will be recognised as King of kings and Lord of lords. Israel shall be restored, the nations

shall recognise Israel's supremacy, and the earth will at last enjoy peace. Meanwhile, since the Jewish nation cast out and crucified their divine Deliverer, God's messengers are scattered throughout the world and day by day thousands of Jews and Gentiles hear the good news and are added to the favoured company, the assembly of the Living God.

R. E. A. Retallick Studies in the Book of Revelation (2) (The Plumstead Conference, April 1995) Continued from page 222 Revelation 7:1-4

"And after this I saw four angels standing upon the four corners of the earth, holding fast the four winds of the earth, that no wind might blow upon the earth, nor upon the sea, nor upon any tree" (5: 1). The order in which these things are presented to us is important. It is made clear that God has complete control of the situation, even of the worst powers which may act upon the earth. The earth may be in total turmoil but God takes care of the saints. He knows each one and this is so important for our comfort and consolation. Nothing is too difficult for Him, nor any situation too dangerous. In this verse the expression "the earth" is used in two different senses. What I am referring to is, "on the four corners of the earth," which I take to be literally the earth as we know it today. But further on in the verse, "that the wind should not blow on the earth, nor on the sea," the earth has rather the significance of what is stable in contrast to what is in turmoil like the waves of the sea. Israel, for example, came from the hand of God having a certain measure of stability, while the sea seems to represent anarchy and that kind of thing amongst the nations. In Revelation 6:13 we get the mighty wind as a figure of God's judgment and this is held back until God seals His own.

It is a very important thing that as much as God intervenes in judgment man refuses to repent. They are more and more against God. That is why their judgment is so much more awful. There is always time given for repentance. That is the essential message of the seven churches time, and God does not change. In connection with the reference to, "nor any tree," we are again shut up to symbols as taught to us in the Scriptures. "The trees of the Lord are full of sap," we read in the Psalms (Psalms 104:16), speaking of the saints. But we find the tree also used in connection with Nebuchadnezzar. It seems to refer to persons, does it not? So that here no power can hinder God from His intended purpose in connection with blessing. The tree also represents ruling power. In this connection the only emblem in blessing is the cedar tree in Ezekiel 17:1-24, which is a figure of the Lord Jesus. Usually in Scripture the tree is a ruling power where "the birds of the air" take refuge (Matthew 13:32). This was the moral character of the heads of the Gentile empires. The church in the Pergamos period should never have taken refuge under the wings of the political powers and should not subsequently have set herself as a governing body in which men of the world take refuge.

We find in Revelation that the powers of nature are several times connected with the angels and in Hebrews 1:7 you find that God has made the angels as winds (spirits). I think these winds in verse 1 of this chapter are connected with supernatural powers. In Zechariah 6:1-15 we have the question in connection with the four chariots, "What are these, my lord?" (verse 4), and in verse 5, "These are the four spirits of the heavens." In the Dutch translation we have, "These are the four winds of the heavens."

"And I saw another angel ascending from (the) sunrising, having (the) seal of (the) living God; and he cried with a loud voice to the four angels to whom it had been given to hurt the earth and the

sea...” (5: 2). Is this other angel in Revelation 7:2 Christ?

I don’t think that it can be the Lord Jesus Christ. He says: “Hurt not the earth, neither the sea, nor the trees, till we have sealed the servants of our God.” It seems unlikely that the Lord Jesus Christ is referred to there, speaking of “our God.” It isn’t until chapter 8 that we have Christ coming forth in angelic form. In the New Testament there are about a hundred and eighty six references to angels but I notice that seventy six of these are in the book of Revelation, so our consideration of angels is really a very important one. I think there are at least two clear instances where we can see that the angel is the Lord, that is Revelation 8:3 in connection with the incense, and then in Revelation 10:1-11 which we shall come to in a later reading. As to the angel here in verse 2, it is difficult to be absolutely dogmatic. There is the statement, “until we shall have sealed the bondmen of our God.” Although it is a divine activity, servants are prominent in this book and the Lord is using His servants in connection with the sealing. You get a somewhat similar instance in Revelation 18:1-24 where the angel cries with a strong voice: “Babylon the great is fallen.” Some think that that is again the Lord but it is difficult to say whether it is the Lord personally or whether it is one of His servants.

Regarding the interpretation of the symbols, we have spoken of the earth as a stable state and of the sea as an unstable state. As a general rule Scripture should be interpreted by Scripture and for example with regard to the sea one of the significant verses is Isaiah 57:20, “But the wicked are like the troubled sea, which cannot rest, and whose waters cast up mire and dirt.” Regarding the angels, we have to be careful, as it is said in Hebrews 1:14 that they are “ministering spirits, sent out for service on account of those who shall inherit salvation.” They are ministering to the saints but basically they are servants. They are important but it is God who is acting and the angels are only instruments. In the Evangelical world there are even books which emphasise the action of the angels for the believer, but the contact which the believer should have is with the Lord, with God. We should rely upon the action of God, or the Lord, and the power of the Holy Spirit, and not be preoccupied with the angels who are just instruments. Could we link the sunrising in verse 2 with Ezekiel 43:2, “And behold, the glory of the God of Israel came from the way of the east; and His voice was like the voice of many waters; and the earth was lit up with His glory.” In my understanding it has something to do with the blessings in relation to Israel. Israel seems distinctly in the mind of God when we come to the next section. When the glory reluctantly departed from Israel it moved from the house to the city and to the mountain. I take that to be the Mount of Olives on the east side of Jerusalem. That will be the direction from which it will come back, in keeping with other Scriptures such as, “His feet shall stand... upon the mount of Olives” (Zechariah 14:4). The first eleven chapters of Ezekiel describe how the glory of God left the earthly house. It went from the holy place, stopped at the entrance gate, went to the east of the city, across the brook Cedron to the Mount of Olives and up into heaven. This is the way the Lord Jesus left the earth according to His future relationship with the earth but for us He left the earth from Bethany. Ezekiel also provides the link with the future time. Ezekiel 43:1-27 is a prophecy; it has not been fulfilled yet because at present the times of the Gentiles are still continuing and the double word Lo-ruhamah and Lo-ammi has been put on the people. But the way of the deliverance for them will be from the east, the rising sun. This is connected with the cry of triumph in Psalms 24:1-10 when we read, “Lift up your heads, O ye gates.” This is not the weeping of the prophet but the rejoicing of his people as they see the glory now returning to the nation.

"... saying, Hurt not the earth, nor the sea, nor the trees, until we shall have sealed the bondmen of our God upon their foreheads" (5: 3). At the time when these Scriptures were written it seems that the Roman soldiers had a seal in their wrists and the worshippers in the idol temples had a seal on their foreheads. These were marks of ownership. Slaves also had a seal in their foreheads, marking them off as owned by those to whom they belonged. This is only an historical point but perhaps it throws up into greater relief the significance of the seal in the Scriptures that we are now reading. We find that the Jewish remnant are in the position where they are God's soldiers and worshippers and bondmen.

I suppose the whole gist of this puts things differently to what we know today. That is why we are sometimes at a loss to understand some of the passages here. We are used to the Lord's words, "I ascend unto My Father, and your Father; and to My God, and your God," but in this passage that is not quite the case. God is not said to be "our Father" and the many references to angels in the book of Revelation seem to bring in a certain element of distance. The saints are regarded as servants in this book and even John is addressed in that way. Perhaps we find this difficult to understand because we are in a place of intimacy and nearness today. The very first verses in the Revelation confirm this when we read, "to shew to His bondmen what must shortly take place; and He signified it, sending by His angel, to His bondman John." This furnishes a key to the understanding of the whole book. Is there the thought in the seal on the forehead that the seal is publicly known to everybody?

Yes. At that time it will be very clear as to who is on the Lord's side and who is on the beast's side. The two marks, the seal here and the mark of the beast, will be very apparent. There will be no middle ground. Today the barrier is often blurred and it is easy to be occupied in a lot of worldly activity with a thin veneer of Christianity on top of it.

Even today we should not be in the grey area because it is not according to the thought of God. That is the trouble with Laodicea. It is an assembly but the Lord is outside. The seal represents the fact that those souls are saved and have God's life. They are not in the Christian position, obviously, but they live for evermore. Death has no power upon them any more. They may go through the first death but they will not be touched by the second death. That is also the reason why it is of so much interest to consider such a chapter. Someone might ask why, since these believers are not Christians, we are studying these verses. But then we see the true character of the world which is totally an enemy of God and an enemy of the true believer. That is the real situation and how can we mix with the world? On the other hand those who are on the side of God are distinct. God has His eye upon them and takes care of them. In verses 9 to 11 of the previous chapter, which describe the opening of the fifth seal, it is so interesting to see that there is a connection between heaven and earth. Heaven is not indifferent to what happens on the earth and there is prayer which has consequences for the earth. It is not the kind of prayer that we should pray now, because they ask for revenge, but nevertheless there are prayers which have consequences.

"And I heard the number of the sealed, a hundred (and) forty-four thousand, sealed out of every tribe of (the) sons of Israel..." (5: 4).

Those who go forth preaching the gospel of the kingdom are a continuation of the work of the disciples when the Lord was here. That is said in Matthew: "Ye shall not have gone over the cities

of Israel, till the Son of man be come" (Matthew 10:23). Looking at the disciples in John's Gospel, they are the nucleus of the assembly, but in Matthew they are representative of the Jewish remnant and that work is carried over. When the Lord was here that would have been only Judah and Benjamin. How is it then that in this passage we have the whole twelve tribes? I would have thought that the actual Jewish remnant continuing the work of the disciples was rather Revelation 14:1-20 than here in Revelation 7:1-17.

God will seal those from out of Judah and Benjamin in chapter 14, but here the principles that we see in Matthew 24:1-51 and in Revelation 14:1-20 extend to a larger group of witnesses, perhaps with a view to the everlasting gospel going to a wider circle than just the land of Israel. Is it not the case that the other ten tribes are not brought back till after Jerusalem has been delivered from bondage? That is Ezekiel 20:1-49. When the Lord addressed His disciples in front of the temple, at the beginning of Matthew 24:1-51, He was on the Mount of Olives. He considered His disciples as those who had received His secret, as those who were to form the basis of the church, and as those who will continue the testimony on earth after the rapture of the church. In other words, the period of the church is not excluded but it is not directly in view. If you don't remember this, Matthew 24:1-51; Matthew 25:1-46 is impossible to understand and you are carried away into all sorts of difficulties. Matthew 10:1-42 tells us that that generation, unbelieving or believing ones, will have the same character as those who lived in the time of the Lord. Considering this, then definitely those marked with the seal carry God's testimony here on earth at that moment. I would say that the first witnesses will be from Judah and Benjamin, but among those who will be judged on the way back to Israel (Ezekiel 20:1-49) there will be a faithful remnant and those will be carrying God's testimony with the others. In other words they are the same company and the two and ten together will carry God's testimony at that moment.

It is difficult to place a time on the judgment of the ten tribes on their way back to Israel. In the first two books of Psalms it is only the Jewish remnant from Judah and Benjamin which are spoken of. In the third book, after the glory (Psalms 72:1-20), the ten tribes join with the two tribes. I don't know when this is in relation to the sequence of events of Revelation. I don't think it is an object of our faith. The teaching is morally important for us but we cannot date the events. And the moral dealings of God are clearly delineated in connection with Judah and Benjamin, not in relation to the ten tribes who are largely passed over. We do see that eventually they are brought in. In Matthew 24:31 you find the gathering together of His elect from the four winds. That is the ten tribes. Again in Isaiah 11:1-16, verses 11 and 12, you find that there is a gathering in of the ten tribes, but how the work is accomplished in their souls Idon't think Scripture tells us.

What we have in Matthew 24:31 regarding the trumpet gathering them together is the fulfilment of the Feast of Trumpets. The Feast of Trumpets comes before the Day of Atonement and the Day of Atonement is accomplished when they look upon Him whom they pierced (Zechariah 12:10). Those who are there and looking upon Him whom they pierced must be those who were present in the land when they crucified the Saviour. Which is Judah and Benjamin. They are more guilty than the others. When we consider the last part of Matthew 25:1-46, just before the judgment of the living, the messengers of the gospel of the kingdom are standing by the Lord Jesus on earth. Who are they? Are they essentially from the two tribes or have the ten tribes also joined them? We don't know but it may be something connected with Revelation 7:1-17. When the judgments of the last half of the week fall upon this world you might think Israel are going to be completely obliterated,

so heavy and so terrible are those judgments going to be. Before they start God says as it were, “I have sealed them all,” and no matter what happens, to repeat again the words from Romans 11:1-36, “And so all Israel shall be saved” (5: 26). We ought to cleave to that because there are hosts around us today who think that Israel is finished as a nation and that all their blessings are being fulfilled spiritually in the church today. That is absolutely wrong. “The gifts and calling of God are without repentance.” The purpose of this chapter is to consider all the saints. That is why we have the Gentiles from verse 9 onwards. For this reason it is clear that the ten tribes cannot be omitted. There is however the question why the people of Israel are numbered when no counting is made of the Gentiles?

I think the answer is that administration, as far as the earth is concerned, is committed to Israel. On the heavenly side you see administration coming out in the holy city in Revelation 21:1-27. In the meantime there is an administration in relation to blessing going out to the Gentiles. Here in Revelation 7:1-17 the twelve times twelve seems to indicate an administration in connection with the going forth of the everlasting gospel.

Even Satan acknowledges it at the last rebellion at the end of the millennium. He goes nowhere else except to Jerusalem to try to destroy the saints. The capital of the world in millennial times will not be London, excuse me, Paris, or even Rome. It will be Jerusalem. When the world was organised by God and humanity placed on the earth, Israel was the centre. It is the centre of the compass points in Scripture. To the north of Israel is Syria, which is “the king of the north.” To the south if Israel is Egypt, which is “the king of the south.” The capital of Christianity is in heaven where the Lord Jesus sits but God will recognise the millennial earth and the centre and capital will be Jerusalem. This is very humbling for the nations. After all, that little nation is nothing, so few, and yet it will be through Jerusalem and Israel that God will govern the entire world. That is why the 144,000 are sealed first and those from the Gentiles later.

Psalms 87:1-7 : “And of Zion it shall be said, This and that man was born in her; and the Highest Himself shall establish her. The Lord shall count, when He writeth up the people, that this man was born there.” You don’t read that about the Gentiles but Israel is counted.

(To be continued, if the Lord will)

Correction The editors are indebted to a reader who has drawn our attention to a mistake on page 216 of the previous issue. The 16th line of the second paragraph should read “The seventieth of the seventy years...” and not “The seventh of the seven years...”

Politics and the Christian That the place of a Christian is in the world but not of it is very evident from the prayer of the Lord in John 17:1-26, ere he went to Golgotha. The example which the Lord set His disciples was one of meekness, humility and obscurity as to the affairs of this world. He came not to judge the world but that the world through Him might be saved. To that end He was willing to suffer what in the eyes of the world was defeat but in reality was the triumph of the grace of God. The way of freedom and liberty is now open to all, even though in this life a man may have to be subject to an overbearing government. True liberty is freedom from sin, the world and Satan, and the blood of Jesus has opened that new and living way, the way of liberty.

It is an open contradiction for a man who knows the way of liberty to be engaged in the politics of this world for such an one must be conscious of the scene of death all around. It is patently

impossible to make comfortable those who are in the grip of death and to try is folly. They need life! The remedy is the preaching of the cross, solely and simply. It is God's remedy. It was commenced by Jesus and carried on by His apostles who made no attempt to better the world, defeat the Romans, or introduce education. They simply preached Christ and Him crucified. Those thus brought into liberty were then exhorted to obey them that had authority. When Christians aspire to positions of power in the world they become prey to the doctrine of Balaam (see the letter to Pergamos) and this soon degenerates into the terrible excesses of Jezebel, who usurps authority (see the letter to Thyatira). However, the letter to Sardis expostulates that there is death in the midst and the works are incomplete before God. It is evident then that if a world-loving church gives rise to Romish corruption, Protestantism is also sadly at fault in that it harbours death and its works are incomplete.

What is needful therefore is a complete reappraisal of the situation by all right-minded Christians whose faith is founded on the finished work of Calvary and not on creeds and dogmas. Surely we would not be so occupied in making the dead more comfortable in their death that the Lord would come upon them as a thief? No! No! We would rather be found with our lamps trimmed and our eyes watchful, awaiting the glorious advent of the Life-Giver. Rather would we be found "Holding forth the word of life," and "exhorting (encouraging) one another: and so much the more as ye (we) see the day approaching" (Php 2:16; Hebrews 10:1-39 :).

Basil Wolf, Jr. The author wrote this when in hospital in 1987 and passed it on to a sister who visited him at that time. He was called home to be with the Lord on 11 February 1995.

Having Loved His Own Which Were In The World (3)

John 14:1-14 The hearts of the disciples were filled with sorrow and loss. The Lord whom they loved was leaving them and they did not know where He was going or why. At the contemplation of not seeing Him again their hearts were deeply troubled.

How beautiful then were the Lord's words to His own, "Let not your heart be troubled." He would have them without care even though His heart was burdened. If the Lord would have the feet of "His own" without defilement, He also would have their hearts without distracting fear. "Ye believe in God, believe also in Me." He introduces them to the sphere of faith. If God was unseen and yet an object of faith, He was now going to be likewise. He would have their hearts hold Him as an object of living faith. Though absent from them He would still love them. "In My Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you." Love reveals to love where He is going. He speaks the truth in love that He may strengthen their confidence in Himself. His going away to the Father's house was so that He might make room for them. How this must have thrilled their hearts! It was for their sakes He was going away, that His place there might be their place. As He had dwelt in their circumstances, even so they would dwell in His. But such was His love that He would come personally and receive them to Himself and bring them into His place. "Where I am, there ye may be also."

He is now conducting them to what is spiritual and not to what is material. Nor does He engage them with the details of what lay ahead for Him but with the One to whom He was going. "And whither I go ye know, and the way ye know." What He had just said was in no way mystical. They already knew, in a conscious way, the meaning of His words. Thomas, puzzled at this, asks as to

“whither” and “the way.” The Lord’s answer centres upon Himself as “the way,” and the Father as the “whither.” The end would be the fulness of what they already knew in measure, as He goes on to show. Love reveals to them the oneness and the fellowship of the Father and the Son. The One in their midst — the Son — seen and heard, represented the One unseen: the Father. He was made manifest in the Son. The disciples, like Israel, had heard and witnessed His marvellous words and works, but never fully realised what they heard and saw. So the Lord has to say, “If ye had known Me, ye should have known My Father also.” He now brings them to the truth: “he that hath seen Me hath seen the Father.” Love draws them on and closer to Himself. He makes known the oneness of the Father and the Son: “I am in the Father, and the Father in Me.” What they heard and saw found its source in the Father. The works that the Lord did were not only proof of His own Person but also a revelation of the Father. How love delights to make known these things! But love would give “His own” part in this testimony. For as He represented the Father so those who believed on Him would represent Him. And those who are here for Him will have yet a fuller testimony when He goes back to the Father. If love bestows part and privilege, it also gives liberty. “Whatsoever ye shall ask in My Name, that will I do.” If “His own,” left in this world and bearing His Name, ask, He in the glory will answer freely for the glory of the Father. They, through the Son, can glorify the Father. His separation from them would, through His Name, guarantee confidence and assurance in Him. What blessings of love the Lord shows to “His own.”

(The brother who has written this series of articles wishes to remain anonymous) House, Not Made With Hands (2)

“For we know, that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens” (2 Corinthians 5:1) (Continued from page 195) God’s Purpose and the earnest of the Spirit

We have already seen that being “clothed upon” is the true hope of the believer in the Lord Jesus Christ. Not only is this so but verse 5 assures us that it is the purpose of God for us: “Now He that hath wrought us for the selfsame thing is God, who also hath given unto us the earnest of the Spirit” (2 Corinthians 5:5). This is put just as clearly in Romans 8:29 : “For whom He did foreknow, He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren.” To emphasise once more what has been said, to be “clothed upon with our house which is from heaven” is equivalent to being “conformed to the image of His Son.” However, there is also God’s sovereign work within. This is described in the words, “Now He that hath wrought us for the selfsame thing is God.” Sinful creatures as we are by nature, only the work of God could bring about such a radical change. This, and the work of redemption done by Another, has made us suitable for such a glorious end: to be like Him. We may pause and reflect on how indebted we are to God’s sovereignty. There is nothing of ourselves for we were unable to contribute anything. It should draw from our hearts the worship which is rightly due to God. It might also be asked, “What manner of life ought to be seen in those who are the subjects of God’s purpose and grace?” As we wait for that time of being “clothed upon,” God has given us the “earnest of the Spirit.” This is a wonderful subject referred to in other Scriptures. In this same epistle, chapter 1, Paul refers to “the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts” (5: 22). And in Ephesians 1:14 the Holy Spirit of promise is said to be the “earnest of our inheritance.” The Holy Spirit is the guarantee or part-payment of the whole. The two references in 2 Corinthians teach us that there is present blessing to be enjoyed as we look forward in anticipation and the expression “in our

hearts” confirms this. At Home — Absent The next three verses in 2 Corinthians 5:1-21 give us light as to the condition of the believer between falling asleep and the resurrection (5: 6-8). The state described in the earlier part of the chapter as “unclothed” is here given as “absent from the body,” and “present with the Lord” (5: 8). Before this Paul describes believers while alive as being “at home in the body” and “absent from the Lord” (5: 6). What is said here is in line with the earlier portion of the chapter that speaks of “our earthly house of this tabernacle.” It is but a temporary dwelling and while we are at home in it we are absent from the Lord.

Verse 7 is a very important parenthesis: “For we walk by faith, not by sight.” This governs the whole of our lives while in our present flesh and blood condition. All the spiritual blessings we possess are true to faith but are not visible or tangible. If absent from the Lord, we have not seen Him with natural vision. However, faith carries with it great certainty and Hebrews 11:1-40 comes to mind in this connection: “Now faith is the substantiating of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen” (Hebrews 11:1, J.N.D. Trans.).

Faith gives certainty “But we see Jesus...” (Hebrews 2:9) Faith attracts our hearts to Him “Whom having not seen, ye love” (1 Peter 1:8) Faith gives us endurance “He (Moses) endured, as seeing Him who is invisible”

(Hebrews 11:27)

Yet with all the certainty which faith gives, keeping within the context of our chapter, it is still true that we are “at home in the body” and “absent from the Lord.”

Thinking again of the “unclothed” condition, referred to above, it is to be “present with the Lord.” Paul does not elaborate upon this state but the word “present” may be rendered “at home” (RV). This is a comforting word. At death the spirit leaves the mortal body but for the believer there is the consciousness of being at home. There is no such thought in Scripture as “soul sleep.” It is the body that is asleep, awaiting the shout of the Lord (1 Thessalonians 4:16). This “unclothed” condition is referred to in another place as being “with Christ; which is far better” (Php 1:23). There is no doubt about this. The Lord Jesus made this promise to the dying thief: “To day shalt thou be with Me in paradise” (Luke 23:43). How sweet is the thought, “with Me” — it is His desire. When the Lord comes again, to raise the sleeping saints and to change the living saints, the apostle says, “and so shall we ever be with the Lord” (1 Thessalonians 4:17). To go back again to our original theme, we will spend that eternal day “with Him,” having “a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.” The Christian’s Ambition

Verse 9 brings us to the practical response. The apostle speaks for himself and his fellow-labourers. “Wherefore also we are zealous, whether present or absent, to be agreeable to Him” (J.N.D. Trans.). The word used here is “ambition.” The literal translation is, “Wherefore we are ambitious.” It has also been rendered, “We make it our aim.” While it was perfectly true that the apostle groaned, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with “our house which is from heaven,” as long as the Lord left him here he was ambitious to please Him. His sentiments are similar in the Epistle to the Philippians: “For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better” (Php 1:23). It seems as though he was in a quandary, not knowing which way it should be. He then thinks of the encouragement and help needed by the saints. He goes on, “Nevertheless to abide in the flesh is more needful for you” (5: 24). This is where his

ambition lay. Caring for the saints was all part of his intense desire to please the Lord. There cannot be a greater aim in life than to please Him. This should be the over-riding motive in every department of the believer's life. There are ambitions we all have which are legitimate. Young believers have to make decisions as to choosing a career and a marriage partner. But over and above this there is to be that single eye to please the Lord. The believer's body, of which so much has been said in 2 Corinthians 4:1-18; 2 Corinthians 5:1-21, is to be presented to God as a "living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service" (Romans 12:1). The Judgment Seat of Christ

"For we must all be manifested before the judgment-seat of the Christ, that each may receive the things done in the body, according to those he has done, whether it be good or evil" (2 Corinthians 5:10, J.N.D. Trans.). This verse raises very sobering concerns. It appears to be much wider in its scope than the more familiar passage in 1 Corinthians 3:12-17 which deals with our service. Rather, the verse here deals with the "things done in the body." Whichever way we view 2 Corinthians 5:10, one thing is certain: "we must all be manifested before the judgment-seat of the Christ." Everything will be assessed at its true value. Thinking of this day, Paul writes of "the righteous judge" (2 Timothy 4:8).

It is not to be judged for our sins that we will be manifested there but that the value of our lives and conduct in His sight may be made known. The matter of our acceptance before God has been settled once and for all and the closing verse of this chapter is adequate proof of this: "For He hath made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him" (2 Corinthians 5:21).

G. Bell Christ's Greatness in the Epistle to Laodicea (3) (Continued from page 210) "Because thou sayest" (Revelation 3:17) In contrast to the mouth of our blessed Lord we find in verse 17 what was proceeding out of the mouths of the Laodiceans. The assembly speaks about itself, not about Christ. What a contrast with what the Lord says in Revelation 3:10 concerning Philadelphia: "thou hast kept the word of My patience..." The assembly in Philadelphia was characterised by faithfulness and loyalty to Christ, although He is presently absent from this scene. The Lord could say of them that they have "kept My word" and have "not denied my name" (Revelation 3:8). This appreciation of His Person and of His Word marked them and singled them out. Philadelphia appreciated Christ, did not have room but for Christ, and gave attention only to Christ. In Laodicea this condition has totally changed. There is appreciation, room and attention for everything but Christ. This is the end of the course begun in Revelation 2:4, when first love was forsaken. Is this not illustrated in Israel's history, according to the words spoken by Moses? "Lest when thou hast eaten and art full, and hast built goodly houses, and dwelt therein: And when thy herds and thy flocks multiply, and thy silver and thy gold is multiplied, and all that thou hast is multiplied; Then thine heart be lifted up, and thou forget the Lord thy God, which brought thee forth out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage" (Deuteronomy 8:12-14). Remember Agur's prayer in Proverbs 30:9 : "Lest I be full, and deny Thee, and say, Who is the Lord? or lest I be poor, and steal, and take the name of my God in vain." The culture in which the assembly of Laodicea was placed had its influence on it, as happens in our days as well. Laodicea was an important centre of trade and communication. Its wealth came partly from the production of a fine quality of famous wool. Laodicea was so wealthy that after the great earthquake of A.D. 17, which destroyed it, they refused help from Rome for the rebuilding of the city. In other words they did not feel the need for

help. This is the attitude that prevailed in the assembly as well. “I am rich, and am grown rich, and have need of nothing” (J.N.D. Trans.). All this implies a warning for believers today who live in an affluent society. It also shows that having Philadelphia’s principles is not sufficient for us today. As well as holding fast those principles we need to be found in the condition that characterises Philadelphia!

Pretension To say something is one thing but to be something is quite another. Sadly, the Christians in Laodicea said much about themselves but they were in God’s eyes the very opposite of what they were claiming. This was in stark contrast to the Lord Jesus in His walk on earth and also to how He wants to be displayed in believers down here today (Php 2:1-30). Could that happen to us today? Paul anticipates such an attitude in Romans 11:19; Romans 11:25. There is the danger of being wise in our own eyes as if all our resources are in our own hands. This would be to despise the lessons of the history and failure of Israel, which are given for our instruction and admonition. It reminds us of Proverbs 13:7 : “There is that maketh himself rich, yet hath nothing: there is that maketh himself poor, yet hath great riches.”

I repeat the question: Could that happen to us today? I suggest a few key-words to pinpoint some of the things that the Lord touches upon in this verse. Laodicea speaks the language of pretension, which is the very opposite of the language which the Lord used (John 8:25). This language displays something that may be well hidden, namely pride and arrogance, but which is the cause of much evil (see many verses in Proverbs and Ecclesiastes) and the Lord unmasks such pretension (cp. Revelation 2:9).

How we need to heed Paul’s words, given in a different context in Romans 12:3, “For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith.” Pretentious talk is challenged by the apostle John in 1 John 1:6-10; 1 John 2:1-9. The book of Malachi provides many examples of this religious pretension in the history of the remnant that returned from the Babylonian captivity to Jerusalem. There are many lessons we can learn from this remnant, both in a positive and negative sense, including the stern warnings against an outward form without real appreciation of the things of the Lord.

Self-deception

Here follow a few more key-words which describe what was involved in this departure which so defied the Lord: self-centred, complacent, self-satisfied, self-exalting, self-righteous; claiming and proclaiming one’s own greatness. These words mirror what is found in 2 Timothy 3:1 ff; 2 Timothy 4:3 ff. In other words these are our days! Should we not ask ourselves whether we are guilty of some of these things and if so confess them to the Lord? This marked departure from Philadelphia, having riches and everything else except the Lord, is not something that we should take lightly. The Lord when on earth said, “But woe unto you that are rich! for ye have received your consolation” (Luke 6:24). This is the portion of the rich Pharisee who said in Luke 18:12, “I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess.” For the historic parallel with Israel I also refer to Zechariah 11:5, “for I am rich.” Is that not the attitude of the unfaithful shepherds of Israel who are challenged by the Lord in Ezekiel 34:1-31?

Materialism The Lord warned against material riches in Matthew 13:22 (cp.Mark 4:19 and Luke 8:14). “He also that received seed among the thorns, is he that heareth the word; and the care of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word, and he becometh unfruitful.” Compare also Luke 12:21 : “So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God.” The same kind of attitude can easily be found among Christians, as it was with the Corinthians of whom Paul had to say, “Now ye are full, now ye are rich, ye have reigned as kings without us: and I would to God ye did reign, that we also might reign with you” (1 Corinthians 4:8). What a contrast with Paul himself: “As sorrowful, yet alway rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things” (2 Corinthians 6:10). And with the Macedonian believers of whom he testified: “How that, in a great trial of affliction, the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded unto the riches of their liberality” (2 Corinthians 8:2). This joy is the remedy for such a wrong Laodicean attitude. Such joy is found, of course, first of all in the Lord’s own example: “For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that ye through His poverty might be rich” (2 Corinthians 8:9). The Laodicean assembly was marked by materialism. What about us today? Listen again to Paul in 1 Timothy 6:9 : “But they that will (or desire to) be rich, fall into temptation, and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition.” And 1 Timothy 6:17 f: “Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not highminded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy; That they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate.” Let us not put our confidence in ourselves or in our self-proclaimed riches, lest we fall under God’s judgment: “Your riches are corrupted, and your garments are moth-eaten” (James 5:2). Are we indifferent to these warnings?

Claims of success

We are living in the days of the “health and wealth gospel” and professing Christians are building false securities. Self-supported and self-sufficient, Laodiceans do not really need the Lord: I “have need of nothing.” Today we build our own systems, not only of materialism but also of rationalism or ritualism, fundamentalism or exclusivism, modernism and ecumenicalism. In all those cases we have managed to organise and control things ourselves, and we don’t need the Lord (of course, we don’t say that). That is why I am always reluctant to consider a set of rules, as if it were possible to set out all God’s principles in a simple list. No, when we think we have things quite under control, then we are very much mistaken.

Ignorance

Then we are ignorant of the real situation. The Lord in His compassion and zeal for His assembly continues to speak: “Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked.” There are five points that the all-seeing Judge brings out against the accused of which, despite high pretensions, they are not even aware. The Lord evaluates the Christians at Laodicea as being (1) wretched, (2) miserable, (3) poor, (4) blind and (5) naked. How would He appraise you and me? A. E. Bouter (To be continued, of the Lord will)

Extract

It is clear, that if two or three are gathered together, it is an assembly, and if scripturally assembled, an assembly of God; and if not, what else? If the only one in a place, it is the assembly of God in the place. Yet I do object practically to taking the title, because the assembly of God in any place properly embraces all the saints in the place. And there is practical danger for souls in assuming the name, as losing sight of the ruin and setting up to be something. But it is not false in the supposed case. If there be one such and another is set up by man's will, independent of it, the first only is morally, in God's sight, the assembly of God; and the other is not at all so, because it is set up in independency of the unity of the body. I reject in the most entire and unhesitating manner the whole Independent system as unscriptural and a positive, unmitigated evil. Now that the unity of the body has been brought out, and the scriptural truth of it is known, it is simply a work of Satan. Ignorance of the truth is one thing, our common lot in many ways; opposition to it is another. I know it is alleged that the Church is now so in ruins that scriptural order according to the unity of the body cannot be maintained. Then let the objectors avow as honest men, that they seek unscriptural order, or rather disorder. But in truth it is impossible to meet at all in that case to break bread, except in defiance of God's word: for scripture says, "we are all one body; for we are all partakers of that one loaf." We profess to be one body whenever we break bread; scripture knows nothing else. And they will find scripture too strong and perfect a bond for man's reasoning to break it.

J. N. D.

(The last paragraph of the article, "On Ecclesiastical Independency," Collected writings, Volume 14, page 307, Stow Hill edition) Psalms 119:1-176 (16) (Continued from page 202) 13. MEM — WATER (or Sources) Verses 97-120. The Importance of Bible Study Section Thirteen. Verses 97-104: "The Word of God is Living Water."

Thirst for the living Word Verse 97: ME-H..."Oh how (I love Thy law!)" The Bible for Christians is the Word of God. It is for us the standard to which we refer. We do not test the Bible by our experience but we test our experience by the Bible. For the Psalmist the Word of God was the final word. Is it for you my dear reader? The so-called higher critics have the audacity to doubt many passages of the Bible and to undermine its authority. Have you noticed how the writer of this Psalm is continually referring to the Word in its several aspects? It seems that he knew his Bible as far as it was then revealed and written down. Do you know your Bible? There is no doubt that in order for the Christian to be strong spiritually he must study the Bible. He must decide to set aside time for this study just as he is willing to set aside time for any project he really wants to do. Do you always carry a copy of the Word with you? Not necessarily your study Bible but a small pocket edition so you have it handy when you are asked questions about your Christianity? When you reason with anyone, do you base what you say on the Scriptures? What a wonderful verse this is. Let us read it again: "O how love I Thy law! it is my meditation all the day." The Bible is our absolute standard for conduct Verse 98: ME-AH-YAVI..."...than mine enemies..." The Bible has always been under attack from the enemy of our souls. We are under attack as Christians today and are continually challenged about our faith in that "old-fashioned book!"

I want you to be sure of this, that it is not unintelligent to believe in the Bible! Serious study of the Word of God will show that the Lord Jesus Christ of the Bible is altogether what He claimed to be and that the Bible is worthy of our entire trust. We must then be willing to make an honest and total

commitment to God. The Psalmist is not arrogant when he says: “Thou... hast made me wiser than mine enemies...,” or later in verse 99: “I have more understanding than all my teachers...” What do these two verses really mean? First of all in our verse he is faced with enemies. They are not believers. They reject the Word, the Bible. They say that other books like the Veda and the Koran are also inspired, so what is so special about your Bible? These are people who reject the Bible outright. You and I therefore as Christians have knowledge that others who are not Christians do not have. The natural man (or the man without the Spirit) does not accept “the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him...” (1 Corinthians 2:14).

It gives spiritual intelligence Verse 99: ME-KOHL...“...than all (my teachers...)” The teachers mentioned in this verse are not teachers in the Biblical sense: “And He (Christ) gave some... pastors and teachers...” (Ephesians 4:11). The Psalmist speaks of ordinary teachers, not spiritual gifts. It is these teachers who, unless they are Christians, are totally void of spiritual intelligence in the Biblical sense of the word. If therefore the writer says that he is wiser than his own teachers he is speaking of spiritual wisdom, for there is another kind of wisdom. This is what James says: “This wisdom descendeth not from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish... But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy” (James 3:15; James 3:17). Such wisdom from above is not acquired simply by our own intellectual abilities but is a gift from heaven. This wisdom never makes proud Verse 100: ME-ZAH-KEHNUM...“...than the ancients...” The ancients in this verse are men of long experience. We must not think that these ancients are the same as the New Testament elders. An ancient in Israel was simply a wise old man with long experience. An elder in the New Testament is a brother in Christ who has the Holy Spirit dwelling in him. It is possible of course that even a present-day older brother is not as spiritually wise as a younger brother but the older brother certainly has more experience. As to wisdom in the sense of spiritual intelligence coupled with spirituality, this is not always necessarily connected with age or long experience. To come back to our verse, “if the Psalmist had been taught to observe the precepts of the Lord in heart and life, then this was more than the most venerable sinner had ever learned, more than the philosopher of antiquity had so much as aspired to know. He had the Word with him and so outstripped his foes; he meditated on it and so outran his friends; he practised it and so outshone his elders” (Spurgeon, The Psalms).

It guides me in the right way Verse 101: ME-KOHL...“...from every (evil way...)”

Here is the practical side of this wisdom: it keeps us from every evil way! In verse 11 we saw that what kept him from sinning was that he hid the Word of God in his heart. Someone has well said: “If the Word does not keep you from sin, then sin will keep you from the Word.” We need God’s Word every day to guide and direct our steps. The Israelite of old was also to be deeply impressed with the importance of having that Word before his heart and thoughts all day long. Here is what we read in Deuteronomy 6:6-9 : “And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart: And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up. And thou shalt bind them for a sign upon thine hand, and they shall be as frontlets between thine eyes. And thou shalt write them upon the posts of thy house, and on thy gates.” Good, sound advice for the believer in Christ today!

It keeps me from wandering Verse 102: ME-MISH-PAHTAK..."...from Thy judgments..."

Another wonderful result of abiding in the Word and the Word abiding is us is that the Word will preserve us from going astray. "I have not departed from Thy judgments..." is the testimony of the writer. The Word of Christ should dwell in believers richly (Colossians 3:16), so that we "henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive..." (Ephesians 4:14). The secret is that we stay close to the Lord Jesus. He has the words of eternal life. It is so easy to deviate and to be distracted and deceived. "Thou hast taught me," continues the verse. We stay close to the Lord so that He may teach us. Do we really take time to be with Him and to listen to His voice so that we may be taught what He wants us to do? The proof of the Word is found in obedience Verse 103: ME-H..."How (sweet are Thy words...)" Is the writer of these words the same as the one who wrote, "O taste and see that the Lord is good: blessed is the man that trusteth in Him?" (Psalms 34:8). To experience the sweetness of honey you have to taste it! "The full soul loatheth an honeycomb; but to the hungry soul every bitter thing is sweet" (Proverbs 27:7). When our hearts are full with other things, with worldy things, then we have no appetite for the Word. It is a good thing when we are hungry enough to accept every bitter thing put before us by our God and Father. Surely this is the result of reading and absorbing the Word of God. It makes us pliable in His hands and willing to do His will, which is always good and acceptable and perfect.

It will influence my sense of values Verse 104: ME-PIK-KOO-DEEMAK..."Through Thy precepts..."

"I hate every false way." This is the result of the daily renewing of our minds by the Holy Spirit. The Spirit uses the Word of God to form our thoughts and to give us a completely new set of values. This leads us to hate the very things we loved when unconverted. The Holy Spirit teaches me what are true priorities, what are true values and what is really important and of value to the Lord Jesus Christ. However, to hate what is false is characteristic of the new life we have received as Christians, though that is not the sum total. There is also the positive side: to delight in that which is good. Paul says, "For I delight in the law of God after the inward man..." (Romans 7:22). The ultimate secret is of course that it is not even sufficient to "delight in the law of God..." Paul found that in him, as regenerate and a believer in the gospel, he had sin dwelling in him. He struggled hard to make his flesh do the will of God but failed. He so much wanted to please the Lord but he found he had no strength of his own. But then he discovered the secret: there was power not in his own strength but only "through Jesus Christ our Lord." Paul thus capitulated and surrendered himself totally to the Lord.

Cor Bruins News from the Field Report of the visit of Andrew Poots and Edwin Cross to Bhutan, Nepal and India, November/December 1995

We are thankful to the Lord for allowing us, once more, to see some of the great work He is doing in the vast subcontinent of India. We are sure that you will be much encouraged to learn of the wonderful growth, not only in numbers but also the spiritual growth in many of the saints. On 6th November Andrew Poots and I flew to Delhi, the capital, to be met by brother Ronny Fernandes. We spent a day and a half there before travelling on to the Himalayan kingdom of Bhutan. The journey was first by plane to Badogra, near Siliguri. The magnificent Himalayas could be seen from the plane, with Everest rising far above even the high range of snow covered peaks. Yet even before these were brought forth our God had His thoughts and purposes for the elect. How great

was our privilege to be travelling to meet some of those who now by grace had received Christ as Saviour. On landing we had to secure another visa in order to proceed further into this part of India. After some haggling we hired a local taxi. The journey to Jaigaon was expected to last three hours but it took 6 hours over some very rough roads. The damaged road surface and three substantial bridges washed away in the recent monsoon made progress very slow. We arrived on the Bhutan border at nightfall and had to search for the immigration office to secure exit visas in order to enter Bhutan. Having obtained the necessary stamp in the passports we crossed through the gate into Phuentsholing. The inhabitants of this border town are a mixture of Indians, Bangladeshis and Nepalese as well as ethnic Bhutia. The Bhutia are obliged by law to wear the distinctive traditional robes of Bhutan. We were met by a brother in the street and almost immediately we began to talk about the Lord's interests. That evening we settled in the hotel and prepared ourselves for the conference the next day. The brethren have a very good compound with a large meeting room, accommodation and all appropriate facilities. About 300 came together and visitors from Nepal and various parts of India were also present. We had the joy of seeing our brother Sat Pal Hans from the Punjab together with three other brothers from his meeting, including a young convert from the Sikh religion. We also met a brother and his wife from Imphal, Manipur, which is near the Burmese (Myanmar) border. He is full-time in the literature work and busy translating our literature into Manipuri. He also expressed a willingness to follow up our contacts in Burma.

It was a thrill to behold the order and keen interest in the ministry of the brethren. We took up the Ephesian epistle verse by verse and were enormously encouraged with the diligent note taking and enquiry. These believers have a variety of backgrounds, some having been Hindus and others Buddhists. A number had been converted to Christ in the last decade and then joined the Bahkt Singh sect (akin to the Chinese little flock associated with Watchman Nee). In 1989 our literature began to enter Bhutan (see T&T 1st issue, 1991) and in the course of time it had its effect in the hearts and minds of these believers. In 1991 a number came out of their sectarian associations and were given the right hand of fellowship by our brethren in neighbouring India. This step provoked much hostility, even to the point of being physically assaulted by Bahkt Singh men! There were also difficulties with the Buddhist authorities. These circumstances have led to a strong testimony and deep conviction as to the place they take outside the camp, bearing reproach for the Name of Christ. The saints meet in 10 localities throughout the country. We could only visit two places due to restrictions on foreigners. One interior assembly was only reached after many miles along tracks and rivers, over fallen tree bridges, up mountains, past giant spiders and through orange groves! All in this area are converted to Christ and it was a joy to taste the generous hospitality of the saints. We were also privileged to be present when they had a prayer meeting. From Bhutan we travelled to Nepal. This country boasts itself as the only Hindu kingdom in the world. After immigration formalities, paying US$15 each for a visa, we had to hire a vehicle. Our Indian taxi driver had turned back at the frontier and we were left in a not very pleasant spot. We stood by the dusty road outside a Hindu temple and a eunuch dressed in a sari eyed us suspiciously. Various locals gathered round and tried to "help" us find a vehicle. We eventually hired a Jeep and set off on some of the most appalling roads I've encountered anywhere in the world. The shaking did little to promote a healthy spine! The dust was also a danger to healthy respiration. We drove past tea gardens with the snow covered Himalayas as a beautiful background. After some two or three hours bumping along at breakneck speed we came to the

first of five refugee camps. Our brethren are found in and near each of these. We only had opportunity to visit three of the localities in Jahpa province where brethren gather to the Lord's Name. It is a most moving sight to behold how faithful to the Lord and how keen on the ministry these saints are. They have nothing in this world except a bamboo-weave hut and some simple items of furniture. The dangers of the insanitary conditions are ever present. The uncertainty of their situation and lack of employment are all calculated to undermine the morale of even the staunchest. Yet in this extremely hostile environment, surrounded by idolaters and political agitation, the saints go on. They have high hopes of seeing the testimony spread throughout Nepal and are looking to the Lord to give them an opened door for effective preaching and teaching. Bringing up a family, eking out a living, and seeking to maintain a testimony in the gospel and to the present truth of Christianity, are not easy tasks in such circumstances. Nevertheless it was a joy to behold the light of understanding on their faces as, sitting together in an hurricane-lamp lit hut, we shared with them the treasures of truth contained in the Scriptures. Other refugees peered in at the windows and doors and heard the gospel and the Scriptures being expounded. It is forbidden by law to preach in Nepal but these were special circumstances and we were thankful to the Lord for the privilege. Sadly we had to leave our beloved brethren in Nepal. At the border the Nepali immigration officials had gone home and we were not permitted to enter India until we had obtained the correct Nepalese exit stamp in our passports. We were obliged to go in search of the homes of the immigration men. Eventually we found four! All came to the office, and one did the necessary to our passports while the others looked on. Before having our travel documents returned we were obliged to pay all four a gratuity.

E. N. C.

(To be continued, if the Lord will)

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Having Loved His Own Which Were In The World (4)

John 14:15-31 In the preceding verses the Lord had shown His own the provision that He would make for them in the Father's house. He now tells them of the support He will provide in His absence. Love seeks to give them eyes of faith and the comfort of love in view of His going away.

He first of all tries their hearts as to their response: "If ye love Me, keep My commandments." He is surely saying, "Am I dear to your hearts as your Lord? Then hold very dear what I say to you!" To responsive love which values Him He promises that He will beg the Father to send One in His place. How much the Lord loved His own! In His absence He would have them cared for by One who would never leave them but would support them in every way even as He had done. The One who would come to them is the Spirit of Truth. The world had no room for the Lord. It was about to reject Him completely — the Truth — whom it had seen and heard, and therefore it could not see or receive the Spirit of Truth. His own had received Him who is the embodiment of truth and therefore they could receive and know the Spirit of Truth. But the Lord with all His burdens feels the sorrow of His own at losing Him. For even One in His room and stead is not Himself and He had made Himself everything to them. He tells them again that He will come to them, not as coming from the Father's house for them, but as coming to them now by the same Spirit of Truth whom the Father would send. He knew that their hearts desired Himself.

Very shortly the coming events would separate Him from the world and He would (re)enter another sphere. There, in that spiritual realm not seen by this world, His own would behold Him. Because He lives, His own would live also. They would have His life. At that day (no doubt when the Spirit should come), they would not only know of the intimate fellowship between the Father and the Son, but also have part themselves in that fellowship which had been unknown to them before: "Ye in Me, and I in you." True responsive love is to have His commandments and to keep them. The Lord addresses each one of His own personally here, sounding out the desire of their hearts. The one who loves and values Him is especially loved by the Father and also knows the love and company of the Lord in a personal way. Not only so, but to anyone who loves the Lord and values the Word — the revelation — which He brought, there would be made known the love of the Father in a special way, together with the abiding presence of the Father and the Son. This wonderful sphere of fellowship would be known and enjoyed in a fuller way by the coming of the Comforter, the Holy Spirit, sent in the Name of the Son. He would teach and bring to remembrance all the communications of the Son, that nothing might be lost. Love would make them the depositories of the truth by the Spirit of Truth.

It was time for Him to go away. The path that He must tread alone is before Him. He knows that His coming trials would trouble them. Thinking of them and knowing their sorrows, He bestows peace and also His personal peace which He had known during His life on earth. Having His

peace, their hearts would not be troubled or afraid. If love desires the best for its object, He has fully shown His desire for them. But likewise, He counts upon their love for Him, that they would desire His happiness. He would therefore have them rejoice that He was going home, back to His Father, the One from whom He had come. His foreknowledge of what lay before them all was made known for their strengthening. The hour of the ruler of this world was at hand, though he had no claim upon the Lord. It was also the hour when the father would be glorified and when the lord's devotion to Him unto death would be seen by this world. He was going to display before it that He loved the Father even unto death and was totally obedient to His will and commandment. He would have His own witness it also: "Arise, let us go hence."

(The brother who has written this series of articles wishes to remain anonymous) What is the Christian's Inheritance? In considering any subject brought before us in the Word of God it is important that we take our thinking about it from the Scriptures. The writer has come to the conclusion that this has not always been done in relation to the question at the head of this article, and the result is that there is some confusion about it.

Christ is Himself the heir of the inheritance.1 The Lord pressed this point in the parable of the unfaithful husbandmen. "But when the husbandmen saw the son, they said among themselves, This is the heir: come, let us kill him, and let us seize on his inheritance" (Matthew 21:38; Mark 12:7; Luke 20:14). His claim upon the inheritance was repudiated and He was cast out of the vineyard (Israel) and slain. That is the point at which the Epistle to the Hebrews begins. Could this rejection of the rightful heir overturn God's purpose? Of course not. "God... has spoken to us in the person of the Son, whom He has established heir..." (Hebrews 1:1). The matter is fixed and inviolable. The inheritance is Christ's and shall never be wrested from Him.

1The Greek for heir is kleeronomos, and for inheritance is kleeronomia. The inheritance of which Christians are heirs is this same inheritance of Christ. We are children of God and "if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with Him, that we may be also glorified together" (Romans 8:17). And it is by reason of our identification with Christ that we have title to it, for He it is "In whom... we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of Him who worketh all things after the counsel of His own will" (Ephesians 1:11). This really brings us to the point where we can begin to answer our question. The verse in Hebrews 1:1-14 which tells us Christ is the established heir, goes on at once to tell us what the inheritance is: "... the Son, whom He has established heir of all things, by whom also He made the worlds" (5: 2). And Hebrews 2:1-18 shows us that it is as the Son of Man that Christ will inherit everything He has created as the Son of God: "Thou hast put all things in subjection under His feet. For in that He put all in subjection under Him, He left nothing that is not put under Him. But now we see not yet all things put under Him" (Hebrews 2:8). Is Christ in possession of His inheritance at the present time? No, He is not. The verse just quoted from Hebrews 2:1-18 makes that very clear. The same point is noted in Ephesians 1:1-23 : "in whom (Christ) also, after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise, Which is the earnest of our inheritance, until the redemption of the purchased possession..." (Ephesians 1:12-14). The purchased possession is the inheritance, and at the appointed time Christ will redeem it by His power. Meanwhile He and His people wait in patience. So far as the saints are concerned, they have the "Holy Spirit of promise, Which is the earnest of our inheritance, until" the waiting time is over. This statement of the Scripture is very clear. It is not said that the Holy Spirit gives the earnest of our inheritance but

that He is Himself the earnest of our inheritance. He is the guarantee that when the appointed time comes we shall possess the inheritance with Christ. The appointed time is referred to in verse 10 of Ephesians 1:1-23 : “That in the dispensation of the fulness of times, He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in Him.” This is consistent with the other references to the inheritance in the New Testament.2 For example, Colossians 3:24 and Hebrews 9:15 speak about the (future) reward of the inheritance and the present promise of it respectively. 1 Peter 1:4-5 speak of the reservation of the (heavenly side) of the inheritance for the saints, and of the preservation of the saints for the inheritance. They are kept “unto salvation, ready to be revealed in the last time.” That “last time” marks the point of transition to the “fulness of times” already referred to in Ephesians 1:1-23.

2The references are — Matthew 21:38; Mark 12:7; Luke 12:13; Luke 20:14; Acts 7:5; Acts 20:32; Galatians 3:18; Ephesians 1:14; Ephesians 1:18; Ephesians 5:5; Colossians 3:24; Hebrews 9:15; Hebrews 11:8; 1 Peter 1:4. The references in Acts 26:18 and Colossians 1:12 in the King James are a translation of the Greek word “kleeros” which Mr. Darby translates “portion” in Colossians 1:12.

Why then should there be any difficulty in relation to this subject? In the opinion of the writer the confusion arises because the inheritance is sometimes confused with our present spiritual blessings in Christ. It should be noted, however, that while verses 11-14 of Ephesians 1:1-23 bring the inheritance before us, verses 4-7 speak of the present spiritual blessings which belong to us as Christians. The two things are not mixed together indiscriminately, but carefully distinguished from one another.

It may also be found helpful to bear in mind that the earthly Canaan is for us a double-type. We, like the children of Israel, are traversing a wilderness and “the Land” is the goal, the ultimate end, that we have before us. In Hebrews 2:1-18 that is “the world to come, whereof we speak” (Hebrews 2:5). This point of view is developed very fully in Hebrews chapters 3 and 4 where the inheritance is connected with the rest, God’s rest, that we are moving onto. The other side of this double-type is that once in the land of Canaan the children of Israel had to fight in order to possess what God had given them. That is where the figure changes. The land is then a type of our present spiritual blessings in Christ, and there is conflict involved in really entering into the enjoyment of them. Joshua in the Old Testament (typically) and Colossians in the New, speak of the entry into these blessings. Ephesians, especially chapter 6, shows us how to stand the ground once it has been gained.

It will be seen therefore that we need to distinguish things that are distinguished in the Scriptures.

R. F. W. From Our Archive The Cross (1) (A Gospel Preaching at the Grove City Conference) Matthew 27:33-36; John 19:25-30; John 19:38-42.

I want to take you with me tonight, and to stand by the cross of Jesus. It is a familiar story, perhaps, to everyone of us here but I am assured not a familiar story to everyone in this country, as it is not in the country from which I come — England. A brother told us of an incident that happened at one of the high schools in the south of England. A new teacher arrived at the school and she was set over a class of girls aged fifteen to seventeen. She was a Christian woman and when it came to the Scripture lesson she began to tell them the story of the Cross. She arrived at

the place where He was taken into Pilate's hall but before she could get much further in her address to the girls the school-bell rang. School was to be dismissed. There were four girls in that class that gathered around the teacher, and this was the question that they asked: "Did He get off?" Could you credit that? "Did He get off?" My friend, I'm going to assume here tonight that you know very little about the cross, and I'm going to speak to you about it. I want your heart to be affected by the story of the cross; and if you stand by it with me tonight, I trust that that stony heart of yours is going to be broken.

I realise, dear friends, that there's no appealing on my part that is going to affect anything. If the story of the cross doesn't affect your heart, if it doesn't break you down in true repentance to see this Blessed One whose love has been so great toward you, if you don't see that that love demands your love and your obedience, there's no appealing on my part that will be in any way successful.

They led Him out to this place of a skull, Golgotha, to crucify Him. There are two sides to this question, dear friend. He was delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, but men with wicked hands took and crucified the Lord of Glory. And here in the twenty-seventh chapter of Matthew we have what they did to Him in great detail. We learn, perhaps, a different aspect of the story when we come to John's Gospel. The first thing that they want to do, as no doubt they did to others who were to be put to death, is give them this stupefying drink that would make them insensible to all that was going on. But my friend, Jesus refused that. Peter tells us that "Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God." There are three wonderful things in that verse. When men want to write to impress you and me, they write volume upon volume. But listen what God puts into the space of this short verse: "Christ also hath once suffered for sins" — propitiation; "the just for the unjust" — substitution; "that He might bring us to God" — reconciliation. And think of it, dear friend, the Word of God — it has a majesty, it has a dignity of its own so that men need not elaborate on it whatsoever. It is a Word that comes from God Himself. And it comes with mighty power to grip the heart and conscience. That's the confidence of the preacher as he seeks to make known the story of the cross to men and women. He's not depending upon his ability. What a poor thing it would be. But he's depending upon the mighty power of God, and the use of that precious Word, simply though it may be spoken, to reach hearts and consciences. I trust it's going to reach yours tonight, dear friend.

He refused the stupefying drink. He was quite sensible to all that was going on, and they took Him there and they nailed Him to that cross. You know what the Word of God says? "Cursed is everyone that hangeth on a tree." I want to say, dear friend, because of your sins, you're in a cursed position; but there's One who has borne the curse by hanging upon Calvary's tree.

They heaped upon Him every indignity. He was stripped of everything, even of His clothes. But there was one thing they couldn't take from Him and that was His body. And listen, friend, the Bible tells us that He gave His body. He gave Himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time, in due season. And the reason for the testimony going forth, the testimony that He gave Himself a ransom for all, is that you might receive it. The testimony comes to you for your obedience. It's looking for an answer in the hearts of men and women here this evening. That's what God is looking for. But they heaped upon Him every indignity. They mocked Him and scourged Him; spit in His blessed face. My friend, I say to you here tonight, does this not touch your heart — to think

of the Lord of Glory suffering such indignity, such hatred and enmity from man? Does it not touch your heart tonight? Oh, I want you to come near to the cross tonight, to see it as you have never seen it before.

There was a young fellow got converted in Northumberland. He wasn't very long in seeing his place and he asked the saints, "What about me taking my place to remember the Lord?" They could see he was in dead earnest. They gave his name out that very Lord's day, and the next Lord's day he broke bread. He remembered the Lord, the One who died for him upon the cross of Calvary. He'd only been converted about three months. After the Breaking of Bread the others got up and they began to discuss how much they had sold their cows for at one of the farm sales. They were discussing anything and everything but the Lord Himself. The young man was still sitting in his seat, with tears — tears rolling down his cheeks. You know what he said to them? He said, "Have you got used to this?" Have you got used to this? I make no further comment. It speaks for itself.

I ask you tonight, young friend, how many Gospel meetings have you attended? How many times have you heard this story of the cross of Jesus, in His wonderful love going there and dying for you and suffering all these indignities at the hands of men, as well as the judgment of a righteous and holy God? How many times have you heard it? Let me ask you, have you got used to it? Have you got so used to listening to this story that it means nothing to you? Jeremiah the prophet, in his Lamentations asks, "Is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by? behold, and see if there be any sorrow like unto My sorrow, which is done unto Me, wherewith the Lord hath afflicted Me in the day of His fierce anger."

Oh, friend, that you might rightly value the cross of Jesus and His sacrifice in laying down that sinless, spotless, holy life, as a sacrifice for sins. I ask you, is your heart not affected by it?

We read of these people, "And sitting down, they watched Him there." It seems as though they had come to the end of their tether. There wasn't another thing that they could think to do; and in cold blood they sat down, and they watched Him there in His agony.

I just want to emphasise these two words: "Him there." Why was He there? Pilate's wife wanted to give her husband a bit of good advice, as she thought. "Have thou nothing to do with that just man; for I have suffered many things this day in a dream because of Him." Advice that Pilate couldn't take, and advice that you can't take either, friend. You've got to do with Jesus just as much as Pilate had.

Pilate says, "I find no fault in Him." His wife said He was a just person. Those weren't the only witnesses, you know — witnesses that you and I would never have thought of bringing forward. Judas says, "I have sinned, in that I have betrayed the innocent blood."

Him there? Why was He there, friend? He was there because you and I should have been there. He was there answering to the holy God in your place and in my place. He became, as the Proverb said, He became surety for a stranger and He was made to smart. Listen, this is no cheap salvation that we are preaching to you tonight. It's a salvation that cost God Himself the very best, the very choicest of heaven's store for you, the rebel sinner.

Visiting one of the villages in the Lake district over in England, and after having a Gospel meeting in the open air, we went around the doors giving out little gospel booklets. I knocked at a door and the lady's voice inside shouted, "Come in," and in I went. She said, "What is it?" "Oh," I said, "I've brought you a little gospel booklet to tell you the way to heaven." "Oh," she said, "you know, I've had a good upbringing," and she began to tell me of the good upbringing she had had. She said that from a girl, as far back as she could remember, she was taken to church three times each Sunday. She said that she had good parents who were church members, and she had been brought up to attend church regularly.

Dear friend, it's not a good upbringing that many people want, it's a good downbringing. I said to her, "Oh, I've had a good upbringing too," and I quoted from Psalms 40:1-17 : "He brought me up... out of an horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock, and established my goings. And He hath put a new song in my mouth, even praise unto our God." I said, "That's the good upbringing that I've had." Naturally speaking, I had no good upbringing, friend. Not speaking in any way disrespectfully of my parents, I was dragged up. Were you brought up in a Christian home? Never cease to thank God for it. You know what I was used to? — a drunken fight, that started on Saturday night and went right over until about the Tuesday when everything was spent up, and our clothes were put into the pawn, and that money was spent as well. That's the bringing up I had. Thank God for the other bringing up. "He brought me up... out of an horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock, and established my goings. And He hath put a new song in my mouth."

I tell you dear friend, I appreciate the grace of God that picked me up, saved my precious soul, and gives me to stand before you here tonight. Have you been affected by the cross of Calvary, by Jesus dying for you? In the nineteenth chapter of John we have a company of people standing by the cross. But before we go there, again let us remind ourselves of these two words — I don't want to pass over them so easily — Him there. Listen friend, those are two words that you'll never forget if you go to hell for all eternity, as you will if you refuse Him. Him there! Christ, hanging upon the cross of Calvary for you a sinner, and you refused Him as your Saviour. Don't come away with the idea that God is a sort of kind, old grandfather, that is going to say to you after you have set the gospel message to one side, and neglected this salvation, "Well, of course, you weren't a good lad; you could have been better, but come on in," and take you to heaven. My friend, there's no such representation of God in the Scripture of Truth. God is a righteous God, and if you want to know how God is going to deal with you about your sins, God has demonstrated that at the cross of Calvary. He didn't spare our first parents in the garden of Eden for one sin; He turned them out. He destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah for their sins. He cast down the angels that sinned, and they're reserved in everlasting chains of darkness unto the day of judgment. Listen, friend, He didn't spare His own Son when He took your place and mine. The very heavens above Him were as brass, and in anguish He sobbed out those words, "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" He was forsaken, friend, that you might be accepted. The judgment was poured upon His blessed head that you might go free. Do you appreciate that? He's looking into your heart tonight. He's searching places that I cannot see. He's looking into your heart tonight and He knows just exactly what your attitude is. Friend, I trust that it's affected, that it's melted with the story of the cross of Jesus.

A. Dockerty (To be continued, if the Lord will) Judgment in the Life of a Believer and the Assembly

Isn't judgment a very serious subject? Yes, it is indeed and may the Lord give us a deep impression of this. But I hope to show that there are features connected with our subject that should be a joy to our hearts and a reason to praise our God and our Lord and Saviour more and more. The Bible distinguishes at least five different forms of "judgment" which have a relation to the believer. Let us study them briefly.

1. The substitutionary judgment of Christ

Right at the beginning of our meditation we find something that is an eternal joy to our hearts. There is a judgment that every sinner deserves — eternal punishment in hell. But the believer knows that this punishment will never reach him because Another has already borne the judgment in his stead. In the three hours of darkness on the cross of Calvary our blessed Lord bore the entire weight of divine wrath. "All Thy waves and Thy billows are gone over Me" (Psalms 42:7 b), but "Many waters cannot quench love, neither can the floods drown it" (Song of Solomon 8:7). And why did He take all this upon Himself? Oh, our hearts know the answer. It was for you and me. He bore the judgment of God for all those who have come to Him as their Saviour in repentance and faith. The words which a future remnant in Israel will utter can surely be applied to us: "But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon Him; and with His stripes we are healed" (Isaiah 53:5).

2. Self-judgment

Although there is no condemnation for those that are in Christ (Romans 8:1; John 3:18; John 5:24), that does not mean that there is absolutely no more judgment in the life of a believer. As long as we are walking here on earth there is need for judgment in the sense of chastening, or discipline. And the first (and best) thing God expects from us is that we do this ourselves.

Self-judgment should be a constant feature of the believer's life. In connection with the Lord's supper the apostle writes to the Corinthians: "But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup" (1 Corinthians 11:28). This self-examination is not merely a matter for Saturday evening or Lord's Day morning. Rather, it should be our constant attitude to search our hearts, motives and consciences in His presence. In writing this the author of this article is fully aware of his own shortcomings in these respects. But self-judgment is the only way to escape further forms of divine chastisement.

3. Judgment in the governmental ways of God with a believer The Corinthian saints had not always followed the instructions of the apostle, which meant that some of them had eaten and drunk unworthily. The result is stated clearly by the apostle: "For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation (judgment — J. N. D. Trans.) to himself, not discerning the Lord's body. For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep" (1 Corinthians 11:29-30).

If we fail to judge ourselves and bring our conduct into accord with the Word of God so that we "walk worthily," then God our Father has to discipline us in His ways with us on earth. This sounds very serious — which it definitely is — but we should be glad that our Father deals with us in this way. It proves that we are sons. "For whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom He receiveth. If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not? But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are

partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons... but He (chasteneth us) for our profit, that we might be partakers of His holiness" (Hebrews 12:6-10). The actual experience of godly discipline is of course something we don't like, but the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews knew about that and so he says: "Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless, afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby" (Hebrews 12:11).

There are two dangers as far as our reaction to godly discipline in our lives is concerned: "My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of Him" (Hebrews 12:5). On the one hand we could despise His chastening, or regard it lightly. Perhaps there are those who, when a problem arises and there are difficult circumstances, roll up their sleeves and think "problems are there to be solved" — and we don't see the chastening hand of the Lord in the matter. On the other hand there is the possibility that we faint when we are rebuked of Him. This is just the opposite danger. We feel more or less overwhelmed by all the difficulties and sorrowful circumstances, — and we don't discern the loving hand of our Father in His dealings with us. May the Lord give us all to be rightly exercised by all the ways of God with us.

4. The judgment of the assembly

There was unjudged evil of the grossest kind in the midst of the assembly in Corinth and the apostle has to tell them: "For what have I to do to judge them also that are without? do not ye judge them that are within? But them that are without God judgeth. Therefore put away from among yourselves that wicked person" (1 Corinthians 5:12-13). If there is wickedness or evil in the midst of a local assembly, the holiness of God requires judgment by the assembly in the putting away of the wicked person. The same thing is also stressed by the Lord Jesus Himself in Matthew 18:1-35 : "Verily I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth, shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth, shall be loosed in heaven... For where two or three are gathered together in My Name, there am I in the midst of them" (vv. 18, 20).

Whenever this sad, serious and holy necessity arises, and the saints, gathered to the Name of the Lord, have the duty to bind the sin on someone, then this judgment of the assembly is recognised in heaven. Of course, this is true as well of the happy occasion of the restoration of the sinner, and the consequent loosing of the sin in the judgment of the assembly. Next to the demands of the holiness of God this restoration of the one put under discipline is the aim of such an act.

It shouldn't need mentioning that an act of discipline which is recognised in heaven is also recognised by all the local assemblies on earth. The one put away from the saints in Corinth was out of fellowship in Ephesus, Phillipi and all the other assemblies. The same one received again (2 Corinthians 2:6-8) was received for the breaking of bread at all other places as well. This is still the pattern for those gathered to His Name in fellowship with one another.

5. The judgment seat of Christ

"For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ" (2 Corinthians 5:10). We started our meditation thinking about the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus. And after some challenging considerations about judgment in a believer's life we close now with another thought that is challenging and encouraging as well. When the believer appears before the judgment seat of Christ, he won't be judged in the sense of condemned. That matter was settled at Calvary. But he

will be revealed. It should be a joy for the believer to think that at this moment he will — for the first time — see his own life entirely in the way the Lord Jesus sees it. And in our glorified bodies we will completely agree with this judgment. All this will lead to eternal heavenly worship.

There is not room here to dwell in detail on this important matter of the judgment seat of Christ. However, in the listing that follows I give some of the ramifications of the subject, together with the Scripture references. This is done as an incentive to personal study, which I trust will be of great value and blessing.

1. All men without exception have to appear before the judgment seat (2 Corinthians 5:10; Ecclesiastes 12:14).

2. This tribunal has three different “sessions”: a) 2 Corinthians 5:10; Romans 14:10 b) Matthew 25:31-33 c) Revelation 20:11-12

3. It is the judgment seat of God in contrast to a human judgment (Romans 14:11-12). Even the perfect Servant committed His work to His God (Isaiah 49:4).

4. Jesus Christ, Son of God and Son of Man, will be the judge (John 5:22; John 5:27; Acts 10:42; Acts 17:31; Romans 2:16).

5. Believers won’t be judged or condemned there (John 3:18; 1 Corinthians 11:32; Romans 8:1).

6. They will appear there with glorified bodies (2 Corinthians 5:10).

7. The appearing of the saints before the judgment seat will take place between the rapture and the marriage of the Lamb (Revelation 19:7-8).

8. All deeds will be rewarded there (2 Corinthians 5:10; 1 Corinthians 3:13).

9. We have to give account of all our words (Matthew 12:36).

10. The counsels of the heart will be made manifest (1 Corinthians 4:5).

11. Hidden things will be brought to light (1 Corinthians 4:5; Romans 2:16).

12. Faithfulness in service will be rewarded (Matthew 25:21).

13. The position of the believer in the kingdom depends on the verdict at the judgment seat (Luke 19:17).

14. Present personal faithfulness bears upon the future collective part of the church (Revelation 19:8).

15. Each one has to give account of himself (Romans 14:12).

16. A servant may lose reward by the unfaithfulness of those whom he was instrumental in bringing to the Saviour (1 John 2:28; 2 John 1:8).

17. It is possible to suffer loss at the judgment seat (1 Corinthians 3:14-15; Revelation 3:11).

18. The thought of the judgment seat encourages us to be well-pleasing to Him (2 Corinthians 5:9).

19. To walk in the light of the judgment seat will give us a good conscience (1 Corinthians 4:4; l John 2:8).

20. Because Christ will be the judge we fulfil the ministry of reconciliation (2 Corinthians 5:11 ff).

21. The truth of the judgment seat makes us respect the freedom of others in matters of Christian liberty (Romans 14:1-23).

Statements 1-4 speak about the Judge.

Statements 5-7 speak about the believer and the judgment seat.

Statements 8-17 speak about what happens at the judgment seat.

Statements 18-21 speak about the present result in a believer's life when he is occupied with the truth of the judgment seat.

Michael Vogelsang "The Sermon on the Mount" (14) Hatred Among Brethren (Matthew 5:21-26) In Matthew 5:21-48 the Lord Jesus gives six examples in which He warns against wrong interpretation and application of the commandments by the scribes and Pharisees. He does not set aside the law as such but in this way shows His disciples various important details.

Firstly, He reminds them that many of the commandments which God gave to Israel only referred to outward conduct.

Secondly, He points out that by their interpretations the scribes had narrowed down the application of these commandments so that sometimes little remained of their true meaning.

Thirdly, He shows them that it was not only the outward keeping of the commandments that mattered but the desire of the heart to live in accordance with God's thoughts and to His glory. The sixth commandment: "Thou shalt not kill" The Lord Jesus begins the first of the six examples with the words, "Ye have heard that it was said to the ancients" (A.V. — "them of old time"). The "ancients" here are not only the contemporaries of Moses, since the following text contains an addition to the original commandment. The audience of the Lord Jesus had heard two things: First, that the commandment, "Thou shalt not kill," was given by God, and second, what they knew had probably been added by the scribes since the Babylonian captivity, "and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment." It would seem that "judgment" here means the judges and officers mentioned for example in Deuteronomy 16:18 who were to be appointed in every town in Israel.

"But I say unto you" The Lord Jesus now sets His own words over against this commandment with its human addition: "But I say unto you." These words occur five times in this part of the fifth chapter. He speaks with the same authority as the One who had once given the law, for He is the Son of God. Yet He does not set aside the law by His words but extends its application to man's condition of heart. Whilst the commandment only forbade the extreme manifestation of hatred, 1:e. killing a person, the Lord shows that anger with a brother (which means the Jewish "brother" here) deserves the same punishment as killing itself.

If in the opinion of the Rabbis only the murderer was subject to this judgment, the Lord's words show that the one who was angry with his brother for no reason was subject to the same judgment. The one who called his brother "Raca" (Aramaic: "reka" — fool, lunatic) was subject to

be called before the Sanhedrin (the supreme Jewish court at that time), and whosoever should say “fool” was to be subject to hell (“Gehenna”): eternal damnation. If the last of these three sins, which hardly differ from one another, led to eternal damnation, then the others would do so as well. God does not look at the outward appearance but into our hearts. The following two examples in verses 23-26 then deal with the right condition of heart. The first one shows how necessary it is to have a good conscience and the second one teaches us that time for repentance is limited.

First example: “Be reconciled to thy brother”

“Therefore, if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee, Leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift” (vv. 23-24). We should remember that the Lord Jesus was addressing His disciples and still had the sacrificial system of the temple before Him. Nevertheless, His words have something to say to us too.

It cannot be pleasing to God if we come before Him in worship without having first put our relationship with our brother in order. How easily relationships can be broken! Perhaps it was only a misunderstanding, or I may have deliberately hurt a child of God, a brother or sister. Anyway, he or she has something against me. The Lord says in this case, “Go.” The disturbed relationship between believers can only be put in order again by reconciliation and this is unlikely to be achieved without an honest confession. Only then can brotherly love flow again freely. Our fellowship with our God and Father is then restored as well: “And then come and offer thy gift.”

Second example: Use the time

“Agree with thine adversary quickly, whiles thou art in the way with him; lest at any time the adversary deliver thee to the judge, and the judge deliver thee to the officer, and thou be cast into prison. Verily I say to thee, Thou shalt by no means come out thence, till thou hast paid the uttermost farthing” (vv. 25-26). In the past it was common to leave a convicted debtor in prison until all his debts were paid (cf. Matthew 18:30; Matthew 18:34). The Lord says here in symbolical language: “There is the opportunity to be reconciled with the adverse party in a peaceful manner before it is too late, even though one might find this difficult. But the time for reconciliation will cease. The one who is not prepared to act in this way, however, will have to bear the consequences.” The very serious nature of the Lord’s teaching in this place becomes clear when comparing the passage with a similar one in Matthew 18:34-35.

Wrong spiritual applications of the latter part of this example (5: 26, cf. Luke 12:57-59) have lead to much confusion, of which the doctrine of “purgatory” is probably the saddest proof. Nowhere in Scripture is it taught that a man must suffer a temporal punishment of God, after his death, in order to be eternally saved. No; once death has come in the eternal destiny of the soul is decided: one is either eternally and perfectly saved or eternally lost! This verse therefore can only refer to circumstances on earth.

These words of the Lord Jesus are in agreement with various Old Testament prophecies concerning the people of Israel. When the future time of Jacob’s trouble has come to an end the word of the prophet Isaiah will be fulfilled: “Comfort ye, comfort ye My people, saith your God. Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem, and cry unto her, that her warfare is accomplished, that her

iniquity is pardoned: for she hath received of the Lord's hand double for all her sins" (Isaiah 40:1-2). When their King and Saviour was with them to deliver them the Jews were not prepared to receive Him or to respond to the call to repentance. Therefore God had to reject this unbelieving people (Romans 11:25). The setting aside of Israel, which will climax in the great tribulation, will last until He has completed His whole work on Mount Zion and on Jerusalem (Isaiah 10:12; Zechariah 13:8-9).

Arend Remmers Christ's Greatness in the Epistle to Laodicea (3) (Continued from page 248) As I mentioned earlier, our Lord also addresses the Laodiceans in His love and in His care, because He continues to be the great Lover as well as the great Physician, for He cannot deny Himself (2 Timothy 2:13). In His earthly ministry He had said, "They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick" (Matthew 9:12). Those who (think they) are whole are unaware of their need of a physician; and those who (think they) are righteous do not see their need of the Lord's the gracious intervention. This ignorance is illustrated in a striking way in Samson's history. When Delilah had seduced him to reveal his secret, he thought that the resources he had used formerly were still available to him. But he was tragically mistaken and the Philistines bound him and put out his eyes as if to mock at his ignorance (Judges 16:20 f). I believe that Samson's early days illustrate the condition of Philadelphia, as described in Revelation 3:8 ff. His decline demonstrates how easily one can "backslide" into a Laodicean condition which is characterised by a false sense of security.1 In a similar way God says of the ten tribes, represented by Ephraim, "Strangers have devoured his strength, and he knoweth it not; yea, gray hairs are here and there upon him, yet he knoweth not" (Hosea 7:9). Verse 10 in Hosea 7:1-16 speaks about pride and verse 11 that Ephraim is "without understanding" (J. N D. Trans.).

1Judges 16:28 shows that, as this happened to Samson, one may return to the condition of Philadelphia.

(1) "wretched"

Some other verses where we find this same word either as a noun, verb or adjective help us to understand its meaning. "Destruction and misery are in their ways" (Romans 3:16); "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" (Romans 7:24). In James 4:9 we read: "Be afflicted, and mourn, and weep: let your laughter be turned to mourning, and your joy to heaviness." In James 5:1 "Go to now, ye rich men, weep and howl for your miseries that shall come upon you." All that is done only results in further failure. This is true for man in the flesh and for the born-again believer acting according to the flesh, and indicates that the natural man is under God's impending judgment. In comparing the passages in the Old Testament (Septuagint) where these words are used, I have come to the conclusion that the word wretched indicates a sure and quickly coming judgment.

(2) "miserable" In 1 Corinthians 15:19 Paul states: "If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable." This is the only other time we find the same word in the Greek text and it helps us to understand the passage in Revelation 3:1-22. The Lord evaluates the situation and says that, despite the high pretension of needing nothing, the assembly in Laodicea needs God's mercy. And it is the object of the Lord's kindness and mercy! This is not God's mercy and kindness towards the miserable sinner (Romans 9:18; Romans 11:31; Ephesians 2:4), nor the merciful attitude of our High Priest with regard to the question of our sins (Hebrews 2:17). The

word miserable in Revelation 3:17 underlines the Laodicean's desperate need of alms!2 In their own reckoning they are very rich, and they despise help from others as a consequence, but in reality they are in need of alms themselves. Yet the Lord is still ready to provide help, even for the Laodiceans! How merciful He is (Hebrews 4:16). He supplies the wisdom from above, which is "first pure, then peaceable, gentle, easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without variance, without hypocrisy." (ASV James 3:17). And the Lord wants this fruit to be reproduced in the lives of believers, even in Laodicean days (Luke 10:37). If it is absent, then "judgment will be without mercy to him that has shown no mercy. Mercy glories over judgment" (James 2:13).

2There is an intimate link in the Greek between mercy, pitiable and alms.

(3) "poor" This adjective is derived from a verb meaning to crouch; to fall down as it were like a beggar. Thus it is used for one who obtains his living by begging, as distinguished from one who, though poor, earns his living by daily hard labour. It indicates a condition of great need and of helplessness regarding the need. The Laodiceans were not aware that this was their condition!

What a contrast this critique is with the commendation the Lord gives to Smyrna, the suffering church! "I know thy works, and tribulation, and poverty, (but thou art rich)" (Revelation 2:9). The Laodiceans obviously didn't know these riches: was it because they did not experience suffering? Is this not a great challenge for Christians today, many of whom are living in an affluent society? We shy away from suffering and tend to be guilty of compromise,3 instead of standing firm for the truth of God.

3The agreement made in 1994 between Evangelicals and Catholics in the USA reflects this attitude.

Paul's example puts us to the test today: "as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things" (2 Corinthians 6:10). Our blessed Lord is, of course, always the perfect Model: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; He hath sent me to... preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised" (Luke 4:18). "For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich" (2 Corinthians 8:9). The poor saints in Macedonia are still an example for us today (cp. also Luke 6:20; Matthew 5:3). In Laodicea there was total ignorance with regard to their condition. Nevertheless, the Lord has good tidings, (now from the glory, whereas in Luke 4:1-44 He acted while on earth), even for them, as we will see in Revelation 3:18.

(4) "blind" In the Scriptures, beggar and blind are often mentioned in the same clause or sentence. The word used here by the Lord is a derivative of a verb that means to cause or emit smoke, or to wrap in a mist. It has a figurative meaning of: "1) to make proud, puff up with pride, render insolent; to be puffed up with haughtiness or pride; 2) to blind with pride or conceit, to render foolish or stupid; 2a) beclouded, besotted." (Thayer/BDB). In this context I think of Isaiah 6:9-10 where the Lord says, "Go and tell this people, Hear ye indeed, but understand not; and see ye indeed, but perceive not. Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and convert, and be healed." This was the condition of the Pharisees, as the Lord explained several

times in the Gospels (e.g. Matthew 15:14; John 9:39-41; cp. 12:35-50). Sad to say a similar condition was found in Laodicea. It is a condition which may affect any Christian, as Peter had already warned: “But he that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins” (2 Peter 1:9). However, the Lord came into this world to the end that “blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, and the dead are raised up, and the poor have good tidings preached to them” (ASV Matthew 11:5). In a different context, as we hope to see, this also applies to Laodicea.

(5) “naked” This word means, “uncovered, bare, exposed; poorly dressed, in need of clothes; perhaps wearing only an undergarment (as in John 21:7).” What does it mean in the context of the Lord’s message to Laodicea? I suggest that the Christians there were not clothed with Christ, as we are supposed to be.

What happened to the young man in Mark 14:1-72, who witnessed our Lord being taken captive, speaks of a lack of experience and maturity. He still had to learn identification with the Lord’s death.4 However, this fifth accusation of the Lord concerning Laodicea rather speaks of a state of indifference towards Christ, so that practically and morally speaking they were not clothed with Him.

4The word for the linen cloth in Mark 14:51 is the word used for the linen wrappings in which the Lord’s body was laid in the grave (Mark 15:46; Luke 23:53). In contrast to this we read, “For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ, have put on Christ” (Galatians 3:27), referring to our position here on earth. Furthermore in Ephesians 1:6 we read that God has accepted us in the Beloved and other passages confirm the idea that God sees us as clothed with Christ. This is the position that every Christian has before God. However, the passage in Revelation 3:1-22 has to do with actual practice. Are we practically clothed with Christ?

A. E. Bouter (To be continued, if the Lord will) Studies in the book of Revelation (3) (The Plumstead Conference, April 1995) Continued from page 238 Revelation 7:5-9

“... out of (the) tribe of Juda, twelve thousand sealed; out of (the) tribe of Reuben, twelve thousand; out of (the) tribe of Gad, twelve thousand; out of (the) tribe of Aser, twelve thousand; out of (the) tribe of Nepthalim, twelve thousand; out of (the) tribe of Manasseh, twelve thousand; out of (the) tribe of Simeon, twelve thousand; out of (the) tribe of Levi, twelve thousand; out of (the) tribe of Issachar, twelve thousand; out of (the) tribe of Zabulon, twelve thousand; out of (the) tribe of Joseph, twelve thousand; out of (the) tribe of Benjamin, twelve thousand sealed” (vs. 5-8).

Almost every part of the heavenly city has the number twelve stamped upon it and this emphasises the fact that it is a heavenly administration. The place of the twelve tribes is going to be the place of rule on earth, the administration among the nations during the kingdom. As we said a little earlier, Israel will be head and the nations will be the tail.

Twelve is usually the number of fulness in God’s government as opposed to seven which is the fulness of God’s counsels in glory. Here it is not really government which is immediately in view but a testifying remnant to be spared through the tribulation to come. It is precious to God’s heart to have those of the remnant for His own. Should we regard the twelve thousand referred to in each case as a symbolical number or an exact number? To my mind it speaks about the precision of God’s election but I would like some help on that.

It would be in keeping with the whole book to accept it as a symbol rather than an actual number. To give a more precise answer to the question I find rather difficult. A difficulty arises in taking the twelve thousand literally when a comparison is made with Revelation 14:1-20. The question whether it is symbolic or literal does not contradict the fact that there is an election. It will be very important for those of this company to be sure that none will be lost in a time when the power of Satan will be so manifest. They may be horrified by the circumstances they are facing but they are made to realise that they have not to be careful, because God knows them. And this kind of moral teaching has practical consequences for us too, even though it is related to another company. The same basic principles apply to the Christian.

Election is always in relation to persons whereas predestination is in relation to place and blessing.

Election is a secret known to God's family and we get convinced of this fact once we believe. When I was a young man I remember one gentleman told me, "I cannot believe because I am not one of the elect." However, that was something outside his knowledge. People do not come to Christ because they are not willing to do so. We know there is no unrighteousness with God and that is sufficient. Is there a special reason for the order in which the tribes are mentioned here? The royal tribe, Judah, is mentioned first. Our Lord arose out of Judah and maybe there is a point there we ought to take account of. Others have a placing which is also significant. Then we might also notice some absences, more than one I think, and some replacements. I wonder if we might dwell on those points with profit.

Judah and Reuben are mentioned in that order rather than the order in which they were born. The reason is found in 1 Chronicles 5:1-26 where it says that Reuben sinned against his father and lost his position as the firstborn. "And the genealogy is not to be reckoned after the birthright. For Judah prevailed above his brethren, and of him came the chief ruler; but the birthright was Joseph's" (1 Chronicles 5:1 b-2). In other words the birthright became Joseph's and the position of Reuben as chief among his brethren passed to Judah of whom came the royal tribe. Obviously those two names are beautiful emblems of the Lord Jesus Himself. The Lord Jesus is the Lion out of the tribe of Judah and He is also the true Joseph. The tribes of Dan and Ephraim are omitted from this list, although we find Joseph, the father of Ephraim, mentioned in his place. When we look at their history in the Old Testament we find them particularly identified with idolatry. But we also see grace coming in because God is not finished with these two tribes. In Ezekiel 48:1-35 when the land is distributed amongst the tribes both Dan and Ephraim are mentioned and remarkably Dan is mentioned first. God has not forgotten them but grace has come in and they have been restored.

It should be borne in mind, however, that although Dan is mentioned first in Ezekiel 48:1-35 he is the furthest away from the sanctuary. Judges 18:1-31 tells us of the priest taken from Micah's house by the six hundred men of the tribe of Dan. The priest took the ephod and the teraphim and the graven image and went in their midst. In the same chapter we read that "the children of Dan set up the graven image; and Jehonathan, the son of Gershom, the son of Moses; he and his sons were priests to the tribe of Dan." Isn't it extraordinary that the grandson of Moses, he and his sons, were priests to the tribe of Dan until the day of the captivity of the land? When you read further you find the tribe of Dan is associated with the tribe of Ephraim in connection with idolatry, and these two are the tribes omitted in the list in Revelation 7:1-17. When he pronounced his prophecies in

Genesis 49:1-33 Jacob said, “Dan shall judge his people, as one of the tribes of Israel” (5:16). I think it is on that account that Dan has a place in Ezekiel 48:1-35. But as to his behaviour, “Dan shall be a serpent by the way, an adder in the path, that biteth the horse heels, so that his rider shall fall backward.” The first omission is that of Dan and because God wants the fullness of His purpose exemplified here, He replaces the missing name with another one. Joseph is in his place because Joseph had a double portion but we can ask ourselves, why should Manasseh be mentioned and Ephraim missing? I think that explains what has already been said. Ephraim was in a terrible position. It is possible to trace the succession of Ephraim’s failures in the book of Judges and all his history is terrible. In Hosea we read that “Ephraim, he hath mixed himself among the people; Ephraim is a cake not turned” (Hosea 7:8). He has the same character as Moab. “Moab hath been at ease from his youth, and he hath settled on his lees, and hath not been emptied from vessel to vessel” (Jeremiah 48:11). Of Ephraim it says, “Strangers have devoured his strength, and he knoweth it not; yea, gray hairs are here and there upon him, yet he knoweth not” (Hosea 7:9). He has no idea of his real moral state which is the worst possible state to be in.

There was also the point between Judges and Hosea when Jeroboam wished to set up an alternative sanctuary to Jerusalem. He made two golden calves and set up one in Dan and the other in Bethel, which is in Ephraim. Which is the worst idolatry because Bethel means “the house of God.”

It is interesting to notice in connection with Gideon’s victory that the men of Ephraim said to Gideon, “Why hast thou served us thus, that thou calledst us not, when thou wentest to fight with the Midianites?” (Judges 8:1). They were obviously getting rather full of themselves and the trouble that came out subsequently in the division of the nation seems to find its first mention in connection with Gideon in this chapter.

We have to learn from the relative behaviour of Gideon and Jephthah. Gideon was wise enough to calm this situation down. Jephthah was full of pride and produced a division and killed 42,000 people, and for what? For a difficulty in the language. Honestly, are we any better at this moment when we see division all around us? (Judges 11:1-40; Judges 12:1-7). Is there any justification for the thought that the false prophet will arise out of the tribe of Dan? I have seen this in print in the past.

I believe the only basis for such a statement is the absence of any mention of Dan here, and in Genesis 49:1-33 where the time of antichrist corresponds to the time of Dan. But it is well beyond the Scripture to say that the antichrist springs from Dan.

I think the idea came from one of the church fathers, Ignatius, who mentioned this based on Genesis 49:1-33 and Revelation 7:1-17, but we don’t find it in the Scripture. The prophet Hosea said also that “Ephraim is joined to idols: let him alone” (Hosea 4:17). So actually Dan and Ephraim are together guilty of the sin of idolatry. Is there a reason why in this chapter Dan and Ephraim are missing and in Deuteronomy 33:1-29 Simeon is missing and not these tribes?

Simeon and Levi were guilty of taking the sword against the people in the land who had dishonoured their sister, and they did this without the knowledge of their father who condemned their action very strongly. The result of that sin was judged in the fact that Simeon did not have an inheritance apart from his brethren, but it was joined with Judah’s, as is very clear in Joshua. Levi

really regained the favour of God by his action at the time of the golden calf in the wilderness (Exodus 32:26-29). The four tribes or four names which speak so wonderfully to us about the Lord Jesus are Judah, Levi, Joseph and Benjamin. The fact that there are omissions in other lists of the tribes in the Bible indicates all the more strongly that this particular list is a literal listing of the tribes. No one can press the argument that the peculiarities we have been talking about indicate that the list in Revelation is a purely spiritual one. Some cultists assert that it is.

I think that is important because there are some that apply this to themselves saying it's their core group, whether it be Adventist, Pentecostal, Russellite or whatever. Also Protestants generally say "Well, it's just a nice way of describing the church." That is completely defective for the reasons that have been rightly given already.

I was thinking primarily of the Jehovah's Witnesses who take this as referring to themselves. They have to take it up in a spiritual fashion because to accept the literality of the list would destroy their whole theology!

"After these things I saw, and lo, a great crowd, which no one could number, out of every nation and tribes and peoples and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palm branches in their hands" (5:9). Do you think we can move on to the Gentiles? When you consider the shortness of the time and the great multitude that are the result of the testimony it is obviously the hand of God at work. The number of the world's population has increased several fold even in the last one hundred and fifty years. It is remarkable how the gospel of the kingdom and the everlasting gospel will be received.

It says out of every nation, tribe, people and tongue, so it will be a world-wide response to the preaching.

I think that most of those here will be from nations which have hardly been exposed to the gospel before. We know that in our countries there is not a hunger and a thirst for the gospel at this moment and the ground is desperately hard. Mention was made earlier of 2 Thessalonians 2:11-12 and those who have refused the gospel of the grace of God will have no opportunity to believe the gospel of the kingdom. Acts 28:1-31 is so clear: Paul said to the Jews, "you don't want the gospel: then we will go to the nations." Today so-called Christian countries refuse the gospel of the grace of God: then the gospel of the kingdom will be sent elsewhere. I was only two weeks ago in Thailand where there are millions of people and very few have heard the gospel of grace.

One can see how well capacitated the Jew is even naturally to carry the everlasting gospel. When you link their ability in language with their knowledge of the Scriptures they seem to be ideally suited as tools for this work. They are able to carry the message world-wide when the Spirit of God takes them up.

It says here concerning this Gentile company that they "stood before the throne." There are diverse opinions about this statement and the question arises, are these saints in heaven or are they on earth? What does the expression, "before the throne" convey? The angels are said to be around the throne, that is, on high, but the context here seems to show that this company is on earth. I suggest that here the expression, "before the throne," carries with it the idea of acceptance.

I agree. Standing “before the throne” is to be taken morally. In a sense the saints in all dispensations can be said to stand before the throne in that they live constantly in the presence of God and this manifests itself in their thoughts and actions. As Christians we have a position that goes beyond these saints in Revelation, although standing before the throne is cross-dispensational. Is this not one of the great anticipative visions that are given us in Revelation? Quite often we see the end result before the steps leading up to it are stated. I suggest that in verse 9 we have the end result of the preaching of the everlasting gospel seen in this great crowd that is found standing before the throne. They are clothed with white robes and have palm branches in their hands which plainly indicates not only acceptance but also that they are in the gain of the victory. In chapters 4 and 5 we see the heavenly saints in heaven forever. Then the seals are broken in heaven by the Lamb who sits on the throne but the results are seen on earth. Here we are brought back to earth with the apostle in order to get the teaching of the Holy Spirit in relation to the earth: “I saw four angels standing on the four corners of the earth.” We see anticipatively what happens on the earth and I think that, with the exception of the two witnesses of Revelation 11:1-19 who will be called up to heaven, all the saints in this period remain on earth. Ezekiel makes it clear that the temple will be rebuilt, and God will be there (Jehovah Shammah). Zechariah shows that even the nations will have to come and worship in Jerusalem and if they don’t they will have no rain. However, the company here in verse 9 is on earth but is in relation with heaven because heaven contains the throne at that moment. Is it correct to say that these believers will not worship the Father although they have been born again? They are believers but not Christians and they do not have the privileges of the church as the body of Christ. When we look carefully we find that they are standing before the throne, they have white robes, and palm branches in their hands. It is evidently a vision of what will be the ultimate result. They say, “Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb.” In their response they don’t get beyond the words that are here before us. Salvation is there but clearly they are not brought into Christian blessing.

“Repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand,” was the gospel preached when the Lord was here. It is rather striking that these Gentiles are said to have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. The Lamb seems to be mentioned quite often with regard to this Gentile company and the preaching they listen to obviously includes something about the relevance of the blood of Christ as being the means of redemption.

Whichever family we consider, whether it be the assembly or whether it be the remnant, blessing is all on the basis of the work that has been accomplished on the cross.

Poem The Difference Between Obstinacy And Firmness To stand by error, and the truth refuse; To close the eyes against unwelcome light; The crooked paths, through prejudice, to choose; For one’s own will, and thoughts, and ways to fight; To fear to have the sleeping conscience stirred, By letting in truth’s quick and searching ray; When ignorance to knowledge is preferred, And dull obscurity to heavenly day: By marks like these is stubborness descried, Offspring of foolish selfishness and pride. To stand by truth, to suffer loss and pain Rather than swerve from duty’s sacred way; To count reproach an honour; suffering gain, —

Endured, because we will God’s will obey;

Ne’er to abate one jot of what is right, Though crowds deride or flatter, smile or frown; To brave the dungeon, rack, or tyrant’s might;

Or, harder still, refuse a proffered crown: This is true FIRMNESS, such as Heaven approves, The noble steadfastness our Father loves.

J. G. Deck (1807-1884) News from the Field Report of the visit of Andrew Poots and Edwin Cross to Bhutan, Nepal and India, November/December 1995 (Continued from page 256) Our programme for India lay before us. Calcutta with its teeming millions came first. Here the monsoon was still bringing heavy rain and we wondered whether we could make it by car to the meeting. This is located in a village on the edge of the city. We arrived there and spoke about the literature work which is undertaken in Bengali. In the meeting there is a convert from Bangladesh who desires to take the truth to his contacts in that country. A letter was shown to us that had been received from ’mother Theresa’ expressing thanks for sending her the Good Seed calendar. She expressed real appreciation of its message. He had also received a letter from her previously in which she said that she took the book calendar with her on her journeys and read it every day. Our days from 19th-30th November were wholly occupied in Andhra Pradesh. First we were in Nellore for a conference where about 250 came together, mostly recent converts from tribal animism. These primitive people have received the Word with gladness and are cleaving to the Lord with singleness of heart. In this district there are 10 assemblies. My health was affected by contaminated water taken in Siliguri, so I went on to Tenali where we met brother Yohan. His recent heart attacks have taken their toll upon him. It was good to see him again after so long a time. Andrew went to the Tadepalligudem area where there have been meetings since the 1950’s. Brother Wilts stayed there some time in those days to assist the testimony in various practical and spiritual matters. The meetings there have seen some spiritual growth. There are 10 localities where brethren meet, in 8 of which there is the breaking of bread. Andrew also reported that he had great joy when the gospel was preached because many responded, some with tears in their eyes. The Tenali conference brought about 1,400 persons together under the sound of the ministry of the Word. Many came from the surrounding villages, there being some ten meetings in this area, but brethren also came from as far as Kerala and Karanataka States. Some also came from Maharashtra and Gujarat and from Bhutan. The subject of the conference was 1 Corinthians 1:9 and the 10th and 11th chapters. We trust that the truths of these passages which were laid before the brethren will be taken up in real exercise and maintained in the many gatherings represented. During the last day over a dozen new converts from Hinduism were baptised in a nearby canal.

After this busy time, Andrew and I travelled on to Kurnool for meetings, which were held in the open air under an awning. About 100 were present, including several from different denominations. It was here that we were interviewed by “All India radio.” This gave us the opportunity to give an account of the hope that lies within us. the broadcast was scheduled for 24th December.

I went on ahead to Baganapele to attend an evening meeting of the local assembly. The town lies in a remote guard area, which means that after sunset vehicles are escorted by police on account of the political unrest and banditry. The road took us down a narrow gorge sided by rocks and mountains. This caused me to think of the Lord’s story of the merciful Samaritan. I prayed we

might not fall among thieves! At our destination I was introduced to the local company of believers which numbered some 100 or more. It was a joy to behold their order. They live in a town with 40,000 Muslims. In that area there are some dozen other assemblies. Before leaving Andhra we had the joy of spending a day in the state capital, Hyderabad. There is a small meeting there comprising about 30 or 40 souls. The final leg of our visit brought us to Bombay. How glad we were to be there, to spend time with the brethren and to participate in the meetings in English. We could rest and we are immensely thankful to the Lord for the great care lavished upon us. While there we could speak together about the great literature needs in India and beyond. We had a good impression of the labours of brother Ronny Fernandes. Also visiting Bombay were brothers from Patna and Baroda, Nepal and Bhutan who are engaged in spreading the printed testimony in Hindi, Marathi, Gujarathi and Nepali. On the Lord's day afternoon I had the joy of baptising a young sister in the Ocean. She is very keen to go on for the Lord, in spite of domestic opposition. She is an avid reader of the books of Hamilton Smith. In the evening we went to the Tamil speaking meeting in Bombay. It is located in a slum area. We left the busy main road, turned down a narrow alleyway between some shops, and went through a labyrinth of alleys, past an open sewer and scurrying rats. The tiny meeting room is up a flight of stairs. Here about 30 or 40, including a dozen children, came together for the ministry of the Word. We were also joined in this upper room by a very active mouse! The corrugated iron walls were hung with Trinitarian Bible Society Scripture texts in English, also A. E. Booth's chart "from eternity to eternity" hung on a wall. We were translated into the Hindi and Tamil languages. There is also a Telegu meeting in Bombay, but lack of time prevented us from visiting the brethren there. On the whole we were greatly encouraged by our visit to the sub-continent. The numbers in fellowship have increased greatly. When I was last in India there were perhaps only 15 meetings in practical fellowship, where saints gather on the ground of the one body, but now there are over 80 such assemblies. The literature work, especially in the north, is expanding and having a good effect. Literature is being prepared in 13 Indian vernaculars. There are now assemblies in neighbouring countries and there is the prospect of the work spreading still further. A good number of gifted men have also been added to the numbers who can instruct the humble country folk in the truths of Christianity.

There are many problems and responsible brethren will always find themselves on the horns of a dilemma. There are so many astonishingly poor people who suffer immensely under a grinding poverty. There are many orphans and undernourished, neglected children. The iniquitous caste system still exerts its pressure, even influencing believers in marriage choices. The unchristian dowry system, whereby a father must pay his future son in law to take his daughter in marriage, still persists. The ignorance of many means that diseases such as polio and leprosy, besides almost every other kind of tropical disease, are found untreated among the saints. The problems of India are exacerbated by poor medical resources, lack of hygiene and sanitation. There are beggars everywhere, and even little children are sent out at all hours of the day and night to beg.

What must be done to help? Are brethren to become a development agency? These areas are really the responsibility of government and our involvement in them brings a diversion of energy as well as all the dangers that go along with the supply of material things. The brethren need our prayers. The literature work is a front line ministry which needs to be further encouraged and augmented. The preaching of the gospel and the ministry of edification also needs to be promoted in the various localities. Small regional conferences will probably be more useful in this respect

than the larger ones. It may also facilitate the spread of the testimony if an English language conference could be held. This would bring about economies of time, save us from being mistranslated (which occurred sometimes and perhaps too often) and give us the opportunity of going deeper into the truth with those able to teach others.

We thank God for the privilege He granted us to behold this corner of Lord's work and trust that this brief report will stimulate further prayer in regard to the immense field that stretches out before us in Asia.

E. N. C.

Vol 01 - Truth & Testimony Vol. 1 No. 1 1991.

Truth & Testimony Vol. 1 No. 1 1991. A Bible Truth Magazine The heart longing after the Person of Christ

Hebrews 13:7-8.

"Nothing is of any value that does not spring from personal love to, and communion with, Christ Himself. We may have scripture at our finger ends; we may be able to preach with remarkable fluency, a fluency which unpracticed spirits may easily enough mistake for 'power'; but oh! if our hearts are not drinking deeply at the fountain head — if they are not enlivened and invigorated by the realization of the love of Christ, it will all end in mere flash and smoke. I have learnt ... to be increasingly dissatisfied with everything, whether in myself or others, short of abiding, real, deep, divinely inwrought communion with, and conformity to, the blessed Master. Crotchets I despise; mere opinions I dread; controversy I shrink from; all 'ISMS I esteem as utterly worthless. But . . . I long to know more of His own precious Person, His work and his glory. And, then, oh! to live for Him: to labour, testify, preach, and pray, and all for Christ, and by the working of His grace in our hearts."

C.H.M. A new magazine for Christians needs some apology for surely there are enough periodicals circulating to satisfy every need. The editors of Truth & Testimony clearly are not persuaded that their work would be a duplication. Perhaps Truth & Testimony will be complementary to existing endeavours but the intention is to provide edification for all the children of God, especially in the field of Bible exposition. In the last century there was a very striking and extensive revival after a long and widespread slumber. The cry "Behold, the Bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet Him" was made. The call was responded to. Today the fact is that many have returned to their slumbers and we need to be revived as to the wonderful prospect of seeing our Lord face to face and to live as if we really do know that He will be calling us up into the air at any moment. Of paramount importance then was the influence of Bible Study in the lives of Christians.

Sudden and little looked-for events have occurred in the world of late — our prayer is that many hitherto slumbering will be aroused to search the Scriptures of Truth rather than scanning the political horizon. Directing our attention to the events of the times, earthly things, will only disturb our judgment. Nothing merits our greater concentration of mind than those things which are above, where Christ is seated. It is our privilege to search the Word of God which is the Revelation from God. This alone tells of the wonderful things God has prepared for those that love Him. In many things we have moved away from Biblical standards because our understanding of God's Word has become so enfeebled. A diversity of articles is planned for the edification and strengthening of the saints of God in every place where this periodical may go and be read. We desire that this magazine will direct the Lord's people into the way of God more accurately and help us return to Biblical precepts and practice. May the Scriptures be the guide in our lives.

We commit this endeavour to the One Who alone can bless the labours of His servants and give the increase, commending this work to the One to Whom the Church belongs and Who loves her that He may be pleased to use this to the glory of His precious name. E.N.C. The Old in the New Explained

Matthew 1:23.

"Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call His name Emmanuel; which being interpreted is, God with us." This verse, with the exception of the interpretation given at the end, is a quotation from Isaiah 7:14. Turning to that chapter we find that Rezin, King of Syria and Pekah, King of Israel (Ephraim), had formed a confederacy against Judah and Jerusalem. Their intention was to set aside the royal line of David, (and hence Messiah) and to place the son of Tabeal on the throne (5: 6). Nevertheless "Thus saith the Lord God, it shall not stand, neither shall it come to pass" (5: 7). Ephraim was to be broken "that it be not a people" (5: 8). Ahaz was invited by Jehovah to ask for a sign as verification of His word but in false piety he refused to ask (5: 11/12). "Therefore the Lord Himself shall give you a sign: Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call His name Immanuel." The royal line of David’s house was to continue till Messiah came, but how much further the sign goes! Not only would He be the virgin’s son, the woman’s seed of Genesis 3:15, but "Immanuel." As He comes into view in Matthew’s gospel and we see Him to be the son of David (5: 1) this first of quotations from the old testament shows Him to be not man only, and miraculously such, but God Himself come down in grace. Might we overlook the meaning of this Name in our hurry to read on? Might we pass His glory by? That we might not do so the Holy Spirit Himself has given us its interpretation "God with us"!

News from the Field

Bhutan

Bhutan is a small kingdom high in the eastern Himalayas with a population of 1.5 million. Accessible only by treacherous mule trails until 25 years ago, its tribesmen were open only to contact with Tibet. Only 5% are literate. The official language is Dzongkha but there are 15 languages used in all. Subsistence/barter economy is prevalent with a per capita income averaging at £50.00 per annum. Buddhism is strong and all public expression of Christianity is illegal. Only Mark’s Gospel is available in Dzongkha. There is a real need for further Scripture translation and Christian literature in local vernaculars. There is widespread anti-Christian prejudice in the "Kingdom of the Thunder Dragon." The believers referred to in our correspondent’s letter need your prayerful support.

Dear Brother in Christ,

Thanks for your encouraging letter dated 4 June ’90. I’m extremely grateful to you for the books which you have dispatched from there. Here in Bhutan we appreciate the books you publish very much, because we don’t have qualified pastors to feed us with nutritious spiritual food from the Word of God. We take help from spiritual books for ourselves and for those who are in fellowship with us. The Government of this land is always against Christianity. So we work for the Lord very secretly and we don’t have church buildings, neither do we have a professional pastor. We meet for worship, prayer and Bible study either in a rented house or in the house of a believer.

Sometimes we go to the woods for prayer because of the fear of policemen.

Though there are about 300 believers in Bhutan divided into 5 local assemblies (due to the distance of places), they are very poor financially and are unable to purchase good books for their spiritual growth and edification. We have no headquarters to control or to support us. Our only Head is Christ and we live by faith. In 1976 I was saved from a Hindu priest background in a village of a small state of India. Then I joined a denomination. But in 1985 Lord led me to come to Bhutan where gospel preaching is strictly prohibited. I left the denominations completely and came to Bhutan to work independently and began to preach to the poor and backward people of this dark heathen land. God blessed me much and gave some precious souls who are now shining witnesses of the Lord in this country. I don't receive any salary from any source but I always claim Matthew 6:33, and our God is always fulfilling His precious promises. I help the believers to know much from the word of God through whatever good books I receive from our friends and relatives in Christ.

We believe the Bible as the Word of God and give much time to study it. The Holy Spirit is our only teacher. Whatever He teaches we try to obey and He has really helped us to walk in His paths.

Rest, I will try to write next time. Please pray for us and if possible, please help us with good and profitable books. With love and greetings. In Christ Yours, J.D., Phuntsholing, Bhutan.

Care for the New-Born. The much-loved stories of Jesus raising souls from the dead are full of spiritual instruction. At the present time we limit our meditation to only three points, easy to see and understand. The first, we need hardly say, is the comprehensive picture they present of the Saviour's complete victory over the "prince of terrors." The little maiden, Jairus' daughter (Matthew 9:1-38, Mark 5:1-43, Luke 8:1-56) was "at the point of death." The widow of Nain's boy (Luke 7:1-50) was dead and being carried to the place of burying. Lazarus (John 11:1-57) was "in the grave four days already." No case was beyond our Saviour's power. Very shortly He will "transform our body of humiliation," He will "Subdue all things unto Himself" (Php 3:21). He is declared Son of God with power . . by resurrection of dead persons (Romans 1:4). The second valuable pointer in these stories is the direction in which souls grow when they are under the Divine hand. Of Jairus' daughter we read, "She rose and walked" (Mark 5:42). The influence of women is great, as both testaments testify; but their testimony is not a public one. Paul speaks of "Keepers at home" (Titus 2:5), not outward adornment, but good works (1 Timothy 2:1-15). Peter is on the same line, the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, and the winning conversation of the wives (1 Peter 3:1-22). Doubtless the world pattern today is to reverse the role of the sexes, but a godly sister instructed in the word will have no desire to overstep the Divine boundaries.

Jairus' daughter arose and walked. In the case of the widow of Nain's boy, he arose and began to speak. This would seem to be a complementary testimony. The sphere of the brothers is a public one, in prayer, and praise and administration. Paul tells us also that they are to speak "to edification, exhortation and comfort," and Peter says "if any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God." Some alas never open their mouths at all, and others speak too much. But at least here we have the Divine pattern. The young man "sat up and began to speak." In the case of Lazarus (John 12:1-50) there was a supper. It was a social occasion. Some will see in it a picture of the Lord's supper. Be it one or the other, Lazarus gives us the picture of the conduct and behaviour becoming to those who are raised from the dead. He sat at the table with Him. Such a

consciousness with Lazarus adds tone and dignity to the occasion, and it is a model for us. The third interesting lesson is that there is work to be done by those who stand by and watch the Master in His gracious operations. How wonderful this is. Only He, the Son of God, can raise from the dead, but He invites His own to have a part in the tremendous work which He has accomplished. For the little Maiden (Mark 5:43) He commanded that something should be given her to eat. Young souls, and older ones too, need food, exactly suited to their age and condition, a skilful matter, and calling for much nearness to the Master. Jesus Himself fed both the disciples (John 21:1-25) and the multitudes (in all 4 gospels). Peter was instructed to feed (John 21:1-25) and he passes on the exhortation (1 Peter 5:1-14). Stewards have to be faithful and wise if they are to give the portion of meat in due season (Luke 12:42). Paul assessed the situation in each assembly before he wrote his epistles, as the variety shows. And how rich and varied is the diet supplied! "Give ye them to eat" is the Master's word. Then the young man, who sat up and talked, he was delivered to his mother (Luke 7:15). This is especially touching. The public ministry of the word brings its joys, but also its strains and pressures, which are sometimes overlooked. "My brethren, be not many teachers, knowing that we shall receive the greater judgment" (James 3:1). Faithful ministry can also bring reproach and persecution, as with the prophets of old (Matthew 5:11-12). The Lord takes notice of this situation — with mother care, and who can care like a mother? Israel will prove it so in the tribulation of the coming day, "As one whom his mother comforteth, so will I comfort you" (Isaiah 66:13). Today we can prove this comfort in the assembly (Luke 10:30-37, the two pence perhaps representing spiritual and temporal care). It would seem the Lord Jesus Himself proved this comfort in the days of His sorrowing flesh when He found refreshment in the home in Bethany. And finally, for Lazarus (John 11:44) coming forth from the sepulchre, bound hand and foot with graveclothes, and his face bound about with a napkin, Jesus said (to those that stood by) "Loose him, and let him go." Souls need liberation if they are to sit at table with Him. Liberation from the world (2 Corinthians 6:14 et seq.), from the ecclesiastical systems of men (Hebrews 13:10-13) and from associations that defile (2 Timothy 2:19-22).

All this, and much more, is the provision of Divine care for new-born souls. The results manifestly redound to the Lord's glory and God's praise.

D.W.P.

Jeroboam's Failure In Hebrews 3:12 we read a solemn warning: "Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God." This might be a fitting description of Jeroboam, the first monarch of the separated Kingdom of Israel, one who came short of the promises of God through unbelief. Let us examine the background of Jeroboam's rise from obscurity to the throne of Israel. First we are confronted with Solomon's Ungodly Ways

King Solomon, who had begun his reign in such a promising manner, was led astray by his many foreign wives. One wonders if he had obeyed the law of Moses when he became king, and copied out the conditions of kingship as set out in Deuteronomy 17:14-20? It is remarkable that, with all His God-given wisdom, he yet departed from all these principles, by multiplying wives, horses and riches, and these very things seem to have turned his heart away from God, so that we read the solemn words in 1 Kings 11:6 : "Solomon did evil in the sight of the Lord." What a warning for those that start well, but in their old age depart from the truth, and often lead younger believers astray! There was really no excuse for Solomon, because we read in verse 9: "The Lord was angry

with Solomon, because his heart was turned from the Lord God of Israel, which had appeared unto him twice, and had commanded him concerning this thing, that he should not go after other gods: but he kept not that which the Lord commanded." As a result of this, God stirred up adversaries against him, one of whom was Jeroboam, a brave and diligent servant, whom Solomon put in a responsible position. The old prophet Ahijah was entrusted with a message for this young man. Tearing his new garment into twelve pieces, he gave ten pieces to Jeroboam, as a token that he was to rule over ten tribes, but for David's sake the other two tribes should remain under Rehoboam's rule. Next we notice The Unchanging Word of God

God had promised the kingdom to David, as we read in Psalms 132:11 : "The Lord hath sworn in truth unto David, He will not turn from it, Of the fruit of thy body will I set upon thy throne." "Hath He said, and shall He not do it?" But now Solomon was confronted by another promise of God, made this time to Jeroboam, that part of the kingdom should be his. Instead of resting in the assurance of God, "Notwithstanding in thy days I will not do it, for David thy father's sake," Solomon, like Herod in a later day, took the law into his own hands, and sought to kill Jeroboam; but, of course, God's promises could not be frustrated, and Jeroboam fled into Egypt until Solomon's death.

God's promise to Jeroboam was plain. The kingdom was his unconditionally. "Thou shalt reign according to all that thy soul desireth, and shalt be king over Israel." The perpetuation of the kingdom, on the other hand, was conditional upon his obedience. "If thou wilt hearken...walk in My ways, and do that is right in My sight...I will be with thee, and build thee a sure house." The kingdom was his. He had only to believe the promise of God for that. Yet, like Jacob, he felt that he needed to work out his own schemes to obtain the fulfilment of the promise. Are we not ourselves sometimes guilty of the same mistake? So often we are not content with God's clear promise, but try by our own efforts to obtain our object, sometimes at the cost of obedience to God's Word. When the time came for Jeroboam to ascend the throne, God was already working. At the same time that he heard of King Solomon's death, messengers reached him, begging him to return, so that when Rehoboam foolishly followed the advice of his young friends, and spoke roughly to the representatives of the people, they immediately turned to Jeroboam, and made him king over the northern kingdom. Rehoboam set out with the intention of restoring the rebellious kingdom by military force, but Shemaiah, the man of God, pointed out that God's hand was in this matter, and Rehoboam wisely refrained from fighting against God.

Now we see The Unbelief of Jeroboam

It would have been well for Jeroboam if he, too, had listened to God's messengers. The God of Israel could have blessed him and his descendants (one of whom, his son Abijah seems to have shown great promise), and he would never have deserved that terrible epithet, the man "that made Israel to sin." But the promises of God were not enough for this man. He reasoned on a purely human level. In 1 Kings 12:26 we read: "Jeroboam said in his heart, Now shall the kingdom return to the house of David: if this people go up to do sacrifice in the house of the Lord at Jerusalem...they shall kill me, and go again to Rehoboam." The kingdom of Judah was privileged to have the temple of God in its midst. The northern kingdom had no temple. What should Jeroboam have done? It is easy for us to judge him, but let us remember that even David, the anointed of God, was once in such a low spiritual condition that he lost sight of God's promises, and said in his heart: "I shall now perish one day by the hand of Saul," and went down to join the

Philistines, his people's enemies, and barely escaped from the shameful position of fighting with them against Saul's army.

There is no doubt that if Jeroboam had truly sought the mind of God about his problem, he would have been reassured, since, whatever happened, the kingdom was his, and, if he had set an example to his people by regularly going to Jerusalem to worship, the two kingdoms could perhaps have lived together in peace and godliness for many years. There were prophets in the northern kingdom, as we see in the next chapter, but it appears as though the ungodly example set by the king caused even the faithful to shrink from a public acknowledgment of trust in the living God.

Instead, however, of asking God, we read that Jeroboam "took counsel," evidently of men, and the result was the setting up of the two golden calves, one at Dan, in the far north, and the other, as a challenge to the God of Jacob, at Beth-el, of which place Jacob had declared, centuries before: "This is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven." It is remarkable that he repeated the sin of Aaron and the people of Israel at the foot of Sinai, where God had already pronounced the solemn words: "Thou shalt have no other gods before Me." Jeroboam even repeated the words of Aaron: "Behold thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt." Had he already forgotten the words of Ahijah, when he promised him the kingdom? This very kingdom had been taken away from Solomon's descendants because the people had forsaken God, and had turned to the abominations of the surrounding nations. Now Jeroboam was committing the same sin. It has been argued that Jeroboam was really worshipping Jehovah, but with the aid of visible images. This is urged to-day to excuse blatant idolatry. The Bible does not support this. It says plainly: "This thing became a sin." God does not require an image to enable men to worship Him. In fact, the very idea is condemned throughout Scripture.

God had said Ye shall worship in the place that I shall choose. Dan and Beth-el were Jeroboam's choice. To-day many seek to serve God and "worship" Him in the manner and the place that suits them, but the New Testament teaches us that the place must be of God's choosing, the place where Christ is in the midst, and where the Holy Spirit is free to lead in true worship. Then again, God had chosen Aaron and his sons to serve him as priests. Jeroboam had no access to God's priests, so he "made priests of the lowest of the people, which were not of the sons of Levi." Christendom has its counterpart, setting up a "priestly class," often composed of unconverted men (or women!), setting aside the Divine principle of the priesthood of all believers. Not content with these alterations, Jeroboam even found fault with the feasts of Jehovah, although he had made some brief reference to the deliverance out of Egypt, upon which, to some extent, these feasts were based. How could he hold a Passover, if he had turned away from the God Who redeemed His people by blood, and delivered them by His power? He made his own feast (perhaps on his birthday, or the anniversary of his accession). The Divine record assures that it was "in the month which he had devised of his own heart." We may see a parallel to this in the "Saints' Days" and "Church Festivals" recognised in Christendom, while the regular coming together for prayer, edification and remembrance of the Lord's death is often sadly missing.

We know the result of Jeroboam's sad beginning. Of the 19 kings that sat on the throne of the northern kingdom it does not seem that one sought after God. Many were murdered by usurpers, who, in turn, were overthrown by others, until finally "the Lord was very angry with Israel, and removed them out of his sight" (2 Kings 17:18), delivering them into the hands of the Assyrians.

These things were written for our learning. Our God and Father seeks worshippers, but those that worship in spirit and in truth. May it be true of us, as Paul writes to the Philippians: "For we are the circumcision, which worship God in the Spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh" (Php 3:3).

R.E.A.R.

Low at Thy Feet Low at Thy feet, Lord Jesus, This is the place for me;

Here I have learned deep lessons:

Truth that has set me free.

Free from myself, Lord Jesus, Free from the ways of men;

Chains of thought that have bound me Never can bind again.

None but Thyself, Lord Jesus, Conquered this wayward will, But for Thy love constraining, I had been wayward still.

Found in J.N. Darby’s Bible after his home call Book Review Bibliotheca Sacra THE PROSPECT. Volumes 1 and 2. Guernsey: Stephen Barbet, 1850. Limited Edition Classic Facsimile Series No. 1. Reprint, London: Chapter Two, 1989. £36.00. This facsimile publication of the first two volumes of The Prospect, William Kelly’s first magazine, by Chapter Two (199 Plumstead Common Road, London) makes a real contribution to the Christian world, especially those interested in the truth of the Lord’s return. It provides a compendium of the early writings of Plymouth Brethren leaders like Kelly, Darby, Mackintosh, and others, enabling libraries to add to their periodical collection material not previously available.

Volume 1 contains among many other significant items Kelly’s complete "Notes on the Apocalypse." The focus of the periodical was on the premillennial return of Jesus Christ to the earth to fulfil the promises of God, a truth which, as Kelly noted, "of late years...has been strikingly and extensively revived among the children of God" p.1). The republication of this periodical can be commended for providing a tool for biblical, theological, and historical study.

John A. Witmer in Bibliotheca Sacra, vol. 147 Women Praying and Prophesying

I have long thought that the expression "praying or prophesying" in 1 Corinthians 11:1-34 does not intimate that they are actually to be themselves teaching or praying, but that while women are in the Assembly, in the place, not in the act of praying or prophesying, they are to be covered. And my judgement is grounded on this, that the men, though they do not either pray or teach, yet being in the place of praying or teaching, are to be as much uncovered as those brethren or men who do pray and teach actually. How many men in our assemblies never actually do anything, and yet we should be as much offended by their being covered as if we saw the teaching, active brethren covered. So that it is the place and not the act of praying and prophesying that 1 Corinthians 11:1-34 contemplates.

Extract from letter of J.G. Bellett.

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