

**MEETINGS
IN
GERMANY**

**WITH
ALFRED J GARDINER**

**NOTES OF MEETINGS
IN
WERMELSKIRCHEN
1954 & 1955
WEIDENAU
1959**

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Introduction

This volume is an addition to seven recently published that bring together ministry by Alfred J Gardiner not previously collected in this form. These other volumes contained a mixture of articles originally published in English and French. Since they were finalised, three books have been made available of meetings in Germany, which were published in German by Mr Alfred Wellershaus. I am very grateful to others who have helped to collect this material, and translated it so that it can be published in English for the first time. I do not read German and would not have been able to make this book without that help; but I take responsibility for the resulting script in English.

The volumes of our brother's ministry already available are listed at the end of this book; those published in the 1950s can be readily found second-hand.

Two other words given in 1942 and 1950 have been added as an appendix; one was overlooked for the earlier volumes; the other has come to light later, as a recording—which I have only very lightly revised. Neither of them was given in Germany.

In my early years, I attended meetings in Streattham where Mr Gardiner broke bread; and have held him in great affection and regard. He was, of course, very active in ministry, and often away, but he never forgot his local meeting—either in his prayers or his attention to our practical and spiritual welfare. I remember him as apt to repeat himself in ministry, but I now know this was not a sign of age—it will be seen in these books too.

Mr Gardiner has salutary advice about reading: 'Books by themselves, however good they may be, cannot establish us in the truth ... It is only in the power of the Spirit that the thoughts of God can be grasped and made profitable, and if we are well aware of that, we are cast on God in prayer'. May reading of these books be taken up in this spirit to God's glory!

ANDREW BURR

2021

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MEETINGS IN WERMELSKIRCHEN

5th-7th JUNE 1954

(SATURDAY TO MONDAY)

COMPLETION

Reading 1—Saturday afternoon

Revelation 1

A.J.G. I thought we could consider in these four readings which we have now, the beginning and the end of Revelation. This afternoon we are going to read the first chapter.

The book of Revelation is connected with what the Lord says about the assembly in Matthew 16: 18: “on this rock I will build my assembly, and hades’ gates shall not prevail against it”. The assembly is not seen here in her heavenly privileges (this must of course underlie every position she fills out in testimony) but rather in the midst of the development of the greatest possible evil down here, but down here as acknowledged by the Lord, and assured that every thought of God will be brought through to the end. That is why we have the local assemblies in Revelation. It is addressed to seven assemblies. At the end of Revelation, the Lord says. “I Jesus have sent mine angel to testify these things to you in the assemblies”, chap 22: 16. It is our local setting that is before us. We see in the first chapter how the Lord takes account of the real conditions. He walks in the midst of the assemblies in His judicial character. He has no desire to judge, but rather He speaks in His faithfulness of what is not pleasing to Him, although He does not fail to refer to what is pleasing to Him. The larger part of Revelation is occupied with the time in which the assembly has been taken up, and yet it is addressed to all the assemblies. The Lord’s desire is that every assembly should be awakened to see their local responsibility, so that the service of God and the truth of God should be maintained until the end. The book also shows that the families after the rapture must go through much more severe tribulations than us. Yet God will bring them through. There are three things in this chapter beside other things that must be

taken into consideration. Firstly, we have the thought of bondmanship, and this thought runs through the whole book.

A.W. It says that His servants shall serve Him and shall see His face (Rev 22: 3, 4), as they will in glory later on.

A.J.G. The angel who had made all this known to John says to him, “I am thy fellow-bondman ... of thy brethren”, Rev 22: 9. It shows that everyone who has a commission from God is engaged as a bondman. Being a bondman means that we are totally dedicated to the things of God.

A.W. Is this the reason why we understand Revelation so little, because we appreciate the thought of the servant so little?

A.J.G. It is quite significant that the thought of a bondman is brought in so early. It says that He will show His bondmen the things that must soon take place. That is why He sent His angel, in view of showing this to His bondman John. So John, who was used in a special way to disclose the book of Revelation, is expressly named as a bondman.

J.A.H. Is bondmanship based on love?

A.J.G. Yes, that is so. John was one that knew love in a special way. He is the only one of whom it was said that he lay on the breast of Jesus. That is why the knowledge of our inward love should make us bondmen the more in the testimony outwardly.

Rem. Bondmen would involve dependence.

A.J.G. That is true, but it goes even further. A bondman is completely his Lord's property.

Rem. The Lord says, “I love my master”, Exod 21: 5.

A.J.G. The Lord presents Himself thus in an outstanding way. It says in Philippians 2: 7 that He “emptied himself, taking a bondman's form”, and the reference that has been made to the Hebrew bondman shows that He loves His Lord in His bondmanship.

Ques. Was the apostle Paul a real bondman in this respect?

A.J.G. Paul presents himself as a bondman in Philippians, and Peter does so as well in his second epistle; Jude does the same in his letter, and James in his also. This shows that all that were inspired to write letters showed themselves being bondmen in Jesus Christ.

Ques. Is a bondman that serves one that has no will of his own?

A.J.G. Yes, and he never has any free time.

Rem. It is always good to know whose bondmen we are.

A.J.G. We find with the Lord that He represents the thought of the bondman towards God. It says in Zechariah 13: 5, “for man acquired me as bondman from my youth”. So He did not only become a bondman in respect of God, but also He served man faithfully as a bondman.

M.v.R. As the Lord Jesus washed the feet of His disciples, He said: “The bondman is not greater than his lord”, John 13: 16. Would that maybe indicate something in this connection?

A.J.G. That is most touching, the Lord regarded no service as too lowly.

Rem. Paul calls himself a prisoner in Christ Jesus, Philem 23. Does this have anything to do with what a bondman is according to these words?

A.J.G. That was the result of his bondmanship. While he was completely devoted to the truth, he had become a prisoner. That shows what this chapter indicates. It shows that the testimony goes on based on suffering. Another matter that is important in this chapter is the place the Holy Spirit has. John presents the Holy Spirit in his writings like no one else. He names Him as the Comforter in his gospel, as Advocate. Before that he refers to Him as the wind or as water, living water. In this book, he mentions the Spirit, the seven Spirits that stand before His throne. It is a unique presentation of the Holy Spirit. It seems to be preserved for the last days, the Advocate in the gospel and the seven Spirits of God in Revelation.

Ques. What is your thought of the seven Spirits of God, what would they mean?

A.J.G. It is a complete power for everything that might arise at the present time. The fact that the book is directed to seven assemblies, and that the Holy Spirit is presented as the seven Spirits, would also involve that the Holy Spirit is available in every local assembly.

J.A.H. Does this mean that the Holy Spirit is able to meet any desire in every place?

A.J.G. That is right, He is before the throne of God. He has placed Himself in this position; this does not view Him as in heaven. Obviously, we cannot say that the Spirit of God is not in heaven, we cannot limit Him as God. But the place He has taken is here on earth to maintain the rights of the throne of God.

Ques. Would He be presented here as the almighty hand of God?

A.J.G. He is God Himself. The Lord speaks of Him in another place as the finger of God, Luke 11: 20. It is very important to consider in general the movements of God through the Spirit, and yet that the Spirit is God in Himself. It is a great encouragement for every local assembly, however small it might be outwardly, that God Himself is with us in Spirit, not only visiting us, as the Lord visits us, but rather He is constantly with us.

Ques. Does the Spirit present Himself here in a seven-fold way so that the testimony was the highest value to heaven?

A.J.G. This book presents the greatest evil activities against the truth by Satan himself, who is behind it all. It is very comforting and stimulating for us that God Himself is behind the position and also comes into every local assembly in which the truth is maintained.

Rem. Seven means perfection, which God has in mind.

A.J.G. Seven involves the complete power there is against all evil or whatever it could be, to act and meet every need.

Ques. Does this involve that the Spirit presents Himself as the seven Spirits at the throne of God, and the seven assemblies being referred to, that the Spirit is accessible in every local assembly?

A.J.G. Yes, that is the bearing of it; when Paul wrote to the Corinthians, opening up the truth to the local assemblies, he says: "Do

ye not know that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?”, 1 Cor 3: 16. That is to say that we can always get light for all matters.

A.L.B. The power and authority of the throne must be acknowledged in every place.

A.J.G. That must be seen in persons, and be established even in us. To begin with, we must be bondmen. When we answer to being bondmen, then we will also receive the support of a bondman.

G.S. Do we have a reference to this in Zechariah 4: 10?

A.J.G. Yes, it is a very encouraging Scripture. It relates to the days of recovery, where everything is small, and the word of God is not by power or might, but rather by my Spirit, saith Jehovah of hosts, even those seven shall see the plummet in the hand of Zerubbabel. That means that his work of building goes on, the plummet was in his hand in view of completion. Then it says: “the eyes of Jehovah, which run to and fro in the whole earth”. We must always consider that the eyes of Jehovah see everything, what goes on in every place. He notices if we are really building up, and if the rights of the throne are being maintained.

E.E.P. You indicated that the seven Spirits are linked with the testimony down here. Eliezer, the bondman in Genesis 24, took ten camels of the camels his master had. Could there be a link between the seven Spirits and the ten camels?

A.J.G. The camels show the power that brought Rebecca to Isaac. That is not really the testimony, but rather that we enter into union with Christ as His bride. The number ten undoubtedly has a link with our responsibility in going in for the truth. The number seven indicates spiritual completion. It also has special application to the power of the Spirit against the present opposition.

F.R. It says therefore in 1 Peter 4: 14, “If ye are reproached in the name of Christ, blessed are ye; for the Spirit of glory and the Spirit of God rests upon you”.

A.J.G. Yes, that is a very encouraging scripture. It shows that the reproach of Christ bestows dignity on a believer.

E.Z. Rebecca proceeded in the obedience of faith.

A.W. The Spirit in Genesis 24 is referred to as a bondman. Does He thereby identify Himself with us?

A.J.G. Yes, although in Revelation 1 the word means slave, the Spirit is not that, He is not as low as that. He will always be the one that rules over Abraham's house.

F.Sh. Is Revelation 3: 14 of any help where it says, in connection with the testimony, “the faithful and true witness”? The Lord Jesus is named this way.

A.J.G. Yes, He is first referred to as the true witness. This shows that believers must be true as martyrs. The Lord has gone before us in this. The faithfulness of this testimony included His death. The testimony is carried through the Revelation in sufferings. He is referred to here as “the faithful witness” and “the prince of the kings of the earth”. It is remarkable that the Spirit is mentioned before the Lord. However, that does not mean that the Spirit has precedence over the Person of Christ. But when we maintain the truth of God, then we first have God in Spirit, that comes to our conditions, and then in Christ the example for faithfulness. This includes sufferings even until death.

Rem. The Lord calls Himself as “the first and the last”. He can thus also be the last One.

A.J.G. That refers to His deity: “the first and the last”. It says in verse 17; “*I am the first and the last, and the living one*”.

F.Sh. Is there encouragement in that He is “the prince of the kings of the earth”? It is the kings of the earth that the enemy has used so much to work against the testimony.

A.J.G. The light of the kingdom is brought in here, and the Lord Jesus is the excellent One in this, the Prince. It is most important that, before John speaks about the vision of the Son of Man, he says, “To

him who loves us, and has washed us from our sins in his blood”, and so on. So he calls upon us to worship and praise the Lord.

A.B. Can we at this time consider John as well? The fact he is looked upon as a bondman, then he was in the Spirit on the Lord’s day, then he turned back to see the voice which spoke with him. Turning round is thus so important, which we should practise and learn. We should turn away from the earth and the world and our flesh, and then the grace of God gives us features of the precious treasures that He relates. We will then be linked with heaven.

A.J.G. We will come to that during consideration in our readings. We should now consider what we have in verse 5 and 6, if they have any weight with us. We should not go back to our earlier sins. What happened in the past is a past matter, as we are washed from our sins in His blood. This is most important for us, so that we may be true bondmen. It also says that He has made us a kingdom, priests to His God and Father. This means that He has the service of God in mind. The service of worship of God in holy conditions, and therefore He has washed us from our sins. Each one of us should have part in this. If every brother and sister would realise that they have part in this, it would be a great preservation for us.

W.R. Does this scripture in the beginning of the book show the greatness of the book itself?

A.J.G. We have the privilege of giving glory to the Lord. Other scriptures relate to the glory that we can render God. But this is a heart matter.

E.B. Could you say something about “made us a kingdom, priests”?

A.J.G. He has made us a kingdom, which means that we are under His protection, and all His support is available to us; because He has so much in His heart that this priestly mind should be maintained.

W.Sch. John presents here what He has done, that He has washed us, and has made us; then He also says He loves us. This is in the present tense.

A.J.G. It says, He loves us—surely, He still does that. But then, that He has washed us from our sins and made us His kingdom—that belongs to what He has done in the past, but it still goes on presently.

E.E.P. Does the continuation link with mutual love?

A.J.G. I believe that “has made us a kingdom, priests to His God and Father” is very important. Whatever our position in the testimony might be, it is all marked by what we are as priests.

Rem. It is our present position before God, to be kings and priests.

A.J.G. We are not yet kings. It does not say He has made us kings; that is said later. Here it says plainly “made us a kingdom”. We being kings is a future thought. Now we are in the kingdom, and we are now under His protection and under His power.

J.A.H. It says of Israel as He brought them to Horeb, that He made them to be a people for a possession and a kingdom of priests, Exod 19: 6. Would the same even be applied to us?

A.J.G. Yes, that is right. The Lord sees how opposition develops against the truth. That is why He brings in the thought of a kingdom. In the kingdom we have a powerful support in what is right, then we are fully able to devote ourselves as bondmen to the service of God. This might bring a number of tests, for example our associations, when we should be priests practically, which means holy in our approach to God. The Lord is determined to support us in power.

J.A.H. We can always count upon His support in practical matters we go through.

A.J.G. It is very important and helpful for us to see how the service of God was in the Lord’s heart. That is why this should not be just a formal matter, when we come together Lord’s day morning. But rather the privilege and responsibility should rest upon us, that we are going to serve God. It should be in our thoughts throughout the whole week, that we are redeemed from our past and now priests to His God and Father.

Ques. Is it important that we should be faithful subjects in this kingdom?

A.J.G. Yes, this is put before us.

M.v.R. The priests were taken out of the people of Israel: would this show we are also taken out?

A.J.G. As we have received the Holy Spirit, we are made priests, and as a matter of fact we are actually of the order of Christ.

E.B. Maybe we could underline again that verse 6 has special bearing on worship on Lord's day morning.

A.J.G. Yes, that is right. It comes especially into expression on Lord's day morning, but of course not just then, but also at our prayer meeting and our private approach to God. When we think of the tabernacle system, we find that sacrifices were brought all the time. There was the brazen altar, the table of shewbread and the altar of incense. The pattern of course lacked the greatest privilege in Christianity, as there was no entrance into the holy of holies. Only Aaron was allowed to go in once a year.

P.v.d.B. Is "his God and Father" here linked with John 20 where the Lord says, "my Father" and "my God"? The Lord brings us on to His side.

A.J.G. Yes, that is right; all this emphasises His jealousy, how the Lord watches over us that we should maintain the service of God in a priestly way. Another matter you can notice in this chapter is the way in which the Spirit avails Himself to John. It says, "I became in the Spirit on the Lord's day". We must realise this more.

A.L.B. You referred earlier to three different things. Is this the third thing you had in mind?

A.J.G. I had in mind to begin with the great thought of a bondman, then the seven Spirits that are before His throne, and then the manner in which the testimony is based on the sufferings of Christ, that He is the faithful and true Witness. These are the three things, because it says in chapter 1: 2 that John had testified the word of God but also the testimony of Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ is the faithful One, His faithfulness cost Him His life. On top of this something else was added, as John says; "I became in the Spirit on the Lord's day".

K.H. Why are verses 7 and 8 included?

A.J.G. It is all encouraging and confirming. It may be that the testimony at present is in weakness and sufferings, but the coming of the Lord in power is the answer to all these sufferings. Verse 8 presents the personal glory of Christ. In reality, He is God; He is “the Lord God, he who is, and who was, and who is to come, the Almighty”.

A.L.B. When it is Jehovah God that speaks in these verses, we still link it with the Lord Jesus.

A.J.G. Yes, that is right. In chapter 22: 12-13 “I” is especially emphasised, “I am”.

E.E.P. Is there a special thought with the two Amens in verse 6 and 7?

A.J.G. It shows we are feelingly in this position. When divine things are presented to us and we are feelingly with them, then we all say Amen.

E.E.P. Is this the true feature of a bondman?

P.v.d.B. In Revelation, you have the word Amen seven times. Does that also show that there should be an answer to the seven Spirits of God and the seven assemblies?

A.J.G. What our brother has said is of great help. It is linked with us as bondmen, we should answer to divine things when they are presented to us.

E.E.P. In verse 6, the Amen concerns what is present. The Amen in verse 7 is a future thought. We all say Amen to what is present and future.

A.J.G. The first Amen means that we totally surrender to the service of God in a priestly way. The second Amen means we love His appearing.

F.Sh. Everything written here shows for example that we are bondmen, that we say Amen to everything, that we are in the Spirit on

Lord's day. Does this show the elevated character of the testimony of the Lord's day?

A.J.G. Yes, that is right. It is important that the service of God is referred to early here, as it is not the general subject of the book. The general subject of the book is the public testimony. The power that underlies the testimony, is characteristically priestly in our approach to God.

J.A.H. Could you please say something of what it is to be "in the Spirit"?

A.J.G. It is very important. I believe we should seek the Lord's help in order that we might learn more of this. We must also seek help from the Holy Spirit. I believe it shows that the heart and spirit of John were under the guidance of the Spirit. He was to a certain extent possessed by the Spirit, so that he would be able to accomplish all, being a vessel available for the Spirit. If I am occupied with all sorts of things when I come to the meeting on Lord's day morning, then the Spirit is hindered. But when I am prepared to dismiss all my own thoughts and only have before me the service and worship to God, the Spirit is free. It is presented here as if John had the power to do it himself, to be in the Spirit. It says here; "I became in the Spirit on the Lord's day". We read the same in chapter 4: 1-2. It shows that John had learned to be able to dismiss different things in order to be completely "in the Spirit".

Ques. Would "be filled with the Spirit", according to Ephesians 5, be generally true of us, or is it something special to be "in the Spirit"?

A.J.G. It is something special. I believe we all feel how little we know of this practically. It is quite clear that the first believers were marked by being filled with the Spirit. We are exhorted in Ephesians to be filled by the Spirit. But what we have here is something special: "I became in the Spirit". He made himself free from everything that engaged him.

A.d.M. Is to be "in the Spirit" more than "to be filled" with Him?

A.J.G. To be "in the Spirit" involves that you can be apart from all to be fully in Spirit. We have to fulfil our responsible pathway, our

affairs and household obligations, but the Spirit helps us even in these matters. We read in Luke's gospel that the Lord was led by the Spirit in the wilderness. But "in the Spirit" means you are also able to walk away from it all, so that you can be occupied with what the Spirit desires you to be engaged in. This is most important in view of the service of God Lord's day morning.

M.v.R. Do we have the same thought in John 20; where the doors were shut through fear of the Jews?

A.J.G. Yes, that is a similar thought.

H.R. John was also in the island of Patmos, "for the word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus". I think he was not engaged with business matters.

A.J.G. Yes, he was in these limited circumstances. His faithfulness had put him outwardly into great limitations, he was on Patmos. He could not have any fellowship. Yet there are no limitations in the Holy Spirit.

K.H. Does Luke 11: 13 show we can also ask for the Holy Spirit?

A.J.G. Yes, the Lord says, the Father gives the Holy Spirit to them that ask. When we have received the Holy Spirit, we do not need to ask for Him again. We can very easily hinder or grieve Him. To be in Spirit would mean that we would allow the Spirit to provide all that He has in mind.

G.S. Do we see with Paul and Silas in Philippi that they were in Spirit in singing in spite of their bonds?

A.J.G. It shows in that moment they were fully in Spirit.

Rem. This state is available for us all. We can all be in Spirit on the Lord's day and then also follow the Spirit.

A.J.G. That is very important. John is the only one who calls the first day of the week "the Lord's day". We can say this is the language of a bondman. A bondman would say, this day is the day of my Lord. I would desire to be in Spirit on this day. This day should not be treated as other days.

Rem. That is why it is not unusual that a bondman would be in Spirit on the Lord's day.

A.J.G. On this day a bondman would present himself altogether at the Spirit's disposal.

F.Sh. I would like to ask if the two Amens that precede this must be realised if we would be in Spirit on the Lord's day.

A.J.G. I believe there is a connection. Please say more about this.

F.Sh. I thought of the meaning of Amen, when we all give our approval aloud which we cannot take back.

A.J.G. When we take this attitude, the Spirit is free to lead us further on. We must always bear in mind we are surrounded by what is called the service of God. But it is entirely formal. It is part of the testimony that the Spirit should be free to bring us further on, in order that the service of God should go on in liberty and power. That is why it is so important to be in Spirit.

E.E.P. To be in Spirit is the same as having fellowship with the Spirit? Does this mean having a close connection with Him?

A.J.G. It is a very intimate connection that we have with the Spirit, and that is the reason why the Spirit has been made prominent in recent years.

Rem. Rebecca said, "I will go" with this man.

A.J.G. Quite right, she went with him. We find the same at the end of this book. The Spirit and the bride say: "Come", this means the bride at the end is seen in correspondence with the Spirit. I believe the ministry over the last years has been marked by this that we may understand what it is to move along with the Spirit.

Ques. It says of Simeon in Luke 2: 25 that the Spirit was upon him, is that a difference?

A.J.G. But it also says; "he came in the Spirit into the temple", 27. It is almost the same thing that we have here.

E.E.P. Was what Simeon expressed because he was in Spirit?

A.J.G. The impression is not given that Simeon had the same thoughts as John here. He was only allowed to see the Lord's Christ. That brought him to giving praise to God, while John was even shown the Son of man, who walks in the midst of the seven golden lamps. This is a very serious incident. It was so serious for John that he fell at His feet as dead. I doubt (speaking for myself) whether we consider enough that the Lord walked like this. We must be aware that a lot has been allowed by us (I speak not only of Germany but also of England) that the Lord sees with His eyes as a flame of fire. His eyes were flames of fire directed towards this.

A.L.B. John turned round to hear the voice. What follows when we hear the voice is it that we turn around.

A.J.G. John wanted to be occupied with the spiritual privileges on the Lord's day. But the Lord spoke from behind, so he had to turn around. For the moment he had to turn aside from the spiritual privileges and consider the assembly responsibilities. The appearance of the Lord was so frightening that John fell at His feet as dead. The Lord laid His right hand on him and said: "Fear not".

A.d.M. Does this show that he was totally free from himself?

A.J.G. It shows he was fully identified with the fallen state of the assemblies. Here he is like Daniel, that was a man greatly beloved, what marked him personally. But when he made himself one with Israel, the lost people, then he had a similar exercise to John here.

J.A.H. If we see a fallen state such as comes come to light here, we must see it from the Lord's standpoint.

A.J.G. Yes, that is right.

Reading 2—Lord's day afternoon

Revelation 3

A.J.G. This chapter is very important for us. The history of the assembly is referred to in chapter 2, and of course in this chapter as well. Chapter 2 touches on the public history, the deviation from what the assembly had been under Paul's ministry and what she had now become; and what we see in Rome is what is presented in Thyatira. In Thyatira, we reach what is marked as "the depths of Satan". Of course, it is possible in the Spirit to know by contrast the depths of God. But Thyatira shows us the deepest depth to which the assembly publicly has fallen. Sardis shows us the result of the Reformation. We are now publicly in what Sardis represents. Philadelphia and Laodicea develop what comes out in Sardis. That is why chapter 3 is very important for us. What comes out in Sardis is that the Lord is concerned that they should reach completion. He had to say sorrowfully, "I have not found thy works complete before my God". This shows us what the Lord is seeking: completion in regard to the assembly, completion not only in view of the truth, but also in the works being in accordance with the truth. This brings out what our exercises should lead us to. First of all, there is a full understanding of the things of the blessed God which have been opened up to us, then a full answer in works being in accordance with it. It is significant that, in the letter to Sardis, the Lord presents Himself as the One that has the seven Spirits of God; He also has the seven stars.

A.W. Why does He omit His right hand? In chapter 1 it says, "in his right hand seven stars"; but here it just says He that has them.

A.J.G. In the time of Ephesus, the Lord could acknowledge the seven assemblies, and He holds them safe in His right hand. But decline has now come in, and the breakdown is incurable. That is why the Lord does not say any more that He holds them in His right hand. On the other hand, He still says that He has them as if He would tell the overcomer, 'You need not give up the local thought that comes into expression in the local assemblies'.

A.d.M. You have said that a collective recovery would take place, that would lead to completion. Could you say something about completion with the individual?

A.J.G. We have the answer to this in Colossians 1: 28 where it says, “admonishing every man, and teaching every man, in all wisdom, to the end that we may present every man perfect in Christ”. That shows Paul’s ministry remained, he wanted to present every man perfect in Christ. Christ was the pattern in all the apostle’s ministry. But the collective thought of completion we find in Ephesus in chapter 4: 13. This is, as I understand, the collective thought, which can only be worked out in the assembly as a whole. I believe this question of completion is very important for us. It is important that in the letter to Sardis the Lord Jesus presents Himself as the one that has the seven Spirits of God.

Ques. What is the meaning of the seven Spirits of God?

A.J.G. Complete power in the Spirit; that corresponds to every condition, and He is at the disposal of every local company.

E.E.P. Is it important to see that this section precedes the section where the works are mentioned?

A.J.G. It is most striking that the Lord speaks in these two chapters so much of works (doings). If the truth that we maintain is not expressed in works pleasing to God, then it is not of much value. Thus we read in the beginning of the Acts: “all things which Jesus began both to do and to teach”. The doing to a certain extent preceded the teaching. He began both to do and to teach, in view of it continuing in the assembly. Thus we read in Ephesians: “having been created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God has before prepared that we should walk in them”, chap 2: 10.

F.Sh. The Lord says in John 10: “If I do not the works of my Father, believe me not”. The works should be a testimony to the person, a testimony in those that were about.

A.J.G. Yes, that is important. Here the Lord says as well, “I have not found thy works complete before my God”. It is significant to see how often the thought of Christ’s God comes in in this chapter. It also

refers, I think, to the great jealousy there is in the Lord's heart, or the great zeal that God looks for in view of completion.

A.L.B. What do you think about the works of local assemblies?

A.J.G. The works would be what we do and how we do them. It says in the beginning as to the first believers that they were honoured by the people, Acts 5: 13.

F.M. Do we find something of this in James?

A.J.G. Faith should be confirmed by its works. Is that your thought?

F.M. Yes.

A.J.G. James was a practical man; and so he held the truth in a balanced way.

W.M. In Antioch the disciples were first called Christians.

A.J.G. Doubtless it came to light through what was seen in them.

E.B. Is it not serious, in spite of a lot of works that the judgment is still "thou art dead"?

A.J.G. That is most important. The Lord writes to Thyatira that they made a lot of their works and yet in this system were the depths of Satan. The Lord writes in the letter to Thyatira (chap 2: 26): "he that overcomes and he that keeps unto the end my works". The works of Christ were not done by Him in view of drawing attention to Himself, but rather they were done to call attention to the Father. That is why we read in Luke's gospel that the people glorified God on account of what Jesus did, Luke 7: 16.

E.E.P. Is it then right to say that there should be a certain correspondence between what the Lord did down here, and what we are doing here?

A.J.G. Yes, that is right. That is the bearing of Ephesians 2 where it says, "having been created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God has before prepared that we should walk in them". It says, "God has before prepared". This preparation was seen in the pathway of the Lord Jesus down here. We see in the end of John's gospel, that if all the things were written that Jesus did, not even the world would

contain the books written. But the assembly can apprehend it, and it will be displayed in the heavenly city.

A.d.M. Could you say something about the difference between the Lord's cry on the cross, "It is finished", and the completion of His works relating to the testimony?

A.J.G. What the Lord completed there was the revelation of God, and through the work of redemption He cleared everything that was in the way. It was finished. Previously He said that He had completed the work that God had given Him to do. The Lord always works in view of moving forward. It says at the end of Mark that He was "taken up into heaven, and sat at the right hand of God. And they going forth ... the Lord working with them", Mark 16: 19, 20.

A.Sch. The character of the life of Christ should be seen in the assembly.

A.J.G. That is the intention. And the Spirit we have received is the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus. I understand that He keeps us in living touch with Christ, in order that our movements are under the influence of Christ in taking character from Him.

P.v.d.B. Do you not think we should understand deliverance more in a practical way?

A.J.G. Yes, that is right. What do you have in mind asking the question?

P.v.d.B. The joy of the life in Christ Jesus through the Spirit is so little known, because so little of deliverance is known.

A.J.G. That is very true. But it is important that each one of us must go through the exercises of Romans 7, in order to come to the liberty and power in Romans 8, where God Himself in the person of the Spirit is known as our Deliverer.

F.Sh. Are Daniel and his three friends a presentation of the works in an appropriate way?

A.J.G. Yes, in that they rejected what Babylon was building up.

E.B. When the work of God is livingly before us, do we then strengthen what is about to die?

A.J.G. Yes, that is right. That is why the salutation by the seven Spirits is emphasised. I think it is always important to see the Lord having completion in mind. We should always have this in mind. He wanted to find all thy “works complete before my God”.

E.E.P. Is it not interesting to see as it says here that we should be complete in the works of His God: all the divine Persons are active here, as the Lord says: “my Father worketh hitherto and I work”, and in another scripture it says, “all this operates the one and the same Spirit”?

A.J.G. You mean that the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit all labour in view of reaching completion with us? But here the Lord is looking out for what already is completed in the believer. We all think what is in the believer is precious as it is wrought by God. Yet the Lord expects completion of His works in the believers, in us.

Ques. Does this leave us with a great responsibility to fill out locally? Would that be right?

A.J.G. Yes, the assembly is the continuation of Christ. The present time is characterised by Christ in glory and the Spirit is down here in the vessel of the assembly. Everything of Christ that was pleasing to God will be continued in the assembly.

Ques. Are the works related to the testimony down here?

A.J.G. It all refers to the testimony.

P.v.d.B. Would John have this in mind, when he says: “as he is, so are we in this world”?

A.J.G. It is important to see that it does not say as He *was*, but rather as He *is*. It says: “as *he* is, *we* also are in this world”, 1 John 4: 17. It describes our position in unchangeable favour.

E.O. Would the apostle Paul have this in mind when he says in 2 Timothy 1: 13: “Have an outline of sound words, which words thou hast heard of me, in faith and love which are in Christ Jesus”?

A.J.G. It refers to the teaching in that connection, an outline of sound words in faith and love, but in Sardis, we find what is about to die and should be kept alive by us: it is what marks the religious confession around us. Then the assembly in Philadelphia is brought in, an assembly of which it could be said that the signs of completion were seen.

F.Sh. Does “thy crown” have anything to do with completion?

A.J.G. It says, “hold fast what thou hast, that no one take thy crown”. The crown speaks of holding fast every feature of the truth.

A.L.B. It is not a crown of a king, but a crown of victory that has completed everything.

A.J.G. I believe we will be crowned with what we have enjoyed. What marked Paul in his pathway was he went forward in righteousness, in spite of what might come. That is why he says, “Henceforth the crown of righteousness is laid up for me, which the Lord the righteous judge, will render to me that day” 2 Tim 4: 8. In Smyrna we have saints that were prepared to die rather than giving up the truth. That is why the Lord tells them, “I will give to him the crown of life”.

H.R. Does such a one have in mind Revelation 3: 3 “Remember therefore how thou hast received and heard, and keep it and repent”?

A.J.G. Yes, I believe Philadelphia is really the overcomer out of Sardis. He is also the result from a new work. The Lord says, “I have set before thee an opened door ... because thou hast a little power, and hast kept my word, and hast not denied my name”. In the movement that began with our brother Mr Darby and those associated with him, the Holy Spirit was recognised in His self-sufficiency. In the recognition that the assembly has a Head in glory and that the Spirit is here, they left everything belonging to man. They were fully cast upon the Lord and the Spirit. And that I think is the little power. That is why the Lord has opened for us a door, which no one can shut, as if He wants to say, only on this ground could you reach perfection.

Ques. Would the Philadelphian position be taken by one that recognises that the Lord has the seven Spirits and the seven stars; and so He is the One that has full control of everything?

A.J.G. Yes, that is right. The opened door that is at our disposal brings us to the next thought before us, that we should keep His word. That is a living thought. When the Lord came to Bethany, Mary sat down at His feet and listened to His words. If He had come a week later, Mary would again have sat down to listen to His words. But the Lord would not have said the same things He had said the week before. He would have said something fresh. That is I think what it is to “keep my word”; we have an ear that is open to hear what the Lord would say at any time, in view of following it.

J.A.H. Why does it say, “how thou hast received and heard”—receiving it comes first?

A.J.G. I believe we must receive it first. We have nothing we have not received. “What hast thou”, Paul says, “which thou hast not received?”, 1 Cor 4: 7. It is important that this attitude should be maintained in our minds. The Lord gives as we are prepared to receive. Then we must hear; not only to receive it but take it in also in a real way into our spirits and our hearts.

Rem. It says *how* thou hast received it.

A.J.G. That relates to the great power of God that was active in the Reformation. It was not any human movement, but rather an irresistible work of God.

A.L.B. There was not the strength to maintain it, but in Philadelphia it says, “and has kept my word”.

A.J.G. “Thou hast kept my word, and not denied my name”. I believe the word is most important. The Lord says, “If any one love me, he will keep my word”, John 14: 23. Before this He had spoken of His commandments. “He that has my commandments and keeps them, he it is that loves me”, v 21. But it is a question if we keep the character of His word.

E.E.P. Can we say, in connection with what we had yesterday, that the position of a bondman would be maintained in this way?

A.J.G. Yes, that is right.

A.Sch. Thus, in spite of the breakdown, God has a perfect work on earth in Philadelphia.

A.J.G. It is most encouraging to see this. It is a question for us whether we have a part in it or not.

W.O. Do we have this in John 17: 6: “they have kept my word”?

A.J.G. Yes, the word of the Father.

P.v.d.B. Does this include Paul’s ministry?

A.J.G. Yes, but it also relates to what comes to us presently, what the Lord would say at any time. Further on He says, “thou hast kept the word of my patience”. We will always be put through tests of patience: here we would be put to the test if we are patient to hear what the Lord is saying. When we keep the word of His patience, and hold on to it, then the Lord will see to it that we will receive something new. That will always mark the ministry He gives. I believe we can see how important it is to hold on to this if we will really reach completion.

A.L.B. It is important to see the Greek word ‘*logos*’ for “word” and not ‘*rhema*’, which is only the word that is expressed; but ‘*logos*’ includes the person behind it who speaks?

A.J.G. Yes, it is more the expression of His thoughts.

A.L.B. So it is something that always progresses.

Ques. What is the service of the angels in this recovery?

A.J.G. They are “sent out for service on account of those who shall inherit salvation”, Heb 1: 14. What is needed for the formation in the truth, that is what the angels can do. When a government rises up that is not good for the testimony, then the Lord might send an angel, which can bring about a total change.

W.J.G. Is that not a great encouragement for the assembly at the present time?

A.J.G. Yes, that is right.

E.E.P. Is there a connection between what is reached here in perfection and those who are perfect, as Paul says in 1 Corinthians 2: 6: “we speak wisdom among the perfect”?

A.J.G. Paul sometimes uses the expression perfection, even when he does not have completion in its proper sense in mind. When he says, “we speak wisdom among the perfect”, then he is speaking to grown up believers in Christianity. That would be those that in a definite way have learnt to judge the flesh and give room to the Spirit. But such must still go on learning.

A.W. Maybe Paul was thinking of the Ephesians as he wrote 1 Corinthians from Ephesus: “we speak wisdom among the perfect”?

A.d.M. How important it is that we should give room to the Spirit in view of completion. I was thinking of both doors: one is shut and the other is open. Room is given to the Spirit by the first; and by the second the Spirit is grieved. Is that right?

A.J.G. Do you mean both doors of which it says, I have set before thee an open door, which no one can shut; and He can shut and no one can open?

A.d.M. I meant the second door in Revelation 3: 20: “Behold, I stand at the door and am knocking; if any one hears my voice and open the door, I will come in unto him and sup with him, and he with me”.

A.J.G. What you refer to as to Laodicea is certainly very serious, because Laodicea is right next to Philadelphia. It is the state of things where everything was an imitation, but no reality was there.

P.v.d.B. Would the door in Philadelphia be our side of privilege and the door in Laodicea be the responsible side?

A.J.G. Yes, Laodicea is our side, but Philadelphia is more the Lord's side. He says: “I have set before thee an open door”. That would be for those that had these features.

A.d.M. I thought how easy it is to grieve the Spirit, so that He cannot bring us to completion.

A.J.G. It is very important that we go along with each movement that the Spirit brings forth in freshness.

F.Sh. Would the last movement be what we have had in recent years, that the Spirit in a personal way should be given greater room?

A.J.G. I believe what has been before the Lord was that we should reach completion. Thus we see at the end of the book that the Spirit and bride are together.

F.Sh. Does it not demand humility from us and admonition, when the Lord brings in fresh and new ministry?

A.J.G. Yes, that is always the case. When you contemplate a river for example, it does not always flow straight, but rather turns, flowing over obstacles and rocks. It flows its way, but not always straight. What hinders must be set aside, in order that the Spirit might flow freely. The Spirit in this book is likened to a river.

F.Sh. Many of us must acknowledge that we have allowed things, which have taken the Spirit's place.

A.J.G. Yes.

Rem. God will therefore emerge as a Victor at the end.

A.J.G. Yes, but it is very important that we are with Him at the end. No saint will be missed in glory, but it is very important that we remain in the testimony until the end.

Rem. That is why the overcomer is mentioned here?

A.J.G. The testimony calls for overcomers through the whole time. It says in Revelation 21: 7, "He that overcomes shall inherit these things", as if the Lord would say that all that is written in Revelation is said to the overcomer.

Ques. Has what you have said in connection with completion its application to the service of God? We do not only speak to the Spirit in worship, but in view of completion we come to God as God?

A.J.G. I believe this is very important. Thus we find the Lord enlightens the overcomer in Philadelphia with the thoughts of Christ's God. He says: "He that overcomes, him will I make a pillar in the temple of my God". That is not just the temple of God, but rather "the temple of my God". Christ speaks as Man, and He strives in view of reaching a full answer to God. He says further on; "and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, the new Jerusalem, which comes down out of heaven, from my God, and my new name".

A.d.M. When you speak of the temple of God, you mean this is on earth?

A.J.G. Yes, the temple of God in the present time is the assembly. The thought of the temple in Revelation is the immediate presence of God. It is not here the general thought of the temple seen in the building, but rather the dwelling of God, the sanctuary. The holiest is maybe included, though the sanctuary is really meant.

A.d.M. Would the exercise of this be found in 2 Corinthians 6: 14-16? We are the temple of God. "And what agreement has God's temple with idols? For ye are the living God's temple; according as God has said, and I will dwell among them; and walk among them; and I will be their God, and they shall be to me a people".

A.J.G. Then comes the admonition: "Wherefore come out from the midst of them, and be separated, saith the Lord, and touch not what is unclean, and I will receive you". The overcomer in Philadelphia shines fully in accordance with the temple of God.

J.A.H. Would the word of the Lord be intended to bring us there?

A.J.G. Yes, that is right. That means that the thought of man is altogether set aside. The only light that shines there is the light in the Spirit.

M.v.R. Is this seen in verse 12, in "the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, and my new name"; what is written to them, showing that completion is reached?

A.J.G. In verse 12 we have the thought that completion is reached. It says, “him will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more at all out”. It is a final position that is taken. God is fully known, and man is in a mutual connection with Him. There, the Lord has written on the persons the Name of His God. The Lord seeks to bring us there in the assembly service, in order that the Name of God should be fully known. This can be seen in how we take part in the assembly.

F.Sh. That is why the overcomer is adjusted as to manners and habits which he formerly practised.

A.J.G. The truth always involves adjustment. The thought that He wants to write upon the overcomer is very important. This simply shows that the truth is not only found in scripture. It can now also be seen in persons. If we had been with Paul or John or Peter in the meeting, and heard them worship, then you would have seen persons on whom the Name of Christ’s God was written, they were marked by liberty and intelligence.

E.E.P. Would such be, “our letter, known and read by all men”, 2 Cor 3: 2?

A.J.G. Yes, a letter of Christ, written by the Spirit of the living God.

Rem. This should set our spirits in liberty, that our worship is not only directed to the Father but also to God.

A.J.G. That is how it should be. We read about the Lord in John 13; He knew He came out from God and was going to God. This thought, “my God”, that the Lord expresses here, indicates that the Lord Jesus had this in His heart, that God, His God, should receive a full answer.

Ques. Does this show that the people of God should be free to do this?

A.J.G. Yes, it seems to be in accordance with what the Lord says at lastly to Mary, “My God and your God”, John 20: 17.

W.T. Paul sought to bring the Hebrews to this in chapter 12: 22-23, “ye have come to mount Zion; and to the city of the living God, heavenly Jerusalem; and to myriads of angels, the universal gathering;

and to the assembly of the firstborn who are registered in heaven; and to God judge of all; and to the Spirits of just men”.

A.J.G. Paul gives a full description of what we come to in Christianity, the city of the living God is also mentioned.

E.E.P. Would you say this is a matter of faith?

A.J.G. Yes, in Christianity all is a faith matter; it also considers us as to our spiritual state. Faith and spiritual understanding are both important features today.

E.E.P. Can we say the believer does not need to be concerned about how he is going to reach this, because the Spirit gives details as to it in verse 12, the way in which we will reach it?

A.J.G. It is all open for the overcomer. It is important to overcome everything which is referred to in the letters to the assemblies.

W.M. In the worship of God, we often say, ‘our God and Father’, but the Lord Jesus keeps them apart and says either “God” or “Father”.

A.J.G. Well now, we know God as Father, we know Christ’s Father as our Father, we are brought into these relationships in love, in order that we might be fully in liberty in the presence of God. In the enjoyment of this position, we do not only appreciate the Father in His supremacy, but we also appreciate the Son as the Mediator; we rejoice also in the Spirit and His powerful support, as He gives us for example understanding, as He animates our affections. Thus we are in the presence of the whole Godhead, of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, in wonderful unity of love. The Father in the supremacy of love represents God in this dispensation, and the Son and the Spirit present more subordinate affection. Thus, we have a full presentation of how God is love. This calls for worship. Then we see that God is greater than the dispensation which He has established. As created beings, we are of course limited to this dispensation, and in this dispensation, God shines out in all His preciousness. Being greater than the dispensation calls for worship.

E.E.P. In verse 12, three names are referred to; “the name of my God; and the name of the city of my God ... and my new name”. Is

my new name something new, something of the mystery on the Lord's day, when we are in Spirit and can understand something of it?

A.J.G. My new name refers, as far as I understand it, to the light in which Christ is known now, that is for us as Christians in this dispensation, and not as He was known or will be known in other dispensations. It is a definite glory that belongs to Christ that only the assembly knows. Thus, the Lord says that we shall behold His glory that the Father had given Him: "for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world", John 17: 24. It is a special possession that belongs to the assembly.

A.d.M. God changed the name of Abram to Abraham; is this something similar here?

A.J.G. No, this is not a change of the name. We can understand the Lord has names that are not peculiar to Christianity. "Christ" is not peculiar for Christianity, it is the same word as "Messiah" for the Jews, but this name is specially enlarged upon through Paul in Christianity. "Son of man" is not a name for Christianity, or even "Son of God"; we have these in Psalm 2. But there are also names given especially for Christianity. That is what I would think "my new name" would be. I believe that would specially be those that are near Christ on whom He can write "my new name".

A.W. It says, "taken us into favour in the Beloved" in Ephesians 1 and we have been purchased "with the blood of His own", Acts 20: 28; these are all special names of Christ that He writes on us.

A.J.G. Yes, all this would be included. I believe John 17: 24 gives us the great thought of this: "Father, as to those whom thou hast given me, I desire that where I am they also may be with me, that they may behold my glory which thou hast given me, for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world".

K.H. Does this remind us of Philippians where it says, He has been given a Name that is over every other Name, chap 2: 9?

A.J.G. That would be more a public matter.

J.A.H. In the designation “the new Jerusalem”, the city speaks of administration.

A.J.G. Yes, that is right. The new Jerusalem gives the thought of administration. It is a vessel displaying God, His influence.

Rem. We have already come into this administration.

A.J.G. We only have if we have made it our own.

W.T. He writes to the assembly in Pergamos: “To him that overcomes, to him will I give ... a white stone, and on the stone a new name written, which no one knows but he that receives it”.

A.J.G. What is your thought?

W.T. In chapter 2, it says a new name is written on the stone; here it says that He writes His new name. There is a difference.

A.J.G. The new name in Pergamos is given to the overcomer, and no one knows it apart from him who got it. That shows that a personal link exists between the overcomer and the Lord Jesus. The name that the Lord gives to the overcomer provides the connection which the Lord maintains with him.

A.d.M. We all have new names, but the overcomer in Philadelphia has the Lord’s new name. When we are asked by the authorities about our name, we often do not know what to say.

A.J.G. We do not need to be engaged with that. Even Paul says that the way he was in was named as a sect, Acts 24: 14. We cannot stop people giving us a name and calling us a sect. But we ourselves do not profess it.

Rem. John writes, “I have overcome the world” (John 16: 33), and he writes as well, “ye have overcome the wicked one”, 1 John 2: 13. We should do this as well.

A.J.G. That is right. We do not have anything if we have not overcome. It says: “He that is begotten of God keeps himself and the wicked one does not touch him”, 1 John 5: 18.

Ques. Is the new Jerusalem here any connection with Galatians 4: it says, “but the Jerusalem above is free”?

A.J.G. That expression marks the liberty which the spiritual assembly has got, that Jerusalem above is our mother.

Reading 3—Monday morning

Revelation 19: 6-10; 20: 4-6, 11-15; 21: 1-8

A.J.G. We considered yesterday the last three assemblies; and noticed how the Lord seeks to bring us to completion. The verses we have read this morning show how God brings everything through to completion. It is a very remarkable feature of the book of Revelation. We see in chapter 18 the fallen Babylon, then in the verses we read in chapter 19, the public vindication of the Lamb. The assembly is brought in there as His wife, in order to glorify the occasion. Then at the end of chapter 19 comes the fall of the beast and the false prophet. In verses 4-6 of chapter 20 we have the public vindication of the saints. In verses 11-15 of the same chapter, we find the condemnation of evil, which will finally be cast completely into the lake of fire. That is the abiding testimony to everlasting judgment of evil. It says: “we have come to God, judge of all”, Heb 12: 23. It is right that there should be a public presentation of man’s responsibility given to God just as there is a complete judgement of God over evil. When every moral question is in a way solved, then eternity is laid out in the beginning of chapter 21. God Himself is the great Centre of everything. I believe the verses we have read show that God will bring all to completion, not in an arbitrary way or only by His power, but rather in a moral and righteous way. All good will be publicly vindicated and all evil will be publicly judged. Then God is all in all. The second part of chapter 21, which we will consider if the Lord will this afternoon, is a type of appendix, where the Spirit of God specially brings our attention to the heavenly city, which in a way is the full and total expression of divine activity. But the way that God brings all to completion ends in verse 8.

F.Sh. Do you think that verse 7 of chapter 19, where it says, “his wife has made herself ready”, might have a connection with Revelation 1 that we have just considered?

A.J.G. Yes, there is a link. The Lamb in Revelation presents the Lord Jesus down here as One who has suffered for the rights of God. It is morally important that His wife is in accordance with Him. That is why it is necessary to take on sufferings in righteousness. Because

it is only if we suffer on account of righteousness, that we can take on features that belong to the Lamb's wife.

A.d.M. Is this before or after the millennium?

A.J.G. It is just before the millennium. The thought of the marriage of the Lamb is not so much our union with Christ, our marriage with Him, but it is a public celebration at which the Lamb is the centre. In Matthew 22, the Lord gives a parable about a great king who makes a feast for his son. When we read through this parable, we see that his wife is not even mentioned. This shows that the marriage in this passage does not represent union and affection, but rather setting forth a public feast, in which the man, the son, is the centre. And that is also here: it says: "the marriage of the Lamb is come". The time has come when the Lamb is presented rightly and publicly. The Lamb's wife is brought in here to glorify the supper.

A.L.B. Is she able to contribute in the same way as she has suffered with Christ down here?

A.J.G. Yes, that is right: it says here; "And it was given to her that she should be clothed in fine linen, bright and pure". The fine linen would be the righteousnesses of the saints. Every righteous action done in this time by the saints, especially done by suffering saints as they swim against the stream, will be seen and celebrated by the marriage of the Lamb as it goes forward.

P.Sch. Could you say something about what it says, that it was given to her?

A.J.G. That is the way it is put, He has granted us grace.

J.A.H. Do we, when we prepare ourselves, look ahead with understanding to the imminent marriage?

A.J.G. It is important to see, when the believer stands for righteousness, and then suffers, that this should always be in view of the public vindication of the One who suffered so much.

P.v.d.B. In the same way as we have suffered with Him, will we then stand as justified with Him?

A.J.G. Yes, we will contribute to it. It does not really deal with the fact that believers are justified, but rather that the Lord Jesus, the Lamb in this incident, is being justified; we are attracted and contribute to it. That makes suffering with Him very attractive.

A.L.B. It speaks in 1 Peter 1 of suffering with Him and says that at His manifestation we will be given honour and glory. Is that a similar thought?

A.J.G. Yes, Jesus Christ is the Man that was found in faithfulness to God in difficult circumstances and sufferings. And the revelation of Jesus Christ is what we speak of here, it is the manifestation of Him who has proven to be faithful down here. Thus it speaks in 1 Peter 1, the scripture that was referred to, of the proving of our faith by the manifestation of Jesus Christ, much more precious than of gold which perishes. The proving of our faith comes to light in the circumstances we go through.

K.W. Does this come to light in the woman that went into the house of the Pharisee in opening the alabaster box and pouring it over Him? The Lord was thus vindicated.

A.J.G. Yes, that is good. She justified the Lord in the presence of hostility. It is important to see what the Lord adds after the woman had poured out the alabaster box over Him: “Wheresoever these glad tidings maybe preached in the whole world that also which this woman has done shall be spoken of for memorial of her”, Matt 26: 13.

E.E.P. Do we see the result of this in the woman of worth in Proverbs 31, in connection with the present application, when it says here, “his wife has made herself ready”?

A.J.G. Yes, the last chapter in Proverbs gives us a nice description of the Lamb’s wife. The feminine features come out in her faithfulness to her husband in his absence.

Rem. We could not think that the Lamb’s wife would go on with anything evil. Then we must take to heart the total judgment of evil pronounced.

A.J.G. That is why it says about the woman of worth that “she doeth him good, and not evil, all the days of her life”. It is remarkable that the Spirit of God has put this down. It is not only “doeth him good”, but the Spirit adds as well, “not evil”. She is marked by resolute rejection of all evil.

E.E.P. In connection with the woman of worth so much activity is found, that evil practically will not find entrance.

A.J.G. I am glad you have referred to the last chapter of Proverbs, because this chapter is full of different kinds of activities. We considered yesterday how the Lord wrote to Sardis. “I have not found thy works complete before my God”. That chapter 31 gives us the completion of the works.

P.v.d.B. Does the fact that in Proverbs 31 the word always is “she” show that it concerns our responsibility? The righteous actions of the saints are manifested, and she is clothed in the righteousnesses of the saints.

A.J.G. Yes, it corresponds with the works that are always referred to in Revelation 2 and 3. The Lord writes to Sardis. “I have not found thy works complete before my God”, and to Philadelphia He writes: “I know thy works”. And He leaves it at that, it means He gives no undue priority to the works. He emphasises to Philadelphia that “thou hast kept my word and hast not denied my Name”, because “thou hast kept the word of my patience”. I believe it means when we keep this, then the works will come.

E.E.P. The expression “of worth” is maybe to be looked upon as her spiritual state that causes her to do these works.

A.J.G. Yes, that is most important, she is a woman of worth, it means a real treasure marks the woman. Babylon the harlot is also marked by much works and activities, but her heart is exposed when she says: “I sit a queen and am no widow”, while the heart of the wife in Proverbs 31 remains faithful, as it says, “The heart of her husband confideth in her”.

H.P. Can we connect this with the beginning of Psalm 45?

A.J.G. What is in your mind?

H.P. We have there how the bridegroom praises the bride.

A.J.G. Yes, that is right. I am not completely sure if in Psalm 45 the bride is at all referred to speaking to the bridegroom. As a matter of principle, it is correct, it is love that speaks. The king's daughter is referred to. She contributes to the occasion. It says in verse 13 of the king's daughter within, that "her clothing is of wrought gold". Then, "She shall be brought unto the king in raiment of embroidery". That is why we can say that the wife is brought in here to enrich and adorn the occasion. What is of wrought gold speaks of the work of God in us. The raiment of embroidery speaks of our own works.

F.Sh. Would the righteousnesses in Revelation 19 be seen in connection with separating from everything Babylonian, from all that will perish?

A.J.G. Yes, it is surely all included. "pursue righteousness, faith, love, peace", 2 Tim 2: 22.

H.R. The Lord says to Laodicea, "Be zealous". Is that connected with works of righteousness?

A.J.G. Yes, that would be worked out in righteous deeds.

F.Sh. Would this include separation from individual associations?

A.J.G. It is important to emphasise what we have in 2 Timothy 2: "pursue righteousness"; it has its bearing on every aspect of righteousness. It says pursue righteousness, that would be what is right in God's eye. This gives us authority to leave all that is religious and other things that are not right. But it is also a principle which should lead us in every situation in which we may come, in our domestic responsibilities, in our business affairs, and in our assembly responsibilities.

A.L.B. If we publicly withdraw from unrighteousness, but are unrighteous in our actions, are we then just like the Pharisees?

A.J.G. Surely that is the case.

K.W. Then the Lord cannot trust or confide in us.

A.J.G. No, it says in Proverbs 31 that “The heart of her husband confideth in her”.

Ques. Is the assembly the great area where these things of which we have spoken are worked out?

A.J.G. I believe it is important to see that. In Matthew 13, several parables are referred to. One of them is the parable of the darnel, in which we find that both the good and evil should grow together to the end. That is the public position. But at the end of the chapter, there is another parable that is worked out in the assembly. That is the parable of the seine that is cast into the sea, and when they have drawn it up on the shore, they sat down. They gathered the good into vessels and cast the worthless out. While both the good and bad remain side by side publicly under the forbearance of God; in the assembly, however, this separation is marked and there should be the rejection of all this that is bad.

Ques. Would we not be helped in the assembly, when we can see both sides?

A.J.G. Yes, that is right. By all means we must see that we come in connection with the Lamb. The Lamb stands in the foreground. He has never tolerated evil and always done good. It says: “The ruler of the world comes, and he hath nothing in me” (John 14: 30), and the believer should be brought in correspondence with this, in view of having part in the public justification of the Lamb.

Rem. After the suffering we have in verse 9 the expression “blessed”. Is that an encouragement to each one of us? It says, “blessed are they who are called”.

A.J.G. Yes, all who have part in this marriage are blessed.

Ques. Is this the fulfilment of all the blessings in Matthew 5?

A.J.G. Yes, that is right. “Blessed they who hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled”.

A.d.M. Is this the full thought of the sufferings of Christ?

A.J.G. The Lamb connected with sufferings is in a special way. In Revelation, His atoning sufferings are not in the foreground; in

chapter 5 they are referred to—“hast redeemed to God, by thy blood, out of every tribe, and tongue ... and nation”. But the important thought of the Lamb in Revelation is not so much the Lamb of God who taketh away the sin of the world, but rather the Lamb being brought to slaughter, that means a little lamb. It is a diminutive thought; it really is called a little lamb. It shows that outwardly the Lord was completely defenceless, but He suffered for the rights of God.

Ques. Does this speak of the lowly mindedness of Christ?

A.J.G. It speaks of outward smallness and defencelessness, though it shows His unshakeable faithfulness towards God.

E.E.P. Would the Lord have this character in mind as He often made a lot of a little child?

A.J.G. Well, maybe you can say that. God works now in conditions that outwardly seem small. He annuls the things that are by the things that are not, 1 Cor 1: 28.

A.Sch. Does chapter 19 show the crown that is referred to in chapter 3?

A.J.G. Yes, the public glory of the Lamb and the Lamb’s wife. When we now go over the verses we have read in chapter 20, in verse 4-6, where we have the public vindication of the believer. Believers will be sitting on thrones and the judgment will be given to them. It says, “and they lived and reigned with the Christ a thousand years”: the first resurrection and the glory, what follows is our vindication.

F.Sh. Does verse 6 have a personal meaning as it says: “Blessed and holy he who has part in the first resurrection”?

A.J.G. Yes, it is most personal, the resurrection is a personal matter, even if we all are raised up together. There will be some that will be beheaded for the testimony of Jesus who had not worshipped the beast. They will be raised after our resurrection and they still have part in the first resurrection. But the first resurrection is the justification of those that are worthy of it. In Luke 20 the Lord says: “but they who are counted worthy to have part in that world, and the

resurrection from among the dead”. It is most important that the first resurrection is the justification of those who are morally worthy of it. When I say this, I include all believers that belong to Christ.

Rem. God has a special pleasure in this resurrection. It says in chapter 18: 20 about the believer in connection with Babylon: “for God has judged your judgment upon her”. That is our judgment.

A.J.G. God loves to take account of what the saints judge. That is also the reason why the Lord leaves us so long in the world with evil, that we should be developed in ability to judge spiritually. We have the Spirit of God in us who enables us to be in a position to do this. So we develop spiritual discernment when we start to judge ourselves. That helps us to judge all that comes before us. That is most important, as later on we are going to sit on thrones and judgment is given to us.

A.d.M. It is important to see the difference, in that we will sit on thrones while unbelievers will be cast into the lake of fire.

A.J.G. It is most important to see that God will bring everything to completion. His own work in the believer will be vindicated there, as all the works of evil will have their end in the lake of fire.

E.B. Could you please say something about “those who had not done homage to the beast nor to his image, and had not received the mark on their forehead and hand”, Rev 20: 4?

A.J.G. There will be some, after the assembly is taken up, who will be tested by the beast. That means after the main part of the first resurrection has taken place, yet there will be believers on the earth who will reject worshipping the beast or his image. Some of these will be killed, they will become martyrs. Some will be beheaded. But God will give them a part in the first resurrection. This will take place after the first resurrection, that is, after the largest part of believers have risen. But they will also be allowed to rise in view of reigning with Christ. In chapter 11 for instance, the two witnesses are referred to that were killed by the beast. “And after the three days and a half the spirit of life from God came into them, and they stood upon their

feet”. Then it says, “and they went up to the heaven in the cloud”. That shows that God in grace works in those that are faithful to Him.

F.Sh. Do we get another view of this in chapter 15; “those that had gained the victory over the beast, and over its image, and over the number of its name”, v 2?

A.J.G. They stand before God and have a position before God.

A.d.M. What do you think about these two witnesses, are they from heaven or are they from the earth?

A.J.G. They are of the earth and they come from the earth. They are two witnesses that God will install on earth. They are compared with the two olive trees, and trees grow on the earth.

W.T. Is the picture of the two witnesses, who were first killed and then made alive, not a picture of the testimony which will be maintained until the end and cannot be extinguished?

A.J.G. Yes, it is a very comforting sign in Revelation, that God maintains His testimony in the midst of the greatest resistance. The book of Revelation gives us a great impression, as we can see how God brings all to completion. It should be a great incentive to us to keep going, because God will complete all that we have.

Rem. God will always have a testimony that goes through to the end.

A.J.G. Yes. But He does not act simply according to His arbitrary will or power, but He acts on the basis of what is morally right. I believe this is important to see. He brings everything into judgment, so that everything that is public is marked by what is morally right.

E.E.P. Do you emphasise what is morally right, because this is available and possible for us?

A.J.G. Yes definitely. God Himself is the end of all, so that in eternity God will be all in all. We are brought to God in order to accomplish everything according to God. God is of course known in Christ. God is on the one hand fully expressed in Christ; and on the other hand, we have Christ as Man, the full answer to the revelation of God in Christ. In Ephesians we see all that concerns God. God is

the standard and pattern for everything, whereas in Colossians Christ is the standard for everything. There is no moral difference between the two epistles, but rather a different aspect.

E.E.P. That is why we see that at the end we have the same God as we had at the beginning. It says, “and God divided between the light and the darkness”, Gen 1: 4.

A.J.G. Yes. He named the light Day and the darkness Night. He named them with definite names.

E.E.P. So we have the thought of completion already from the beginning.

A.J.G. Yes.

F.Sh. Has God not shown us that the great principle is that evil should be overcome by what is good? That should spur us to overcome evil by good.

A.J.G. Yes, that is right.

P.v.d.B. Does the fact that the city has the glory of God show that she is in accordance with what God is in all eternity?

A.J.G. Yes, that is right. We must see that the expression that the city has the glory of God is only linked with the assembly in the millennium and not in eternity. In saying that I do not mean to say that the holy city in eternity no longer has the glory of God, but it is not presented in that way in scripture.

F.Sh. Do you not think that the great white throne in verse 11 shows that we should be stimulated to walk consistently; the believer should walk in consistency with it.

A.J.G. Yes, it is most important that this should be the case with us. Of course, we have the standard of the judgment of evil at the cross.

A.d.M. The colour white is referred to a few times in Revelation.

A.J.G. Yes, that is right, it speaks of total purity.

A.Sch. In this way the believers in their completeness will be seen in heaven.

A.J.G. It says that they sit on thrones. Further on it says, they are priests of God and of Christ. It is most important that the thought of service in worship to God will mark us through the whole millennium. When believers stand there publicly vindicated and sitting on thrones, they would still be occupied with the service of God; it means they are not any more occupied with their own justification.

P.v.d.B. Is the priestly side inward, and the royal side what is outward?

A.J.G. Yes, that is right. Now there is something else in chapter 21. The eternal state is really only described in verses 1-4. What marks the city, the new Jerusalem, is that she comes down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband; it means she is marked by eternal freshness and beauty. A bride adorned for her husband is the very best. She is marked by the best kind of refinement.

J.A.H. Would that be adornment from the divine side? Does it speak of the adornment that the servant of Abraham provided for Rebecca in Genesis 24?

A.J.G. I have wondered if the adornment is prepared by her or from God. I am inclined to say it is both. She is surely the very best of divine workmanship. But God works also in intelligent affection in the hearts of the believer. God has no pleasure in it that it goes on without our participation.

A.L.B. That is why new creation is already active now in the believer.

A.J.G. Yes, the work of God is active in us. But He works in us through things that correspond to Christ.

W.R. Why do we have in chapter 21 the thought of the bride and in chapter 19 the thought of the wife?

A.J.G. The wife represents that the believer is faithful to His interests during the absence of Christ. What clearly underlies it is the well-known position that we have in the affections, in the heart of Christ. The bride is specially adorned, that means the assembly shows her best.

Rem. I remember Mr James Taylor once saying the bride presents what the wife stands for, she is the best for Christ and will not give it up.

A.J.G. We clearly see how the bride is the climax reached in divine workmanship.

A.L.B. Will “adorned for her husband” be expressed in everything that comes out of our hearts?

A.J.G. She is for His eye and His heart, she is not occupied with her own adornment, but rather what is precious for the heart of Christ.

W.M. Do we see this in the Songs of Songs?

A.J.G. Do you have a special scripture in mind?

W.M. I thought of chapter 1: 10, “Thy cheeks are comely with bead-rows. Thy neck with ornamental chains”, she is adorned.

A.J.G. We have the thought of adornment with the bride as well. It presents the beginning again.

J.A.H. Would not this adornment refer to the heavenly origin of the bride; the assembly comes down from heaven?

A.J.G. Yes, that is right. She comes down out of heaven from God. This is not just a geographical thought, but rather a characteristic matter.

J.M. Does this mean that the assembly coming down from God, all is completed and God is all in all?

A.J.G. Yes, we have here the assembly as the dwelling of God, the holy city. She is the city here but also named as the tabernacle. She is a great vessel of influence. It is not so much the greatness of the temple that is seen, but it refers rather more to the original conditions of the tabernacle system, specifically simplicity. It is said God will dwell in a tabernacle, it means in simple conditions with men.

A.L.B. Would you say that the great thought of the sanctuary is that God will dwell with men?

A.J.G. Yes, but the conditions in which God will dwell there are not in greatness and elevation and majesty, but it is really as being at home, as in a tent or tabernacle. When the Word became flesh, He dwelt among us. That is, He tabernacled among us. There was no reluctance or inaccessibility with Christ when He dwelt among men.

W.R. Does the word “their God” give the thought of completion?

A.J.G. Yes, that is right. It is God with men, those that acknowledge Him as “their God”.

Ques. Is God’s wisdom expressed in all this, in the fact that we are able to understand this?

A.J.G. Yes, the great thought of God was always to dwell with men. It came into expression in reality the first time in the incarnation. Then we have a vessel in the city, that is the fulness of Christ as His body. That seems to be an enlargement of Christ in the mediatorial system. God links on with men in a Man, in Christ. But then the mediatorial thought is further extended in the body of Christ. That is why the city will be called the tabernacle of God with men.

P.v.d.B. Does this show that the assembly in eternal conditions is closest to God?

A.J.G. That is right. The truth of the body of Christ underlies it all, which is seen in the assembly. That is why we are nearest to Christ and to God in nearness and confidence. Therefore the proximity we have with God is as we are in Christ and with Him.

J.A.H. Could you say something of the expression, “God himself shall be with them, their God”? Would that indicate the presence of the Spirit in the assembly?

A.J.G. In the present time we come to this in all its fulness. I believe the Lord brings these thoughts in in John 14: 23. He speaks of the Comforter, the Advocate, who will be with us in eternity. In connection with the presence of the Comforter, He says. “If anyone love me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our abode with him”. Consequently, we have the Father and the Son dwelling with such as keep the word of

Christ. The Spirit is already with us. Thus we have God Himself with us, when we keep the word of Christ and keep His commandments.

E.E.P. Can this be worked out practically when we take up the position as a bondman?

A.J.G. Yes, that is important.

A.W. “God himself” would be the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.

A.J.G. Yes. I believe the verse in John 14 is most interesting and important, that we should think it over. The Lord indicates there that the Comforter, the Holy Spirit, is with us, thus everything is possible. The Lord speaks in the singular, of “any one”. He has evidently the truth of the assembly in mind. But it comes down to the smallest and weakest conditions, wherever these conditions may be found. It is not only the commandments of Christ that are to be kept, but also His word is treasured and regarded. Then He goes on to say: “my Father will love him and we”—that is the Father and the Son—“will come and make our abode with him”. Thus we have dwelling conditions for the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, the Holy Spirit being already present. It is now, as it will be later, that God Himself is with us, our God.

Rem. What is true in the assembly now will be true later generally with men.

A.J.G. Do you not think that this requires that we believe and have the necessary spiritual conditions? We are often hindered, on account of looking at the weaknesses with us and in us, so maybe we are not able to see all that is available to us as we have the Holy Spirit.

Ques. Do you not think that our hearts should be more established in what is available to us now?

A.J.G. Yes, that is right, we can see from these passages what God will reach in eternity. Everything will be in His glory, in completion, as it includes every family. Everything is of God; everything is of new creation. Everything else is forever taken away. We may already

now in the Spirit have a certain right or a certain foretaste and knowledge of this, that God will be all in all.

M.v.R. It says in verse 3: “And I heard a loud voice out of the heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men”. Does God make known publicly that all His desires and counsels are all fulfilled?

A.J.G. Yes, that is a public announcement.

F.M. May we refer to Ephesians 1: 9, “having made known to us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he purposed in himself for the administration of the fulness of times”; does this fit in here?

A.J.G. The mystery of His will is more linked with the millennium and not with eternity, because it says, “the administration of the fulness of times”. That is, as far I understand it, more linked with the millennium.

Reading 4—Monday afternoon

Revelation 21: 9-27; 22: 1-5

A.J.G. The holy city as John gives it in Revelation 21 presents the masterpiece of divine workmanship. The world to come is the answer to all that has come in, to all the questions that have been raised in the world of sin. God allows evil to reach its climax. He allows man in his independence from God to fulfil his course. This only brings in misery and confusion. But then God gives His own answer to this on the earth, and the world to come will be the display of this. The heavenly city has its influence that is altogether from God. It is an influence that goes out entirely from God, wrought out in men, in creatures. This is a great triumph of God's, that He secures this practically in men. It has often been said that the holy city represents the perfection of creation. She is not totally infinite, she is immense although measured, yet she is perfect. Of course, it is all the work of God, it is all new creation. Yet there is perfection in what is created.

F.Sh. Would this include all believers from Pentecost until today?

A.J.G. Yes, it is the Lamb's wife that will be seen as the bride. That is why it is the whole assembly, from Pentecost until the rapture. She is viewed as coming down out of heaven from God to spread the light of God. The great subject of this section is seen in administration. This is of great importance at the present time. When we see what the assembly in its administration will be in a future day, then we can also understand what the Lord works out in her at the present time. What will be there in the day to come should already be seen now, of course necessarily in great limitations and smallness. So it says that she has the glory of God. It does not say she is displaying it, but rather she has it as something that belongs to her. This shows that we will be all formed very much in the divine nature, because the glory of God is expressed in love.

A.L.B. You said this morning that it is not indicated in the first section that she has the glory of God, referring to the eternal day. What was your thought?

A.J.G. I thought of how the assembly in the millennium is seen in contrast to all that existed on the earth before. Until the coming of the Lord, this world is the environment for the glory of man. Human pride and the human self will have had an active part in it, with all its misery and confusion. In the millennium the assembly comes down from heaven having the glory of God.

Rem. It is a heavenly administration, that is why the glory of God must be connected with it.

A.J.G. As God is expressed in it, she has the glory of God. But it is divine glory that is expressed in men who are united in love. That is why the number twelve is prominent in this chapter, as is often said: twelve gates, twelve angels, twelve foundations, twelve names, twelve apostles, one hundred forty-four cubits, twelve stadia. The number twelve in scripture is always linked with working out things in love as it is a number that is easily divided. Eleven or thirteen cannot be divided, but in twelve we have twelve ones, six twos, four threes, three fours, two sixes. This shows among other things that you can quickly take it in your hand and divide it up. It is the great token of love amongst the brethren, that you can work easily. Everything can easily be done when love reigns amongst the brethren. That is why the number twelve is taken for administration. That shows that everything must be taken up in love, because God is love. He takes up the saints in the number twelve, in view of expressing all in love, towards the whole universe.

A.L.B. Is the number twelve the same here in administration as what we have in Ephesians 4: 16 in connection with the body, where it says, “the increase of the body to its self-building up in love”?

A.J.G. Yes, but the body would express more what underlies this; it is the living organism, so to speak what is not seen, whereas the administration is seen here, as we see in 1 Corinthians, which is the great administration epistle, where the apostle says, “Let all things ye do be done in love”, chap 16: 14.

F.Sh. Is there a special thought in that it says in verse 10, “He carried me away in the Spirit, and set me on a great and high mountain, and shewed me the holy city, Jerusalem”?

A.J.G. I believe the holy city is a very great thought. It shows that we must be elevated in the Spirit in view of getting a right view of it. But it is important to see that, although it is in the future when the holy city comes down, yet it gives us now a picture of divine administration. That is why every local company should take on features that are seen in the holy city.

P.v.d.B. Do the twelve gates show that something is worked out locally?

A.J.G. Yes, and all the gates are the same, they are all marked by the same features, which means that whatever local meetings we visit we should see the same, so that in 1 Corinthians, which is the most important letter of assembly administration, there is such a verse as this, “thus I ordain in all the assemblies”, chap 7: 17. We have two or three similar verses in 1 Corinthians. That is the result of each gate coming from the same pearl.

Rem. That shows the unity in the city and in the body.

A.J.G. Yes, that is right. That is the great end that God strives towards. This thought of unity cannot be overestimated, because God is One. If the vessel is marked by inconsistency, it is a dishonour to the one God. That is why it is necessary that each should judge himself and his self-will, because when he looks after himself, it leads to disunity and it dishonours God.

A.L.B. I believe it shows that the assemblies everywhere should follow the same principles. And does this not also show that we should follow the same customs and habits in every place?

A.J.G. Yes, that is right. There are twelve gates and they are all the same, and anyone coming to one sees the very same as he had seen at the other gates.

F.Sh. That would be consistency as well as unity.

A.J.G. Yes.

Rem. I thought of John 17: 22 where it says: “And the glory which thou hast given me I have given them, that they may be one as we are one”.

A.J.G. Yes, that supports what we are just saying. The Lord calls it glory. The same unity that exists between the Father and the Son should also be in character amongst the believers.

A.d.M. Would you think the glory shines out of unity?

A.J.G. Yes, the glory that shines out is the glory of God, and God is One.

P.v.d.B. The fact that the gates come out of one pearl also shows unity. I thought there are not 12 different pearls, but rather all of one pearl.

A.J.G. I believe the beauty the Lord sees in the assembly is the pearl. This shows she is only for one Man, as it is only one pearl. That is the unique character the assembly is marked by. Paul writes to the Corinthians: “I have espoused you unto one man”, 2 Cor 11: 2.

M.v.R. What does it mean, that the names of the twelve apostles are written on the foundations?

A.J.G. The apostles laid the foundation of the assembly. The great dignity of the apostles was that they were witnesses of the resurrection of Christ. That means God had refused every other man. He had raised one Man, Jesus Christ, and thereby He only recognised this Man. This foundation must be formed in the souls of believers. What is said at first is that her shining was like a most precious stone, as a crystal-like jasper stone. Then jasper is mentioned again in verse 18, and in verse 19 the first foundation of the city is adorned with jasper. Transparency is especially emphasised. We should be totally transparent like the jasper.

A.L.B. Is this reached in what John writes: “if we walk in the light as *he* is in the light, we have fellowship with one another”, 1 John 1: 7?

A.J.G. Yes, I am glad you draw attention to that. I think it is most striking that John says in the beginning of his first epistle: “And this is the message which we have heard from him and declare to you, that God is light, and in him there is no darkness at all”, chap 1: 5. It was a distinct message that John received from the Lord, in view of telling

it to the believers, before he goes on to write about other things, as if he would say that with God everything is transparent. This should also mark conditions among ourselves.

A.d.M. Is the transparency only for divine Persons?

A.J.G. No, it should also mark our relations with one another. It should also be seen in others. Satan brings in darkness. God is light, and there is no darkness in Him. That is why the Lord says in another scripture to His disciples: “Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy”, Luke 12: 1. Hypocrisy is when you show something that is not existing. The Lord speaks to us as His friends when He says, I say unto you my friends, beware of this leaven.

A.L.B. Did He not say of Himself: “Altogether that which I also say to you”, John 8: 25?

A.J.G. Yes.

Rem. This question of transparency arises often in our mutual relationships, does it not? I believe that when the apostle Paul concludes 1 Corinthians with, “Salute one another with a holy kiss” (chap 16: 20), he wants us to be transparent with one another.

A.J.G. Yes, that is right. When we walk in the light as God is in the light, then we are able to walk in His light in our relations amongst ourselves, having all things right.

W.T. That is why the city has no more need of light, as it says, she has no more need of the sun or the moon.

A.J.G. Yes, that is right, for the glory of God has enlightened it, and the lamp thereof is the Lamb. All the light of God shines in Christ upon us. In the millennium and in eternity this will be the case.

Fd.M. Is it of significance that the Lamb is referred to here? It says in the beginning, “the bride, the Lamb’s wife”.

A.J.G. The Lamb is referred to throughout Revelation apart from the first three chapters; there the Lord Jesus is the Son of Man.

Fd.M. I thought especially that the mind of the Lamb is necessary for administration in the assembly.

A.J.G. Yes, that is right. The holy city is in no way independent of Christ. She stands in the most intimate connection with Christ, she is the Lamb's wife. She is seen in her perfect beauty as the bride. The Lamb is referred to in this chapter, yet It is not in the foreground. That is why the Spirit of God is showing forth the work of God that He has wrought in us.

W.T. We can see in chapter 21: 22 another distinct thought, it says: "And I saw no temple in it, for the Lord God Almighty is its temple, and the Lamb".

A.J.G. It shows the immediate closeness of God and of Christ; "I saw no temple in it". If a temple had been in there, then the presence of God would have been known only in this little temple. But it says the Lord God Almighty is its temple and the Lamb. In earlier days the temple of glory was in Jerusalem. But now the glory is in the assembly, in the fact that God and the Lamb are there in immediate nearness.

A.W. We have the presence of God everywhere in the holy city.

H.P. It says in verse 12: "having a great and high wall; having twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels". Would that tell us that nothing unsuitable can be brought in?

A.J.G. That is right. It is important to see there are three things that are measured. The city itself is the first to be measured, then the gates are measured, then also the wall is measured. The measure involves everything corresponding to the divine standard. The wall is a very important feature as it speaks of the holiness that has been brought about in the saints. It excludes all evil and admits only what is good. We see that for example in Acts 5: 13. After what had preceded in power of evil with Ananias and Sapphira, it is said, "but of the rest durst no man joined them". At that moment there was such a holiness in the assembly, that none in whom there was no work of God dared to join them. This shows us the true thought of the wall, it is great and high.

A.W. It is striking that even in the eternal setting the city is still called holy, "the holy city", Rev 21: 2?

A.J.G. She will have this character eternally, she is the holy city. The wall is measured and it measures one hundred and forty-four cubits, a man's measure, that is the angel's.

A.L.B. Why is it called a man's measure?

A.J.G. That is the measure that comes to light in man. It is for us to reach the measure of the stature of the fulness of the Christ. It is a man's measure, it is presented in a man.

P.v.d.B. Does this show our ability to understand this at all?

A.J.G. It also relates to our ability to accept it, not only to understand it, but also to correspond to it.

E.E.P. The measuring is carried out by someone else.

A.J.G. It says: "And he that spoke with me had a golden reed". That means that God insists that the city should meet His own requirements.

W.R. What can be said about the wall: in verse 18 it says about it that it was made of jasper?

A.J.G. The wall was built of jasper, which means it was transparent. Our separation from everything must be completely transparent.

H.D. We have various conditions amongst the saints here on earth. They are very different, looking at all the saints. I am thinking of Paul and of the malefactor on the cross, and yet the city, the assembly, the new Jerusalem, will be marked by glory.

A.J.G. Yes, that is right, she is most glorious. When confusion is so awful, God brings in an answer in Christ. When He is able to secure an answer in a little place, that will be a great triumph for God. Where the truth of the assembly finds a place in the hearts of the saints, God wants believers to mature to this measure.

F.Sh. This shining was like a most precious stone as a crystal-like jasper stone. I would like to ask if this has an application for us now: should we already be in the good of this?

A.J.G. Yes, it is something great when we have Christ Himself before us. He is the One in whom God has fully come into expression.

There are conditions that come to light in the Lamb's wife. The thought, that we should be more in accord with Christ and more like Him, does also draw us towards one another. We cannot put the world right, though we can keep ourselves right. That is why it speaks of the woman of worth in Proverbs 31, the entrance of her house, and her children; she surveyed the ways of her household.

E.B. Could you say something about the different precious stones?

A.J.G. They beautify the foundation of the wall of the city. I do not believe I can give you details about these precious stones.

E.E.P. Is the great lesson in connection with John in Revelation, that God shows us how we should see things; not in the way we would see them, but rather how God sees them? Then we can see the precious stones in a spiritual way and see what God has in mind to say to us.

A.J.G. Yes, that is surely right. They beautify the foundations of the wall of the city. They present something which cannot be seen. I believe they are linked with the hidden exercises when we build the wall.

E.E.P. Maybe it could be what the apostle Paul kept for fourteen years, special impressions.

A.J.G. It is not quite clear to me that that is the thought in mind here.

E.B. Is there a connection with 1 Corinthians 3: 11; "For other foundation can no man lay besides that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now if anyone build upon this foundation, gold, silver, precious stones ...".

A.J.G. That is mentioned in order to show that what is built can stand the fire. However, here it is plainly a beauty on the foundations of the wall, and the foundations of the wall cannot be seen. These precious stones are mostly found in the depth of the earth, and they are the result of pressure. I believe they present something from our souls that does not come out visibly, through pressure we go through, and difficulties we are in, which yield a result, that holiness in our souls should be built up, just like the wall. Christ is the Holy and True, but first the Holy. And He is to be appreciated in this light, in order that

holiness should be built up in our souls. That presents the wall: it is holiness built up in the hearts of the saints.

A.d.M. Would 1 Peter be of help in connection with these stones?

A.J.G. Peter presents in his letter living stones that would fit into the divine building, the house. But that is not the thought here in the precious stones, although there is a work of God in them. That is why they are also precious stones. The stones in a building can be seen, but the foundation of a wall cannot be seen.

H.M. The number twelve is referred to here. Can we assume that the number twelve means perfection?

A.J.G. It is a complete thought.

M.v.R. Can we say that what comes into expression here is the thought of God as to a city?

A.J.G. Yes, I believe that.

F.Sh. As to these precious stones, we do not simply get holiness through great light?

A.J.G. Certainly. Holiness is the result of deep exercises as well as chastening. In Hebrews 12, it says we are chastened in order to be partakers of His holiness. We are also asked to perfect holiness in the fear of God. But the expression of holiness is Christ Himself. Peter says in John 6: 68, 69; "Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast words of life eternal; and we have believed and known that thou art the holy one of God". So I think that these twelve precious stones signify what comes out in the souls of different saints through pressure and difficulties; it is preciousness in Christ that brings us to holiness.

E.E.P. Would you say that characteristics from such stones are seen in Romans 16 in the many persons mentioned?

A.J.G. What comes out there is different features of the work of God in brothers and sisters. That would be features that can be seen. But here it is what is totally out of sight.

A.L.B. Do you not think we should be preserved from hardness in assembly matters, when we go through these pressures and difficulties and carry these precious stones in us?

A.J.G. Yes, that is most important. It is most important to see how the figure “twelve” runs through the whole chapter. That is love amongst the brethren. Love is in fact the regulating factor that no element of darkness is allowed to be there.

Ques. Could we say that we must be on the mountain like John, to see the spiritual level of the city?

A.J.G. Yes, that is right.

Ques. Do we find here the thought of completion, it says “every precious stone”?

A.J.G. Yes, that is most interesting, “every precious stone”, and then no precious feature will be missed. I believe we can see the glory of the city when we consider it. We remarked previously that, if all things were written that Jesus said and did, not even the world itself, as John says, would contain the books written if they were all written down one by one; because all that Jesus did was precious, John 21: 25. The heavenly city is the expression of this. It is a great vessel that is altogether an outshining of what Jesus is. We can be assured that all that Jesus did will have an answer in the holy city.

A.S. Do we not see in these twelve precious stones, the foundation of this city, the mystery of Christ seen in Ephesians?

A.J.G. Yes, it is the display of it, of what now is brought forward in the mystery. The present time is the time of the mystery, but we should be able by the Spirit to understand it now. But this is the development of what God has done in a mystery.

E.E.P. It was no longer a mystery for John.

A.J.G. Later on, it will be no mystery for the world.

E.B. Is there not a precious thought in verse 25: “And its gates shall not be shut at all by day, for night shall not be there”?

A.J.G. Yes, it shows that there is no feature of darkness any more. God named the light Day and the darkness He named Night. It says here “its gates shall not be shut at all by day, for night shall not be there”.

A.d.M. What do you think about verse 26: “And they shall bring the glory and the honour of the nations to it”?

A.J.G. This will be an actuality in the day to come. Then God will take care that the city will be honoured in a way that the nations give their honour and glory to it.

A.d.M. You mean in the kingdom?

A.J.G. Yes, but we see now how this should be developed in our localities.

F.Sh. Do you not think, although this is a future thought, that it should be seen in our localities and also have an individual application? The more these precious stones get a place in us, the more influence we have in our locality.

A.J.G. I am sure that is right.

W.R. Could you say something about the city built of pure gold as transparent glass?

A.J.G. The pure gold as transparent glass shows it is all from God. It also shows how everything is transparent. We can see how God indicates transparency at every juncture; because illusions and deceit mark Satan’s world. There is more of this in our hearts than we know. If we really want to see how much of this is in us we must go into the presence of God. It says the city is of pure gold like transparent glass. And at the end of verse 21, it says that even the street was of gold as transparent glass. The street presents the movements of the saints. Apparently, there is only one street in the city, so the saints are moving together in one direction.

J.A.H. Is it right to say that there are no restrictions for us in the city, as there is no temple? The whole city is the temple, and we are in it having no restrictions as we approach God.

A.J.G. Yes, that is right.

Rem. We have noticed that the city has no need for the sun or the moon that they should shine for it. Amongst other things it says here in verse 23: “for the glory of God has enlightened it, and the lamp thereof is the Lamb”.

A.J.G. The city is marked by having light from God, and her lamp is the Lamb, as it says further. That means that the glory of God shines in Christ; that is why we do not need any other light. These are, of course, all spiritual thoughts.

Ques. Do we not find a scene where the question of evil is solved, and everything is pure? Should we not always keep this in mind in our administration questions?

A.J.G. Yes, it is the same city we see in eternity. When the Lord takes us to Himself, then the work in the believer is completed and, as you said, every moral question solved. The work of God in us goes on now in view of this. That is why it is important to see why these features are mentioned here. Because these are the features that God will bring to light.

Rem. I believe we will only work out what contributes to the glory of God in the city.

A.J.G. Yes, then we do not only have the city and its wall and its gates and its foundations and its street, but also a river, a current of water of life, bright as crystal going out of the throne of God and of the Lamb. That indicates that the supremacy of God and the Lamb is fully acknowledged. What is there does not hinder the water of life flowing out of the river. Of course, this presents the Spirit who constantly flows out and gives us spiritual support.

E.E.P. Do we see here the completion of what we have in John 4; where the Lord Himself spoke to the woman?

A.J.G. Did He not have in mind more there the fountain that springs up to eternal life? But here we have a river that flows out; which is more connected with John 7.

A.L.B. Would the thought you brought in about the street continue in the river that is moving.

A.J.G. Yes, the river presents a lasting freshness that the Spirit brings in.

Ques. Why is verse 27 brought in here: “And nothing common, nor that maketh an abomination and a lie, shall at all enter into it; but those only who are written in the book of life of the Lamb”?

A.J.G. That is in view of amplifying the holiness of the city. We have the application of it in the present time in chapter 22: 14: “Blessed are they that wash their robes, that they may have right to the tree of life, and that they should go in by the gates into the city”. We show we have a right to enter into the city, when we wash our robes.

A.d.M. Is the river here the same as the river mentioned in Ezekiel that came out of the sanctuary?

A.J.G. Yes, but here it flows out from the throne of God and the Lamb, it means it deals more with the keeping of the rights of God and the rights of Christ. If in any of our meetings things are dead or are not in movement, then we should ask ourselves, if either the rights of God or the rights of Christ are not acknowledged. If so, that means that the river of water of life bright like crystal cannot flow in us. The Spirit is here with us, and there are always enough resources available in the Spirit. The Spirit is here, and He flows out from the throne of God and the Lamb.

P.v.d.B. Is it a river that constantly flows?

A.J.G. Yes, that is right. It is most encouraging that the river is referred to, because a river is not anything fixed. And what is lastly said about the city is that a river is in it. It says in Psalm 65: 9, “The river of God is full of water”. That is why we should always aim that our meetings should be marked by freshness.

A.L.B. Would you say that the link between the throne and the river brings two principles together? It seems to suggest that we can only rejoice in liberty and freshness in our movements, to the extent we acknowledge divine authority.

A.J.G. Yes, that is a very important principle.

W.T. Do you consider the leaves that are for the healing of the nations to be what goes out of Christ to heal the nations, that is the cross?

A.J.G. That will come into expression in the future. Maybe we could now speak about the present application of the river.

J.M. Should the fruits of the tree of life emerge, when we have freshness and liberty in the Spirit?

A.J.G. Yes, I believe so. It is remarkable that the month is referred to. Every month yielding its fruit, fruit freshly marked every month as a result of the free-flowing river emerging again. The tree of life is the real pattern here, it is Christ. We read in the prophet; "From me is thy fruit found", Hos 14: 8. But this thought of constant freshness and fruitfulness is most interesting.

J.M. Does this refer to Joseph's blessing in Deuteronomy 33?

A.J.G. There also the months are mentioned, by the precious fruits of the sun, and by the precious things put forth by the months, v 14. Thus, there is definite mature fruit available, when the care meetings are maintained every month. The month should be completed, in order that what the month brings could be taken up. We see when the thought of the river is taken up, we are always newly corrected and rectified. This is a token of life.

A.d.M. Does the emerging of the river out of the throne of God and the Lamb show us that the way to God is open?

A.J.G. Yes, that is definitely true, that our way to God is open.

A.d.M. Does the purity and holiness of the river point to the Spirit?

A.J.G. It does have a most sanctifying effect on us, when we allow this river to work in us in view of approaching God. It sets us in liberty to approach God. But here it conveys that the Spirit of God always brings fresh thoughts about the throne of God. I believe this is the reason why in recent years the exercise has been taken up to give a larger place to the Spirit. One proof of the presence of the Spirit in the assembly is that freshness is available. When freshness is there, then fruitfulness will be there.

P.v.d.B. Do you think we should have the care meeting when the month is ended?

A.J.G. Yes, the most suitable day would be the Saturday before the first Lord's day in the month. Then the previous month is ended.

Ques. Does the tree of life refer to Christ? Would that mean the tree of life in the garden of Eden points to Him?

E.E.P. We have in the garden of Eden one river, that divides into four rivers; here in Revelation also is one river. Is there a connection?

A.J.G. Yes, it is remarkable what similarity there is between Genesis and the end of Revelation. Yet there is a feature here that is very important, for there is a general thought of administration in chapter 22: 3-4: "and his servants shall serve him, and they shall see his face, and his name is on their foreheads". The term servants here is the same as slaves. That shows that the thought of a bondman goes through. But the service here involves priestly service. Alongside all administration we always have to maintain the priestly thought, those that prove themselves as servants who maintain His holiness, those that are close and can see His face, of course in Christ, His name will be on their foreheads. That is connected with the overcomer in Philadelphia that we considered yesterday.

A.d.M. Is this priestly service linked with our great High Priest?

A.J.G. Yes, in the priesthood there is always holiness. When we are with Christ in glory, it is no longer necessary to emphasise holiness because everything is holy then and nothing unholy is present. Holiness is emphasised now in the present time. It is important for us to provide holy conditions in this scene, when we are priests.

A.d.M. I was thinking of the order of the high priest Melchisedec.

A.J.G. That means it will never perish.

Ques. Does the name on the forehead indicate glory?

A.J.G. Yes, and also understanding, the person is marked by it because he is in accordance with it.

E.E.P. What would you say about the last part: “they shall reign to the ages of ages”, v 5?

A.J.G. That shows it is pleasing to God to honour believers. They are the result of His own work. That is why He can honour them with eternal dominion.

P.v.d.B. JT said that the believers constituting the city belong to the ruling class¹.

A.J.G. Quite so.

¹ Ministry of James Taylor—New Series, vol 63 p304, 5

WHAT GOD PREPARES

Address on 5th June 1954

Jonah 1: 17

Malachi 3: 17; 4: 2-3

1 Corinthians 2: 7-10

John 14: 1-3

I would like to speak about what God prepares. Preparation implies that something is thought of beforehand, and we can receive impressions from God as we consider how He prepares everything. Before this, dear brethren, I would like to say that Christ becoming Man was a great turning point in the ways of God. Of course, He always had this in mind. But it is important to see, as Christ became Man, not only that God was fully seen in Christ, but also that man could now be in perfection before God in Christ. As this is the case, God has nothing less in mind but conformity with Christ, because He takes us up in view of blessing us. It is good for us to have before our eyes that God works in view of conformity with Christ. It says, “he has also predestinated to be conformed to the image of his Son, so that he should be the firstborn among many brethren”, Rom 8: 29. The heart of God delights in the thought that He will be surrounded by millions of men in sonship, who are made fully in accordance with the image of the Son. As this is before God, then God has much work with us. Each one of us comes into this workmanship in His hand, and God goes the whole way with us in view of reaching His end. But this should not make us careless.

Jonah is presented as one that was marked by self-will. First it was said to him to go towards the east, but he quickly turned his face to go towards the west. But God would not allow him to go any further. The history of Jonah is remarkable in connection with what God provided. It says here, He prepared a great fish to swallow up Jonah. After this He prepared a gourd, then He prepared a worm and after that a sultry east wind. It is very impressive to see how God brings in the power of creation in all its great diversity so that He can undertake to break down one self-willed person in order to bring him into correspondence with Himself. Consider for instance the

difference between a great fish and a worm, and the difference between the gourd and the sultry east wind. It is all what God prepared. He also saw to it that all this took place at the right time; because God had in mind to release one single self-willed person. We do not need to say that there was no self-will with Jesus. Also, there is no self-will in heaven. But Jonah was taken up by God. He was taken up as a servant, as a prophet. God made all these efforts and prepared all these things. God has wonderful resources in His creation. If we were more sensitive and more attentive, we would see how near God is to us. The heavens testify that God can bring out vast dimensions of glory. The little creatures testify that God can go down and use what is little. He draws our attention to the ant. So full is the creation that God is able to use for us. A little creature like the ant is connected with wisdom, it says. If we are too sluggish to desire wisdom, then says God “Go to the ant, thou sluggard; consider her ways”, Prov 6: 6. Thus, we get an impression of God and all the precious resources He has. He can prepare all that is needed for the moment to complete and promote the work that goes on in us. One does not need to be occupied with Jonah’s history any more. God bore with Jonah. He even bore with his anger. He says, “Doest thou well to be angry?” and Jonah is bold enough to say, “I do well to be angry, unto death”. Yet God bore with this and reached His end with Jonah. It was once said by someone, ‘in spite of all, Jonah allowed God to have the last word’. There is no doubt that the writer of the book is Jonah himself, and at the end Jonah steps totally aside. God alone is now before us with His feelings in relation to His creatures. Thus, we see that Jonah doubtless came into accord with God. But we also see what God had to prepare to reach this.

We see in Malachi that God prepares a day. It speaks of those who feared Jehovah. That is their character outwardly, publicly in the presence of evil persons, of those that did not fear God. It is often a test for believers to move on in the fear of God. They experience more tests, and exercises come along with it. Asaph, who is also referred to as a prophet, felt it difficult to go on with God in the fear of God. In Psalm 73 he speaks of his feelings according to his outward experiences of evil persons being allowed to progress whilst he who was marked by fearing God, had to go through many tests and

exercises. But then it says: “Until I went into the sanctuaries of God”, v 17. Then he saw all in its true light. We are also able to go into the sanctuaries of God in this way. It is remarkable that the word there is in the plural—“sanctuaries”. While we always have immediate access to the presence of God in the sanctuary, these “sanctuaries” relate also to the hosts of believers we are able to enter in with; for when we are among the saints we see everything in its true light. We remember when God brought His people out of Egypt, they first came to Elim. There were the twelve springs of water and seventy palm trees. At this place they received an impression of the perfect resources there are in the Holy Spirit, especially in the twelve springs of water. It is a constant supply of spiritual service in view of what is required. There were also the seventy palm trees. That would be the saints marked by victory. In such an environment you would be confirmed and strengthened. In the prophecy of Malachi it says, “They that feared Jehovah spoke often one to another” (chap 3: 16, 17); further on it says, “and Jehovah observed it, and heard, and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared Jehovah, and that thought upon his name”. I have often thought of that when we come together in our readings. When we speak as those that fear the Lord and think upon His Name, then the Lord observes it all and respects it all. A book of remembrance will thus be written. If we would hold on to this in our thoughts, then our readings would reach a higher level. God takes a special interest in such people. He says, “And they shall be unto me a peculiar treasure, saith Jehovah of hosts, in the day that I prepare”. The day is not yet prepared, but God is about to prepare it. He intends to make such a day, in which everything which He has prepared in this evil world will be fully justified. Scripture speaks of “Jesus Christ’s day”. That is of course the day to come, the world to come. It is the day when this Man Jesus Christ comes to light fully. He is now counted worthless and rejected by men, but chosen and precious with God. At the day of Jesus Christ, He will be publicly vindicated and justified, and in that day believers that have been faithful will also be justified. Jehovah says, “And they shall be unto me a peculiar treasure ... in the day that I prepare”. It is wonderful to think of this, that God prepares a day, not only when Christ is justified, but also all that have been pleasing to Him at the

present time. He says: "I will spare them as a man spareth his own son that serveth him". How God values service from sons! When He sees this the love of the Father will be set in movement. On the day when evil persons will be judged, each one that fears God will come into blessing in public justification. Those that have served Him would be recognised as such as the Father has spared as His own sons.

In the next chapter it alludes once again to the day that God prepares. It is a day of great glory. It is a day of which it says that the Sun of righteousness arises. The present time is more the time when the morning star is shining. It may not be right to call it day, as it is really night. The morning star is not as large as the Sun of righteousness, but it is shining very brightly and is most precious. The morning star has arisen in our hearts; it is Christ, as being the great joy of our hearts, the One who is ready to introduce the day of the pleasure of God. Here God says to His people, "And unto you that fear my name shall the Sun of righteousness arise". That is Christ in His universal glory. Nothing is hid from the heat of the sun, says Psalm 19: 6. When the Lord Himself rises as the Sun of Righteousness, then the whole universe will be brought into righteousness, and the godless will be brought under judgment. That is the day that God prepares. These references to what God prepares show us that He thinks of everything. He thinks thus of each of us. He is also prepared to usher in that day for us. It will extend, as we know, over a thousand years, in which not only Christ shall be vindicated, but in which righteousness shall reign. All those who have loved righteousness shall then be vindicated too.

Thus everything is fixed and assured. It is all in the hands of God as a divine preparation. In Corinthians, the apostle is concerned to bring the Corinthians forward. He sheds tears over the awful conditions amongst the Corinthians. He said he had great things in mind to speak about. He had in mind to speak about the mystery, about the wisdom of God in a mystery. This means he would have done this if the conditions in Corinth had allowed it. So sorrowful were the conditions in Corinth that he was not free to speak about these matters. They had not fully appreciated the cross of Christ. That is why the flesh was active there. The things that God had prepared

for those who love Him could not be reached by them. For when I allow the activity of the flesh then the question can be raised if I really love God, because I go on living in what God sent His Son to die for. It says, “God, having sent his own Son, in likeness of flesh of sin, and for sin, has condemned sin in the flesh”, Rom 8: 3. If I go on with what He has condemned, for what reason did He send His Son to condemn it in Him and not in me? How can I then maintain the ground that I love God? These are great things, that God has prepared for them that love Him. You need not prepare anything; it is already prepared. It is all in the hands of the Spirit, that we might be acquainted with these things. God’s wonderful thought is that Christ became Man and accomplished redemption and was raised from among the dead. A wonderful world of glory opens up for faith. It says in Colossians 1: 18 that He is “the beginning, firstborn from among the dead”. We should know Christ as the firstborn from among the dead; then we begin to grasp the world of glory that is in the mind of God. The question is, how much do we know of this? It says that these things are revealed to us by the Spirit. It also says, “the Spirit searches all things, even the depths of God”. When Christ as Man is apprehended by us, then the light of the assembly starts to shine in us. We then have Christ as a type of what is seen in Adam in Genesis 2: 18. We also know that God said there; “It is not good that Man should be alone”. He said that to Man whom He had set over all the things that He had made. Adam is a picture of Christ in this chapter. Christ is the great anointed Head over all that God has in mind. In this connection God says: “I will make him a helpmate”. This means the assembly must come to light, and that includes all of us. Do we have God’s impression of the assembly? She is not just a local matter as we referred to this afternoon but a great entity, that consists of all believers from all nationalities united through the work of God and formed according to Christ, and through one Spirit baptised into one body. God presents her to Christ as Man. Not only this, but Christ also loves her. It says, “Christ so loved the assembly, and has delivered himself up for it”, Eph 5: 25. He has focused His love on her, and nothing pleases Him more than that believers should, to a certain extent, be conscious of being united with Him. Think of this, what possibilities there are for God in this, that believers in the unity

of the Spirit are conscious of being brought to union with Christ to share His own place before the Father and move according to His own desires. We noticed this afternoon how jealously the Lord guards the answer to God, having the assembly consciously in His love and in His hand. She is aware that His place before the Father is her place. What possibilities are given to praise God. We could not possibly come closer than we are now, apart from making progress in this as we appropriate it the more. That is what the Spirit has got in hand. It is not only the great vessel, answering to the grace of Christ, but formed in features of Christ, a vessel which is about to come down out of heaven from God to manifest what God has revealed in Christ. When we contemplate these things, we see how wonderful God is, as He desires and as He has also planned and brought it about. And we ourselves have our part in this. The Spirit is able to give us understanding in this and to enable us to move on in a way pleasing to God. This is something that God has prepared for them that love God and it raises the question with each one of us, if we really belong to them that love God. If I am one that loves God, then I also will love what He loves, and hate what He hates. That is why the question is: Do we love God? A most deep question for us if we are among them. It says in Romans 8: 28: "that all things work together for good to those who love God". When we belong to them that love God, then all that God has accomplished is to our benefit. When we are marked by self-will as with Jonah, then it can happen that God must work against us. Jonah got a wonderful impression of the goodness of God, yet what a hopeless position finding himself in the belly of the fish! He felt there what man's self-will lead to. But when I love God, then all His ways are in my favour. His ways with me, His ways in the world, His ways with the nations, all work for good for them that love God. He is the great ruler in this world, and He loses no control over any matter, and all things without exception work for good for those that love God. Those who love God are now His interest.

In the scripture we read in John's gospel the Lord spoke of His Father's house. That corresponds with what we already have spoken of, although it leads on further than Christ and the assembly. His Father's house is the widest thought we can have. It includes the whole world of glory that God has in mind. It includes the heavenly

families and the earthly families. They are all named by the Father. That is why the Lord shows us the greatness of things before us. Then he says: "In my Father's house there are many abodes; were it not so, I had told you; for I go to prepare you a place". That is a most attractive statement, as He also says: "where I am ye also may be". The place, as I understand, is already prepared, because Christ has taken the place as Man in the presence of the Father. He is in the immediate presence of the Father, and He is the centre of love. The portion of the assembly is with Him in this position. We can see the dimensions which the Father has in mind, as He once said to Abraham, he should look to the east, west, north and south. But our position is in the centre of all this, it is in Christ. This place is already prepared. These thoughts will turn us away from all that is around us down here. It says, "the world is passing and its lust" (1 John 2: 17), but the things that Christ has prepared and God has prepared remain. These things are unseen for the moment, yet most real. They are in the hands of the Spirit to make us more acquainted with them. The question is, therefore, how much room we give to the Spirit. We can be assured of God's pleasure when He sees the saints having an interest in these things that are before Him.

May the Lord help us to go in for these things more for His Name's sake.

FOOD

Address 7th June 1954

Deuteronomy 8: 16

John 6: 48-69

I would like to speak about Christ, first as He is presented as a type in the manna and then as the living bread come down from heaven. He must be appreciated as the manna as well as the living bread. The thought of being nourished by Christ involves that we are occupied with Himself in the different light in which He is presented. When our mind is engaged with Him it sets our affection in movement, because He secures a place in our heart. In this way we are formed by what we feed upon. There are two great things God has in mind: first Christ must have a place in our hearts, and then we must be formed in measure in our appreciation of Him. The manna presents Christ in type as One that has come near to us in our common human circumstances through grace, to become food for the saints in these circumstances. Each one of us knows well what it is to live in these ordinary circumstances, and we know from time to time how testing this is. They are ordered by God that we should find Christ as our food, which we need in these circumstances to maintain all for God's will. It is a great matter that believers are left down here for the will of God, whatever might take place. Satan has brought in the thought of independence from God's will, and by nature each of us would be opposed to the will of God. Christ has washed us from our sins through His blood, so that we are no longer marked by what we were marked by before. What is before us now is to be redeemed, in view of being here for the will of God. God works in order that this should be attractive to us, in presenting Christ to us in circumstances like our own. That is why He is presented in Luke as a little child, and then at the age of twelve, and then reaching the age of about thirty. The whole time He spent in Nazareth, apart from the time we read about in Matthew's gospel. As He escaped the persecution of Herod, He was brought down to Egypt and then brought out again in order that the scripture should be fulfilled: "out of Egypt I called my son", Hos 11: 1. Before this He was born in Bethlehem, and as He came back from Egypt, He was brought to Nazareth, where we read that He grew up.

In this way we understand He was in normal conditions for thirty years, sin apart, conditions in which we ourselves are found. He lived together with those who in God's ordering were His parents. He was known as the son of the carpenter, and probably He had Himself worked as a carpenter, because He is referred to in Mark's gospel as the carpenter, chap 6: 3. In these outward circumstances there was nothing attractive, as His parents were obviously poor, and His work was not desired by people with ambition. But in these conditions, He rendered pleasure to God day by day. So at the time when He was baptised by John, the Father's voice from heaven was heard: "This is my beloved Son in whom I have found my delight".

The Psalms and other scriptures give great detail of these thirty years. For example, in Psalm 22: 10 we read, "I was cast upon thee from the womb; thou art my God from my mother's belly". We read in Psalm 16 that He spoke in His heart: "Preserve me, O God; for I trust in thee". This took place in order that this great feature of dependence on God which came out in the beginning of His life down here should be a pattern for us. I need not say that He is in His Person God, "over all, God blessed for ever" (Rom 9: 5); He came out of eternity as we read in Micah 5: 2. But I speak now of how He became Man, and He began His life in manhood as a little child, and in this way as the prophet of Isaiah says, "he shall grow up ... as a tender sapling, and as a root out of dry ground", chap 53: 2. The ground around Him was dry, He could not derive anything from it. But nonetheless He was a root, which means fruit should come out such as takes character from Him. In this way He is presented as the manna that we see with the children of Israel when God brought them out of Egypt. They were in a wilderness, in surroundings that did not suit their life. That is the position of the believer in this world. There is nothing here in the world that awakens us spiritually.

God took up the question how the children of Israel would be fed. God said He would give them food from heaven. It would be found on the surface of the ground in the wilderness. They had to gather it fresh every day. God never gave them more than what was needed for one day, apart from the sixth day of the week, when He gave them enough for two days, in order to maintain the sabbath.

Through this God brought in the principle of “from day to day”; that was a principle that the people should live by. Thus the manna presents the word of God; it had to be gathered daily. The Lord Himself as Man moved according to this principle. In the prophet of Isaiah, it says prophetically of Him: “morning by morning, he wakeneth mine ear”, chap 50: 4. The manna was given as the Lord Himself said: “Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word which goes out through God’s mouth”, Matt 4: 4. This principle of daily dependence on God has a great moral impact in the eyes of God. It is man’s glory to be dependent on God. It is really a shame when you are independent from God. The influence of Satan leads to this, that you are independent from God. But the intention of God is that man should be dependent on Him, that we would find in Him all we need. By nature, we want to have great resources at our disposal. But it is greater to know God as the great visible source of help. As the children of Israel murmured about the food, God said through Moses that they would see in the evening as He brought them out of Egypt. But in the morning they would see the glory of God. What God did in the evening was that He prepared a multitude of quails. This shows there was nothing that was not in His own power to accomplish. It was not His intention that they should feed on quails; later on He gave them quails in answer to their lust. But it was not pleasing to Him that they asked for it. But in the beginning He granted this experience, that there were no limitations in connection with what He could accomplish in His power. This was not really the glory of God which He had in mind that the people should learn to know. “In the morning, then ye shall see the glory of Jehovah”, Exod 16: 7. And in the morning, what they saw was something fine, granular, on the surface of the wilderness. Then they asked, what is it? The meaning of manna is, “what is it?” It was something completely new that was not known before. We have thought of God becoming Man and He did become Man. He lived here by principles which were fully pleasing to Him. It was on the principle of obedience, dependence, submission under the will of God, lowliness of mind, as He lived by every word that came out of the mouth of God. These were the principles by which Jesus lived. He glorified God and made His heart rejoice. As we value Christ in this light, then we learn to move on in our

circumstances in this light. That is the only way to spiritual substance, the way on which we never will be overcome. That is why it says in Deuteronomy 8: 16: “who fed thee in the wilderness with manna, which thy fathers knew not, that he might humble thee, and that he might prove thee”. We are humbled when we see how independent we are. We are humbled when we see how much we strive against the will of God. Everything we find in ourselves humbles us. That is why the answer is in Christ. In all these exercises God intends that we should turn to Christ in our hearts and feed on Him and learn from Him. With this comes a double result. Firstly we are indeed maintained in the wilderness. A believer that feeds on Christ goes through life down here and is not overcome. But he is not only maintained in life down here, but it says also, “to do thee good at thy latter end”. As we feed on the manna, this not only results in being maintained, but also works that in our inwards something definite is developed: “to do thee good at thy latter end”. That is the elimination of “myself” and the formation of Christ in us. That is according to God, to do thee good. In this light we can fill out our usual daily life, pleasing to God when we serve Him and accepting His will in all things in the spirit of obedience and in dependence on God, and trusting in Him, which glorifies Him.

The bread from heaven in John 6 is another kind of food. In verse 49 the Lord says: “Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness and died. This is the bread which comes down out of heaven, that one may eat of it and not die”. That is why the bread coming down from heaven is in contrast to the manna. It is a kind of food that is meant to build us up in the enjoyment of eternal life according to the mind of God. It is not only the thought that we will enjoy blessedness in the day to come, it involves rather that we can enjoy life that will never more be touched by death. Our ordinary circumstances here, if it be our family or in our business or in any other circumstances, are all under the shadow of death and death brings all to an end. Our life is a precious education but the circumstances in themselves end in death. And yet God has in mind that we should have part in a life which is never touched by death. That life consists of certain interests and relationships, and God intends us to be in the enjoyment of these things now. But they are really linked with Christ beyond death,

although known by the saints already in the power of the Spirit. In John 6 the Lord presents Himself as the living bread that has come down out of heaven. We all know in our natural life, if we are to survive, we must eat. Likewise, it is also so with the spiritual things. If we are to survive in spiritual things, we must feed on food that is given to us. That is a reason why certain believers do not prosper in a spiritual way, as they have not laid hold of the food to appropriate it, food that is within their range. But the food is Christ, the One who has truly come down from heaven, in view of dying and then as Man again returning to heaven, to establish in Himself a new order of life, of interests and of relationships in which we now can find our part through the Holy Spirit. And so the Lord presents Himself first of all as the living bread to underline that He Himself is the food for our souls. When it comes to the point of how we can make this food our own, then He changes the picture. He says then that we must eat His flesh and drink His blood, make His death our own. And we are not believers at all if we did not make the death of Christ our own. It is on account of this our sins are taken away; it is thus that the love of God and the love of Christ are brought to us. We have no life in ourselves if we have not made the death of Christ our own. But when we have made the death of Christ our own and life is in us, then the question arises how this life can be maintained in us. It comes back to eating His flesh and drinking His blood as we read in verse 54: "He that eats my flesh and drinks my blood has life eternal". That is a characteristic thought. Do we appropriate this food characteristically day by day? Why did Christ die? It was not only to take our sins away, but rather to remove us in His death before God judicially and to remove the state of flesh and blood that we are in naturally, and in rising as Man from among the dead He manifested a new order of life for man. It is a spiritual kind of life in which we have been given part by the Holy Spirit. The Lord has left this world behind; He is not engaged in making the world better. He has left it behind as being judged as He says: "Now is the judgment of this world ... and I, if I be lifted up ... will draw all to me", John 12: 31, 32. Thus He who was removed and crucified by the world becomes the point of attraction. In the light of this we need to make a judgment of the world for ourselves. But we can apprehend Christ as the beginning of

a new world. It says in Colossians 1: 18: “*he* ... is the beginning, firstborn from among the dead”. Then you see all that God has brought in, in Christ risen. It is connected with the world He has introduced into which we have been called by God through the gospel. The question is now in which world do we find our life? Are we held back through earthly matters or do we find ourselves in spiritual matters? We rejoice in the fellowship we have with one another. With the saints of God spiritual things are known and enjoyed. It is a great thing when we devote ourselves to these things, as they are things that remain. The way to this is to eat His flesh and drink His blood. Then He says further on: “He that eats my flesh and drinks my blood dwells in me”. It means you will be drawn to Him in your heart. Just contemplate how much we owe to the Lord. How could there be another way out given to us from the life we normally live, apart from the death and resurrection of Christ? Our affections must be constantly nourished by Him. The result is that we are closely linked with Christ in our affections. That is why it says: “He that eats my flesh and drinks my blood dwells in me and I in him”. Thus, Christ becomes a necessity for us, and we also become indispensable for Christ. I believe this chapter shows us the way of our personal development in these mutual conditions between Christ and ourselves that are peculiar to the assembly. He loved the assembly and gave Himself for her, and the assembly will always be with Him. But here we have individual development of features in the consciousness of the love of Christ for us, and being conscious of what we are for Him.

This brings us in full measure to what the assembly properly is. He says further on: “As the living Father has sent me and I live on account of the Father, *he* also who eats me shall live also on account of me”. He lived in connection with His Father. His Father was not down here on earth. His Father remains in His own glorious environment outside of the present world. The Lord lived in relationship with His Father. Then He says: “*he* also who eats me shall live also on account of me”. There were those saying: “This word is hard”. But the Lord says: “Does this offend you? If then ye see the Son of man ascending up where he was before?” We must respect the movements of Christ. He speaks of Himself as the Son of man. That is the One who came down to manifest and bring into

expression all that God had in mind for man. The mind of God is that He has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenlies. Our blessings are spiritual, and their place is in the heavenlies, and that is in Christ. Our blessings are linked with Christ, that is why He says: "If then ye see the Son of man ascending up where he was before". He came down from heaven and died and ascended again, where He was before. We must contemplate this in our thoughts, and we must reach out for this and lay hold of what this means to us. Maybe we say, how do we do this? The answer is the Spirit. "It is the Spirit which quickens, the flesh profits nothing", v 63. Our natural mind will never lay hold of these things, but the Spirit will teach us the meaning of them, as long as we are minded to be taught. The Lord says: "the words which I have spoken unto you are spirit and are life". That is why the words of Christ must be nourished in our thoughts and also get a place in our hearts. When we come to this and also ask the Spirit for help, then we will understand the importance of its bearing. The main thought is that we find our life in the things that are above, where Christ is. All our blessings are connected with Christ. It says in Colossians 3: 4, "When the Christ is manifested who is our life, then shall ye also be manifested with him in glory".

From that time many of his disciples went away and walked no more with Him. He says now to the twelve: "Will ye also go away?" v 67. Peter answers: "Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast words of life eternal". You can understand how much the Lord would have spoken to the twelve about this. The Lord did not want them to be occupied with matters in Jerusalem. He did not want them to be occupied with the daily conversation. He did not want them to be occupied with the general things in this world. The words they heard from Jesus were words of life eternal. The Lord would have said: My Father has His own world. It lies on the other side of death and we are invited to have part in it. And the Spirit, the Comforter who will come to you, will give you full current understanding of these things. To a certain extent Peter understood this. He says: "thou hast words of life eternal, and *we* have believed and known that *thou* art the holy one of God". He appreciated Christ so much that he understood He was the embodiment of all that God desired to have in man. All that are drawn to Christ must be brought into accordance with Him. The

present time forms us morally like Christ, and when the Lord comes, we will be transformed to His image. It is a matter of power and it only requires a twinkling of an eye. But to become morally conformed to Christ is a process which the Holy Spirit is engaged with in the present time. The approach and way in which He reaches His object with us is to present Christ as food to us in these different characters of light we have seen. The passages we have considered present two of these aspects. They are most important that we should understand them.

May the Lord bless the word to us.

MEETINGS IN WERMELSKIRCHEN

17th-19th JUNE 1955

(FRIDAY TO LORD'S DAY)

THE TRIUNE NAME OF GOD

Reading 1—Friday morning

Matthew 28: 16-20

Revelation 21: 22-23; 22: 1-5

A.J.G. I believe it is good to see that, as soon as the Lord rose from among the dead, He brought in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, as He taught His disciples. I thought we could on this occasion have the thought of the name "God" before us, as He is made known in this triune Name, and see how this brings out God being all in all. He should be everything for the believer, as He will be all in all in eternity. So we see this in what we read in Revelation, viewing the throne in the city; it means that God has the first place in the city, but known in Christ; because the Lamb is the lamp in which we can see the glory. Then we have the river that speaks of the Spirit. He gives the whole position its character. So, the final thought is that God should be known in His full Name in which He has been made known, and as known in this way He becomes a blessing for the believer. I wondered if we could, in the following readings, take up the thought how we arrive at the knowledge of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. We could start this morning with how God is known in this glorious Name. It is most significant that the Lord introduces it straight after He rose from among the dead. We see the same thing in John 20: 17 in the message He gave to Mary of Magdala, straight after He rose from among the dead and said: "but go to my brethren and say to them, I ascend to my Father and your Father", and as an additional thought: "and to my God and your God".

What is especially remarkable in Matthew's gospel is that the truth comes out in the face of great opposition. In chapter 16, the Lord speaks of it that the gates of hades shall not prevail against the assembly. This shows clearly that conflicts will be there and yet the

truth will be victorious. In these three last chapters of Matthew, we see the gates of hades, and we see from chapter 26: 4 that the chief priests and elders took counsel together in order that they might seize Jesus by subtlety and kill Him. Then it says in chapter 27: 1: “all the chief priests and the elders of the people took counsel against Jesus so that they might put him to death”, and in chapter 28: 12, “And having assembled with the elders, and having taken counsel” to put a lie into circulation. That is what we see in these three chapters, the wicked taking counsel with one another against the truth. In spite of this the Lord says to His disciples: “All power has been given me in heaven and upon earth. Go therefore”, He says, “and make disciples of all the nations, baptising them to the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit”. In spite of opposing evil counsel, the disciples were to go forward and announce the full name of God, making disciples and baptising them in this Name.

A.W. Do you think that something of the gates of hades was seen when the chief priests and elders were gathered?

A.J.G. The gates of hades are, as I understand it, places where counsel is made, where the enemy plans opposition against the truth. In every current opposition, even in the present time, we must hold on to the fact that the enemy is behind it, planning to resist the truth. They even found in Judas one that could help them. Judas sets out the principle of traitorship. Outwardly he was one of the disciples, but he also had a link with those that opposed Jesus. He brings in the principle of traitorship. We must be carefully on our guard that we do not maintain any links or communion or activities that deny the truth, because that is something the enemy can use to weaken the position.

H.H. Does verse 2 of Psalm 2 fit in with what we are saying here: “The kings of the earth set themselves, and the princes plot together, against Jehovah and against his anointed: Let us break their bonds asunder, and cast away their cords from us!”?

A.J.G. Yes, they take counsel with one another. It is most important to realise that the enemy always counsels against the truth. That is why we must always be alert in our thoughts to be faithful to the truth before everything else.

H.L. Is it the purpose of the enemy's great opposition that the answer to His revelation in praise to God should be silenced?

A.J.G. Yes, that is the final great object. The Lord holds believers in His hand that have been washed from their sins in His blood, and whom He has made a kingdom. This means that we are under His support and protection; and are priests to His God and Father. That is the first thing He had in mind, when He redeemed us, to be serving God as priests.

The service of God must be in accordance with His Name. The Name is the light in which He has made Himself known, and the answer to God must be in accordance with this light.

L.M. "According to thy name, O God, so is thy praise unto the ends of the earth". Ps 48: 10.

A.J.G. It is a most important principle, that the answer that we give to God in praise must be in accordance with His Name. It is most interesting that we have in Malachi constant references to the Name of God in the last days, and we find such as thought upon His Name. God constantly thinks of them that fear His Name and seek Him.

B.M. Does Galilee in verse 16 have a meaning?

A.J.G. Galilee was a place of reproach. In John 7: 52 it says for example: "They answered and said to him, Art thou also of Galilee? Search and look, that no prophet arises out of Galilee". So Galilee was despised, and the Lord emphasised in Matthew that they had to go to the area of reproach. They would see Him there. If we are not prepared to take on reproach, then we will not have a sense of the Lord's presence and support. Taking on the truth brings reproach along with it. In taking it on we will find the Lord and His support.

H.L. Is it therefore the "eleven disciples" referred to and not "apostles"?

A.J.G. Disciples are such as learn from Christ, and as following Him they are disciplined. It says: "Some doubted". Some hesitated but nevertheless the Lord went on. He went on with those that were available.

R.Z. Can we say that the resurrection of Christ has broken the power of the enemy?

A.J.G. Yes, we can say that. In the beginning of chapter 28 we could say that man's power was ridiculed. The angel simply rolled away the stone and sat himself on it. In Psalm 2: 4 it says similarly, "He that dwelleth in the heavens shall laugh, the Lord shall have them in derision". We should go on with this power in our souls.

A.G. The apostle Paul says: "But the Lord stood with me", 2 Tim 4: 17. Even today, faithful ones can experience this that the Lord stands by us.

A.J.G. That is how the section in Matthew 28 ends: "And behold, I am with you all the days, until the completion of the age".

D.H. Each day that comes, the Lord is by us. Whatsoever the day brings, in tests and opposition, the Lord is by us.

H.H. Is it not of interest, as God sent out Moses, that Moses immediately asked about God's name?, because God had said: "ye shall serve me on this mountain"? The service of God shows that the Name is important.

A.J.G. That is most interesting. The answer to this is: "I AM THAT I AM". And before that God had said He was "the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, the God of Jacob", this means God made Himself known in a threefold way. The patriarchs present a threefold glory that is linked with the name of God.

A.W. Do you think that they correspond with the name "Father, Son and Holy Spirit"?

A.J.G. Yes, Abraham gives the thought of the Father, Isaac gives the thought of the Son, the beloved Son, and Jacob sets out in a special way the fruit and the work of the Spirit, so at the end of his life he is a great worshipper and a great blessing. He worships God, and comes forth like God. And that is really indeed how the assembly works, the great vessel of worship to God, and also the great expression of God in blessing to man, when she comes out of heaven from God having the glory of God.

G.S. Is it necessary to do homage, as the disciples did here, so that the Lord could speak to them?

A.J.G. Yes, that is most definitely so, the Lord should be held in reverent love. But it is remarkable how the Lord assured them: “All power has been given me in heaven and upon earth. Go therefore...”. In the light of this we must go on in the truth—“make disciples of all the nations, baptising them to the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit”.

L.B. Do we need an especially important impression of this as it was what the Lord said to His disciples straight after His resurrection?

A.J.G. That is exactly what I feel about Matthew 28 and John 20, that the Lord, as soon He rose from the dead, He announced the wonderful message to Mary of Magdala, and on the other hand He gave this command to His disciples. We begin to enter into the fulness of these announcements right away. But it was in the Lord’s mind straight away as soon He rose from among the dead.

A.W. As He was heard from the horns of the buffaloes in the resurrection, He brings the name of God to light and praises God in singing in the midst of the assembly.

E.B. The disciples went to the place the Lord had appointed them, and it says further: “And Jesus coming up spoke to them”. What would you say about that?

B.S. That was life out of death, the triumph, life out of death on the principle of faith.

A.J.G. Yes, it was the proof of victory over death. The Lord said, Satan can kill the body, but he cannot go any further. So death is the limit of the enemy’s power. The resurrection from the dead involves the total victory over the enemy.

R.Z. We surely see that in Exodus 15, as the people of Israel stood on the bank of the river, and God brought forth a song of triumph.

A.J.G. Yes, they did. They also brought in wonderful names of God in the song. They bring in the name “Jah”; it does not only say “Jehovah” which is His name involving relationship, but rather “Jah”

a name involving His great majesty, then also the name “El” is brought in that speaks of His actual being. It is entirely right that God’s final thought is that His majesty and glory should be worshiped in His people. The name of the Father is a blessed thought, and in the knowledge of the Father we are set in liberty before God. But morally it is right, that God Himself should be the object of His creatures’ praise.

A.T.E. Thus Exodus 15 and Matthew 28 go together. Baptism is to a certain extent seen in the Red Sea, which Israel went through, and then sang the song. It shows there we are not only baptised to the Name, but the Name should also in us lead to a song of praise.

A.J.G. Yes, the name should be before us, we should be contemplating it and start going into its fulness. I believe this name is always used in connection with baptism. Most of us were baptised as children and this name was expressed over us as we were baptised. But we must understand something of the greatness and fulness of what it means.

H.L. The Lord speaks here of teaching. Do you think it is necessary to understand the fulness and greatness of the Name?

A.J.G. Yes, it says here: “teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have enjoined you”. Besides the glory of the name we should be obedient and subject. In Malachi, the name is constantly referred to on the one hand, but also it always says that we should fear God, in view of being held under the fear of God all the time.

H.L. What I had in mind was that we cannot be without the teaching. Some say that Scripture is enough.

A.J.G. The Lord never thought that, that the Scripture as such should be enough for us, as He has given us teachers. He has given us shepherds and teachers for the perfecting of the saints. No teaching of course can go against Scripture, and no teaching the Spirit gives ever goes against scripture. But the teaching is necessary, in order that the truth should be presented in a right way.

B.S. Can we say that God has been manifested in flesh?

A.J.G. God is manifested in flesh in Jesus. What have you in mind?

B.S. I thought that the flesh had come to an end, and each one baptised on the ground of the resurrection.

A.J.G. God manifested in flesh involves that God has come out in a Man; this means in Jesus, but it is also perfectly true that everything we are according to man in the flesh is brought to its end in His death.

H.M. Does verse 19 bring out the love and grace of God: “Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations”?

A.J.G. Yes that is right, God must have an answer that is worthy of Him. That is why it says that many are brought out of all the nations.

L.L. Could we say, when we have learnt the bearing of the names, Father, Son and Holy Spirit; we have then learnt what God is in His being?

A.J.G. We cannot really understand God in His actual being. He dwells in light unapproachable, whom no one has seen or can see. But He has been manifested in a Man. When we come to the scriptures we have read in Revelation, we will always find the reference to “the Lord God” and “the Lamb”. God is there, but He is known in Christ, in the Lamb, and He is not known in any other way but in Christ. So it says in verse 22: “the Lord God Almighty is its temple” and then also in chapter 22: 5 “the Lord God shall shine upon them”. The Lord God means “Jehovah Elohim”; that means God in His gracious connections with man, but He remains God.

W.R. Is it not most encouraging to see that the Lord Jesus comes forward as the One that was given all power in heaven and earth before He gives the commission to His disciples?

A.J.G. Yes, that is most encouraging. It shows God brings everything through to the end in what He intends to do. He has given all power into the hands of the Lord Jesus with the purpose of fulfilling what was necessary to accomplish, that we might be real disciples.

F.Schm. It is good to see that we cannot do anything in our own power, but only in His power.

A.J.G. Yes, He says: “I am with you all the days, until the completion of the age”. At the present time the Lord has completion in mind. This present age is marked by the full light of God. Thus, we should consciously answer to the name of God.

W.Sch. What does it mean that the Lord God is the temple?

A.J.G. It supports just what we have said. It is morally right that God in His supremacy and His majesty should be the climax of worship by His creatures. This does not take away the preciousness of the Father’s name. We are before God in liberty and rejoicing in the Father’s name. But it is also right that God should be first in the hearts of His creatures: “the Lord God Almighty is its temple, and the Lamb”. That means the whole city is filled with the preciousness of God. In the former Jerusalem you had to go into the temple in Jerusalem to approach God, but now there is no need for the temple in the city. The Lord God the Almighty is there Himself, “and the Lamb”, of whom it speaks later. This means the light of God shines in Christ, and this light fills the city.

G.S. Why is there no need for the sun or the moon? It says the glory of God has enlightened it.

A.J.G. It does not require any other light than the light of the glory of God. I think it is important to see that what the city will be in a day to come should be known in the assembly already now; as everything that is formed in the saints now will be fulfilled in the city in the day to come. That is why we need no natural light. We need no other light than the light of the knowledge of God in Christ, which has been made true in us through the Spirit.

K.Pf. “Do ye not know that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?”, 1 Cor 3: 16.

A.J.G. By the Spirit, God Himself dwells in us, and the Holy Spirit expands our hearts for the glory of God in Christ. It is important that God and the Lamb always go together in these scriptures. This means our thoughts are only about Christ, the Man that suffered, and in Him shines the light of God for us.

R.Z. That is why the great light that shone from heaven had such a power over Saul of Tarsus?

A.J.G. Yes, it shone in the face of a Man. He says: “the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ”, 2 Cor 4: 16. The human face is a wonderful piece of God’s creation, expressive in a wonderful way. So it says: “the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ”. A man stands before our hearts, in whom God has been made blessedly known.

H.H. Is it not touching that it is the Lamb here?

A.J.G. Yes, it is the One that has suffered.

A.G. Of Moses it is also said that his countenance shone as he came down from Jehovah.

A.J.G. Yes, the skin of His face shone.

Fr.M. So does the remembrance of the death of the Lord Jesus go into eternity?

A.J.G. Not the remembrance as we have now, because the important point with remembrance now is that He is absent. In eternity we have the Lord Himself close to us. It says: “The Lord God Almighty is its temple, and the Lamb”. This means that God and the Lamb are there, and fill the whole scene.

O.H. “We will come to him and make our abode with him”, John 14: 23.

A.J.G. Yes, that is right.

W.Sch. The starting point is what we have in Matthew 28: He appointed Galilee.

A.J.G. Yes, that is the beginning.

L.Bi. Could you say why the city is linked with this.

A.J.G. The city is the assembly in its glory in the millennium. She is the great result of the work of God. I believe the city presents the glory of the work of God. It says that Abraham looked for a city whose artificer and builder was God. That is why I think the city is a view of the assembly as she presents the glory of what God has

wrought in the saints. But when we come to what is eternal it says: “the tabernacle of God is with men, and he shall tabernacle with them”. That is not so much the thought of the glory of what God has wrought, but rather God with men in nearness, in tabernacle conditions, in great simplicity and accessibility.

O.H. God’s masterpiece.

A.J.G. Yes, that is right. The assembly is the masterpiece of God, and she will be displayed in this way. But what she is marked by is that there is no temple there. The temple embraces partly the thought of distance. If you were living in a suburb of Jerusalem, you had to go up to the temple to go into the presence of God. But it says here: “And I saw no temple in it; for the Lord God Almighty is its temple, and the Lamb”. This means God and the Lamb fill the whole position.

W.Sch. Did Zacharias have this in mind when he said, we should serve God without fear, Luke 1: 74.

A.J.G. Yes, serve God without fear.

R.B. In Revelation 22, the throne of God and the Lamb is referred to, is that the centre?

A.J.G. Yes it says: “the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it”. It means that God has supremacy, it is always God and the Lamb, God known in Christ. Christ has of course His own part in Deity, and yet God is known to us in Christ, in a Man.

H.R. Should we see this?

A.J.G. We must see this. We could never know God outside of Christ. He is the Mediator of God and men. The fact that He is the Mediator of God and men makes it necessary that He is God, as no one else than who in Himself is God could be the Mediator of God and men. The mediator must be able to put his hands on both of them, on God and men, Job 9: 33.

H.M. Does that not indicate the thought that God will be all in all?

A.J.G. That is the final thought. God will be all and in all. That is why it says: “the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it”. Earlier it says: “the Lord God Almighty is its temple, and the Lamb”. Then

further on: “for the glory of God has enlightened it, and the lamp thereof is the Lamb”. Then the river comes out from the throne of God and the Lamb; it means the Spirit is there to spread the glory of God over the whole scene.

R.Z. Do we have a similar thought of this in Ezekiel 43: 5 where it says, “And the spirit lifted me up, and brought me into the inner court; and behold, the glory of Jehovah filled the house”?

A.J.G. Yes, then we have the river in Ezekiel 47 that issued out. Then it was shown to Ezekiel, and the waters were to the ankles. As he moves further on the waters were to the knees, and then to his loins, and waters to swim in, a river that could not be passed through. It shows throughout that there was an increasing abundance available. The knowledge of God always becomes greater as we move on. But, as Ezekiel came to this point when it became a river in which he had to swim, then the question came up, am I able at all to swim across. We must reach this point: can we swim? That means, if we really have learnt to know the power of the Spirit, that can move us along in these things. There is no limitation in the Spirit.

B.M. Can we say this of Stephen?

A.J.G. He was most definitely supported by the Spirit in that moment. I believe when we start touching the preciousness of the knowledge of God, we will find out that we are very much dependent on the Spirit’s power, which must support us in it. We must come to this; we must learn how to swim.

H.L. We must be in the deep area to be able to swim.

A.J.G. We must be released from all natural support. But we cannot go out of our depth in any other way. We cannot get into a state where we are not controlled or supported by the Spirit. That is why we have in Ephesians 3, the breadth and length and depth and height, and to know the love of Christ. We are assured of being supported in the love of Christ.

A.W. It surpasses all knowledge.

A.J.G. Yes.

T.A. It says of Stephen that he was “full of the Holy Spirit, having fixed his eyes on heaven, he saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God”, Acts 7: 55.

A.J.G. That is wonderful. He saw the heavens open. He had a wonderful view of what there was in heaven. It says, “he saw the glory of God”. Who could limit or define it? He also saw Jesus, and all the glory of God shining in the face of Jesus.

W.W. Why is the river in Ezekiel called a double river?

A.J.G. I do not know. I believe it should impress us of the fulness in the Spirit.

H.H. Water bright as crystal brings us in a realm of light, and joy and liberty. Where there is life and not the slightest touch of death, or anything that distracts us from Christ.

A.J.G. It is most important to realise this principle in the city, it is crystal, transparent as glass. At present there are many different exercises in many places going on, and among other things I can well see that the Lord insists on transparency among the saints and that we should keep out of any feature of darkness. The reason for this is that God is light and in Him there is no darkness at all. We must be in accordance with this. When the holy city comes down out of heaven from God, then she is like a precious stone, as a crystal-like jasper stone. This river of life is bright as crystal. It shows how attractive the light of God is, which will be given to us by the Spirit.

L.Bi. The river excludes independence. It is necessary to be in the river, to reach God in the present time.

A.J.G. Yes, a river is unlimited, it flows between two banks. It does not overflow the bank in an uncontrollable way, apart from when it is in flood. The thought of a river is that it is a constant flow, but still controlled. The service that the Spirit gives has this character. He is ready for the need of the saints at any time, and yet the river of God is full of water, it cannot be exhausted.

H.M. He always brings us something fresh and new.

A.J.G. Yes, that is why it is important what our brother said, to be in the river, what is given us by the Spirit at the present time.

G.S. Could you say something about the river in Revelation coming out of the throne, and in Ezekiel it comes out from under the threshold of the house.

A.J.G. The throne of God here emphasises the supremacy of God, and when His supremacy and His rights are completely and fully recognised then there will be no hindrance for the Spirit's service.

B.M. We could well say everything is green, there is no drought.

A.J.G. Yes, then it says in verse 3: "and his servants shall serve him, and they shall see his face; and his name is on their foreheads". Here we come back to the names. The fact that it is on their forehead shows that they are intelligent in relation to the name of God. The name is not only in their hearts, but it can also be seen, that they have a knowledge of the name of God. In this way it shows how they can provide an answer to God.

L.Bi. Would this be the impact of thinking of His name?

A.J.G. Yes, that is so.

R.D. Do we have this name in Philadelphia?

A.J.G. That is most significant. The overcomer in Philadelphia has got the name Christ's God on his forehead.

A.Gr. Do we have this thought in Psalm 46: 4?

A.J.G. Yes, there is a river... "There is a river the streams whereof make glad the city of God, the sanctuary of the habitations of the most high". This shows the important place the Spirit has got. The stream shows there are no limitations, and His presence gladdens the city of God. That is why it is most important to come to this, acknowledging the Spirit. The fact that He has abidingly taken His place in us, to fill us joyfully with the knowledge of God, should in itself be an encouragement to us to worship Him, as He is God in Himself, that has taken this position.

A.L. Is it important here that it is His bondmen that serve Him?

A.J.G. The service here is a priestly service, it is a service that has in mind to present an answer to God.

A.T.E. This is the normal answer to us being baptised to His Name according to Matthew 28.

A.J.G. Yes, that is so. It is a feature that marks the city, that God is served according to this Name.

L.Bi. We speak of knowing the Spirit better. Is that why the river is shown: “He showed me a river of living water”?

A.J.G. I believe it is necessary that things must be shown to us, and for us to consider the different ways the Spirit serves us. He has a personal interest in each believer. He takes His abode in such mortal bodies as our own, and never leaves us. Even when we lose our ability to talk or walk, the Holy Spirit does not leave us. It is most touching that He has taken up His abode in every believer, and also whatever befalls our mortal and weak bodies the Spirit never leaves us. When we ponder this more and more and what is shown to us, I am certain that this will bring forth more worship to the Spirit.

K.Pf. It brings us from strength to strength (Ps 84: 7) and from glory to glory.

L.L. Can we say, when we have this confidence in the Spirit, that we can search all things like the Bereans did?

A.J.G. Yes, even the children have the unction from the holy one and know all things, 1 John 2.

H.H. “They shall see his face”. What does that mean?

A.J.G. It speaks definitely of great closeness. We will be very near to the Lord. Just think of it that we will be united with Christ for all eternity. We will be very near to Him and held in love.

R.Z. When we are close to God, we will move in this light.

A.J.G. Yes.

Reading 2—Friday afternoon

John 1: 14-18, 32-39

Acts 2: 32-33

Psalm 68: 18

A.J.G. We were considering the name of God this morning, the Name includes the three Persons of the Godhead, but in certain relationships with each other. We know that in their being the three Persons in Deity stand on the same ground. If one were to be inferior to the other two, then He would cease to be God. That is why it is very important that we hold to it firmly that, in their being, the three Persons in the Deity are the same. In order to be known to man, the three Persons in the Godhead have taken certain relative positions, as the Father, as the Son, and as the Holy Spirit. And in these positions the Father is the highest, so the Lord says: “My Father is greater than I”. He also says: “My Father who has given them to me is greater than all”, John 10: 29. Whilst the Son and the Spirit can be apprehended by us in certain positions of service, yet this emphasises their moral glory and brings out too that God is love.

I wondered if we could consider in this reading how the three Persons in the Godhead are seen, while holding firmly that it was always the thought of God to have man before Him. It says in Proverbs 8: 31, “my delights were with the sons of men”. What we call the Economy is the mutual agreement that the three Persons of the Godhead have with one another, in which they are known as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. They had in mind to bring man to the knowledge of God, to bring man to God for God’s pleasure, with the effect and result that God can dwell amongst men. The incarnation was necessary for all this. You can say that everything was dependent on the incarnation. As we read: “the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us”; that means one Person of the Godhead took up a human condition, and in this condition He moved amongst men, so that man should have a right impression of God imparted to him. Evidently, the incarnation is a glory that belongs only to the Son; that means that the Father did not become man, nor did the Holy Spirit become man. But the Person of the Godhead that we now know as Son, became Man, and He dwelt amongst men, in order that He could be contemplated. And what was contemplated was the glory of an only-

begotten with a father; this means a relationship of affection existed, which is brought near to man. God was presented in this light. Then it says: “No one has seen God at any time; the only-begotten Son (which is an expression of intimate love), who is in the bosom of the Father, *he* hath declared him”. God is made known in this remarkable and attractive light.

A.W. Would you say it was love from God that one divine Person should become man, that we could be in relationship with God at all? If we had come into relationship with God as such, then we would have died immediately.

A.J.G. Yes, that is the way which love being the divine nature has taken that He has come into these human conditions.

R.Z. Can we say John’s gospel is based upon the activities of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit?

A.J.G. Yes, I believe that is the case. Maybe we will reach that to speak about it in a later reading in John 14, where the Persons of the Father and the Son and the Spirit illustrate that in a wonderful way.

Ch.H. What do you think about the Spirit abiding on Christ?

A.J.G. We find that that the Spirit comes to light in this chapter. The Spirit descended here as a dove and abode upon Jesus. There was now a man available in the Person of the Lord Jesus in whom He could dwell and abide, but as the verse read in Psalm 68 shows, as the Spirit was given at Pentecost, it was the divine thought to dwell amongst men, even with rebellious men. We must of course be saved from our rebellion, yet it was in the mind of God to dwell amongst men: “even for the rebellious”, it says. That was met on the one hand through redemption and on the other side through the gift of the Spirit. Atonement was made for our sins, and we as sinners were removed in death. Then the Holy Spirit was given to us, which is life in Christ. In this way we receive part in the life of the heavenly man, and that is an order of man that can dwell with God. That is why you can see the importance of the incarnation of Christ, and then on the other side the descending of the Spirit, so that God should bring out the thought of

God dwelling with men. He also brings in Christ as man in relationship with Him in His presence.

L.M. Does this include “grace upon grace”?

A.J.G. I think when we apprehend this, when we mature in the knowledge of the truth, we will be impressed by what grace upon grace means. The incarnation is a wonderful expression of the grace of God. Redemption is an expression of the riches of His grace, and giving us a place in sonship before God in Christ is a wonderful expression of the glory of His grace. It is grace upon grace.

H.H. It is wonderful that it says here: “the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us”, according to the note ‘tabernacled with us’. God came so close to us in Christ.

A.J.G. Yes, God came very near to man in Jesus. Everyone could come close to Him. He attracted persons that were in need. There was a woman that said: If I only touch the hem of His garment, I shall be healed. She came and touched the hem of His garment. God came very close to man in this way. So the divine thought for eternity is that the tabernacle of God is with men. This is the same approachability as in the conditions we saw in Jesus when He was here as man.

A.G. It says, “grace and truth subsists through Jesus Christ”. We have all our blessings in Christ,

A.J.G. That is right. It is grace and truth. The truth is not given up, but grace abounds.

T.A. Do we find the thought of nearness in John 14: 23? “Jesus answered and said to him, If any one love me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our abode with him”.

A.J.G. Yes, surely that is so. We must consider that the Spirit is here. The Lord Jesus had just said that the Spirit was about to come, to be with us eternally. Then He said that, if anyone were to be in a suitable state and kept His word, the Father and the Son would come to him and dwell with him. In this way we have the whole Godhead

there. It shows that God in His fulness as He is now known can dwell with us in these conditions.

H.H. When David suggested building a house for Jehovah, God said that He had been from tent to tent, 1 Chron 17: 5. Does that bring out that God loves accessibility and nearness?

A.J.G. It shows how God loves securing the trust of man so that He can be near to man and dwell with him, even if David had in mind to build a great house, which Solomon built. We saw this morning that the mind of God is a city; and His glory is in it, what God can do comes into expression. But when we come to eternity, He chooses again tabernacle conditions, Rev 21: 3. The thought of a tabernacle is a tent. In a tent, there is no distance any more.

E.C. It says: "I will dwell in the midst of the children of Israel, and will be their God", Exod 29: 45.

A.J.G. Yes, that is the divine thought, that He desires to dwell with them. It is wonderful to contemplate that the Word became flesh and dwelt among men. We have this double thought in Christ as Man. On the one side He has declared God to man fully. On the other side everything that God desires in man, is in Christ for Him. Something wonderful was said about the Lord at the mount of transfiguration in Matthew 17: 2: "And his face shone as the sun, and his garments became white as the light". His face shone as the sun, meaning that the complete light of God radiated or shone out of Him. But then it says: "his garments became white as the light". This shows that everything was also in Him as Man, in answer to the light. It is a wonderful glory, that we can have an insight as to Christ as the Mediator. On the one hand God is presented towards man and on the other hand man is presented towards God.

R.Z. It is on account of this that Moses is referred to in verse 17: "For the law was given by Moses: grace and truth subsists through Jesus Christ".

A.J.G. Moses came to light in the ways of God in the Old Testament. He secured the rights of God in the law, but the proof was provided that the first man could not come up to it. This shows the necessity of

the second man, and that is Christ. That is, one of the Godhead became Man. I believe we will come to this more and more, that we will see that all things are of God, but we are included in this in Christ, as indwelt by the Spirit of God.

L.B. At the birth of Jesus, it says: “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good pleasure in men”, Luke 2: 14.

A.J.G. Yes, the pleasure of God was in men. On the one side God received glory, and on the other side there was also pleasure of God in men.

C.M.M. Would that be men in Christ?

A.J.G. Yes it shows how precious it is, that God’s wonderful thoughts in connection with men could not be realised without one from the Godhead becoming Man, and through the Holy Spirit we even have part in this Man. Of course, we will never have part in deity, but we take part in the life of a Man who in His Person is God Himself.

K.Pf. When the Christ dwells in our hearts by faith, then we will experience this.

A.J.G. Yes, when the Christ dwells in our hearts through faith, then the Spirit creates conditions.

P.Sch. Is that the thought in Colossians 2: 9: “For in him dwells all the fulness of the Godhead bodily; and ye are complete in him”?

A.J.G. Yes, that shows how wonderful the assembly is, and the assembly has a Head in whom all the fulness of the Godhead dwells bodily. That is why the assembly has the wonderful potential to give an answer to God in a fuller understanding and loving way. And there is also the wonderful possibility of bringing into expression God’s manifest fullness, because she is the body of Christ.

B.M. He is not ashamed to call them brethren.

A.J.G. No, we are of His order. “He that sanctifies and those sanctified are all of one”, Heb 2: 11.

K.H. How could the disciples be able to see the glory of the Lord Jesus before the Spirit came?

A.J.G. They did to a certain degree even before Pentecost. But it was certainly greatly enlarged when the Spirit came at Pentecost. We must also keep in mind that God worked in them, before the Spirit was given: only those whom God worked with could receive Christ.

L.M. Do we see the growth of Peter in his second epistle, in the way he appreciated the Lord after the Spirit had come?

A.J.G. Yes, when he was on the mountain of transfiguration with Jesus, he suggested that three tabernacles should be built, one for Jesus, one for Moses and one for Elias. He put the Lord first, which was right, but he also gave Moses and Elias a place too. When he writes his second epistle, he says nothing at all about Moses and Elias; he only says that they, the apostles, were with Christ on the holy mountain. They were so near to God, that they could hear the voice that said: "This is my beloved Son, in whom I have found my delight". Moses and Elias were on the mountain and spoke with Jesus, to bring into expression what the mind of God was for man. But after the voice had been heard, they saw no one but Jesus alone.

H.C.H. Would you say that while the fulness of God was in Christ, yet both the Father and the Holy Spirit were necessary to bring the saints into full blessing?

A.J.G. The thought of God is in the Father, as known in grace, and also includes that God desires to have man in relationship as sons. Then one of the Godhead became Man and took up the relationship of Son towards the Father, all in view of expressing what the divine thought was. Then we receive the Spirit through redemption, and it is given to us the life of the Spirit in Christ, we have the Spirit of the Son of God in our hearts. Thus the answer by the Spirit to God is suitable to God.

H.L. Why is the glory of the relationship referred to in verse 14?

A.J.G. It is lovely thinking about this. Glory in John's gospel involves the outshining of what is morally excellent.

R.Z. Paul says in the beginning of Hebrews that Christ is the effulgence of His glory and the expression of His substance. Is that the thought?

A.J.G. What is your thought about it?

R.Z. I thought that Paul was in touch with this glory.

A.J.G. That shows in a way how the Lord outshone everyone else. God speaks now in the Person of the Son, in One that is God in Himself in His Person and yet one who sets out the wonderful thought of sonship for man. Then we also have in this scripture the wonderful fact that the Spirit was seen. The Father was never seen, except as Christ represented Him. The Spirit is not seen now either, but at this moment He was seen. He came as a dove out of heaven. And at Pentecost He was seen as parted tongues of fire that came down. But He was seen here, as He came down on Jesus and abode upon Him, and the testimony of the Father is: "Upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending and abiding on him, he it is who baptises with the Holy Spirit". That has to do I believe with bringing in the thought of the assembly because it says in 1 Corinthians 12: 13: "For also in the power of one Spirit, we have all been baptised into one body". This means that the baptism of the Holy Spirit has to do with the building of the assembly to fulfil what has now come in in Christ as Man.

R.D. Do we not see here a great difference: He came here as a dove, but in Acts 2 as a violent impetuous blowing?

A.J.G. Yes, that is a difference in the way He came: "as a dove" shows how God was completely at rest. The Spirit came down in the form of a dove. A dove is a very tender creature, but He came down on Jesus and abode upon Him, showing that there was nothing at all that could disturb the pleasure of God in that Man. But when He came at Pentecost, He came as parted tongues of fire, as there is a lot in us that must be eliminated. It says: "our God is also a consuming fire". It is in the power of the fire that the testimony of God proceeds. It was a powerful wind in Acts 2: "And there came suddenly a sound out of heaven as of a violent impetuous blowing, and filled all the house where they were sitting". God came down in testimony in a most

powerful way. It was a testimony that continued in men, but in men where the flesh had been set aside through the activity of the fire.

H.H. But it does not say here that He abode upon them as it says in John 1 about the Lord.

A.J.G. I believe it shows that the incarnation was necessary to bring about an order of man according to the thoughts of God. Then we find this wonderful thought that God in His grace gives us life in Christ, and that is through the Holy Spirit. Then you can see the place the Son fulfils, and the place the Spirit fulfils, and the place the Father fills in His supremacy, love and affection. Everything is in perfect unity to complete the mind of God in love.

T.B. God's plan comes into expression: "Let us make man in our image", Gen 1: 26.

A.J.G. Yes, that is the case. And this really necessitated the incoming of Christ, as the first man was really a figure of Him that was to come.

R.Z. What the Lord says to Nicodemus is a sign of the Holy Spirit: "The wind blows where it will"?

A.J.G. Yes, that is a reference to the Spirit. It is remarkable how we have, even in the physical creation, what speaks of mysteries. You cannot explain the wind, it blows where it will, you cannot say where it goes or where it comes from. So whenever God makes us aware of the wind, He reminds us of the Spirit and of His sovereign activities.

We find further on, in verse 38, two disciples who were attracted by the words of John the baptist, leading them to follow Jesus. "But Jesus having turned, and seeing them following, says to them, What seek ye?" It is most encouraging to see how the Lord follows up every true exercise that comes to light.

W.Sch. Is not the question most important for us: what do we seek?

A.J.G. Yes, that is most important.

K.H. Can we link this with Colossians 1: 19, where it says: "for in him all the fulness of the Godhead was pleased to dwell"? This was

true of the Lord from the very beginning. At His baptism, the Spirit came down, and thus it could be announced.

A.J.G. It could not be seen before the Spirit was given. What is in your mind?

K.H. I thought the descent of the Holy Spirit in the form of a dove was a public testimony of it, that the fulness of the Godhead was always there in Him, and that was going to be announced.

A.J.G. Yes, and it was also a testimony because He Himself would baptise with the Holy Spirit. John the baptist says: "And I have seen and borne witness that this is the Son of God". The Son of God is He that comes in here to do things for God.

C.M.M. Why do the two disciples ask "Where abidest thou"?

A.J.G. They must have had a wonderful impression of the preciousness of the dwelling place of Christ, and they were encouraged to ask where He dwelt; and the Lord said: "Come and see". That shows that the place He had in the Father's love should be revealed to those who were drawn to Him.

H.H. They said to him, "Teacher". Do we need to be instructed as to where the precious dwelling place of Christ is?

A.J.G. Yes, and we must also be instructed in relation to the principle of contemplating. He does not instruct them any further, rather just saying: "Come and see". The Lord shows that the great principle is contemplation. The Spirit has been given to us so that we should be able to contemplate Christ. We will always learn the truth more when we contemplate Christ.

K.M. It says in the note [in the German Bible]: 'Come and ye will see'.

B.M. Why is there a reference to the tenth hour?

A.J.G. I think the tenth hour has to do with the end of human responsibility. The time of the law was up. The first man never fulfilled his responsibility, but his failures were taken away in the death of Christ; and what characterises Christianity now is that responsibility can now be fulfilled in the power of the Spirit.

L.M. Could you say a bit more about contemplation? Is it a collective or an individual thought?

A.J.G. It is both, personal and collective.

K.Pf. “But *we* all”, it says.

A.J.G. “But *we* all, looking on the glory of the Lord, with unveiled face, are transformed ...”, 2 Cor 3: 18. But we must also provide room for individual contemplation; because the writer of Psalm 45: 1 says likewise, “I say what I have composed touching the king”. Then he starts describing Him, saying “Thou art fairer than the sons of men; grace is poured into thy lips.” That is the result of a personal contemplation.

H.M. Then the seeing comes before the hearing?

A.J.G. What do you mean with that?

H.M. Our attention is drawn to contemplating (or seeing) here.

A.J.G. Yes, but before they were invited to come and see, they had heard John speaking. What they had heard in the ministry spoken by John brought them to Christ, and then He encouraged them to come and see.

W.Sch. It says: “In the beginning was the Word”. Does this also indicate speaking?

A.J.G. Yes, the Word is the perfect expression of God.

K.M. In the first epistle of John it says: “which we have heard, which we have seen”, 1 John 1: 1.

A.J.G. It says in the first epistle of John: “which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes; that which we contemplated, and our hands handled”. That is most interesting, it shows it is so important to start with the hearing. Because it says in Hebrews: “To-day if ye will hear his voice”.

H.L. John first contemplates before he speaks.

A.J.G. Yes, “looking at Jesus as he walked” (v 36), and as a result he spoke of Him.

L.B. Would our service on Lord's day be more effective if we contemplated more?

A.J.G. I believe that is the case, and also when we listen more and treasure it in rest. It says of Mary, "having sat down at the feet of Jesus was listening to his word" (Luke 10: 39); then she served effectively in John 12.

K.H. Did we see that this morning in Ezekiel in the water: water to the ankles following, water to the knees praying, water to the loins combatting, leading to water to swim in, which would be worship?

A.J.G. There is a great inexhaustible abundance in that. It is a great comfort that we never will be able to exhaust the fulness which is in God. We will never get tired in eternity. God is great enough to fill all eternity with His preciousness.

K.W. Is increase the thought?

A.J.G. Yes.

F.R. Do we have something of this in Song of Songs 1: 8: "Go thy way forth by the footsteps of the flock"; the question there is "Where thou makest it to rest", v 7?

O.H. In Hebrews 2: 9 it says, "but we see Jesus", and then in chapter 3: 1: "consider the Apostle and High Priest ... Jesus", and in chapter 12: 2: "looking steadfastly on Jesus".

A.J.G. That is very good, both the ability to see and to hear are most important. John was lifted up to heaven and saw wonderful things, Paul was caught up to paradise and heard wonderful things.

A.T.E. In John 1: 39 it says, "they saw where he abode". And they abode with him that day. "They saw".

A.J.G. It is wonderful that the Lord says: "Come and see". He says: "I am coming again and shall receive you to myself, that where I am ye also may be". May this be a great help to us, to have in a more definite way in our thoughts that we are united with Christ, and that He is soon coming in view of taking us to Himself; that is our place.

A.W. He does not say: 'in the Father's house', rather "to myself".

A.J.G. Yes, “to myself ... where I am”. In Acts 2: 33 it says: “Having therefore been exalted by the right hand of God, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, he has poured out this which ye behold and hear”. The verse in Psalm 68: 18 sheds light on this, that “Thou hast ascended on high ... thou hast received gifts in Man” (or as man, see footnote). As Man, He received the Spirit from the Father to pour out, even for the rebellious, in order that Jehovah, God, should have a dwelling. So it is a great thought of God that He desires to dwell amongst men. He will subdue the rebellious ones through the gospel; through grace He will take up His abode even with such, in view of finding His pleasure in Man and to glorify His grace. But I think we can see how the Manhood of Christ, the incarnation, and the descent of the Spirit, were necessary for this, because God could only dwell with men after the order of Christ.

H.L. Repentance is necessary for the rebellious.

A.J.G. We must condemn the rebellious, and the death of Christ meets them all. The gift of the Spirit sets us up in the life of a Man who pleases God.

P.Sch. It says: “I dwell in the high and holy place, and with him that is of a contrite and humble spirit”.

A.J.G. That is a remarkable scripture in Isaiah 57: 15: “I dwell in the high and holy place, and with him that is of a contrite and humble spirit”. God would never have had any man with a contrite and humble spirit if He had not had Christ.

P.Sch. That is why John says in his first letter, “that which we have seen and heard we report to you, that ye also may have fellowship with us; and our fellowship is indeed with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ”, 1 John 1: 3.

A.J.G. What is on your mind?

P.Sch. John reports this, on this basis we have fellowship.

A.J.G. Yes.

H.H. The verse in Psalm 68 applies to Saul of Tarsus in a beautiful way: being rebellious, he repented and received the Holy Spirit, and then he was made submissive.

A.J.G. Yes, Saul came into personal touch with Jesus, and the result was that he was converted from a rebellious and blasphemous man to a man being fully submissive to Christ.

T.A. Would you say we find the basis of worship in Revelation 1: 5-6? It says: "To him who loves us, and has washed us from our sins in his blood, and made us a kingdom, priests to his God and Father: to him be the glory and the might to the ages of ages. Amen." I thought the Lord Jesus had laid the basis for us. He has washed us from our sins, as it says here.

A.J.G. Yes; He also has in mind to make us into a kingdom for the service of God. That is what He desires to secure at the present time in an evil world. The saints are held through Him, they are under His protection, as priests to His God and Father; which means they serve God in holiness.

A.T.E. "Jah Elohim", the one who dwells with us, is the name of God that will be before us in eternity.

A.J.G. Yes, that is right. "Jah" is actually the name of God in His absolute being: it also shows us His great majesty.

A.W. Why is the Father referred to in Acts 2: 33? It says, "having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit". Otherwise, the Father is only mentioned in the whole of the Acts in chapter 1, 4 and 7.

A.J.G. It seems to bring in the whole Godhead, showing how the whole Godhead is in accord with this, that man is brought into relationship with God, and that God dwells with man.

Reading 3—Saturday morning

Romans 6: 1-4, 10-11; 7: 1-4; 8: 1-7, 26-27

A.J.G. We are seeking to get help regarding the name of God. We remarked yesterday morning that the Lord, as soon as He rose from among the dead, gave the commandment to make disciples of all the nations, baptising them to the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. It is one Name, because God is one, but it embraces three Persons. Then we saw in Revelation, the holy city where the throne of God and the Lamb is. There is no temple in it, but God Himself is its temple and the Lamb, and she has no need of the light of the sun or moon, because the glory of God enlightens it and the lamp is the Lamb. Thus it is the divine thought that God should be fully known and exalted in His assembly. The light of God shines for us in Christ. Then also the thought of the river was mentioned. The Spirit brings in life and freshness to it. Then it says: “his servants shall serve him”, and “his name is on their foreheads”. We noticed yesterday afternoon that it all was dependent on the incarnation. The word became flesh and dwelt among us, and was contemplated. What was seen was the glory of an only-begotten with the Father. God is made known in the only-begotten Son, the One that is in the bosom of the Father. God is thus made known in this wonderful light. He has shone forth in Christ, the One that became man. Then we also spoke of the Spirit who came down as a dove upon Jesus and abode there. This shows that God had gained a Man in Jesus in whom He could fully confide. He is specially marked out by baptising with the Holy Spirit. This means that He will bring in the assembly, which consists of men according to His own order, who have been baptised by the one Spirit into one body, so that God has a dwelling place with man.

I thought we could consider this morning how the whole Godhead is working towards our practical deliverance; because God works out His thoughts in those who were once under the power of sin. I think Romans chapters 6-8 show the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit all having part in view of our deliverance. Chapter 6 presents the Father, because it says that Christ has been raised up from among the dead by the glory of the Father, so we should walk in newness of life.

Then chapter 7 presents Christ as the new husband. We have become to another, who has been raised up from among the dead. Chapter 8 brings in the fulness of the power for all this that lies in the Spirit. And its result is that we have come to the joy of deliverance when we cry: “Abba Father”. It is the result from the activities of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, in order that God Himself in all His preciousness should be before our souls.

A.G. In Luke 15 we find the three divine Persons active together.

A.J.G. That is most significant. We can see there that God has joy seeing man recovered or saved.

H.H. Is it also important to see that the Lord says: “this parable”, not ‘these three parables’?

A.J.G. It is a complete presentation of this wonderful thought.

R.Z. So grace is prominent in bringing us into deliverance?

A.J.G. Yes, it is all grace. It is most interesting that Jacob at the end of his life, after he had worshipped God, blessing the sons of Joseph, said: “The God before whom my fathers Abraham and Isaac walked, the God that shepherded me all my life long to this day, the Angel that redeemed me from all evil, bless the lads”, Gen 48: 15. He is filled with the mind of God in a threefold way, and I believe, in mentioning this three times there is a touch of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. It is not that Jacob had any understanding of this, but we can understand it now in the light of Christianity; because “the Angel that redeemed me from all evil”—the third thing he mentioned—is not so much a reference to redemption through the precious blood of Christ, but rather the thought of the intervention of power to make us free from the power of sin. The Spirit is indeed presented in this way to us in Romans 8.

R.Z. The Spirit of God is life in the delivered soul.

A.J.G. Yes, that is the case.

G.S. Is that the same angel as in Exodus 23?

A.J.G. I believe it is. We see the word angel is often used. It sometimes refers to Christ, and sometimes to the Holy Spirit. The

word angel means ‘a messenger’ or ‘one that is sent’ and both Christ and the Holy Spirit have been sent.

A.W. Could that refer to the two angels that came to Lot at Sodom?

A.J.G. I believe they were only angels. However, in the scripture our brother referred to in Exodus 23, the angel is mentioned in a most significant way. It says in verse 21: “Be careful in his presence, and hearken unto his voice: do not provoke him, for he will not forgive your transgressions; for my name is in him”. These are remarkable statements, and could only be applied to one in the Godhead.

W.Schu. It says: “to him that speaks injuriously against the Spirit it shall not be forgiven”, Luke 12: 10.

A.J.G. Yes, Romans 6 engages us with the question of deliverance from the dominion of sin. In chapter 6, it is not so much sin in the flesh, but rather sin as a principle, as seen and represented in the world around us. Sin is lawlessness, the principle of the world around us is to do their own will, and each one of us tends to be marked by it may be in a lesser or greater degree. We must be entirely delivered from that. So the Lord has died out of this world, and He was raised from among the dead by the glory of the Father, in view of our learning from Him, what is the mind of God for us, that we in this world can escape on the principle of death, live for God on a totally new principle, that is in grace in the Name of the Father known in Christ Jesus.

R.D. Is that the realisation of baptism?

A.J.G. Yes, that is the meaning of baptism. That is why the apostle reminds us of our baptism. He says, as ye have been baptised to Christ Jesus, ye have been baptised to His death. That is the way our baptism has acknowledged that we have been delivered up to death. Death is the secret of our deliverance from the power of sin outside of ourselves.

P.Sch. Is this the entrance into the wilderness according to Exodus 15?

A.J.G. Yes, that is the case. It is most interesting that, when God appeared to Moses in Exodus 3, He presented two things. He said to begin with that He was coming down to relieve His people and bring them into the land. But He also said: “when thou hast brought forth the people out of Egypt, ye shall serve God upon this mountain”, v 12. On the one hand, the full thought is there, that we should be brought to the land—the purpose of God: but on the other hand, there is also the thought of serving God in the wilderness.

S.C.D. In this connection it is also important what it says in Romans 8: 31: “what shall we then say?” Are divine Persons waiting for an answer?

A.J.G. That is the case. It is remarkable that when the apostle Paul opens up the truth, he makes it in a form of questions. When a question is presented to us, it leads us to ponder it. We tend to be most superficial. But the Spirit would like to set us in exercise, in order to ponder and contemplate the truth, and it is a matter once again of contemplating our baptism.

H.H. The eunuch did not need much time to get to it.

A.J.G. Yes he said: “what hinders my being baptised?”, Acts 8: 36.

P.Sch. Would submission under the leadership of Moses be included in baptism according to 1 Corinthians 10: 2?

A.J.G. Yes, it says: “baptised unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea”. When we are baptised to Christ Jesus, then we become obedient to Christ. The cloud represents the presence of God, and the sea presents more the thought of death.

Ques. God says in Exodus 19: 4: “I have borne you on eagles’ wings and brought you to myself”. Do we see this in these chapters?

A.J.G. Yes, we see the eagles’ wings, especially in chapter 8 that has to do with power.

R.Z. Was the Samaritan woman delivered from her sins through the presence of the Lord?

A.J.G. In her case it had to do with sin, not just deliverance from her sins. Sins are a question of our guilt. They are met by the blood of

Christ. But sin on the one hand is met by death and on the other by the power of the Spirit.

L.B. Why is the resurrection in this chapter linked with the glory of the Father?

A.J.G. It seems to me that resurrection is linked many times in scripture with the Father. The Lord says: “For even as the Father raises the dead and quickens them, thus the Son also quickens whom he will”, John 5: 21. When He desired to raise Lazarus, He asked the Father, that the people might know that the Father had sent Him. This means that He did the Father’s work when He raised someone from the dead. It is a mark or feature of the glory of the Father that He raises from among the dead what is pleasing to Him, and thus He introduces a world that is beyond death. He has begun in Christ, but what He has begun in Christ, He will also bring us into. Christ has died for our sins once for all, and in that He lives He lives to God. He is a Man that God has fully before Him. That is also the mind of God for us, that we should be walking in newness of life as we have this as a principle in our life.

R.B. Do we have this thought in John 17: 3 where it says: “that they should know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent”?

A.J.G. That goes a bit further. But what we have here brings us there, because the last verse in Romans 6 says, “the act of favour of God, eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord”. I believe the verse in John 17 has also to do with our testimony down here: when we are down here in testimony in the world, then we must rise above the world through which we go as a testimony. That is why the knowledge of the only true God delivers us from idolatry as Mr James Taylor has said², and the knowledge of Jesus Christ, whom He has sent, delivers us from lawlessness. These two things are necessary if we are to be effective in testimony down here.

L.B. Could we also apply here what we have in 1 Peter 3: 21: “which figure also now saves you, even baptism, not a putting away

² Ministry of James Taylor—New Series, vol 7 p306

of the filth of flesh, but the demand as before God of a good conscience”?

A.J.G. Yes, chapter 6 brings us even further, that we are bondmen of God. Yet the great point in chapter 6 is that our thoughts should be in the right direction. It says in verse 11: “reckon yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus”. We must have our thoughts in accordance with the thoughts of God in regard to ourselves. Then we will find the support of Christ on the one hand and on the other hand the support of the Spirit.

C.M.Oe. Does this “reckoning” flow from knowing? It says in verse 6: “knowing this, that our old man has been crucified with him”.

A.J.G. Yes, and it flows from seeing the position in which Christ is now, and the way by which He has reached it. He has died to sin once for all, and He lives to God; and all this has been accomplished in Christ as the expression of the will of God in relation to us. Thus we also keep our mind in the same direction: we “reckon ourselves...”.

W.Sch. How far then does grace go? “Should we continue in sin that grace may abound?” It seems that when grace has not been arrived at, then there is something for us to do.

A.J.G. Paul presents a question here that could come up in a lawless mind. He raises this question and says right away: “Far be the thought” (chap 6: 2), and then further on: “we who have died to sin, how shall we still live in it?”

Th.B. Joseph said: “and how should I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?”, Gen 39: 9.

F.Bu. Deliverance must be an individual exercise.

A.J.G. But first of all it is important that our attitude of mind is right, that we in our thoughts are held in the direction of what God has introduced in Christ. There is one Man who has died to sin, and died to the world, and who lives to God. Also we should reckon ourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.

R.Z. Paul says in Corinthians, “and leading captive every thought into the obedience of the Christ”, 2 Cor 10: 5.

A.J.G. Yes.

A.G. It says in Colossians 3: 5: “Put to death therefore your members”. I believe that is our side.

A.J.G. Yes, it is also said here that we even should yield our members to God. It says in verse 13: “yield yourselves to God as alive from among the dead, and your members instruments of righteousness to God”. That means it is worked out in detail practically.

Now chapter 7 brings in what relieves us from the principle of law, for if we take up the exercises of chapter 6 in a practical way there is the tendency to become legal. That is why the apostle is so concerned about how we are delivered from the principle of law through death. When a man has died, then the law does not apply any more for him.

H.M. Is our responsibility emphasised through this?

A.J.G. Our responsibility is to take on the truth. But now the simple principle of life for the believer is, that he is to be to another, he belongs to Christ: it means we are no longer under a law that I must do something, but rather it is a matter that I belong to Christ. We present ourselves at the disposal of Christ. We learn from Him and move under His influence.

Th.A. Has this already come out in chapter 6: 17 where it says, “But thanks be to God, that ye were bondmen of sin, but have obeyed from the heart the form of teaching into which ye were instructed”?

A.J.G. God has brought in a new husband in Christ. “Ye also have been made dead to the law by the body of the Christ, to be to another”, as it says. When we are maintained under the influence of Christ, then we will also yield fruit unto God. God does not direct our view towards ourselves, but rather directs our view to Christ.

E.O. Do we see this in Bethany, they were under the influence of Christ?

A.J.G. Yes, they were.

H.L. Is the thought of the husband a thought of support over against the law?

A.J.G. Yes, the law raises claims, but the husband gives everything that we need on the way, namely wisdom and support.

K.H. The woman in John 4 understood this very quickly.

A.J.G. Yes, she did. She said: “Come, see a man who told me all things I had ever done”, v 29. She had come to this, to appreciate a Man, for whom she wanted to live from now on.

B.S. Is it the new man in Christ that comes to light?

A.J.G. The new man in Christ is character, the character which the saints as being formed according to Christ take on. The new man is a creation. He is created according to God. The Lord Himself is never spoken of as the new man. “The new man” refers to the work of God in the saints.

R.Z. We have a beautiful touch in Romans 4: 13: “For it was not by law that the promise was to Abraham, or to his seed, that he should be heir of the world, but by righteousness of faith”.

A.J.G. Yes, that is right.

L.B. Could you say something about the expression, “to be to another”? Does this also show that we should be at His disposal?

A.J.G. Yes, this is how you keep yourself in this relationship. That is why Paul in writing to the Corinthians says. “Not as without law to God, but as legitimately subject to Christ”, 1 Cor 9: 21.

H.H. What is the bearing of “dead to the law by the body of the Christ”? Why does the apostle say, “by the body of the Christ”?

A.J.G. I believe the body is linked with how He has served us in love. He has taken up a body in view of giving it up in death for us. I believe it should give us an impression of the love of Christ.

R.D. Do we find this in John 13 as to the feet washing?

A.J.G. Yes, He served there in a wonderful way. He took up a bondman’s attitude in view of serving them. It is not that He always remained in this position: having taken His garments, He sat down again. But it says before this that He laid aside His garments, and

having taken a linen towel He girded Himself, and washed their feet. This is the way how love serves.

H.P. The publican in the temple said, “have compassion on me, the sinner” (Luke 18: 13); the Lord Jesus answered and said, “This man went down to his house justified”. He acknowledged that he could only be saved by grace.

A.J.G. But then we also must have power, because the epistle to the Romans has in mind that victory in this world is worked out in such as were once under the power of sin. That is why we have the thought referred to in chapter 8: “For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus”. The believer must come to this and understand that he can only be guided by the Spirit. The Spirit is the spirit of life in another man, so that I do not do things that I used to do according to nature, acting according to what was in my flesh, but rather the Spirit holds me in relation to Christ, and the influence of Christ works to this end. It is life of this character, life in Christ Jesus that works in me through the Spirit.

A.B. Why does Romans 7 start with “brethren”? It says: “Are ye ignorant, brethren?”

A.J.G. The apostle speaks to our feelings. He is striving in order that we should accept the truth, and that is why he specially speaks to our hearts.

Th.Pf. Do we see in Mary of Magdala one that was marked by affection and love to the Lord?

A.J.G. She is referred to in two ways. In Mark’s gospel, it says that the Lord had cast out seven demons; in Luke it says from whom seven demons had gone out. That means that, when the Spirit of God gets room in the believer, then the power of evil will be driven out.

E.B. Can Romans 6 and 7 only be realised if Romans 8 is understood?

A.J.G. We can never get the gain of Romans 6 and 7 if we have not touched Romans 8. These three chapters must be taken together, but of course they also must be understood in a certain order. We must

see ourselves alive in Christ, then we must go on and see that Christ is the new husband for us, and then that we are dependent on the power of the Spirit, who loves us to keep us in relation to Christ. He always directs the hearts of the saints towards Christ.

R.B. Is that why it is important that we are completely free from the mind of the flesh?

A.J.G. Yes, that is the case. It says: “the mind of the Spirit life and peace”, chap 8: 6.

F.B. Is it important we should finish the old man in death by the power of God, in view of serving the new man?

A.J.G. Yes, the Spirit always works in that direction, in view of maintaining the appreciation of Christ in glory, and keeping this fact before our eyes, that He has reached that position by way of death. In Christ in glory, we have the Man in whom God has His joy, in whom He has given us life. But it is life out of death, and as you said death must constantly be realised.

P.Sch. Can we link this thought with Numbers 21 with the brazen serpent?

A.J.G. Yes, Numbers 21 is in line with chapter 8 and verse 3: God has condemned sin in the flesh, that is the brazen serpent in type, and whoever looked up to it lived. That means for us that our eyes are now open to see the power which is in the Spirit. At the well, they even sang to the Spirit. This means they happily acknowledged the Spirit as the only power for life and movement.

R.Z. Why does the Lord mention in John 3: 14: “as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, thus must the Son of man be lifted up”?

A.J.G. The whole thing lies there as a foundation, that sin in the flesh has been condemned, so we do not expect anything from the flesh. We know it is incorrigible, and that causes us to be totally cast on the Spirit: and make us very slow to get away from the Spirit.

L.M. You have indicated the difference between sin that marks the world, and sin that marks the flesh.

A.J.G. It says here that God has condemned sin in the flesh, so we can apply the principle that we have received a totally new life in the Spirit.

E.E.P. Is it important that we have details here in Romans 6, 7, and 8, and still in every chapter the full thought of God is behind it? It says in Romans 6: 11 “reckon yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus”, and in chapter 7: 4 it says “in order that we might bear fruit to God”, and I thought in chapter 8: 27 we have the thought that the Spirit “intercedes for saints according to God”.

A.J.G. Yes, God is the great thought in Romans; the word “God” is referred to more than one hundred and fifty times, while the Father is only mentioned four times, chaps 1: 7; 6: 4; 8: 15; 15: 6. Clearly the great thought is God in Romans. This means man is set in right relations with his Creator, and that is morally important.

H.L. Would the reference to the righteous requirement of the law be linked with bearing fruit, fruit to God?

A.J.G. Yes, everything is held under the influence of Christ and in the power of the Spirit, in order that the righteous requirement of the law should be fulfilled in us. It says in chapter 7 that the law indeed is holy, and commandment is holy, and just and good. So the law is not set aside for us, although of course it is not the Christian’s standard. Christ is the standard for the Christian. The law is not set aside for us, but its requirement is fulfilled, and that is the great triumph of Christianity; and the power of this is found in the Spirit of God.

Th.A. In Galatians 5: 18 it says: “but if ye are led by the Spirit, ye are not under law”.

A.J.G. No, we are not under law. Christ is the end of law for righteousness to every one that believes, and Christ becomes everything for the believer in this way. But it also says that He has magnified the law and made it honourable, and in the power of the Spirit the believer loves God and his neighbour.

F.B. Is the law written in our hearts?

A.J.G. Christ is written in our hearts. The law will be written on Israel's hearts in a coming day.

E.C. Is that the new and living way?

A.J.G. Yes. There is the liberty available in Christianity. It says in verse 9: "But *ye* are not in flesh but in Spirit, if indeed God's Spirit dwell in you". In Romans 8 the apostle brings in the Spirit of God. He is God who dwells in the believer. There is divine power in the Holy Spirit which is much stronger than the power in our flesh.

R.Z. Incidentally, why is the Spirit of Christ referred to here?

A.J.G. It shows here the character of the Spirit of God. It is the spirit of this Man.

H.P. Does "the Spirit of Christ" mean His mind?

A.J.G. Yes, His mind is involved, but it is the Holy Spirit.

E.B. Is it not very important that everybody has a personal sense of verse 9?

A.J.G. Yes, it is so indeed. There is nothing that can go against the power of flesh but the power of God.

L.B. Is it not remarkable how the Spirit speaks of Himself in verse 9: "God's Spirit", "the Spirit of Christ", and in verse 11, "the Spirit of him that has raised up Jesus", and "his Spirit"; and in verse 14 again "the Spirit of God"?

A.J.G. Yes, then it also says: "a spirit of adoption", which does not directly refer to Him personally; but is very closely linked to the Spirit personally.

E.B. Why does it say here in verse 9: "but if any one has not the Spirit of Christ *he* is not of him"? Why is it expressed in such a severe way?

A.J.G. That is a most deeply searching verse, as I see it. When you cannot see any proof for the Spirit of Christ in a person, then you may ask yourself if he is a Christian at all.

E.E.P. Could we refer to Philippians 2 to ascertain the mind of Christ?

A.J.G. Yes, that is a feature of it.

B.S. Is it not the thought in Hebrews 5: 14, to have our senses exercised?

A.J.G. The Spirit of God gives us discernment between good and evil. I believe what was referred to is important. In verse 11 the Spirit of Him that raised up Jesus from among the dead dwells in us. That is the assurance that our mortal bodies will also be quickened. It is not connected with us falling asleep. This verse views us as living at the coming of the Lord. We are in mortal bodies; not in dead bodies, but rather in mortal bodies. We are in bodies that can die, and it is most affecting to think of how the Holy Spirit remains with us, regardless of what may happen to our bodies. You often see in Christians what deterioration can be caused by an illness, even our ability to think is lost, and yet the Spirit of God does not leave the believer. The Spirit of God remains with us and in us in such circumstances. He is content with such humble conditions. I believe we should be more impressed by the love of the Spirit.

G.S. Does this come out in 2 Corinthians 4 where we have this treasure in earthen vessels?

A.J.G. Yes, they are earthen vessels, and they are mortal.

R.Z. The apostle Paul says in Philippians 3: 21: “transform our body of humiliation into conformity to his body of glory”.

A.J.G. Yes, the Lord will do that. It says in Philippians 3 that the Lord will do this. But here in verse 11 it says that God does it because of His Spirit that dwells in us, because the Spirit is down here and dwells in the believer, and that is why you can understand that the Lord makes use of the Spirit to accomplish this.

E.E.P. Is this the result of the Spirit dwelling in us?

A.J.G. Yes, He is in us. He is very near to us; indeed He is in us. You could suppose that God expects a glorious temple, but the Holy

Spirit is entirely satisfied with the body of a believer. It says, “your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit”, 1 Cor 6: 19.

F.B. It says in verse 10: “but if Christ be in you, the body is dead on account of sin, but the Spirit life on account of righteousness”.

A.J.G. This shows how we should reckon ourselves. We should hold in our thoughts that the body is not allowed to go after its own lusts. The body should now be held as a vessel for the Spirit, because the Spirit is life on account of righteousness. This passage brings us right there where we are brought into full liberty. “As many as are led by the Spirit of God, *these* are sons of God. For ye have not received a spirit of bondage again for fear, but ye have received a spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father”. This shows fully how the believer is brought to full liberty towards God.

H.M. That corresponds with the thought we have in Galatians 4: 6; “But because ye are sons, God has sent out the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, Abba, Father!”

A.J.G. Yes. In Romans 8 it is to a certain extent our side, it is the Spirit of sonship. God has given us the place of sonship and given us the Spirit, in order that we should be able to fulfil this position.

H.H. Making room for the Spirit in our lives and being led by Him is an evidence that we really are brought to the glory of sonship?

A.J.G. Yes, that is so. It is a great triumph for God that we, that were once bondmen to sin, now are in the liberty of sonship.

P.Sch. Does the Lord present this in perfection in Luke 4? He returned from Jordan, and was led by the Spirit in the wilderness forty days.

A.J.G. Yes, He was led by the Spirit in the wilderness. That was His characteristic power in His movements as Man.

E.E.P. The thought of the Spirit dwelling in us is a very intimate thought, which we must reach according to the mind of God. The Spirit dwells in us, and we are led by the Spirit; everything else is eliminated.

A.J.G. Yes, that is most intimate. In recent years, the Lord has made the Spirit prominent, in order for us to realise that we are intimately connected with Him. That leads to a holy state with us.

Th.A. What does this verse in Galatians 6: 8 mean: “he that sows to the Spirit, from the Spirit shall reap eternal life”?

A.J.G. It has to do with what our minds are occupied with. It says in Genesis 26: 12, “And Isaac sowed in that land, and received in the same year a hundredfold”. It has much to do with the direction of our thoughts, if we think of the Spirit and divine things, or if we are engaged with other things. Of course, sowing to the Spirit includes that things are not allowed that would hinder the activities of the Spirit. When anyone wants to sow and reap, then obviously you must also remove the weeds.

E.B. What does “suffer with him” and “glorified with him” mean in verse 17?

A.J.G. It is right according to the ways of God that the believer should suffer now, in the present time. He also desires to glorify us with Christ. Christ has suffered outstandingly, and it is important, as we are to be glorified with Him, that we have to suffer with Him in the present time. When we are faithful to the truth, that involves suffering. It may involve me having to separate from friends and relatives. It might also involve that we may need to withdraw from such whom we walked happily together with earlier. But if the truth requires it, then we must take up the suffering that is linked with it.

A.T.E. That is why it speaks of the assembly as the Lamb’s wife. The Lamb is the one that has suffered here.

A.J.G. Yes, the Lamb’s wife is connected with the Lamb that has suffered.

S.C.D. And Christ is our standard down here and above.

H.M. Can we link this with verse 28?

A.J.G. We have read verses 26 and 27 to show how touchingly the Spirit links on with us. He intercedes for us with groanings that cannot

be uttered. He comes in in a feeling way into our circumstances that are marked by weakness.

A.W. Why does it say “the Spirit itself” in verses 16 and 26? Is that the Spirit personally?

A.J.G. Yes.

Th.Pf. Does my intimate relation with the Spirit of life bring my heart to worship Him?

A.J.G. I believe that. The more we see how completely the Spirit identifies Himself with us, the more we would be brought to worship Him: because He is God on the same level as the Father and the Son. It is the Son that has died for us, and it is the Spirit that has taken His abode in us, and in spite of all conditions, remains with us the whole time.

H.L. The Spirit has full knowledge of our desires.

A.J.G. Yes, that is the case, we often do not know what to pray for, but the Spirit itself makes intercession with groanings that cannot be uttered. He intercedes for saints according to God.

L.M. Does this link with the second parable in Luke 15, the Spirit knows the hearts through and through?

A.J.G. Yes, the woman swept the house carefully till she found the drachma. It is similar to Romans 8: 26-27. The woman lit her light and swept. She brings every thought and everything hidden to light; this often comes out when the Spirit searches our hearts. But it means great salvation for us, when we allow the Spirit to search us at all times, because God will have truth in the inward parts.

E.E.P. So “according to God” is the great standard that Paul has in his thoughts.

A.J.G. Yes, according to God. We ourselves have been brought into accordance with God.

Reading 4—Saturday afternoon

Ephesians 1: 3-14; 2: 17-18; 3: 14-21

A.J.G. These scriptures give us the primary thoughts of God, and in each of the three scriptures, the three divine Persons are presented. The Father is the object of the doxology in chapter 1. Purpose and counsel is accredited to Him in this dispensation. But then the Son is brought in immediately as the One who is the Centre of all counsels and by whom everything is introduced. The Spirit is presented as the earnest of our inheritance, and as the One by whom we are sealed. As Earnest He gives us power now to enter into these things, that in their fullness are still future.

In chapter 2 we have access to the Father through Christ and by one Spirit; and in the prayer in chapter 3, when the apostle bows his knees to the Father, he prays to be “strengthened with power by his Spirit in the inner man; that the Christ may dwell, through faith, in your hearts”, and that would have in view that we should be filled to all the fullness of God. Then at the very end, in verses 20 and 21, glory is ascribed to God.

It seems, as you contemplate the three Persons of the Godhead that they are fully united in view of divine purpose reaching its end in this doxology to God at the end of chapter 3. We are here on the ground of the sovereign will of God, yet a will that demanded the incarnation of Christ and the coming down of the Holy Spirit. So we have the movements of divine persons and their relationships that they have entered into on account of us, having their origin in the counsel of God’s own will.

E.O. That is why the Lord Jesus says: “Lo, I come ... to do, O God, thy will”, Heb 10: 7.

A.J.G. Yes, the will of God is the beginning to everything. We have here the expression: “according to the good pleasure of his will”, and then, “works all things according to the counsel of his own will”.

L.M. That is why the apostle could praise God; he starts with praising His will.

A.J.G. Yes, he calls himself, “apostle of Jesus Christ by God's will”. It seems that the will of God required his apostleship, in view of bringing the saints livingly into what God had in mind for them.

W.Sch. Does this explain why, in this very book where we have the greatest truths expressed, the will of God is specially emphasised.

A.J.G. Yes, that is most important. The will of God sets everything in movement. When we see what His will is, then we get an impression of what a wonderful God He is. We get a wonderful impression that God is love as well as an impression of His wisdom, and of course also His power, that excludes everything else. Towards the end of chapter 1, he speaks of “the surpassing greatness of his power towards us who believe”, v 19. The more we linger over the greatness of God as He shines out, and the different attributes of God which have come to light, the more we will be found in a spirit of worship. Worship does not really spring from our consciousness of our blessing, but rather from a sense we have of the presence of God.

R.Z. That is why Paul says to the Ephesians in Acts 20: 27 that he had not “shrunk from announcing to you all the counsel of God”.

A.J.G. That is most significant. One has often thought about that, why Paul spent three years in Ephesus. When he came there, he found both Jews and heathens, but the activities of the apostle for three years were enough with the help of the Lord to bring this company of saints into the full counsel of God. It was a special work for the apostle linked with prayers and tears, as well as much personal service for the saints and also at their gatherings. That is why we can expect that God can work very quickly even today. He can achieve much in a very short time, as we allow him to work.

P.Sch. Are not these great thoughts pointed out in the end of Romans 11 and chapter 16?

A.J.G. Yes, that is the case. You must always have in mind that Romans has the assembly in view. We often say that the letter is only for individuals, but the apostle had the assembly in mind in all his service, and when we are well founded in Romans, then it is not difficult to enter into greater truth. Mr Darby said that a good Roman

can go anywhere. Romans confirms us in a special way in the definite recognition of the Spirit. When this marks us, then we have no difficulty entering into spiritual thoughts.

B.S. “Chosen us in him before the world’s foundation”: maybe you have some thought on this?

A.J.G. I believe it shows that God has all resources needed for what He is going to bring about in Himself, in God. That is why it was in the mind of God before the foundation of the world, that one of the Godhead should become Man.

R.D. Do we have that in verse 9: “having made known to us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure”?

A.J.G. The mystery of His will is what follows: that God has purposed in Himself to head up all things in the Christ, the things in the heavens and the things upon the earth. That is still a mystery. The rulers of this world know nothing about this, but the saints have come into the light of it.

E.B. Could you please say something about the heavenlies?

A.J.G. It is a remarkable expression, “in the heavenlies”. I believe it would emphasise that our blessings are not on the earth. They are spiritual and not of a natural kind, they are heavenly and not earthly.

A.G. I believe Ephesians has a heavenly character for the believer. The coming of the Lord is not referred to in this letter. We are now viewed as those that are found in the heavenlies in Christ Jesus; that is our position.

A.J.G. Yes, and God has created heaven as well as earth, to show us what great thoughts He has for us. That is why it says in Isaiah 55: 9: “For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts”. This expression “the heavenlies” therefore means that God wants to give us the highest blessing.

H.H. Paul says, “as having nothing, and possessing all things”, 2 Cor 6: 10.

A.J.G. Yes, that is so.

A.M. Is it always important to think that our citizenship is heavenly?

A.J.G. Yes, and the Spirit will help us to further this. There is something that rises above all, what the Spirit brings to us that belongs to the assembly, that we are united with Christ and that we are held in His love. As Christ is in heaven, so our place is also there, and the more we have this consciousness in our souls, the more we will be released from things down here.

R.Z. Why does this word come in here after our heavenly position is established, “redemption through his blood”?

A.J.G. In view of giving us a full thought of divine grace. It is the glory of His grace that He has in Christ taken us into the favour of sonship; but it is the surpassing richness of His grace, that He has forgiven our offences through the blood of the Beloved.

H.H. The blood of the Beloved links us with God’s own Son.

A.J.G. Yes, the link consists in the very fact. “The Beloved” is a remarkable name, and in Him we have redemption through His blood, through the blood of the Beloved. This shows the surpassing richness of the grace of God and also the glory of His grace, so that God in His wonderful preciousness should be before us, that worship should be developed.

C.M.M. Sonship here is something that God prepares for Himself.

A.J.G. It is most important that we should consider that. If we only look at this in view of what it brings us, then we miss the main point. It is all that God has planned according to the pleasure of His own will. From all eternity love existed among the Persons of the Godhead, because God is love, and it was love among fully equal Persons. But it was according to the counsel of God that One of them should become Man, and also that He should be loved in a special way in this position. That is why the Lord says in John 17: 24: “thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world”. This love is now enjoyed, and it rests upon a Man, so that we can be brought to God in this Man.

S.C.D. Does this involve the expression, “The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ”?

A.J.G. I am inclined to say that is the Father. In this dispensation the Father retains the place of supremacy, and the purpose and counsels of God are attributed to Him; while the Son is presented as the Centre of all these counsels, as the One they are all about, but also by whom they all have been secured. The Spirit is viewed as the One making this effective in us. In principle, the whole Godhead has part in it in the unity of their thoughts and their purposes. The question is how the things are presented now in this dispensation.

A.G. The first word that God said was, “Let there be light”, Gen 1: 3. I believe that, if we are going to enjoy the blessings, then we must move in the light of God. Light and life go together.

A.J.G. Yes, that is right.

H.Ch.H. Could you say something about the mystery mentioned in verse 9?

A.J.G. It is the mystery of His will there. I believe it is not the same as we will come to in chapter 3. In chapter 3 we have the same mystery as we have in Colossians. It says there: “they who are of the nations should be joint heirs, and a joint body, and joint partakers of his promise in Christ Jesus”. The mystery there concerns Christ and the assembly, which is His body. But it says in chapter 1: 9, “having made known to us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he purposed in himself for the administration of the fulness of times”, which would mean what colours the world to come. It means that all things will be headed up in the Christ. Then we have already now an inheritance in Him, so that later on when all things will be headed up the assembly will share His headship. But this is something unknown; only His saints who are inaugurated in the mystery know it.

C.M.M. I thought that the mystery of His will is presented as the good pleasure of His will as it comes out in verses 6 and 9.

A.J.G. I believe it helps us to see that it is a feature of sonship to have an understanding of the thoughts of God, because when he has

spoken of the glory of His grace and the riches of His grace, he goes on to say: “which he has caused to abound toward us in all wisdom and intelligence, having made known to us the mystery of his will”. When a father still has young children, then he does not tell them about all his interests, because he knows that they are not yet able to take them in. But when they have grown up and are sons in the full meaning of the word, then he draws them into his confidence and tells them all of what he has planned in his heart. I believe it is important to see that sonship is not only a relationship, but it requires also a full understanding and interest on our side in all the interests God has proposed for us, in order that we should also be interested in other families as well as the assembly. I do not mean that other families already exist, but I think God expects us to have sympathy in all His interests.

W.Sch. In Ephesians 1: 5 it is a special idea of sonship, it is through Jesus Christ. It was even said of the angels that they were sons, and of Israel it was said: “Let my son go, that he may serve me”, Exod 4: 23.

A.J.G. Yes, that is so. The present time has a heavenly character, and the blessings are marked by being greater than what transpired before.

R.Z. Would these mysteries be related to what the Lord says to His disciples: “to you it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of the heavens”, Matt 13: 11?

A.J.G. That would be mysteries in the sense of what was hidden of the things of God from the wise and prudent of this world, but are now made known for the saints. The mysteries of the kingdom relate to what God is doing now.

T.A. Is this expressed in 1 Corinthians 2: 9: “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, but God has revealed to us by his spirit; for the Spirit searches all things, even the depths of God”?

A.W. Even the mystery is mentioned there.

A.J.G. Yes. “We speak God’s wisdom in a mystery”, v 7. Then it says: “that hidden wisdom which God had predetermined before the ages for our glory”. That connects it, as I understand, with the same mystery we have in Ephesians and Colossians. But the point in Corinthians is that the apostle says to them that he could not develop it, on account of their carnal condition. He says he was prepared to reveal it, but they were not in the state for him to develop it.

C.M.Oe. In verse 9 it says: “which he purposed in himself”. Is that the Father or God?

A.J.G. We should not say it is the Father, and then exclude the Son and the Spirit.

B.S. Here it is certainly a definite mystery, what God has purposed in Christ for the administration of the fulness of times; to head up all things in Christ.

A.J.G. Yes, as I understand that expression, it looks on to the world to come, it means that God has in mind to bring all things together under Christ as head. The end of the chapter shows that the assembly has part in the headship of Christ as well; this means that men are placed in such an elevated position through the wisdom and grace of God.

W.Sch. But this requires that we acknowledge Him as Head now.

A.J.G. It says later, “ye have been sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise”. It is a very precious thought that we have been sealed. God sealing us means that we belong to Him.

R.Z. We see that at the sepulchre where Jesus was laid. It was sealed by the Roman power. But that seal broke.

A.J.G. One angel was enough to break that seal, and he sat himself on the stone and despised everything else.

L.M. Why is it the Holy Spirit of promise.

A.J.G. The possession of the Spirit was a matter of promise for many centuries. In the prophet Joel, there is a definite promise of the Spirit, and many other scriptures show that the Spirit was to come, so the Lord could say: “I send the promise of my Father upon you”, Luke 24:

49. It all shows that, from Pentecost and on, when the assembly was formed, the climax of the ways of God was reached. There will be of course another time, when Israel will be brought in, and also persons who will be blessed on the earth; but all that is mentioned in the Old Testament has in mind this wondrous moment, the time we are in now.

A.T.E. Does “to the praise of his glory” involve the praise of the glory of the Spirit.

A.J.G. It is to the praise of the glory of God. The section from verse 3 to verse 14 is one whole.

W.Sch. Three times it says there: “to the praise of the glory”.

A.J.G. Yes.

B.S. It says in verse 5: “according to the good pleasure of his will”.

A.J.G. The thought of praise is predominant in this section, it envisages that when God has manifested His great thoughts of purpose, there is a reason for us to praise Him.

R.Z. The acquired possession leads to praise for His glory.

H.Rä. In Psalm 145: 2 it says, “Every day will I bless thee, and I will praise thy name for ever and ever”.

A.J.G. Yes, we already looked at Psalm 48: 10 where it says: “According to thy name, O God, so is thy praise”. God’s thought in making Himself known was that He would be praised according to what He is and how He has made Himself known. In chapter 2, we read about the access that we already have: “through him”, it says—that is through Christ, “we have both”—that is Jew and Gentile—“access by one Spirit to the Father”. Thus the whole Godhead is referred to in this little verse, that the believers should be aware of the liberty that they can approach the Father. Christ is the Mediator, and the Spirit the power.

R.D. Does this specially come before us on Lord’s day morning?

A.J.G. It gives us a special touch when believers move together in the unity of one Spirit. But you would still not limit it. It is

characteristic of the whole of Christianity, that we through Christ have access by one Spirit to the Father.

R.Z. That belongs to both Jews and Gentiles.

A.J.G. Yes surely, and it belongs to every kind of believer, such as would not naturally be able to get on with one another. Yet still we can go forward together in the appropriation of the death of Christ and in the benefit of the Spirit.

E.E.P. Would you say we have an indication already in John 4, of what was fulfilled here, those afar off and those near, yet it is the access to the Father that the Lord presents to the woman.

A.J.G. Yes, the Lord said the Father seeketh worshipers. The Lord said that to a Samaritan woman, to one that the Jews did not want to have anything to do with. But she and other worshippers, whether she was a Jew or not, should be worshipping the Father.

E.E.P. Is it significant that the thought of peace is emphasised in these verses: “peace to you who were afar off” and “peace to those who were nigh”?

A.J.G. It is most important from a practical point of view, that we really should be united in the worship of God as one heart and one soul. You often find personal differences amongst believers, and that hinders the service of worship, or we occupy ourselves with our natural characteristic traits, and this also hinders the service. But the apostle says here that the death of Christ has taken place, in view of ending the Jews and also the Gentiles; and all difficulties will disappear when the persons die. We are able to die when we appropriate the death of Christ. Then we are able to move together in the benefit of the Spirit.

H.H. One new man, not two new men, one Jew and one from the Gentiles! Do you have that in mind?

A.J.G. Yes, one new man. It is sad that difficulties are very often prolonged for weeks and years, because those concerned have not availed themselves of the death of Christ and the Spirit.

L.M. Should this be referred to in the announcement of the gospel? It says here He “preached the glad tidings of peace”.

A.J.G. Yes, surely so.

P.Sch. Is that the position of service: “through him”; through the coming down of the Lord and by the service of the Spirit, that we have access to the Father?

A.J.G. Yes, that is so. We must have the mediatorship of Christ. The Lord says: “No one comes to the Father unless by me”, John 14: 6. We must have to do with God through Christ. Then there is no power available to move, but through the Spirit. That is most wonderful, as the Father remains in His supremacy and grace and love before us, but then both the Son and the Spirit are set in a subject position, in order that the believer should move towards the Father in worship.

C.M.M. Does this show that the new man has a desire to approach the Father?

A.J.G. Yes, that is so, as the Spirit in the believer moves in this direction. He cries “Abba, Father”.

B.S. Is peace more than faith and love?

A.J.G. Peace is of course necessary, when differences and divisions occur.

R.Z. That is why He must break down the middle wall of enclosure?

A.J.G. Yes, in a natural way it was impossible for Jews and Gentiles to move freely in the assembly; but in the death of Christ the Jew is finished and the Gentile is finished, and they are both reconciled to God by the cross into one body, in order to be able to walk joyfully together in the power of the same Spirit.

E.C. Difficulties would then be removed by the death of Christ.

A.J.G. Yes, we must accept the death of Christ. It is significant that it says in Genesis 24: 63: Isaac “lifted up his eyes”. But then it does not say he saw Rebecca coming to him, but that he saw camels

coming. It says, “behold, camels were coming”. That means a united movement of believers towards Christ. It captured Isaac’s view that camels were coming. That is a unifying movement by all the saints towards Christ in the power of the Spirit.

Rem. Is “both” in verse 18 important, where it says; “through Him we have both access by one Spirit to the Father”. It is only in the power of the Spirit that we can approach the Father through Christ Jesus.

A.J.G. It says, “by one Spirit”; we all have part in the one Spirit.

C.M.Oe. What does “*he* is our peace” mean?

A.J.G. That means to say that we are brought together in Him. When my natural things are finished in the death of Christ, and your natural things have ended in death, then we can rejoice in Christ, thus Christ becomes our peace.

C.M.Oe. It is maybe not so much the thought of our peace, but much more the peace that is in Him?

A.J.G. We are brought into the peace in Him. There are no difficulties in the presence of God, where Christ is. Every difficulty has been removed in His death, and now there is a Man in the presence of God, whose heart is rejoicing, and all believers are together in Him before God.

H.P. The Lord Jesus has said: “I give *my* peace to you”, John 14: 27.

A.J.G. That is another thing. That is the peace the Lord enjoyed when He was here as Man; in the testimonial setting; with all the resistance, He still found His peace in what the Father was to Him.

R.Z. After the resurrection the Lord drew close to His disciples, when the doors were shut for fear of the Jews, with the words: “Peace be to you”, John 20: 21.

A.J.G. Then we also see in chapter 3: 14 that the apostle bows his knees before the Father, and he goes on to say: “of whom every family in the heavens and on earth is named”. It means he leaves us here with a view of the great glory that the Father has in view, and he desires

that we should have an understanding of this. He also desires that we should be strengthened by His Spirit in our inner man. The Spirit of the Father has in mind to bring into our hearts the thought of the Father and His feelings.

L.M. Should we read Revelation in the light of the Spirit of the Father? There are many references to the Father.

A.J.G. I believe so. The book of Revelation of course is very much occupied with the earth, but it shows also that God will bring in other families. I believe in fact that the heavenly families, other than the assembly, are already formed, although they have not yet appeared; they await resurrection. They wait for the assembly to be complete. Then earthly families will also appear after the assembly has been raptured.

H.Ch.H. Do you think when we bow our knees, we will be strengthened by the Spirit?

A.J.G. Yes, I believe so. I think the apostle speaks to us of bowing his knees, in view of showing us the great exercises in which he was. He encourages us to do the very same: to come before the Father and ask Him to be strengthened by His Spirit, in order that we might see everything as He sees it, and see Christ as He sees Him. He is the One in whom every family will be headed up, for every family has an impression of Christ.

R.D. Does the Spirit of the Father bring Christ before us?

A.J.G. Yes, He does, and He gives us the Father's thought of Christ and the whole region of glory which the Father connects with Christ.

R.Z. Could you say something about the families on earth?

A.J.G. I do not know a lot about it, though we know that Israel will be recovered to their place on earth. Chapter 7 of Revelation then shows us a great multitude that no one can number that would be saved out of the nations. Then we have in chapter 14 a multitude which stands with the Lamb on mount Zion. I believe that will be a special family, though I am not fully clear about it. We read in Matthew 25 34 that the Lord sits down on His throne of glory, and all the nations

shall be gathered before Him, separating the sheep from the goats: the sheep on His right side are the nations that enter into blessing on the earth. It says: “Then shall the King say to those on his right hand, Come, blessed of my Father”. So the King of kings will tell even the saved ones out of the nations that they owe their blessing to His Father. That is why every family will have some knowledge of the Father. They have an impression of God in grace, as He is known in the Name of the Father. But the assembly knows the Father in a unique way, because we know the Father as Christ’s Father and our Father, and that is unique for the assembly.

E.E.P. And the breadth and length and depth and height can only be linked with the assembly.

A.J.G. I believe only the members of the assembly could get a real and full appreciation of that.

E.B. Could you say something of the thought of dwelling: that “Christ should dwell through faith in your hearts”? Is that more than to be in Christ?

A.J.G. I believe Mr Raven once said that a faithful wife always has her husband in her heart, even when he is absent; she always has him in her heart, and she only thinks of him and his interests³. What is normal to the assembly is that Christ dwells in our hearts, because we are united and linked with Him; and all that He inherits we will inherit with Him.

T.Pf. One Spirit in Him.

A.Ru. The virtuous woman in Proverbs 31 is a type of this.

A.J.G. Yes, that is right. The husband’s heart confides in her.

H.L. Could you please say something about “filled even to the fulness of God”?

A.J.G. As far as I understand it, it means that there is an answer in us according to the fulness in which God is revealed, meaning that we have an intelligent appreciation of the Father, and of the Son, and the

³ Ministry of F E Raven—vol 6 p154; vol 14 p148; vol 15 p296

Holy Spirit, and our answer to God shows that we are in the gain of this appreciation. I believe it involves that we are formed in love, because the more we have our mind on the way how the Godhead has revealed Itself, the more we see the way of perfect love. When we realise that the Father purposed this in Himself, and that the Son became Man and accomplished redemption and remains Man in eternity, so that we stand before God in His life in love, and that the Spirit has come to help us in relation to this, in that He produces in us affection and intelligence that are proper to this position, then we are always impressed by being embraced by nothing else but love. We should be formed in love, in order that selfishness should not get a place in us, because in the Godhead we see self-sacrifice.

H.Ch.H. The “fulness of God” is surely God Himself?

A.J.G. Surely.

M.M. Are we in the presence of what is unlimited and incomprehensible? It says that the love of the Christ surpasses all knowledge.

A.J.G. Yes, I believe that the thought of the length and breadth and depth and height conveys this thought, unlimited. Then the love of the Christ that surpasses knowledge speaks of what is incomprehensible. It is remarkable that it surpasses knowledge, yet we should apprehend it.

R.Z. It is most precious that we have the same thought in John 13, where the Lord took the linen towel. Would this be linked with what the length and breadth and depth and height is.

A.J.G. I believe that is the case, because the washing of their feet, surely involves for us the significance of His precious death. I believe we see the depth in the death of Christ especially in that He was made sin for us.

Reading 5—Lord's day

John 13: 3-5; 14: 1-23

A.J.G. John 14 sets before us, in a most remarkable way, the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. The chapter seems to show that we can enter into the greatest privileges of the assembly, even in the day of breakdown. As we know, John writes for the last days; he does not refer to the assembly in his gospel, nor in his first letter. He refers to the assembly only in the third letter and in Revelation. In his gospel, however, he shows how we enter into the truth of the assembly, as those that love Christ. This section leads in verse 23 to the thought of tabernacle conditions prepared for God. The Lord says, as it were, that where there are suitable conditions provided, the Father and the Son would come there. He had said just before this, that the Spirit was about to remain with those concerned. Verse 23 shows conditions provided by those that love Christ where God can dwell. That corresponds with what we have read in chapter 13, where the Lord is about to serve His own, and where He knew that the Father had given all things into His hands, and that He went out from God and was going to God. The fact that the Father had given all things into His hands indicates this dispensation in which the Father is the supreme One; and has given everything into the hands of Christ so that He might bring it to pass, and it is brought about in the love for His own. And in giving Himself up to serve His own the Lord always knew that He came out from God and that He was going to God. That is to say that He would provide a complete revelation of God, and also bring back an answer to this revelation. In the action of the feet washing, and the Lord laying His garment aside, there lies the thought that He has served us in love in His death. But it all served its purpose, that God should be made known and that He also should receive an answer. In chapter 14, the Lord immediately starts by speaking about the Father and the Father's house, but He also emphasises that He, as the Son, should be believed in, that is to say that Christ as man in the presence of the Father should be held in our hearts and affections. So all that the Lord said from chapter 13 and onwards, He said anticipating that He was going to the Father.

K.W. Does this give us liberty to speak to the Father, because we know that Christ as Man is before the Father?

A.J.G. Yes, the full light of the Father shines in Him, and the full light of a perfect answer in sonship also shines in Him, so that the Lord Jesus in His present position above should be the abiding Object of our faith.

R.Z. Can we say that the serving love of the Lord Jesus in chapter 13 comes into expression, as we see it in the Hebrew bondman in Exodus 21?

A.J.G. Yes, that is very similar. It says of the Hebrew bondman, that he says distinctly: "I love my master, my wife, and my children", Exod 21: 5. The master comes first, and then the wife and the children are connected with the servant in service towards their master. But the answer from the Hebrew bondman in Exodus 21 is seen in chapter 28, where we see the Lord in His garments of glory and for ornament. Just as He also has served down here in love as a bondman, now He serves in a glorified condition. That is why it says in John 13; when "he had ... taken his garments, having sat down again".

So what comes to light in the words in chapter 14 is the special place the saints have in His love as belonging to the assembly. We are marked by this, that we are where He is. He has prepared an abode, where He is now as Man, and a place where He Himself will bring us to.

B.M. Could you say something more about laying aside His garment and taking His garments again?

A.J.G. It says first that He "lays aside his garments, and having taken a linen towel he girded himself: then he pours water into the washhand basin, and began to wash the feet of the disciples, and to wipe them with the linen towel with which he was girded". This means that He went the full way in the service of His love. He even did a bondman's service. But after He had done this, and taken His garments, and having sat down again; He would now present His present glory to us.

So we hold in our thoughts the way He took in His love. And this love has in mind that we should be with Him in a conscious way: “that where I am ye also may be”. This shows that the assembly is intimately connected with Christ. All this should be in our souls, as it provides liberty and power in the service Godward.

C.M.Oe. Is the purpose of the feet washing that it should set us in liberty in the presence of such a love?

A.J.G. Yes, that is the case. But I am not thinking now of the feet washing in its moral bearing, but rather how far the love of Christ has gone, and its object is that we should have part with Him. But surely the feet washing in its moral bearing must be known by us.

H.H. Did you think that this was the entrance door to all that followed?

A.J.G. Yes, and also the Lord, as He did this service He thought about His coming out from God and that He was going to God.

A.G. We know Him now as our High Priest, who intercedes for us at all times.

A.J.G. Yes, He also represents us, but now He is above, where He has prepared us a place, that we should be where He is.

H.Br. Does this remind us of Psalm 22: 22: “I will declare thy name unto my brethren”?

A.J.G. Yes, it is significant that this is the first thing that comes up, as soon as the Lord is heard from the horns of the buffaloes.

K.W. Is the love of the Lord also seen in the word: “Father, as to those whom thou hast given me, I desire that where I am they also may be with me”, John 17: 24?

A.J.G. That is closely connected with the third verse of John 14. Do you not think, when we consider the glory that the Father has given Him, that we get then a view of the whole extent of the counsels of God? For it is His (Christ’s) glory, it has been entrusted to Him to bring it all about.

K.W. We can behold it.

A.J.G. Quite so. As a result, it causes worship to the Father and to God by us.

W.R. Do we have in Ephesians 2, “made us sit down together in the heavenlies in Christ Jesus”, a fulfilment of John 14: 3?

A.J.G. Yes, that is so, but there the elevated position that has been given to us in grace is emphasised; but here it is love that is prominent. It is the love of Christ that desires that we should be where He is; He wants nothing less.

R.Z. Would faith precede this love?

A.J.G. Yes, we should believe in Him.

G.S. Joseph presented his brethren before Pharaoh, is that the same thought?

A.J.G. I would rather say that the thought is more linked with Joseph presenting his own sons before his father, and his viewing them. Joseph brought his own sons before his own father, and the father said: “they shall be mine”. Then they were brought nearer, and he kissed them and embraced them. It is a wonderful thought how we are brought into sonship, for they were not the sons of Jacob, they were his grandsons; that is to say that they were not born to him, they belonged to his generation. But Jacob still gives them the position of sonship, “as Reuben and Simeon”, Gen 48: 5. That is a wonderful type of being taken up in sonship. It means the gift of sonship.

R.B. Does the mediatorship in Christ come to light?

A.J.G. Yes, that is right. The Lord says: “No one comes to the Father unless by me”. One can say that one of the most outstanding glories of Christ is that He is the Mediator.

R.Z. Was Thomas unclear about the way to the Father, as he asks: “how can we know the way”?

A.J.G. Yes, but he still had the liberty to ask. Chapter 14 of John is similar to a reading. One after the other asks questions, and the truth opens up as the Lord gives the answers.

B.M. If Philip had not asked, we would not have known.

A.J.G. It is a great advantage when we ask questions, it could even be ignorant questions, because the Spirit is prepared to answer.

E.B. When Philip presented the question, “Lord, show us the Father and it suffices us”, the Lord’s answer was: “He that has seen me has seen the Father”. Could you say something about Philip’s question?

A.J.G. The Lord had spoken so much concerning the Father to them that they were attracted. But the answer that the Lord gave them then served the purpose of shedding more light on His Person. He said: “He that has seen me has seen the Father ... Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and that the Father is in me?”

E.B. Is there a thought in this, that Philip saw here a living Man presented in the Lord Jesus, a man that is living?

A.J.G. Yes, the Lord had moved along with them, but all that they had seen in Christ was always an expression of the Father. There was never any inequality or defect there; that is why the Lord asked: “Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and that the Father is in me?”

E.B. Did He bring in the answer showing His manhood as well as His deity.

A.J.G. Yes, that is the case; we have a similar expression in chapter 10: 37, 38: it says, “If I do not the works of my Father, believe not me; but if I do, even if ye believe me not, believe the works, that ye may know and believe that the Father is in me and I in him”. That is why one Person in the Godhead can fully represent the other.

H.H. That is why we should be completely at home with the Father.

A.J.G. Yes surely. As we see how the Lord moved amongst His own, and the way He took the little children into His arms, He always expressed the Father.

A.W. Even in His activities, for example when He raised Lazarus, He expressed the Father.

A.J.G. Yes, that is right.

R.B. Do we have this thought also in John 1: 18?

A.J.G. “The only-begotten Son who is in the bosom of the Father, *he* hath declared him”. It is significant that He has been declared in that way, it is the way of love.

O.H. He is the effulgence of His glory and the expression of His substance, Heb 1: 3.

A.J.G. The expression of His substance involves the essence of God.

S.C.D. The expression, “I am the way, the truth and the life”: is this our side?

A.J.G. I believe that is so. “No one comes to the Father unless by me”. So He is the way. Then He is also the truth in His own Person. Man is placed in the glory of sonship in the Person of Christ, and this is what the Father has in mind for man. But then He is also the life, as we have part in His life as man. The Lord said: “Because I live, ye shall also live”.

H.Br. Is it a similar thought when it says: “Let us make man in our image”, Gen 1: 26?

A.J.G. Yes, that is God’s image. I believe the image is a representation.

R.Z. Then also the life of the Father comes into expression in the Son.

A.J.G. The Lord says: “as the Father has life in himself, so he has given to the Son also to have life in himself”, John 5: 26. What is in mind is that it should be communicated to us. Of course, we have no part in deity, but we have part in the life of a Man who in Himself is God. That is the preciousness of God bringing us so close.

H.Ch.H. Does a difference exist between the Father’s house in Luke 15 and the Father’s house here in John 14?

A.J.G. Yes, the Father’s house in Luke 15 is more a type of the house of God at the present time. But the Father’s house in John 14 is the whole area of blessing that is before the Father, and it corresponds

with what was considered yesterday in Ephesians 3 where the many families were named by the Father.

W.Schr. Does the Lord bring us there to learn to know the love with which He was loved by the Father?

A.J.G. Yes. He does not go further here on the thought of the many abodes; He just touches on it briefly, as Paul in Ephesians 3 refers to the many families. But then the Lord occupies Himself with the unique position the assembly has been given; that is to say, to be loved by Christ, where He is.

R.D. Does not Christ fill that place?

A.J.G. Yes surely. As a final result indeed, God fills this place.

W.Schu. Did Moses have this in mind in his song in Exodus 15? He spoke of “the mountain of thine inheritance, The place that thou, Jehovah, hast made thy dwelling”, v 17.

A.J.G. Yes. “Thou shalt bring them in, and plant them in the mountain of thine inheritance, The place that thou, Jehovah, hast made”. That corresponds with what He says: “I go to prepare you a place”.

C.M.M. Is the purpose here why the Lord speaks about the Father’s house and the Father Himself, that we should feel at home in the Father’s house?

A.J.G. It should confirm to us that the love of the Lord Jesus to the assembly is unique, in order that we should really be in the joy of union with Christ, then the Lord can avail Himself of this power, in view of giving an answer to the Father and presenting praise to God. It is to be noticed that, when the Lord spoke to them at first, He refers to what is future; He says: “I am coming again and shall receive you to myself”. In verse 23, we see where this will bring us, that there can be a dwelling place for God now; and it is most important that there should be a place now where God as manifested can dwell.

S.C.D. Is this the character of “my Father’s house”?

A.J.G. It takes character from what soon will appear publicly.

C.M.Oe. In the day of breakdown, the Lord takes up individuals even.

A.J.G. Yes, that is so. In this section the Lord comes down to an individual. It is not just to make it fully and altogether a personal matter, as it is an assembly truth that is nourished in the heart of each one that is faithful. It says: "If any one love me". That does not mean to say only individuals are available, but rather it is open for all that love the Lord.

L.M. Such as keep His commandments?

A.J.G. Yes.

R.Z. Why does He say, "Let not your heart be troubled"?

A.J.G. It grieved them much that the Lord intended to leave them; He had just said that Peter their leader would deny Him. But now the Lord takes their thoughts away from all that and brings them on to the purpose of God. He says, "Let not your heart be troubled".

H.H. Do you not think verse 23, that you referred to, includes all assembly privileges?

A.J.G. Yes, I believe so. I believe in the verses from 1-14 we have especially the Father and the Son, and then we have in verses 15-20 the Holy Spirit, the Comforter; and then in the power of the Spirit who is with us and in us. We know, according to verse 20, that Christ is in His Father, and we are in Him and He is in us. Then we see in verse 21-23, the conditions in which those precious things that can be already known. Of course, it embraces the presence of the Spirit, though it requires more than the presence of the Spirit. It demands first of all that the Lord's commandments are kept, and further on that His words are kept.

H.L. What does "His word" mean"?

A.J.G. To begin with we must keep His commandments. One must for example consider 2 Timothy 2: "Let everyone who names the name of the Lord withdraw from iniquity". That is a foundational commandment. Then we must consider the whole of 1 Corinthians, that is as a whole a commandment of the Lord, and it regulates us in all our comings together. We must also keep the new commandment

that John brings us, that we should love one another; that puts us together in assembly conditions. All this is necessary if the truth of the assembly really should be known. When we reach this state, then we must also keep the word of Christ. We should be marked by keeping His word. His word simply means what He says to us: we must always have the door open to what God brings out and have it in freshness.

H.H. Is that what He appreciates with Philadelphia?

A.J.G. Yes, they had kept His word.

S.C.D. Do we see this with individuals in John on the island of Patmos? He was in the Spirit on the Lord's day in spite of the circumstances. Would he have been fit for every assembly privilege?

A.J.G. I believe so. When the Lord desired to speak to him about the conditions in the local assemblies, and how the Lord walked in a judicial way amongst them, John had to turn round to hear the voice. I believe his thoughts were occupied on the Lord's day with the assembly privileges, but he still had to turn round. He said: "And I turned back to see the voice which spoke with me", Rev 1: 12.

P.Sch. Is the speaking of the Spirit the same as when the Lord speaks?

A.J.G. I think both correspond. What is on your mind?

P.Sch. "He that has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the assemblies" (Rev 2: 7, etc) was said to the assemblies.

A.J.G. The Lord may have something definite to say to a certain local assembly, as we see in Revelation 2 and 3. The Lord spoke of the conditions that He found in each assembly. And when He had finished His speaking, He said, "He that has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the assemblies". I believe that the word of the Christ is almost the same and it corresponds with what we have in Colossians: "Let the word of the Christ dwell in you richly", Col 3: 16.

P.Sch. Would keeping His commandments make us overcomers, as we have in the last four assemblies? The speaking of the Spirit comes afterwards.

A.J.G. Yes, the commandments are important, and they remain unchangeable, yet the word of the Christ always goes further and is always new and fresh. Mary of Bethany was marked by this, as she sat at the feet of Jesus and listened to His word. If the Lord came a second time to Bethany, Mary would once again be listening to His words. But the Lord would then not say the same thing He said previously: He would say something fresh then. That is the bearing of keeping the word of the Christ, that we give an ear to what the Lord says at the particular moment.

St.Gl. Does this come out in Genesis 17 and 18 when Abraham took heed to the word of God in chapter 17, and then in chapter 18 he got a divine visit?

A.J.G. Yes, you can say that. The three men were prepared to receive the meal that Abraham provided. You can say that in principle they made their abode with him.

K.H. It says in Psalm 25: 14 “The secret of Jehovah is with them that fear him”. It says ‘intimate communications’ in the footnote. Does this mean that “the word” is the intimate communication of the Lord?

A.J.G. I do not know if it is always the intimate communication. It is what the Lord says to us. We find in the end of Numbers 7, Moses going into the holiest, to speak with God. “And when Moses went into the tent of meeting to speak with Him, then he heard the voice speaking to him”, and then at the end “and he spoke to Him”, v 89. God said something fresh to Moses that He had not said before, and then Moses spoke to God, after God had spoken to Moses, all was put in order. In this way the word of Christ holds us constantly in freshness.

R.Z. We have an attractive section in Isaiah 50: 4: “He wakeneth morning by morning, he wakeneth mine ear to hear as the instructed”.

A.J.G. That is more for the path in the testimony and its responsibility down here. As it says, “that I should know how to succour by a word him that is weary”.

E.B. It says in verse 19, “the world sees me no longer; but ye see me”. Could you say something of what this word involves?

A.J.G. It is an effect of the presence of the Spirit with us, that we may not lose sight of Christ. The Christian profession around us has lost Christ from their view. That also happened when they made the golden calf. They said of Moses: “we do not know what is become of him!”, Exod 32: 1. But when the Spirit of God is acknowledged, then we will not lose Christ from our view.

H.Ch.H. Could you say something about the manifestation in verse 21?

A.J.G. The Lord loves to manifest Himself. We should know something of this on the first day of the week. I believe we do so too.

A.W. Was this the case with Mary of Magdala, that the Lord manifested Himself to her?

A.J.G. Yes, that is the case. The Lord accustomed the disciples to the thought of manifestation. We read from the first chapter of Acts of “all the time in which the Lord Jesus came in and went out among us” (v 21), and every time He came in afresh, they received a new presentation of Himself.

A.G. In John 20, the Lord manifested Himself to the disciples.

A.J.G. Yes, He showed them His hands and His side. In chapter 21, it says that He manifested Himself again.

H.H. There is an attractive word in Acts 1: He presented Himself living.

A.J.G. Yes, but it is important to see what we have in Acts 1: 21: “that of the men who have assembled with us all the time in which the Lord Jesus came in and went out among us”. When the Lord was in the days of His flesh down here, He taught His disciples the thought of assembling. What marks the assembly is that the Lord comes in

and goes out; that is to say, He left a manifestation of Himself, a constant fresh manifestation.

H.H. That continued until the day He was taken up.

A.J.G. Yes.

L.M. What is the thought of going out?

A.J.G. From this point of view the Lord is not always with us. From another point of view, as to support in our weakness, the Lord says: “I am with you all the days”, Matt 28: 20. But according to John 14, the Lord has gone to the Father, so He is absent from this scene, and He only manifests Himself to those who love Him. But in contrast to the Lord coming in and going out again, the Spirit remains always with us.

H.L. Should we expect a new manifestation every Lord’s day morning?

A.J.G. Certainly we should.

Fr.R. Would we otherwise be orphans? The Lord said: “I will not leave you orphans”.

A.J.G. Yes, that is the thought, we should not be comfortless.

H.Rö. He says also in verse 18: “I am coming to you”.

A.J.G. Yes.

P.Sch. So it speaks three times in this chapter of His coming, in verse 3, 18 and 23.

A.J.G. That shows how much the saints are in the heart of Christ.

E.C. In chapter 20, we see Jesus coming into the midst.

A.J.G. That was on the first day of the week, when He came and stood in the midst.

B.M. He says in the Song of Songs: “I am come into my garden”, SofS 5: 1.

A.J.G. The bride says as well:

Behold, he cometh
Leaping upon the mountains,
Skipping upon the hills. SofS 2: 8

G.S. It says here: “we will come to him and make our abode with him”. Does that include the three divine Persons?

A.J.G. That would be the Father and the Son, because the Spirit is already there, as He had just said that the Spirit was due to come and remain with us in eternity. Consequently, we have reached a climax in verse 23, as it seems to me. We have there an abode, tabernacle conditions for God, the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.

E.B. In the note in verse 23 [in the German Bible], it says, ‘we will prepare an abode with him for us’.

A.J.G. It says it comes to pass where such a state exists. I believe it is important to see that here in verses 22 and 23 we have the way to prove our love for Christ. We prove our love to Him in having and keeping His commandments, but also in keeping His word. Indeed, we have no right to say that we love Christ if we do not consider His commandments and keep His word.

H.M. Is this expressed in 1 John 2: 5: “but whoever keeps his word, in him verily the love of God is perfected”?

A.J.G. Yes, that is right.

A.G. We love, because He first loved us.

A.J.G. That is so, but we must also show our love. There are many Christians that love Christ, at least basically in their hearts. But they do not show their love. They do not prove their love by having and keeping His commandments and also keeping His word.

L.M. It says in verse 24, “my words”: would that be the details of what He says?

A.J.G. Yes, I believe, “the word” is the content of what the Lord would generally say at any time. “The words” would be the details of it as you said.

K.H. Does this include the Old Testament scriptures?

A.J.G. It is what the Lord says. The Lord speaks to us through the Scriptures. He can use the Old Testament scriptures just as much as the New Testament scriptures. But here it is the word, that is to say it is a living voice.

W.Schu. Should we make room at the Supper for the Lord to speak to us?

A.J.G. Definitely we should do that. Maybe we need to have more faith and exercise in these matters, in order that the Lord should speak to us.

R.D. Do we see this in the two disciples going to Emmaüs?

A.J.G. Yes, we see that to a certain extent. They had to be adjusted and brought back. But the Lord loves to find such conditions amongst us, in which we are able to keep what He says to us.

A.Sh. Could you say a little more of the position the Spirit has in this?

A.J.G. From our side nothing is possible, except through the Spirit. That is why the Lord says: “the world sees me no longer; but ye see me; because I live ye also shall live”. Thus we are held in the light of Christ, and in the assurance that we are united with Him. That is the service of the Spirit for us. Then it says: “In that day”—that is the Spirit’s day, the present day—“ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you”. That is the result of the Spirit’s service towards us, that we are fully conscious of this, that Christ as Man is in the Father’s affections, and as Man the Father’s affections rest upon Him, a Person that is of the Godhead; and that we are in Him and He is in us. Thus, we get an impression of the wonderful nearness that the saints have with God because they are in Christ, and also of the pleasure that God has in the saints, because Christ is in them.

L.M. Why does the Lord say here “know” (verse 20) which means objective knowledge (see footnote)?

A.J.G. It is the result of the service of the Spirit presenting it before our view.

R.Z. Could you say something about the greater works in verse 12, please?

A.J.G. I believe that the Lord emphasises especially the character of the day of the Spirit; “because I go to the Father”, He says. That means that the Spirit could come.

C.M.Oe. Is the Spirit the gift of the Father? We see from the Acts that He is the promise of the Father. But here it says: “I will beg the Father, and He will give you another Comforter”.

A.J.G. I think this helps us to appreciate the Spirit, because He is the gift of the Father and the result of the request of the Lord Jesus.

H.M. That comes out in chapter 15: 26: “But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who goes forth from with the Father, *he* shall bear witness concerning me”?

A.J.G. The Spirit is presented as the gift from the Father, because Christ had asked for it, but then He was also sent from Christ, so He was sent both from the Father and the Son to be at our disposal.

O.H. Could you say something about chapter 14: 12: the greater works?

A.J.G. I believe I cannot say much about them. The Lord emphasises in these verses the special character of the day when the Spirit is down here. I believe the greater things were apparent in the great results of the work of God, that we find in the day of the Spirit. The Lord was subject to great restrictions when He was on earth. He did not go beyond the borders of Israel. But now in the works of those whom the Spirit has sent out, the work of God has extended to the whole world, and finally according to God’s thought a full answer will come to light in the saints.

H.Ch.H. Do we see the dwelling conditions for God in the material for the tabernacle, Exod 25?

A.J.G. Yes, God commanded the people to make Him a sanctuary, that He should be able to dwell amongst them, and He indicates what they should all bring. We can see the first three things that were

required come from our knowledge of God, so that it is a result of our knowledge of God: the gold, the silver and the copper or brass. After this come eight things that have to do with our appreciation of Christ as Man. Then comes oil for the light and spices, two things that have to do with our appreciation of the Spirit. Finally, there are two things, onyx stones and stones to be set, that have to do with our appreciation of the saints. What is necessary for tabernacle conditions, is that God Himself is fully appreciated by us, that is, the Father, Son and Holy Spirit; and the saints should also be appreciated accordingly, what they are according to the work of God, for the saints are indispensable for God in His dwelling place.

C.M.M Then we reach what we have in verse 23 at the end of Revelation 21:3 where it says: “and God himself shall be with them, their God”.

A.J.G. Yes, quite right. I think we should take special care that already now dwelling conditions for God are found with us.

THE CONFLICT FOR THE TRUTH

Address—Friday evening

2 John 1-3

1 Chronicles 12: 1-2, 8-22, 37-38

I would like to speak about the truth, and about the importance of having links with one another in the truth. In the second letter of John, John speaks about two things: of “whom *I* love in truth”, and then also of those that have known the truth and of loving them for the truth’s sake, so that the truth should be a great bond between us. We love one another for the truth’s sake, and we must see that we love “in truth”, which means that our truth is an upright truth, and our love is an upright love. The truth has always been opposed, and it was so from the beginning as soon as the serpent said to the woman: “Is it even so, that God has said?” (Gen 3: 1), bringing in a thought that was against the truth. It brought the thought into the woman’s mind that God was not completely good. And from that day on the truth has been attacked. It is the mind of God that “all men should be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth”, 1 Tim 2: 4. It is the truth we should acknowledge. When we realise that we live in days when the truth is questioned, then it behoves us who know the truth that we stand for the truth; and when we stand up for the truth, then our affections will be kindled towards one another. That is why John says in connection with this lady to whom he wrote, that he loved her in truth, and not only he, but also all that had known the truth; and they loved her for the truth’s sake. He adds then also that the truth abides in us and shall be with us to eternity. I believe that refers to the Holy Spirit, because He is the Spirit of truth, and as He abides in us, and as He has secured His dwelling place in us, then the truth remains in us if the Holy Spirit is not hindered in us; and it will be with us to eternity. When all that is against the truth is finally set aside, then the preciousness of the real knowledge of God will be our eternal portion. That is why the truth is most important. To those who are like this sister, to whom John wrote, he says: “Grace shall be with you, mercy, peace from God the Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father, in truth and love”. That is a remarkable and full salutation. We are directed to the place where Jesus is. It is in a place

of perfect rest and joy. According to Psalm 16, the Lord Jesus as Man says to God: “thy countenance is fulness of joy”. So we can always through the Spirit look up to Christ where it is now—to the Son of the Father’s love—and can get an impression of the area of complete peace and fullness of joy. The love of the Father rests on Christ, and the love of the Son responds to the Father. From this circle the apostle John calls for grace, mercy and peace for this sister and her children. He says, “in truth and love”. It is important that the apostle mentions truth before love here. We must always see that our love is marked by the truth. It is not love when we encourage those who resist the truth. It is not love when we have connections and friendship and acquaintance and converse with those that resist the truth. Our love must be regulated by the truth. Only when our love is guided by the truth, are we suitable for the Lord and available to defend the truth. Only in this way can we be of any help to our brethren.

The first book of Chronicles is most interesting, showing in different sections that it was not written before the return from the captivity; that is to say, it is a review. The Spirit of God, through the writer of the books of Chronicles in the days of recovery, looks back on all the battles that had taken place in the testimony. The Chronicles were not written in the days when the events took place. What we have read in 1 Chronicles 12 are events in David’s history; but the first book of Chronicles was written at least four hundred years later. During this time, different persons came to light that were faithful to David. God observed it and wrote down their names and what they did in His Chronicles, and He brought it to light round about four hundred years later. We should therefore all be encouraged and at the same time sobered, because God notices everything that goes on amongst the saints. He sees if the truth is really announced. He also sees what Satan is doing, how he works against the truth. Satan even uses the saints when he can to speak against the truth. One of the greatest adversaries of David was Saul, and yet he was one of the people of God. He was even anointed. David never really considered Saul as an enemy. In the heading of Psalm 18, it says that it is a song which David sang on the day that Jehovah had delivered him out of the hand of all his enemies and out of the hand of Saul. That is to say, Saul was not regarded by him as an enemy, even if Saul sorrowfully

often behaved like an enemy. So in spite of his behaviour, he was one of the people of God and he was even anointed. That is why David never considered him as an enemy. But of course God noticed all his activities, and his end was extraordinarily sorrowful; and finally God left him, and he went to a woman who had a spirit of Python, and died then on mount Gilboa.

In 1 Chronicles 12, the Spirit of God writes about certain events, not in the order in which they took place, but rather to show that He had knowledge of all that had taken place. He mentions many personal names. God has great pleasure in mentioning those that stand for the truth. They are included in His Chronicles, and at a given day, when the time has come, He will bring them to light. Thus we read in the beginning of the chapter: “Now these are they that came to David to Ziklag”. God calls them by name. I said that this took place four hundred years before, but God had not forgotten them, and He brought them to light in the day of recovery, to show that these persons had their part in maintaining David’s interests. One can say that at that time the truth of God was linked with David, and it says of them that they helped David in the conflict. They could use their right hand as well as their left hand. They were not one sided. We read in 2 Corinthians 6: 7, “through the arms of righteousness on the right hand and left”. These persons helped David, and they could use “the right hand and the left with stones and with arrows on the bow”; and then it says, “they were of Saul’s brethren of Benjamin”. This is important: they overcame the claims of natural relationships in view of identifying themselves with David. Further on in verse 29, it says “the greater part of them had adhered to the house of Saul”. Why did they do this? Because Saul was a brother according to their natural relations, and they put the demands of natural relationships before the demands of the truth: and the Spirit of God refers to this here. The Spirit of God had taken account of this. It says: “but hitherto the greater part of them had adhered to the house of Saul” (1 Chron 12: 29), in spite of God having said “I have rejected him”, 1 Sam 16: 1. They went along with what was against God through their natural relationship. It is most serious that God writes this down after four hundred years. This is written down in scripture, beloved brethren, in order that we should be warned, because God sees every motive that

governs us. He also sees how we act in connection with the truth, if the demands of the truth are valued more than the demands of natural relationships.

Then we find in verses 8 to 15 references to the Gadites; they separated themselves to David when he was in the stronghold, in the wilderness. At any rate this must have been at the cave of Adullam. It was a place of separation and rejection. But they were persons that were furnished with shields and spears, they were equipped for the conflict that took place close to them. The ones referred to earlier used stones and with arrows on the bow. They also had their part in the conflict, but it was not in the immediate conflict with shield and spear. When we fight with the spear the enemy is very close. That is why we always also have the shield as well as the spear. The more we go along with the truth, the more we will find out that the devil is close at hand. That is why we must be prepared to have the shield by us. The shield is our protection, and the only protection in the things of God is that we ourselves are marked by the truth, otherwise we will expose ourselves to the enemy, and he is able to come in one or another way. But when we are armed and protected, then we can use the spear as an offensive weapon against the enemy.

It also even says further about them, “whose faces were like the faces of lions”, that is to say that they could not be diverted by anything. You could clearly see in their faces that they went along with the truth, whatever would happen. God appreciates such. They were “swift as the gazelles upon the mountains”. This shows simply that the Holy Spirit was unhindered and not grieved, so that we would be able to move quickly. We are often slow in our movements, when fresh features of the truth are being presented, because there might be something in us that hinders the Spirit of God. But when the Spirit of God is not grieved, then we will quickly acknowledge what comes by the Spirit. Then we are minded to follow it energetically. These were then mentioned by name, just as those in the previous section were mentioned by name. It is remarkable that God writes things down and records names that are not linked with His eternal purpose. From the standpoint of His eternal purpose our names are written in heaven. God also writes down names in the light of how we have stood for the

truth. In connection with the sons of Gad it says: “they that went over Jordan in the first month, when it overflows”. Gad was one of the two and a half tribes that preferred to remain on this side of Jordan. They are like brethren that were held back through their convenience and through their own things, as Paul had to say about some: “all seek their own things”, Phil 2: 21. But these Gadites were so attracted to David and the demands of the truth that it set them in movement, that they went over the Jordan, in spite of the banks being overflowed. They overcame great difficulties, to identify them fully with David and have part with him to fight for the truth.

Then others are referred to in verse 16 to 18, they came to David in the stronghold, and David went out to meet them; and now he also presents a question to them. He says: “If ye come peaceably to me to help me, my heart shall be knit unto you”. There is something very attractive for us in this, dear brethren. If we direct our hearts, to further the interests of the Lord and if we come with peace in our hearts and no double motives, then His heart will be knit to ours. But then David goes on to say: “but if to betray me to mine enemies, seeing there is no wrong in my hands, the God of our fathers see it and rebuke it”. David warned them about this; but their leader was able to answer immediately. He said:

Thine are we, David,
And with thee, thou son of Jesse:
Peace, peace be to thee!
And peace be to thy helpers!
For thy God helps thee.

It is a great thing to have this outlook on the truth. These are the ones God helps. He helps those who fully surrender to the truth, and that is a great encouragement for us, when we surrender ourselves to the truth; then it says: “And David received them, and made them chiefs of bands”. They are those who can see where God is and where His will is known. Each one that is fully with Him without any double motive, who is identified with Him and not linked with any that are against the truth, these could be made chiefs of bands. They are those who exercise an influence for good.

Now we come further to another section verse 19 to 22. It is remarkable that those who came to David at the time when he was on his way to Ziklag, after the Philistines, with whom he wanted to fight against Saul, had sent him back again. That was one of the darkest points in the history of David. David was marked by weakness, he was even prepared to fight against his own people of Israel, but God preserved him from doing that. As he came back to Ziklag he found out that the Amalekites had burned the city and all the children and wives had been taken captive and carried away. It was one of the darkest junctures in David's history. It was a moment when the testimony was marked by much weakness, it was surely weakness that other people could point their fingers at. And yet some in this moment identified themselves with David. God has recorded it in His Chronicles, and He mentions the names of those who did it. This section therefore gives us the greatest possible encouragement, beloved brethren, for us to fully devote ourselves to the truth. The truth in itself is perfect, but those who support it may often be marked by weakness and failures. But it is still important that we surrender to the truth and are unconditionally identified with it.

If we continue reading the chapter, we find different kinds of persons. There were those that had understanding of the times. They knew what Israel ought to do. There were others that were keeping ranks without a double heart. All this reminds us of how the Lord observes us, how we move about, and how we move together and if our hearts are pure. Now in verse 37 a great number of the Reubenites, and the Gadites, and of the half tribe of Manasseh are mentioned. They had been on the wrong side of the Jordan, they were held there by their own interests. They preferred their own interests to the land. But now they were set in movement, and there were about one hundred and twenty thousand of them. They were able to keep rank in battle array with a perfect heart. Just consider one hundred and twenty thousand brethren, walking together, without the least trace of differences between each other. The claims of Christ were so real, and the claims of the truth were so pervasive, that they all with perfect hearts kept rank in battle array. They all came to make David king over all Israel, and then it says: "and all the rest also of Israel were of one heart to make David king".

This is all I have to say, beloved brethren. I just would like to set out that the truth at the present time is the most important thing, and shows the great matter of interest that should really link us together; and then how God looks down on each one of us, to see how we stand in relation to the truth and how we behave, and if we are marked by the truth. Then God rejoices to refer to our names as such that have been found faithful. May the Lord bless the word for us!

REST

Reading—Lord's day

24th May 1959

Mark 2: 13-28

A.J.G. The preceding section seems to indicate the necessity of the forgiveness of sins and also being set up in power. This is also public. It says, he "went out before them all". Then when the Lord says in verse 14, "Follow me", it involves direction. This is how our public position is regulated. It is not to be left to us to determine how we move.

W.Schr. We have seen that the Lord appears in this gospel as the perfect Servant, and in the previous section we saw that He was in the house. Here He goes again to the sea. Do we see wisdom in His movements?

A.J.G. Yes, and there is no doubt that the sea here means people in general. I was struck by the moral power in the words of the Lord, that He only had to say, "Follow me", and Levi immediately followed.

H.G. Can it be said that, morally speaking, this is a continuation of the previous section? The paralytic in the previous section was healed and "went out before them all". But now there is one who follows the Lord. It is not only necessary for us to be set up, but also to follow.

A.J.G. I thought that the Lord was giving instruction to us as to where to follow, and what this leads to is fellowship, for many tax gatherers and sinners were at table with Jesus and His disciples. It is a question of the public position. Thus the first epistle to the Corinthians, which has the public position in mind, immediately brings in the idea that we have been called to the fellowship.

K.M. You said yesterday that we must go from followers to believers. Do we have persons saved here who are to become disciples?

A.J.G. Yes, and their public position is that they are devoted to the fellowship. That is, we do not move on independent lines.

K.M. The disciple is called a follower, and the Lord Jesus indicates the direction.

A.J.G. Yes.

H.G. This leads again into a house. Do you think that fellowship is being realised there?

A.J.G. Yes.

W.M. We will find expansion right here. Levi was obedient. It reads: "He rose up and followed him".

A.J.G. Yes, and then we find at the end of verse 15, that "they were many, and they followed Him".

W.M. The Lord calls the individual in view of many.

A.J.G. Yes, and He puts them all together in the fellowship. The Lord Jesus is our bond, but the fellowship includes certain responsibilities to one another.

E.E.P. "They were many", is it like, "I have much people in this city", Acts 18: 10?

W.Schr. We have here first, following and then they that were at the table with His disciples.

A.J.G. The 'lying at table' is an expression of this fellowship. Thus we have the Lord's table and the Lord's supper, and they are related to the public position. Psalm 23 says, "Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies".

H.G. The enemies show themselves immediately.

A.J.G. I noticed that.

E.E.P. The enemies will surround him immediately.

A.J.G. Do you think that the enemies surrounded Jesus and His disciples?

E.E.P. Yes.

A.J.G. The religious world looks for people with a good reputation. It is said in Luke 7 that the Pharisee was astonished that the Lord spoke

to a woman who was a sinner. But the fellowship really consists of sinners who have come to repentance.

W.Schr. Why do the Pharisees not turn directly to the Lord? They speak to His disciples.

A.J.G. I think they were afraid to speak to the Lord. But it is important to bear in mind in the gospels when the enemies turn to the disciples, that the Lord always answers them.

H.G. Does that not put the disciples and ourselves to the test?

A.J.G. I think that is how it works out.

H.G. When Peter was asked if the Lord was paying tax, Peter answered “yes”, but he needed adjustment.

A.J.G. If the Lord brought in someone locally who has a bad reputation, we would also be tested. People might say, why do you have fellowship with such a one? The answer would be: He has come to repentance.

E.E.P. Does this indicate that we are all equal when we have come to repentance?

A.J.G. This is what the fellowship is actually composed of—sinners who have come to repentance.

E.E.P. Is it often so difficult to repent?

A.J.G. Well, if we truly follow the Lord, we will come to repentance; for if we follow Him, we will see that He leads us to the cross, where sin has been judged according to God. Then we come to a correct assessment of sin. Repentance means that we acquire God’s assessment of sin and judge it accordingly.

W.Schr. This is also how we see that there must be those who are called here to the fellowship, because the Lord says: “They that are strong have not need of a physician, but those who are ill. I have not come to call righteous men, but sinners”.

A.J.G. Thus, in the days of David, those who were afflicted and had debts came to him.

E.E.P. Does this also show that we must rely entirely upon the Lord if we come into contact with those who are considered tax gatherers and sinners, and we want to help them? The Lord then shows us what we have to say.

A.J.G. Yes, that is so.

W.M. We can see how the Lord handled things in a different way from how it was done before. The Pharisees always ask, “Why?”

W.Schr. Surely it was a great test for the Pharisees when the Lord said, “I have not come to call righteous men”?

A.J.G. The Lord introduced the grace of God and true freedom.

E.E.P. Could the disciples understand what was going on?

A.J.G. Yes, I think so. Because they followed the Lord, they learned to understand everything as He guided them. In John 6 there were some who no longer walked with Jesus, and the Lord said to the Twelve, “Will ye also go away?” Then Peter said, “Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast words of life eternal”. I do not believe that Peter understood everything about what they were to be led into, but he had the impression that what the Lord spoke was life eternal. They would never have had an impression of this if they listened to the scribes and Pharisees.

H.G. So this “follow me” is always important for us.

A.J.G. Yes, it is. We see and recognise the movements of the Lord in the service He gives us.

H.G. I also thought of John 1: 39: The disciples abode with Him that day.

A.J.G. Yes, the thought of following is immediately found in the first chapter of the gospel of John, just as it is in different chapters throughout the gospel, and it is also the last word at the end of the last chapter. The Lord said to Peter, “Follow thou me”.

H.G. It is encouraging to see that John followed already.

A.J.G. In the next section we see that our position here is to be influenced by the Lord. While the Lord was with them it was not the

time to fast, but because He now is no longer here, fasting is appropriate.

W.Schr. Would there be great pleasure from hearing the teaching direct from His mouth when they were at table with Him?

A.J.G. Yes.

K.M. The disciples of John and the disciples of the Pharisees are mentioned here together.

A.J.G. John's disciples should have been found with Jesus, but because they stayed with John, they were in danger of being connected with the Pharisees.

K.M. They must have had John before them and not the Lord?

A.J.G. Yes. But the ministry of John pointed to Christ.

K.M. So we should never hang on to a servant, but follow where his ministry leads to.

E.E.P. When the Pharisees fasted, perhaps it was just a ritual?

A.J.G. There was no life in it.

H.W.O. Can it be said that the disciples of John had missed the opportunities that were mentioned in John 1 when John pointed to Him? That is why they did not get in touch with the true bridegroom, as we read in John 3.

A.J.G. Yes, I think so. In the first chapter of the gospel of John, we have two of John's disciples who heard Him speak and who followed Jesus. Then later in the gospel of John, John the baptist says, "He must increase, but I must decrease". Thus we see that John's ministry was directed to Christ. Nevertheless, here we find some of John's disciples in connection with the Pharisees.

W.Schr. The Pharisees also wanted to make the baptism of John a ritual, but the Lord says: "ye were willing for a season to rejoice in his light", John 5: 35.

A.J.G. When Paul came to Ephesus, he found some disciples who knew only the baptism of John, and he said to them, "that they should

believe on him that was coming after him, that is, on Jesus. And when they heard that, they were baptised to the name of the Lord Jesus”.

H.G. Does this then give us freedom so that we are able to judge for ourselves when fasting is appropriate, and also if it is appropriate to stand in all the joy that we have as the assembly in relation with Him?

A.J.G. I think so. In the assembly we have a wealth of joy. It is like the bride chamber. But in the world outside, where the Lord has no place, fasting is appropriate.

K.M. Have we the privilege of being in the assembly only on Lord’s day mornings?

A.J.G. It is in a special way then, but I think that whenever the saints are together and the Spirit is free to work among them, they get a taste of the joy that does not belong to this world.

W.Schr. Is fasting appropriate when we feel that the Lord’s rights are not being granted to Him?

E.E.P. So it was quite right that the disciples did not fast?

A.J.G. Fasting does not mean that we deny the flesh, but it is a renunciation of things which we are legitimately entitled to.

H.W.O. Does the question: “Can the sons of the bride chamber fast while the bridegroom is with them?” test us as to what the bridegroom means to us?

A.J.G. Yes, and do we feel His absence? But in the position when He is with us—that is, when the Lord comes into the assembly, it is, of course, not an occasion for fasting; but if we then go out into the world where He is not, then the matter of fasting is appropriate.

E.E.P. Is then the power of the Holy Spirit available to us especially?

A.J.G. Fasting is needed to bring strength in. It is said in Acts 13 that “they were ministering to the Lord and fasting”, and then the Spirit spoke. Verse 2 says, “And as they were ministering to the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said”, and then again in verse 3, “Then,

having fasted and prayed, and having laid their hands on them, they let them go”. The sovereignty of the Spirit wanted to test them. The Spirit chose the first and last of those mentioned. The aim of fasting is to set aside all these natural thoughts and intentions. Would it be right to say that the fasting has resulted in allowing the Spirit freedom among us?

H.G. I wondered about this passage in Acts 13: “And as they were ministering to the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said”. This led to an expansion of the work; they sent out Barnabas and Saul.

A.J.G. And Mark with them. That was the beginning of his story, as being devoted to the testimony. I think he came to acknowledge that he had not fasted enough; otherwise he would not have turned back to Jerusalem and left Paul and Barnabas.

H.G. So it is certainly very important that we understand the necessity of fasting at the right time. Mark had much to learn in the course of the later years before he was able to write this gospel.

A.J.G. Quite so.

E.E.P. So fasting makes us free from everything and we come without any hindrance under the influence of the absent bridegroom?

A.J.G. Yes, the Lord is absent, but the Spirit is here. Fasting makes room for the Spirit to come in. So we should be alert that every exercise becomes an opportunity for the Spirit to speak.

K.M. It was emphasised that fasting is important at the right time. Do we find this in verse 21, which says, “No one sews a patch of new cloth on an old garment”?

A.J.G. The Lord pointed out that Christianity is something completely new, and it should not be associated with the old system at all.

H.G. Is not this also confirmed in Antioch? There was such a spiritual state that the disciples were first called Christians there.

A.J.G. Quite so. Mr Taylor has often said that in Acts 2 they continued in the doctrine of the apostles and in the assembly; they did not go back to Moses, they continued in the teachings and fellowship

of the apostles. It was something completely new, of which the apostles were the authorised representatives.

W.Schr So there is nothing to improve on this old garment, it has to be done away.

A.J.G. Yes, that right.

H.G. When we have the bridegroom, and when we think of the bride, the assembly, should we remember that each family has its own glory? You mentioned Moses. The saints of the Old Testament or John the baptist were before this time, and then the assembly came later.

A.J.G. Yes, and the assembly is so great that the Lord says that the least in the kingdom of the heavens is greater than John the baptist, even though John the baptist is the greatest of those born of women.

H.G. I thought we should be taught in this way to understand better the character of the assembly, the bride, and the greatness and glory of the Bridegroom.

A.J.G. Yes, I think so. So Elisha took up the mantle of Elijah, which fell from him. This is the mantle of the man who went to heaven. Thus Christianity is to take on character from the Man who has gone to heaven. It is not like an old garment that has been repaired.

E.E.P. This example in verse 21 should have been enough in itself, but now we get a supplement in verse 22, so that we understand it even better.

A.J.G. We must have a new vessel to enjoy this new joy in.

W.Schr. Is this more inward, while the garment shows more the external?

A.J.G. Yes.

E.E.P. Why is the external here first and the inward afterwards?

A.J.G. Well, the Pharisees were occupied with what was external.

E.E.P. The new is always brought first. It says: “new cloth on an old garment” and “new wine into old skins”.

A.J.G. Yes. We read at the end of Hebrews 8: 13, “In that he says New, he has made the first old; but that which grows old and aged is near disappearing”. This is characteristic of Christianity, which God has said is “New”.

H.G. John the baptist had fully understood this, and that is why he was probably the greatest of those born of women?

A.J.G. Yes, that is so.

W.Schr. Can we say that the new one is no longer growing old?

A.J.G. No, never. It is then said in Hebrews 12: 24 that we have come to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant. The word means “fresh” there. It is the thought of fresh and youthful, which will never grow old.

W.M. The new wine was better than the best old wine.

A.J.G. Yes, that is right. Does this next section show that a great feature in Christianity is liberty?

H.G. “The law of the Spirit of life ... has set me free from the law of sin and of death”, Rom 8: 2. We are not subject to commandments and statutes, but all this wealth is at our disposal, so that we can move in liberty where the Lord Himself is.

A.J.G. The Lord was always in complete liberty in His movements. It is very touching that the Lord said, “The sabbath was made on account of for man”, for originally the sabbath was intended by God for His own rest. But now we see in what the Lord says that men were in the thoughts of God from the very beginning.

H.G. And the old system has not entered into the rest: “If they shall enter into my rest”, Heb 3: 11.

A.J.G. No. In Genesis 2 we have the first reference to the sabbath. On the sixth day we have the type of Christ and the assembly, that is, God created man, male and female created He them, so that as soon as God brought in this thought, Christ and the assembly, we will find the thought of His rest introduced.

E.E.P. The rest serves to enable us to enjoy all this.

A.J.G. Well, it is wonderful that when God establishes His own rest, He has man in His thoughts; for the Lord says: “The sabbath was made on account of man”.

H.G. Was David the man according to the thoughts of God, because he is mentioned here in this context?

A.J.G. It was particularly pleasing to God that David could move in such liberty. It shows that he had a real knowledge of God.

K.H. It is said here: “The sabbath was made on account of man”. Do we gather from this that God rests in the blessing of man?

A.J.G. Yes, I think so.

W.Schr. This new wine cannot be kept in the old skins.

E.E.P. Do we find this patchwork in what is called systems, among those who do not have Christ in this way?

A.J.G. Yes, they all have it before them, making much of the first man by always putting something new on the old man.

E.E.P. Therefore, “to be born again” means ‘to be born from above’.

A.J.G. Yes, it is a wholly new origin.

H.G. Is it not also very encouraging here, that David and those who were with him ate? Thus we should be in the same liberty as the Lord was free Himself because He is the Lord of the sabbath.

A.J.G. Is this not seen in the way that the disciples went and picked the ears? It is not said that the Lord did it, but they did it, and without any instruction from Him. This shows the liberty in which they were.

E.E.P. What the Lord said here was for the Pharisees’ sake, was it not?

A.J.G. Yes.

W.Schr. The ears of corn were food that was a nourishing of the believers, just as David also ate the shewbread, which speaks of the saints?

A.J.G. Yes, it is remarkable that David fed himself from the shewbread just as he was preparing to enter the time when the people of God treated him so badly. In the times of conflict, it is always good to feed on shewbread, that is, of how the saints appear before God in Christ.

H.G. If we see the saints in the presence of God as here, we will be able to move in the light of this, even in difficult circumstances.

W.Schr. It is said here that this happened under the high priest Abiathar. It was a priestly matter.

A.J.G. Yes.

E.E.P. Can one perhaps think of Paul when he was in captivity and wrote all the prison epistles, so that all the letters he wrote from captivity show how he was nourished by the saints?

A.J.G. Well, he certainly received impressions and revelations directly from the Lord in prison. Mr Taylor pointed out a few years ago⁴ that the time Paul was in prison in Rome, was not so much the suffering of the testimony, but more that the Lord prepared him to be restful and free from the activity of ministry in order to receive the full light of God's thoughts on the assembly, and to communicate them. Thus the richest letters of Paul were written from Rome.

W.M. It is said that we walk by faith and not by sight. Can we link this?

A.J.G. What are you thinking about?

W.M. I think we have liberty in faith, because David was able to accept spiritual help.

A.J.G. Yes. It is worth noting that the Lord says: "how he entered into the house of God". This shows how things take on a spiritual character in our minds through faith and by the Spirit.

W.Schr. The house of God was probably completely forgotten publicly?

⁴ Ministry of James Taylor—New Series, vol 58 p453

A.J.G. Well, it was not built yet, the tabernacle was there, of course.

E.E.P. Was David here really above the high priest?

A.J.G. Yes, David seems to be in control here.

E.E.P. Thus the Lord must be in control: “the Son of man is Lord of the sabbath also”. Is that not encouraging?

A.J.G. The Son of man comes in so that man can receive all that is for man.

REST FOR MAN AND FOR GOD

Gospel Preaching—24th May 1959

Matthew 11: 28-30

Hebrews 3: 7-15

I want to speak about rest for man, but also about rest for God. In the passage in Matthew, we read that the Lord first says, “*I will give you rest*”, and then “*and ye shall find rest*”, and then we find in Hebrews that God has it in His mind that we should enter into His rest. The gospel has not had its full effect until we know something about entering into God’s rest. But first we need to know rest for ourselves.

Firstly, rest is given to us by Christ, and is then found by us by following the line proposed by the Lord. Thus the Lord says, “*Come to me*”. These words are associated with a certain authority: “*Come to me*”! In Acts 5 we read about two different people who gathered men around themselves. The first of them was called Theudas, and the second was Judas the Galilean. But they were both killed, and those who listened to them were scattered. But the Lord lives forever, and He says in reference to those who come to Him, that no one will take them out of His hand, and that no one will take them out of the hand of His Father. Thus the Lord Jesus is a great gathering point for men and now He makes this appeal: “*Come to me, all ye who labour and are burdened*”, and then He says, “*I will give you rest*”.

Now I believe that the greatest burden that men bear is the burden when they awaken in relation to their sin; and then it is the burden they have when they feel their sinful state and the lack of hope in the flesh. But it is very beautiful that the Lord says, “*Come to me, all ye who labour and are burdened*”, as if there was no one who had any burden that was not invited to come to Christ. We read in the scriptures of those who were burdened. We read of a man who went up into the temple and could not even lift up his eyes to heaven, who smote his breast and said, “*O God, have compassion on me, the sinner*”. This was a burdened man, and he found relief by coming into the presence of God and acknowledging the truth in the way it is stated, and how he felt it. And we read of a woman in Luke 7, who

came where the Lord Jesus was, into the house of the Pharisee, and she stood at the feet of Jesus, and wept and washed His feet with her tears, and dried them with the hair of her head; she kissed His feet, and anointed them with myrrh. What was the reason for this? The Lord tells us the reason. He tells us that she was guilty of many sins. “Her many sins are forgiven”, He says, v 47. She was also a burdened person, but she appreciated that grace. God had come to her in the Person of the Lord Jesus.

Those who love Christ break bread in remembrance of Him. When the bread is broken, the Lord tells us, “This is my body, which is for you”, 1 Cor 11: 24. I wonder if it has ever made an impression on you that Jesus is He who is, as it is said: “over all, God blessed forever”, Rom 9: 5. Is it not wonderful that He should talk about having a body? The woman appreciated His feet, she kissed His feet, and they were part of His body. He had taken a body so that He could serve men in grace and that He might die. It is not possible for God to die. But He, who in His Person is God, took on a form in which He could die. He is the man Christ Jesus, who has given Himself as a ransom for all. Think of the greatness of Christ who entered the scene of death; remember how great was the sacrifice offered to God when Jesus offered Himself spotless to God! And all this was for every one who is burdened with sins. All this has had an effect over the last two thousand years, that in His name repentance and forgiveness of sins will be proclaimed to all who come to Him. And everyone who feels burdened by sins finds in Him a perfect answer to all that burdens him. Thus there is something attractive in the words of the Lord Jesus: “Come to me, all ye who labour and are burdened, and *I* will give you rest”. The same One who died for our sins and went under the judgment of God, and who endured it, and who died and also was buried, is the same One whom God raised from the dead and set in glory at His right hand. Now God wants the whole world to know that this matter is for His glory, and that in the Name of the Lord Jesus forgiveness of sins is proclaimed.

It is good to come to Christ, not just to hear Him, but also to come to Him and have to do with Him. In the 4th chapter of the gospel of John, we read about a woman who had to do with the Lord. The

Lord made her aware that He knew her whole story, so much so that she said, “Come, see a man who told me all things I had ever done”, v 29. All the things we have done must come to light. Everything that is hidden must come to light. It is a good thing to come into the light now and come to Him who died now, that our sins may be forgiven, and not only that our sins may be forgiven, but that we may also receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

But then there are also those who are burdened with what they discovered in themselves, and they always tend to look inward, and then they are disappointed that they do not find things the way they wish. But all this has also been met for us. At one time Samuel mourned for King Saul, for Saul had proved to be a great disappointment. But God said to Samuel, “How long will you mourn for Saul, when I have rejected him?” He then said to him, “fill thy horn with oil” (1 Sam 16: 1), and he had to go and anoint David. This is what God wants to say to everyone here who mourns about what he finds in himself. Perhaps no one knows about it other than God, but He knows what is going on in your mind and in your heart, and He would say, How long will you mourn for the man whom I have rejected? God has rejected the first man. When the Lord Jesus took our place and was made sin for us, the One who knew no sin, He was completely united in grace with our sinful state. Our sinful condition by nature is hopeless. Scripture says, “and they that are in flesh cannot please God”. It says: “Because the mind of the flesh is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God; for neither indeed can it be: and they that are in flesh cannot please God”, Rom 8: 7, 8. That is why our position is hopeless by its very nature. David said, “Behold, in iniquity was I brought forth, and in sin did my mother conceive me”, Ps 51: 5. He came to believe that he was sinful in the root and origin of his being. But we too must come to this. Therefore, one does not expect anything from a corrupted tree, but one turns away from it in the light that God has rejected it. Thus, when Jesus was made sin for us, He, who knew no sin became completely identified with the sinful state in which we are found by nature. In this position, sin in the flesh was condemned by God, and the judgment, which was an expression of this condemnation, was borne and exhausted by the Lord Jesus. And then He died, and He was buried, and it was all for

us. We are entitled to accept this for ourselves and to understand before God that sin and the sinful state have not only been condemned, but that the sinful man was also finished in death and has gone out of sight in burial. Now God has brought forth the Man of His choice from death, the true David, the root and the offspring of David. God has raised Him from the dead, and everyone who believes in Him receives the Holy Spirit and is set before God in the life of Christ. There is no condemnation at all for those who are in Christ Jesus. You are completely outside the realm of condemnation.

Now I believe that you can understand that when you come to Christ in faith, all this is yours, and you can then also understand that the Lord gives rest. It may be that you have been struggling for a long time and are trying to improve yourself, as Peter says on one occasion: “Master, having laboured through the whole night we have taken nothing”, Luke 5: 5. That is what people discover when they struggle and try to improve themselves, that nothing comes of it. But what a joy it is to come to Christ and receive rest from Him: “I will give you rest”. This is something very stirring to note how fully the Lord has identified Himself at the cross with the sinful state in which we were, so that by this means, that sinful state is forever finished and judged before God. There is now a Man before God, in whom He is well pleased, and every one who believes in the Lord Jesus is before God in Christ. One finds in Genesis 7 at the end, that the flood had destroyed all mankind, and this refers to what came into being in God’s eyes at the cross of Christ, namely that the end of all flesh has come before God. Then it says, “And Noah alone remained, and what was with him in the ark”, Gen 7: 23. This is the position today, that the end of all flesh has come before God, before Him on the cross, and Christ, whom Noah represents, remains and those who are with Him.

Thus we find in Matthew 9 that two blind men come to Jesus and He touches their eyes. We read in Mark 1 that a leper came to Jesus, and the Lord touched him. In Mark 7 we find that a deaf man who could not speak right was brought to Jesus, and Jesus put His finger in his ears; and He spat and touched his tongue. Then in the next chapter, we get a blind man brought, and the Lord spat on his eyes and laid His hands upon him. All these events in the gospels,

where the Lord touched various conditions in man, are given with the intention to remind us of the way He became completely involved with our state. On the cross, He was made sin, who knew no sin, and thus the whole position was met. So I believe that we can understand that when we come to Christ, He gives us rest.

But then He goes on to say: “Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am meek and lowly in heart, and ye shall find rest to your souls”. This means that we can rest in a certain way, and if we do not move forward on this line, then we will not find the rest which we are speaking about. A large number of true believers are not at rest; but the Lord has this before Himself that we, as believers, are to be at rest, calm in all the circumstances of life. The secret is that we take His yoke upon us. When the Lord was here as a man, He had no will but the will of His Father. He found His pleasure in the will of God. He could actually say: “My food is that I should do the will of him that has sent me, and that I should finish his work”, John 4: 34. But now, as believers, we are admonished to present our 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”, Rom 12. These are the lines on which we find rest, that we are here on the principle of obedience. Remember that when the children of Israel came out of Egypt, they first found no water to drink, and then they came to a place called Mara, and there they found that the waters were bitter. As young believers, we often find that the will of God seems to be contrary to what we desire. In this respect, the waters are bitter. But Moses cried to God, and God showed him wood which he cast into the water, and the water became sweet. Well, the wood is simply Jesus as here in the same world in which we are, as here to do the will of God and to be satisfied and happy in this will, as it is prophetically said of Him in Psalm 16: 6: “The lines are fallen unto me in pleasant places; yea, I have a goodly heritage”, that is, that the Lord found pleasant places and a goodly heritage in the circumstances which God had appointed for Him. He found peace and joy and satisfaction by following His course on the principle of obedience to God’s will. That is why, at this point in Mara, that God set them a statute and an ordinance for the

people, and that was simply on the principle of obedience. As we move forward on these lines, we will find rest for our souls. God said that He would not lay on them any of the diseases He had laid on the Egyptians. We often find that people in the world are full of disappointment and bitterness and feel that everything is against them. These are some of the diseases that God has placed on the Egyptians. It is that which comes to those who are here in independence of God, while the believer, who finds rest in the will of God, is free from all these things. Then it is said that they came to Elim, where were twelve water springs and seventy palm trees. There we come in reality to the assembly, it is the complete administration of divine things in the Spirit, and one sees the brethren in power and the joy of victory over the world, of which the palm trees speak.

I now come briefly to the passage in the epistle to the Hebrews. We find in chapters 3 and 4 that God speaks of His rest and that He desires that we should enter into His rest. Well, we noticed this afternoon that the rest of God is mentioned first in Genesis 2, according to the six days of His work in creation. At the end of the sixth day, He introduces us to the thought of Christ and the assembly, for it is said that on the sixth day He created man, in the image of God He created him, male and female He created them. Thus, from the beginning, God had before Him Christ on the one hand and the assembly on the other. Now, every believer who has the Holy Spirit belongs to the assembly. It says: “in the power of one Spirit *we* have all been baptised into one body ... and have all been given to drink of one Spirit”, 1 Cor 12: 13. That is why every believer who has the Holy Spirit belongs to the one body. This one body is nothing less than the body of Christ; that is, it is the expression of Christ in men, men and women of course—that is, when I say, ‘men’, I mean members of the human race. God does not effect these great thoughts in angels, but He brings forth this His wonderful thoughts in men, the assembly as the body of Christ. When Jesus was here as a man, everything in which God could rest in a man was here. There was nothing that the heart of God desired in man, which it did not find in Jesus. But how wonderful it is that the assembly is His body, the fulness of Christ. Through the work of God, all that is for the good pleasure of God in Christ is formed in the saints, and the wisdom of

God is so infinite, and His power is so great that the assembly, when His work is complete, will be the exact expression of Christ. Nothing will be lacking, and nothing is superfluous, but it is the complete fulness of Christ, composed of those who were once sinners, but who are sanctified by the death of Christ on the one hand and the gift of the Holy Spirit on the other. Well, in this wonderful plan, God finds rest for His heart. When we read the gospels, we get an impression of the rest that God finds in Jesus. He says, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I have found my delight", Matt 3: 17. Well, that will be extended in the assembly. Nothing is added, everything that is there comes from Christ, but under the eye of God it is expanded. Although we have to wait for the day to come for it to be completed in its glory, we can already understand by faith and by the Spirit that God finds rest in Christ and the assembly. God also wants us to surrender completely to the assembly. That is why He says in this passage in the epistle to the Hebrews, "To-day, if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts". Today is the day for the greatest things to be grasped, and every believer, brother and sister, should understand and enjoy their part in the assembly, and also see that nothing is allowed to come in that does not correspond to our calling, to have our part as those who are called to participate in such a great matter. That is why the passage here says: "For we are become companions of the Christ". That is what we are, nothing less. The first chapter tells us that Christ is anointed with oil of gladness above His companions. We get a certain impression of this when we meet in assembly on the first day of the week, that Christ is there and that His companions are around Him. He is anointed with oil of gladness above them, but we have our part with Him in the joy of the position, and the Spirit gives us the knowledge that God Himself finds rest in what He has brought about in the assembly. He wants us to enter into this rest, and this is where the gospel wants to lead us, first rest for ourselves, and then the privilege of sharing in the rest of God. May the Lord bless the word!

MEETINGS IN WEIDENAU

26th to 28th MAY 1959

(TUESDAY TO THURSDAY)

THE REST OF GOD, THE OBJECTIVE OF GOD'S WORK

Reading 1—Tuesday morning

John 1: 9-13; 3: 1-21

A.J.G. I thought that perhaps we could look at God's activities, having in mind that all the activities were in view of the rest of God. In Genesis 1 we see that God worked to a plan. The first thing He did in connection with creation was that He commanded the light to shine. Now this led to the sixth day, when mankind—male and female—was brought to light. This shows that God works in view of Christ and the assembly. Christ the man, and His fulness, the assembly is the final thought that God has before Himself. As a result of this, He will be served in a perfect way by men, and He will also be represented in a perfect way by men. When He brought this in He is said to have rested. The sabbath is brought in immediately after man has been introduced. It is so touching that the Lord says that the sabbath was for man's sake. So we see that God had it in His mind from the beginning that we should share in His rest. This is especially what Hebrews 3 and 4 have in mind, that we should enter into His rest, as something present. But then we must also see that, in this kind of activity, God brings in that which is spiritual. God Himself is a Spirit, and He also wants us to be brought to what is spiritual, so that there may be the nearest, most intimate connection between Himself and man. So the verses we have read in chapter 1 show that everything must come from God. The true light came into the world, and the world, as it is called, received being through Him, and the world knew Him not. He came to His own, and His own received Him not. But there were those who did receive Him. The reason for this is that they were born of God: "who have been born, not of blood, nor of flesh's will, nor of man's will, but of God". So we must start by saying that

if we have believed in the Name of the Lord Jesus, we are the objects of the work of God; and if this is the case, we must ask ourselves what the objective is, what has He in mind, and then we may know what it means to reach His rest. There is something else: even if everything is based on divine sovereignty, the principle of responsibility will nevertheless be maintained because those in whom God works believe in the Name of the Lord Jesus; that is, they believe the testimony that is presented to them. Thus, although it is acknowledged that everything is based on divine sovereignty, yet the principle of responsibility is maintained.

C.deK.F. What would you say about the light? Is it that the light radiates?

A.J.G. God works in the light. He is light. Darkness is completely alien to Him. The darkness was on the face of the deep. Therefore the first thing that God did was that He commanded the light to shine, and that came about when Jesus came into this world.

W.Schr. John testified to the light, but it is said that this was ‘the true light’. It was there in the Person of the Lord.

A.J.G. Yes, the more we look at the movements of Christ in the gospels, the more we can see the true light of God shining. Grace was there, which met every need of man, and yet the truth was maintained in a full way.

C.deK.F. Is this the same light that radiated from the glory on Paul?

A.J.G. Well, that was another thought. Christ in glory corresponds to the great light brought in on the fourth day.

A.S.T. Can you say more about “the true light”? Does this gospel have in mind to bring about what is true?

A.J.G. I am glad that you mention that, because it seems to be something very important, that God is true. At the end of the first epistle to John we read: “And we know that the Son of God has come, and has given us an understanding that we should know him that is true; and we are in him that is true, in his Son Jesus Christ”, 1 John 5: 20. Well, God as Him that is true means that He wants to have

everything in its right moral connection. So, in the end in the assembly, it concludes with God having His right position as God, and man is placed into his right relationship as a man, and yet everything is in accordance with the holy nature of God in love. Thus, in Christ and through the Spirit, we are brought as close to God as man can ever be. God is true. Did you have that before you?

A.S.T. Yes, that is very helpful.

E.B. Can you say something else about the rest that you spoke about? I am referring to Hebrews 4: 10, where it says: “For he that has entered into his rest, he also has rested from his works, as God did from his own”?

A.J.G. Yes, it is good to see that all the activities of God are in view of His rest. This is how we see the works of God, in Genesis 1, and in chapter 2 we see how His rest is brought in. But in the gospel we see the Lord saying, “The sabbath was made on account of man”, Mark 2: 27. It is very touching that when God establishes His rest, He then has in His mind that man himself is brought into His rest. Well, in the epistle to the Hebrews the great objective of the Spirit is that we should now enter into the rest of God. That is what we are already touching in the assembly.

E.E.P. Do you think that in our individual experience and practice, we are to cease from our works, so that we can understand the great works of God?

A.J.G. Yes, and that He has reached finality in Christ and in the assembly. Therefore the end of John 20 tells us that there are “many other signs also therefore Jesus did before His disciples, which are not written in this book, but these are written, that ye may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing ye might have life in His name”. Well, the name “Jesus Christ, the Son of God” is the glory which belongs to Him. The whole epistle to the Ephesians is needed to open up what Jesus is as the Christ. And then He is the Son of God, that is, it is a great system of affection that He introduces and establishes, and we should have life in all this.

Ques. Do we come to this thought in Revelation 21: 6, which says, “It is done”?

A.J.G. Yes, I think so. It is a good thing if we have the consciousness of finality in this day of the Spirit. But then we must all be ready to move on to what is spiritual. This examines us very practically, because we may have a right judgment about the flesh, so that we do not sow characteristically to the flesh, but we tend to be held by the natural. But God is active in view of the spiritual.

E.E.P. Hence the thought of “the true light”, because what is true tests our innermost being.

A.J.G. That is something else—that everything gets tested and revealed by the light. This exposes ourselves. But God wants everything to be marked by truth. It says, “he that practises the truth comes to the light, that his works may be manifested that they have been wrought in God”.

E.E.P. Is that why the work of transparent sapphire should be found in us?

A.J.G. That is transparency like God Himself.

Ques. Do you think that the disciples entered this when they were in liberty to pluck the ears on the sabbath?

A.J.G. That is another feature of God’s rest, namely that it is characterised by liberty. The disciples plucked the ears and ate them; the Lord did not do so, nor had He told them to do so, but they moved in complete liberty. This is a feature of God’s rest, that it is characterised by liberty.

E.E.P. It is said that: “The true light was that which, coming into the world, lightens every man”, John 1: 9. Is this this great expansion that God has before Himself for us to take hold of it?

A.J.G. Yes, He has man before Him. Not that all men are affected by it, but the light shines for all. It is very touching that it is man who has such a place in the thoughts of God. He does not work so much with angels. The sabbath was on account of man. It is so touching that God wants man to enjoy His own rest. I believe that God rests in

this, that the knowledge of God is made effective in the hearts of men, and man fully corresponds with this knowledge. Then the light is radiated to others by man. So He is active in the view of the heavenly city as the great vessel that radiates the light in the whole universe.

C.deK.F. Does John have this before him in his first letter in chapter 2, where he writes of the true light, and of the darkness that passes, and then he speaks of love for the brethren?

A.J.G. Yes, the darkness passes and the true light already shines, that is, these things can all be seen in the Christian circle.

A.S.T. The last sentence in verse 13, “but of God”, is probably fundamental to this, is it not?

A.J.G. Yes, it is God as He comes out in His nature and in His wisdom. I believe that we will find that this includes the fact that the whole Godhead is expressed personally: first the Son in John 3, then the Spirit in chapter 4, and then the Father in chapter 5. Thus, in this way, God enters on to our field of view.

C.deK.F. I would like you to say something as to the difference between what we find in chapter 1, “born of God”, and that the works are worked in God, chap 3.

A.J.G. When our works are wrought in God, it means that they are in accordance with the way God Himself has made Himself known to us. So what the Lord had to say to Nicodemus is very challenging for all of us. It makes us very small. It leads us to be totally dependent on the Spirit. I believe that, in a characteristic way, Nicodemus was the best of men, a teacher of the Jews, and yet the Lord must say to him, “Except any one be born anew he cannot see the kingdom of God”.

J.deR. Can you say something more about being “born anew”?

A.J.G. It shows that a whole new source of life is necessary, that my own ability, which I may possess by nature, has no purpose for me in the things of God, although the Lord can, of course, use it. But in terms of grasping the truth of God and any answer to it, we are completely dependent on a new beginning from God.

E.B. Can you say something more about water and the Spirit?

A.J.G. That brings in more the moral element, which is never lacking in the ways of God. Water speaks of the need to be morally purified, and this comes about when we understand the importance of Christ's death, for we are morally cleansed of the first man when we are fully reconciled in our thoughts with the death of Christ. But this is done in view of the fact that the positive should come in in the Spirit, and so the Lord says, "That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit".

A.S.T. Is this the taking away of the first, so that the second is established?

A.J.G. That is exactly what it is. And there can be no mixing between the first and the second. That is why this makes us all very small and suggests to us that we are completely dependent on the Spirit, whether to understand the things of God or to move in them.

W.E. As Nicodemus came to the Lord Jesus in the night, do we see that the Father had already worked in him; because it says, "No one can come to me unless the Father who has sent me draw him", John 6: 44?

A.J.G. Certainly, that is the case. I believe that when the Lord says to Nicodemus, "Except any one be born of water and of Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God", he really said to Nicodemus that he had already been born anew. Nicodemus just had to understand this.

E.E.P. Could the Lord therefore say here, "he cannot see the kingdom of God", because Nicodemus had followed these signs of which he had heard? For he said, "for none can do these signs that thou doest".

A.J.G. Yes, he had been touched by what he had seen; but the end of chapter 2 shows that many believed on Jesus, because they saw His signs. "But Jesus himself did not trust himself to them". One can trust in nothing but the work of God.

E.E.P. God was about to honour His work here by connecting Nicodemus with Jesus.

A.J.G. Yes, He Himself had started it. Undoubtedly, there was already a work of God in Nicodemus, so that he was born again. But the Lord also wanted him to understand what had taken place in him. This is also so important for us that if we have believed in Christ, we must understand that God is behind it, that He has worked in us and has the perfect end before Himself.

A.S.T. Does it not liberate our souls when we understand this?

A.J.G. That is so, and that brings in a desire with us to follow exactly what God has done in our souls, and in the assembly, He arrives at His final purposes according to His thoughts. There could be nothing greater than a created vessel that is the fulness of Christ, capable of answering to God as Christ Himself answers God, and which is also able to express God, as Christ Himself has expressed God⁵.

E.B. What is the connection between the wind and the Spirit in verse 8?

A.J.G. The Lord reminds us that we are in the presence of this mystery all the time. No one can explain the wind, and no one can control it, and yet it is all around us. This reminds us that we are in the presence of this mystery. It is also the case with the works of God in us. We cannot grasp it with our natural minds, but we can understand it through the Spirit. All this is intended to give us the impression that we are fully entrusted to the Spirit of God.

E.E.P. And we should be able at every moment to look out for what the Spirit reveals to us, so that we can see the kingdom of God increasingly, as it is said here.

A J.G. Yes.

C.deK.F. What does it mean: “thou hearest its voice”?

A.J.G. We should be careful to hear the voice of God every time we come together. The Spirit is continually present in the assembly, and

⁵ see Ministry of F E Raven—vol 3 p245

every time we come together we should look for God speaking to us. It is not a question of a special brother serving, but of whether God really speaks so that we can hear His voice.

C.deK.F. Would you say that we will then see results?

A.J.G. Yes, and this is so important in Hebrews 3 and 4: “Wherefore, even as says the Holy Spirit, To-day if ye will hear his voice”.

R.D. Was this voice heard in Antioch?

A.J.G. That was so. They were ministering to the Lord, and fasting, and the Holy Spirit said, “Separate me now Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them”, Acts 13: 2. Thus the Spirit made His voice to be heard, and His rights were recognised, and the assembly was in complete harmony with it.

E.E.P. “The wind blows where it will”. Is it important that we recognise the sovereignty of the Spirit as the original principle?

A.J.G. Yes, it is. We owe everything to God’s sovereignty, and yet He upholds the principle of responsibility. So He bears a testimony through Christ, and those in whom He works believe this testimony, so that the responsibility to hear and to answer to what God says is maintained.

W.E. Do we see in Nicodemus that the work of God progressed, because we find him at the cross?

A.J.G. That is so. We see him at the end of chapter 7 saying something to the Pharisees, so that he came under reproach. And they said, “Art thou also of Galilee?” But in chapter 19 he comes in in a certain way, and then we hear nothing more about him. He found his place in the assembly, so to speak.

E.B. Is hearing the voice of God related, for example, to Hebrews 4: 12?

A.J.G. Yes, we have it there. This is the character of the word of God, and it distinguishes between the soul and the spirit, that is, it distinguishes between the natural and the spiritual.

P.Sch. When the Lord says here, “We speak that which we know”, He is focusing on “know”?

A.J.G. He does. But what do you think about it?

P.Sch. I think what God has done in us is something we have and know.

A.J.G. Yes, that is right. God brings forth something that is tangible. Thus, this is the focal point in Revelation 21, where the dimensions of the heavenly city are given to us, it is a cube. That is to show us the great substance God has wrought in the saints. Therefore it is said that it comes down from heaven from God, and it has the glory of God. It does not reflect it, but it has the glory.

W.M. Why does the Lord speak in the plural here: “We speak that which we know”?

A.J.G. He probably identifies John the baptist with Himself. John the baptist had come to testify of the light. But I believe that the Lord is bringing to light here the principle to which our brother referred, namely that we should speak that which we know.

A.S.T. I refer to the side of responsibility once again. Is it also connected with the fact that we enter into the kingdom of God?

A.J.G. You think it involves subjection on our side?

A.S.T. And that we understand something of what we are brought into.

A.J.G. Quite so. The kingdom of God is an area where God has everything in complete control and everything is characterised by Him.

W.Schr. What are the “earthly things” that the Lord mentioned according to verse 12?

A.J.G. I think the Lord refers here to Ezekiel 37—the valley of dry bones. This is what the Lord refers to. Nicodemus, as a teacher of the Jews, should have known that it was impossible to speak with these dry bones, and yet they are brought to life by the living power of the wind.

W.Schr. Is that why you think it is a word by the Lord Jesus through the prophets?

A.J.G. Yes, the bones were made alive as a result of Ezekiel speaking to the wind. Here the Lord refers to the wind, which is an image of the Spirit of God.

C.deK.F. Nicodemus should also have known that in the preceding chapter in Ezekiel the heart is purified and the Spirit is given.

A.J.G. Quite so. Then the Lord continues to speak of Himself and says, "And no one has gone up into heaven, save he who came down out of heaven, the Son of man who is in heaven". We are once again faced with a mystery; when we are dealing with God, we are always in the presence of mysteries. Here was a Man on earth, we would like to say it with all reverence, who spoke of Himself as the Son of man who is in heaven, and I believe that all this should make us submissive and humble us, for we are dealing with God.

E.Sch. Therefore, does the Lord say: "We speak that which we know"?

A.J.G. Yes, quite so.

O.D. It shows that He is not only the Teacher, but also that He is also Lord.

A.J.G. Quite so.

E.E.P. Do you see a certain contrast in verse 10: "Thou art the teacher of Israel and knowest not these things!" This is actually said about all those like Nicodemus, so that the Lord says, "We speak that which we know", which carries divine authority.

A.J.G. Quite so. Elsewhere, the Lord tells them to listen to the scribes, because they sat on Moses' seat; and because they taught what Moses said; authority was associated with it. But He said that they should not do according to their works. But now the Lord speaks of the necessity that the Son of man had to be lifted up: "And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, thus must the Son of man be lifted up". The children of Israel were bitten by the serpents. Everyone who was bitten was aware of it and knew that the poison of

the serpent worked in him; and we must come there, that this is our state in the flesh, that the poison of the serpent is effective in all our being and in our nature.

E.E.P. It destroys in such a way that we do not hear correctly and see correctly.

A.J.G. Well, it shows how necessary it is that this man must end; and therefore the Son of man must be lifted up.

E.E.P. What is on our side has been met by the “Son of man” and has been ended.

A.J.G. Yes, He takes up all that is on man and meets it all by sacrificing Himself to bring in in Himself all that God has in His mind for man.

A.S.T. Thus He is not only the Son of man, but also the Son of God.

A.J.G. And that is so beautiful.

A.S.T. God sent His own Son.

A.J.G. Our condition made it necessary that the Son of man had to be lifted up, but it was necessary for the heart of God, that His only begotten Son had to be sent.

E.E.P. Does this being “lifted up” already contain any reference to the rest that you are talking about?

A.J.G. Well, it is making way for it. It removes all that is against God, so that man may have life in His Son.

Ques. What was included in the lifting up in its full sense?

A.J.G. It included that He was made sin. It was a brazen serpent. It is important to trace things back to their origin in scripture. In Genesis 3: 13 as to the woman, she says, “The serpent deceived me, and I ate”, that is, she came to the root of things regarding the serpent. And God has dealt with things at the root, by God “having sent his own Son, in likeness of flesh of sin, and for sin, has condemned sin in the flesh”.

K.H. Can we grasp the value of His exaltation only when we have Him before us, that He has ascended and is in heaven, the Son of man who is in heaven?

A.J.G. Yes, that is the case, but we must also take note of the depths into which He descended. Proverbs 8: 24 is very interesting in this connection, because it says, “When there were no depths, I was brought forth, when there were no fountains abounding with water”. Well, John 3 gives us the depths, that is, the Son of God enters such a position by being made sin for us, and in this position He stood in relation to the whole condemnation of sin in Himself. These are the depths. But then John 4 gives us the springs, abounding in water.

A.S.T. That is why verse 13 says, “And no one has gone up into heaven, save he who came down out of heaven, the Son of man who is in heaven”.

E.E.P. Is it not helpful that as the heavenly things come before us, the Lord immediately brings in the thought of heaven in verse 13?

A.J.G. Yes, that is very interesting, because God blesses us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenlies in Christ. He brought in the heavens to show us how infinitely greater His thoughts are than ours, and we should have that in our souls, that is, He has worked for us in the light of the best. He has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ.

W.Schr. Is it one of His beauties that it says: “the Son of man who is in heaven”—His place is in heaven?

A.J.G. That is so. You cannot limit any Person of the Deity in any way. If a Person of the Godhead has accepted the conditions of manhood and has come down to earth, then we cannot limit that Person to the earth, and therefore He can speak of Himself as the Son of man who is in heaven. That is why God says in Jeremiah 23: 24: “Do not I fill the heavens and the earth?”

E.E.P. Is this principle important for the believer, that the more he moves in dependence, the more he understands this ascension in verse 13, we also get a deeper impression of why He descended?

A.J.G. Yes, I think so. I understand it to be a principle in construction that the higher you build, the deeper you have to lay the foundations. And the more God opens up His great thoughts to us, the more He wants to give us an impression of the depths into which Christ has gone. The two things have to go together.

E.E.P. It is similar to the ladder that Jacob saw in his dream. The angels ascended and descended.

A.J.G. It is very interesting to read Proverbs 8, for it speaks of a time when there were no depths and no springs abounding with water; but all these things have now come forth in Christ and in the Spirit. God has shown in Christ how far He can go into the depths in love, and in the Spirit we have the springs, abounding with water, a spring that springs up into eternal life.

H.G. Was Paul filled full at the end of Romans 11: "O depth of riches, both of the wisdom and knowledge of God!"?

A.J.G. Yes, I think so, and the result is that he breaks out into a doxology. It is the impression he has of the wisdom of God that produces it. It is not only the love of God, but His wisdom. And that is the important thing in Proverbs 8.

W.E. The Spirit searches the depths of God.

A.J.G. Quite so.

C.deK.F. Why does the Lord speak of faith in connection with the Son of man, and then again of faith in connection with the only-begotten Son of God?

A.J.G. The Son of man is the one who came in on our side. We must believe in Him so that we may understand how He has met our side of things. But the only-begotten Son of God has come in on God's side to express His love. We must believe in the Name of the only-begotten Son of God in order to really get an impression of divine love.

The last verses 18-21, which we have read, show that these things have a certain moral significance, so that those who do not believe in the only-begotten Son of God show that they prefer to go

on in evil. In Christ it has come to light that there is a way out for us to leave evil and to come into the good. We accept the judgment of evil on the cross, and we get life through the only-begotten Son of God in the Spirit.

K.Pf. Do we see this in the one born blind in John 9: 35? When the Jews cast him out, the Lord says to him: “Thou, dost thou believe on the Son of God?”

A.J.G. I think so. But it is not only that the Son of God brings us the light of God’s love, but in the power of His own Person He opens up to us another world beyond death. For it was impossible for the Son of God to be kept in death. Thus the Son of God has opened up a different world beyond death, and that is the spiritual world.

H.G. And that introduces us to rest?

A.J.G. That is right. If God is to have His rest, then He must rest in conditions suitable to Him. And He is a Spirit and works in us on the line of that which is spiritual.

E.B. Is the life eternal mentioned here in verse 15 and 16 of the same character as in 1 John 5?

A.J.G. Yes, it says in 1 John 5, that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. It is the character of a life that cannot be touched by death.

E.B. We often say that eternal life as we understand it is something collective. But here it says: “Every one”, that is more personal.

A.J.G. Well, we have to enter into eternal life individually, but the realm of eternal life is really among the saints.

E.E.P. Is it perhaps the case, as verse 20 says, that if we hate the light we do not submit to the truth?

A.J.G. It shows that we are not prepared to be exposed. Anyone who really has had to deal with God is marked by transparency.

C.deK.F. Then it is the case, as it is said, that he is practising the truth.

A.J.G. Yes, he practises the truth.

H.G. Do we see the practical side of it in 1 Corinthians 13? Love “rejoices with the truth”.

A.J.G. Yes, that is so.

Rem. Peter mentions the spiritual things in his letter. He had got an impression of it when he was with the Lord.

A.J.G. Yes, he says, “a spiritual house”, 1 Pet 2: 5.

E.E.P. So our movements in practising the truth are in accordance with verse 21?

A.J.G. “But he that practises the truth comes to the light”.

C.deK.F. Please say a little more about the meaning of “come to the light”.

A.J.G. We do not hide things. We are not trying to make things appear in a way that they are not. We cannot deceive God. We sometimes tend to maintain an external appearance and thus deceive each other; but the Lord wants to encourage us to have to do with God habitually. This makes us transparent; for God is light, and there is no darkness in Him.

E.E.P. If this were not the case, God would hold back what He has for us through the Spirit.

A.J.G. Quite so.

C.deK.F. Do you think this refers to a believer?

A.J.G. Certainly.

C.deK.F. I thought of Ananias and Sapphira in the Acts of the Apostles. They can be considered as an example of this.

A.J.G. Yes. It is very touching that God wants us to share His rest with Him. It is not possible for God to rest in conditions that do not correspond entirely to Him; and that is why He works with us in the line of spirit and truth.

E.E.P. “That they have been wrought in God” means that we are then close to God, that we understand this and that we are influenced by what came from God?

A.J.G. Quite so.

W.E. Have the people of Israel never entered into this peace of God?

A.J.G. In a way, they came in. Joshua brought them in. But the epistle to the Hebrews shows that they had never actually entered into the rest of God, so that the apostle said, "For if Jesus [Joshua] had brought them into rest, he would not have spoken afterwards about another day". That is why the Spirit says, "To-day, if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts" (Heb 4: 7), which shows that only in Christianity can we truly achieve the peace of God.

Ques. In Christianity or in Christ?

A.J.G. Well, it is in Christianity, it is what is actually formed as substance in the saints. First of all, of course, it is in Christ; for when the Lord was here, the heavens opened above Him, and a voice said, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I have found my delight", Matt 3: 17. But then we must always remember that the assembly is the fulness of Christ; it is nothing less than that, and in it God really finds His rest.

K.Pf. "This is my rest for ever; here will I dwell, for I have desired it", Ps 132: 14.

A.J.G. Yes. "This is my rest for ever; here will I dwell, for I have desired it". That was said of Zion.

K.H. It is said of David that he was a man according to God's heart, because in truth he was before God and did not hide his iniquity, Ps 32 and 51.

Reading 2—Tuesday afternoon

John 4: 1-30

Proverbs 8: 22-31

A.J.G. We are considering the activities of God that have His rest as the objective. As we have already seen this morning, the Lord said that the sabbath was on account of man. When God sanctified the sabbath, He had man before Him, as well as having His own pleasure before Him. We read in Exodus 31: 17 that He rested on the seventh day and was refreshed. All this is very touching when we remember that God had man before Him. Proverbs 8 shows that He possessed wisdom before He even began an activity. It is said in verse 22 of Proverbs 8, “Jehovah possessed me [wisdom] in the beginning of his way, before his works of old”, that is, before He even began any activity, He possessed wisdom. It says: “I was set up from eternity”, or, as it is noted in the footnote, ‘anointed’, so that God possessed wisdom in all that He wanted to bring forth. I believe that the expression of divine wisdom was first to be seen in the incarnation, that is, how One of the Godhead came into manhood condition, and then in how the Holy Spirit came to dwell in man. I believe that these two things are the great expression of divine wisdom. Others, of course, are related to wisdom, as followed up in the epistle to the Romans, chapters 9-11. But I believe that the wisdom of God is seen in a special way in these two wonderful movements of these two Persons of the Godhead. This is what verse 30 of Proverbs 8 says: “then I was by him his nursling”, which implies a special object of affection, which we see in Christ as becoming Man. The other meaning, however, is also ‘artist’, or ‘artificer’, which is a remarkable suggestion of the Spirit, as it seems to me. So this morning we saw how the Son is predominant in what we had before us. He is the Son of man ‘lifted up’, and He is the only begotten Son of God. But in this chapter 4 (John 4), the Spirit is now predominant. All this is in view of the fact that man is brought to the true knowledge of God and made capable of responding to it in accordance with God.

E.E.P. Would you say that it is then mainly the work of the Spirit to make us children of wisdom?

A.J.G. Yes, I think so. All that God is working out in men He is doing through His Spirit. That is why we should become very familiar with the Holy Spirit, because God works with us in line with what is of the Spirit.

E.E.P. Thus, the effectiveness of the Lord here towards the woman is quite different from what we have seen this morning.

A.J.G. Yes, it is very different from what we had this morning. This morning we had a man who had a great religious reputation, and the Lord introduces to him that which seems very deflating, that there would not even be hope for such a person if he were not born again. But with this woman who had a bad reputation, the Lord mentions what morally cleanses her and then makes her a worshipper of God.

C.deK.F. I thought of verse 4. It is different here than in the third chapter, where the man came to Him. It says: “he must needs pass through Samaria”.

A.J.G. The Lord makes Himself available in His movements to a person in whom God works. In chapter 3 we see how one came to Him. This chapter introduces Him as the One by whom God had worked or was going to work. For the first time He made Himself available where the woman usually went; He was sitting by the well.

C.deK.F. It is as if we have a connection here between the work of the Lord as the Son of God and the Holy Spirit.

A.J.G. It is very touching that we always find perfect agreement between the divine Persons in their activities.

W.Schr. This shows the word: “And he must needs pass through Samaria”.

A.J.G. Yes, quite so. In chapter 3 the Son of man had to be lifted up, and now He had to pass through Samaria.

E.E.P. This “must needs” is for us.

A.J.G. It refers to a woman.

W.Schr. Is it not also related to the rest of God?

A.J.G. Without a doubt, because this woman is important, and every single one that the Father draws to Christ is important.

A.S.T. Is it not interesting that Jesus, the Spirit, the Father and God are all mentioned together in this chapter?

A.J.G. It is indeed very interesting. This shows that with such a person as this woman, the Lord has it before Him that she should be brought into the greatest privilege: she should become a worshipper of the Father and a worshipper of God in spirit and truth.

A.S.T. Does it include that the woman should be a vessel in which the Spirit dwells?

A.J.G. Yes, that is just before us, namely that each individual should become a vessel of the Spirit, and then the assembly as a whole should also be a vessel of the Spirit.

E.E.P. The idea of rest is an indication of what is eternal? It is the sixth hour here, and there were five men she had, “and he whom now thou hast is not thy husband”, he was the sixth; with the seventh man we should get to the thought of rest.

A.J.G. Quite so, that is what we were looking at this morning—finality; this gospel has been written that we may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that we may have life in His name. In all the glory associated with Christ, the Son of God, we should find life, and that is truly finality with God.

P.Sch. Can you say something about Jesus sitting down at the well? Then He says: “If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that says to thee (v 10), and then in verse 14: “... become in him a fountain of water”.

A.J.G. Well, the Lord sat at the well, and He sat there “wearied”. This is something very touching, that He had assumed a condition in which He knew exactly what it meant to be wearied. I believe that this should win our confidence. Although He is God in His Person, He comes so close to us as a Man in a condition that He knew exactly what fatigue meant. That is why this should encourage us to have to do with Him, with Him who, according to experience, knows exactly

what our experiences are. With Him, of course, everything was without sin. But then He speaks to the woman and says, “If thou knewest the gift of God”. He refers to the Spirit as the great gift that God has for man, and He speaks in such a way that He directs her interest so that she would like to have this gift, and then He shows her what this gift looks like: that on the one hand this gift would provide complete satisfaction, so that the person receiving the gift will not thirst forever, and on the other hand, the Spirit in such a person becomes a spring of water that springs up into eternal life. This is one of the things that God has before Him, to ensure that we have this springing up. There was a time when there were no depths and no springs, abounding with water, but now in chapter 3 the depths have come, in the distance into which the Son of God has been. Now in this chapter springs, abounding with water, come to light, which characterise one by spontaneous springing up in answer to God.

Ques. Does not the Lord refer here to His own Person, the last Adam a quickening spirit?

A.J.G. That is so. This is a very interesting scripture because it speaks of Christ as a man. He is the last Adam, but He is a quickening spirit. Thus the spiritual is very much emphasised in all these things, and we will have spiritual bodies.

E.B. Can you say a little more about the 14th verse: “... shall become in him a fountain of water, springing up into eternal life”?

A.J.G. Well, the Lord has it in His mind that worshippers should be won, those who worship in spirit and truth. Now, worship has no value at all if it does not come spontaneously on its own initiative. In the religious world around us we find what is called ‘divine worship’, but it does not come of its own accord, it is formal. But God looks for what comes of its own accord, what comes out of the believers, swelling from within, and it is to bring forth this that the Holy Spirit has been given.

E.B. And what is the connection that it springs up into eternal life?

A.J.G. It connects us to what lies beyond death. Eternal life is depicted in the land of Canaan of old, it was on the other side of the

Jordan, they had to cross the Jordan to reach it. And eternal life is for us that which lies on the other side of death; but the believer already knows it in the power of the Spirit.

K.H. You also spoke earlier, in regarding the woman in John 4, of the vessel which is the assembly. Is this to be associated with the “great sheet, bound by the four corners” in Acts 10: 11? Is the woman to be regarded as one of “the quadrupeds and creeping things of the earth” whom God has cleansed, and that Peter was asked to slay and eat?

A.J.G. Yes, that is so. It has often been said that John does not formally mention the assembly in his gospel, but he secures the personnel who make up the assembly. And this woman was an exemplary person to participate in the assembly.

E.E.P. Would you say that it is up to us whether we reach the seventh hour very quickly, for it says in verse 21: “the hour is coming”, and in verse 23: “But the hour is coming and now is”?

A.J.G. The term “hour” is very often found in John’s writings, and usually refers to a time marked by something special. When the Lord says, “But the hour is coming and now is”, He has before Himself this present time of the Spirit, which is marked by God securing the worship He looks for—worship in spirit and in truth.

E.E.P. The hour certainly indicates that which is eternal; it always helps us to see what passes quickly.

A.J.G. Yes, but in Christianity it has extended to two thousand years, that is, it is a perfect period of time, marked by one thing, and much concentrated action is associated with it. The formation of the assembly is a wonderful divine work containing an innumerable multitude of persons, and yet the work of God in them is so perfect that we have as the final result the whole fulness of Christ, where nothing is missing and nothing is superfluous.

A.S.T. The note in the passage we have read in Proverbs 8 points to Song of Songs 7: 1, to “The work of the hands of an artist”. Does this relate to the work of the Spirit?

A.J.G. I think that is the case. It refers to a complete work, characterized by skilfulness and beauty.

C.de.K.F. I wondered if we see this here with the woman, because her answer comes so fast, she is moving so fast, and you do not see that with Nicodemus.

A.J.G. She did not have as much to lose as he did. He had a great reputation, and all that had to disappear. She had only a bad reputation, and it was a great relief for her to be freed from it.

C.de.K.F. She was despised by the Jews.

A.J.G. Yes.

W.Schr. And then the Lord speaks to her about worship.

A.J.G. If we want to become worshippers, then everything must be morally right with us. As soon as she showed that she had an interest in what the Lord presented to her, the Lord put His finger on the mystery of her life. Because if something is wrong with us, morally speaking, then we cannot be worshippers. The Spirit can never support us in untruthfulness.

T.B. She was satisfied that she was exposed.

A.J.G. Yes, she was satisfied that everything was exposed.

O.D. Was it an hour of love for both persons, with Nicodemus and now also with the woman?

A.J.G. Yes, they both came into the presence of One who loved them and who opened up to them the thoughts of divine love.

D.Pf. Would you say that this morning we had, “we speak that which we know” and now, “we worship what we know”?

A.J.G. That is why it is so important that we know the Father and know the Lord, and also know the Spirit, because the question of our worship of the Spirit has arisen, and how this enters the service of the assembly in an appropriate way. Later in the gospel, we will come to the way the Spirit is remarkably presented as the Comforter. This is a very personal representation of the Spirit, which is to provoke worship in us.

E.B. Can I come back to verse 19: “Sir, I see that thou art a prophet”, said the woman. Was that a prophetic word? Does the prophetic word lead to such exposure?

A.J.G. The prophetic word brings us the mind of God, and it always exposes, of course, when there is something that needs to be exposed. So this morning we had that “the word of God is living and operative, and sharper than any two-edged sword, and penetrating to the division of soul and spirit, both of joints and marrow, and a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. And there is not a creature unapparent before him”, Heb 4: 12, 13. This woman had to feel that here. That is why she later says He “told me all things I had ever done”. It is good that everything is exposed, for this will not only bring liberty as a result, but it also means that we come into intimate contact with Christ, because He presents Himself as the one who has given Himself, so that all that is exposed may be taken away forever.

W.Schr. Was that a liberation for her? Because she went to the people and said, “He told me all things I had ever done”.

A.J.G. Yes, that is so. This is something that leads to liberty, that is, that everything is brought out before God.

H.Mö. Did the grace of God bring this about?

A.J.G. Yes, it is the grace of God that allows us to bring everything to light without being condemned by it. Therefore it is stated in chapter 1: 17: “For the law was given by Moses: grace and truth subsists through Jesus Christ”.

E.E.P. The woman stands here in the foreground. It is said only briefly in brackets about the disciples that they went away to buy food. They thought of food and did not know what the Lord’s needs were. He said to the woman, “Give me to drink”, and He probably detected that she might give it to Him; at least it is this question that He touches on with her.

A.J.G. Yes, the Lord found food by doing the will of the Father. This one was a person that the Father had given Him and drawn to Him. Thus every individual who is drawn to Christ is valued by Him in this light.

Ques. Is there a certain sovereignty, but also a responsibility in that it says: “whosoever drinks of the water which I shall give him”?

A.J.G. It is the grace and love of God that this has been made available to us, but we are responsible, we are to appropriate it. But the Lord seems to emphasise here how important it is that we are dealing with Him personally. Therefore He says, “If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that says to thee, Give me to drink, thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water”. And afterwards the woman says to the people, “Come, see a man who told me all things I had ever done”. It is then said that they went out of the city and came to Him. So the Lord does not meet the need at a great distance; although various miracles show that He was able to do so; He pours out this blessing being near to the persons.

E.E.P. Is this language in verse 11: “the well is deep”, the language of all those who have not come into this area of blessing? I am now thinking of those in the systems—or is it also an indication of one’s own activities in them, while we are seeing here what depth means in relation to the activity of God or the activity of the Spirit?

A.J.G. Yes; the well was deep, so you had to do a lot of work to produce only a little water. This is true of the world’s offerings in terms of refreshment. But since the Holy Spirit is given, He becomes a spring of living water in the believers—the source is what God has put in his heart.

E.E.P. And then there is no drying up.

A.J.G. No.

A.S.T. Do you think that the danger is that we are so slow in leaving Jacob’s well?

A.J.G. You mean that we are very slow to leave what the world wants to offer us, while the Lord told the woman that she herself should become a vessel of the Spirit?

A.S.T. He says, “... become in him ...”—as if there is a certain development here, if we give room to the Spirit.

A.J.G. This is something very important, because here is the source that God has placed in us, but then there is also the well in which the spring rises.

W.M. Was the story similar to David's? He was also told everything he had done.

A.J.G. What are you referring to with David?

W.M. He was in the dark at first. "When I kept silence, my bones waxed old". And when he came into the light of God, sin was forgiven him.

A.J.G. You are quoting from Psalm 32.

W.M. Yes, it was just mentioned that for the woman it was a special grace that she was told this, and so it was also that the grace of God was told to David, otherwise he would have remained in the consuming state for even longer. He was told, "Thou art the man", 2 Sam 12: 7.

A.J.G. God sent Nathan to David. Nathan was very skilful, but he was also worried about David. Therefore, before he told David what God had commanded him to say, Nathan produced something, one could call it a parable, so that David himself had to say that this man who had done this was worthy of death. That is why David condemned himself before he knew that he had done it himself. When Nathan then said, "Thou art the man", the matter suddenly became perfectly clear to David. Then Nathan could say what God had commanded him to say; but first he had to bring out in David the state which would immediately receive what God had to say to him. It is very interesting to look at this incident carefully, because you can see that the first part of what Nathan tells David is not what God commanded Nathan to say. It is something that Nathan himself says in his affection for David, and the result is that a state has been brought about in David, that he immediately accepts what God had to say to him through the prophet.

E.E.P. We often do it in a completely different way, and there is little recovery. But if we go ahead on the line as you have just said, then restorations are possible.

A.J.G. Yes. But we are now going back to the point of the source. The thought is that there is the source that God is offering; but then the well must also be dug, that is, everything that prevents the water from welling freely must be removed. This is always necessary with us when we have received the Spirit, for what prevents the free movements of the Spirit in us must be removed.

C.deK.F. I thought perhaps one can speak here in two ways of the movements of the Spirit; first the woman was morally cleansed, she was freed from moral impurity, and then she was also freed from the religious world as it is represented here by Jerusalem, as well as by the Jews who are mentioned.

A.J.G. She is now beginning to talk about the right place of worship. People often talk about it when you start talking to them. But the Lord seems to set it all aside and say, that the most important thing is that persons are secured as worshippers.

E.O. Did the woman come into complete liberty? She left the water pot.

A.J.G. Yes. But she has come to appreciate that Christ is the Head that is destined for man. She had six men, but now God wanted her to be freed from the influence of all six men and brought under the influence of Christ. She shows that she saw this, because she says to the men, "is not he the Christ?" that is, Christ as the appointed Head for man.

E.B. Why does the Lord make a difference in verse 23 and 24 in terms of worship in spirit and in truth, once He mentions the Father and then God?

A.J.G. In spirit stands in contrast to everything formal and religious, and in truth shows that everything must be true, that moral conditions must be right. We have the two thoughts, first the worship of the Father and then the worship of God. The worship of God is the final thought, but the worship of the Father is on the way there. The knowledge of the Father puts us in complete freedom and we are then at rest. We are not in bondage or standing afar off, even if we are dealing with God. For God has accepted the name of Father.

H.M. Do we not also see an increase from the Father to God?

A.J.G. Yes, the Lord mentions this in John 20: "I ascend to my Father and your Father, and to my God and your God". Therefore God is the final thought, and the worship of God is the final thought from man's side. But the knowledge of the Father brings us into freedom.

E.B. So on Lord's days, when we worship God, the final thought is reached?

A.J.G. Yes, that is the final thought.

Rem. Does the term Father relate to His love in activity by the Son?

A.J.G. Yes, He is known as a Father in relation to the Son, and then the Son brings us in alongside of Himself, and therefore He says, "My Father, and your Father".

E.E.P. You mentioned John 20, and here is already a hint of that in all that has been said to the woman. But the woman says nothing of these high thoughts, but she says only, "a man who told me all things I had ever done". Does it need time for this to be fully developed?

A.J.G. She probably did not notice what was included in it. Every individual must first of all be brought to terms with moral matters. As we come to see Christ as our Head we can see how we can be practically freed from lawlessness. I am not talking about Christ as the Head of the assembly, I am talking about Christ as the Head of every man. We hold Him together and also individually as our Head, so that we are then freed from lawlessness. It says, "Whoever abides in him, does not sin", 1 John 3: 6.

E.E.P. Is this the state in which we can arrive at all these thoughts in terms of rest?

A.J.G. That is right. It is very interesting when we think of the ways of God that when He brought in the human race, He did it on the principle of birth, and of generations, and of families. That was not the case with the angels. Each angel, as far as we know, has been created individually. In the case of angels, we do not have the concept of birth, or of generations, or of families. But man has grown up and

has become accustomed to the concepts of father and son and children and family and so on. God had before Himself in all this the desire to bring man into relation to Himself. Therefore, when the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, He was seen as One who had a glory as of an only-begotten with a Father. This has been brought on to view.

W.E. It is said that God will be all in all, is that the ultimate thought?

A.J.G. Yes, that is the final thought: “God all in all”, that is, how God is known by us as Father and Son and Holy Spirit in the Economy into which He has come.

A.S.T. Is there a further thought in this chapter when it says: “the Father” and “God” to John 20: “my Father, and your Father, and to my God, and your God”?

A.J.G. Do you think that the Lord refers here to the Father, without referring to those who are connected to Him?

A.S.T. Yes.

A.J.G. Would you say a little more about it?

A.S.T. I thought, “my Father, and your Father, and to my God, and your God”, refers to God in His relationships with us. We must always acknowledge that while the assembly has the most unique and greatest place, it is not everything, and God should be known as Father and God throughout the world.

A.J.G. Yes, every family is named by the Father so that every family gets an impression of the Father. This shows, I think, that it is pleasing to God to be known in a presentation of love throughout the universe, and I believe that the secret of this is that every family is brought together under Christ as the Head, who is the beloved Son of the Father. That is why the whole system is one of love: the Father is the supreme One, the beloved Son as the centre and object of His love, and all the families are brought together under Him as the head. Did you think so?

A.S.T. Yes, I thought so.

E.E.P. Can we say that the content of verse 24 should touch us very much, because it is told to us by One who knew it best and understood how to express it that way?

A.J.G. Yes, God is a spirit. That is something, I think, that we should think very much about; and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth. There is no reason why we should not be marked by truth in all our movements, and since we have the Holy Spirit, we can rise up to God in a spontaneous way.

E.B. When the woman speaks of the Christ and the Lord answers her, "I who speak to thee am he", I also thought of the similar word in John 9. Does this also have a connection with Romans 8? Is this position not a position of Romans 8?

A.J.G. Here in chapter 4, the Lord reveals Himself to the woman as the Christ. In chapter 9, the Lord reveals Himself to the man born blind as the Son of God. This is how the truth is developed; we really come to Christ, the Son of God.

P.Sch. Does all this include verse 10, "the gift" and "who it is"?

A.J.G. Yes, the gift of God refers to the Spirit, and "who it is" is, of course, the Son of God. What else were you thinking about?

P.Sch. We must have the Spirit to know Christ and the Father and God.

A.J.G. Quite so. That is why we have the Son in chapter 3 and the Spirit in chapter 4. We see how divine wisdom works so that man is brought into the knowledge of God in a complete way and is also fully able to give an answer to God.

E.E.P. Does this chapter show us how the Holy Spirit becomes the real effective power in us in relation to being born again?

A.J.G. Yes, the Holy Spirit is the One who is active in the new birth, but here it is of course more than the new birth. The Holy Spirit works in the believer, that is, He dwells in Him and brings the glory of Christ to our hearts, and also the glory of the Father as He is known in Christ. Then He also becomes the power so that a response is springing up in us.

E.E.P. What is brought before us in John 4 is to find an answer in us.

A.J.G. Yes, quite so, and I believe that the more we think of these things, the more we realise that God is the source of all that He does for Himself, either in Christ or in the Spirit. He Himself is the source of what He desires to secure in man.

C.deK.F. Do we get the thought of these activities of God in the word: “the Father seeks such”?

A.J.G. Yes. But God does not need to go outside Himself to bring His own thoughts to fruition. Therefore it is said: “of him, and through him, and for him are all things”, Rom 11: 36.

A.B. Is that so in Genesis, that God first created heaven and then the earth?

A.J.G. Quite so. Please continue.

A.B. I thought about it because it provided the environment for man whom God had in His mind.

A.J.G. That is what I think, and heaven was probably created so that we might know that God stands infinitely above us in all His thoughts and ways. Therefore it is said in Isaiah 55: 9: “For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts”. I believe that the heavens and the earth were created in a way to help us become worshipful in our thoughts of God.

W.E. God gave the people of Israel water springs. Does this indicate the Spirit?

A.J.G. Yes. The land was full of springs of water. The other image used for the Spirit is that of a stream. A stream is always fresh, a stream never stops. Thus the things of God are intended to impress us with constant freshness.

E.E.P. Verse 14 states: “for ever”. Is that an indication of how the Lord Himself will deal with us in eternity?

A.J.G. Well, it is not exactly eternity, but eternal life. But you probably thought of “shall never thirst for ever”; that is, we are completely satisfied, in time and eternity we all find our satisfaction in God.

E.E.P. I thought that when the Lord said this, He would have had the rest before Him.

O.D. Do we find the whole nature of God contained in it? For God is love in His nature and as such, has revealed Himself as Father and Son and Spirit.

A.J.G. Yes. We know God in the way He made Himself known, that is, in the Name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. This is the wise way in which love has come to creature man.

W.E. There is also a stream in the heavenly city. Rev 22: 1.

A.J.G. “A river of water of life”, Rev 22: 1. Psalm 65: 9 says “the river of God is full of water”.

Reading 3—Wednesday morning

John 5: 17-30; 6: 37-40; 51-69

A.J.G. We have had before us the activities of God in relation to the rest of God, and we have noted the words of the Lord Jesus that the sabbath was for man; that is, rest by His sanctifying, which of course had the Lord's own pleasure in view, and also that God desired that man should share in His rest. The writer of the epistle to the Hebrews refers especially in chapter 3 and 4 to the fact that the saints should know what it means to enter into the rest of God in the present time. He is very anxious because He says, "To-day, if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts", Heb 4: 7. Yesterday morning we saw that the Son is the Son of man, who was lifted up on the cross, that everyone who believes in Him should not be lost, but should have eternal life. Yesterday afternoon we saw the Holy Spirit as the power, which practically frees us from the power of the flesh and enables us to be worshippers.

Chapter 5, which we have read, especially brings the Father before us. The Lord indicates that the Father is supreme, and that He Himself, the Son, could do nothing of Himself except what He saw the Father doing. The Father, on the other hand, did not hold anything back from the Son, but showed Him all that He did. Thus it was a great concern of the Lord to show that the works which He did were the works of the Father, and that the words which He spoke were also the words of the Father. So He wanted the Father to be the greatest in our minds. But He also introduces Him in this chapter as the One who raises and brings the dead to life, that is, the Father is seen as the One who exercises the power of the resurrection. Therefore, even in chapter 11, when the Lord brought Lazarus out of the sepulchre, we see that He prayed to the Father before He did so, and said, "... on account of the crowd who stand around I have said it, that they may believe that thou hast sent me"; that is, the Lord was concerned that the Father should have supremacy in all that He did.

C.deK.F. Why do you think John mentions the two thoughts in verse 18: "because he had not only violated the sabbath, but also said that

God was his own Father”, as if he were bringing together these two thoughts, the sabbath and equality with the Father?

A.J.G. These were two things that brought about the hostility of the Jews. According to their way of thinking, the Lord continually violated the sabbath because He exposed their system as formal and without life. But they also acknowledged that the Lord’s speaking of the Father in the way He did included that He Himself was a divine Person. How much the Lord spoke and did in the presence of hostility is very striking in the gospel of John, and this emphasises the vitality of life, for the power of life cannot be denied.

E.E.P. Does verse 19 in chapter 5 give us an idea of how this wonderful system of divine activity is worked out and how it should affect us?

A.J.G. Yes, it is remarkable how the Lord maintained the appropriate position for the place He had taken as a man. Therefore He did nothing in independence from the Father, but in everything He said and did, He wanted to leave an impression of the Father.

E.O. Did He say, as a boy at the age of twelve, “did ye not know that I ought to be occupied in my Father’s business”, Luke 2: 49?

A.J.G. It shows that the Lord was devoted from the very beginning to the will of His Father and His glory. It is as if we should understand that the Lord wants the Father to be supreme in our thoughts. That is why the Father judges no one, even if God judges. We have come “to God, judge of all” (Heb 12: 23), as it is said, but nevertheless the Father, in the order of this Economy, hands over all judgment to the Son, so that there is no thought of judgment with the name of the “Father”.

E.E.P. When the Lord Jesus Himself says in verse 17, “My Father worketh hitherto”, He does not set aside the work of the Father, but we come here to a wonderful expansion of the activity of divine Persons in order to achieve in a greater way this thought of rest that you have before you, and this wonderful addition is made, “and I work”.

A.J.G. Yes, the fact that the Lord speaks of the Father as being active shows, as you say, that rest has not yet been reached; for the Father is working, and the Son is working, in view of conditions in which God can rest, and in those that man can rest with Him.

A.S.T. What does Jesus refer to when He says, “My Father worketh hitherto”?

A.J.G. The Father worked in the souls of men. That may go back to the beginning, to the fall, I do not know.

E.E.P. Does it also reveal wonderfully what divine Persons know of each other?

A.J.G. Yes, there is no difference in thought or outlook between the Father and the Son and the Spirit, nor is there any independent action.

C.deK.F. I would like to ask what it means here, where the Lord says, “save whatever he sees the Father doing”? He sees what the Father is doing. Is this what is being dealt with in the gospel of John?

A.J.G. It shows how the Lord was completely dependent in His movements and in His activities. He was on guard, so to speak, in relation to what the Father was doing, and moved in accordance with it. But He seems to be leading everything to the great thought that the Father raises the dead and quickens them. This shows that the world of life in which God can find His rest lies on the other side of death. We are very slow to accept it even if we accept the truth of it.

A.S.T. I would like to know whether the activities in this sense did not already extend to the previous dispensation; and then did the Lord and the Spirit work in this dispensation to bring to light the complete work of God, which then leads to rest?

A.J.G. Surely that must be the case. It is quite clear that the Father could not rest until He had come to finality regarding Christ and the assembly.

E.B. Can you say something more about what lies on the other side of death?

A.J.G. We saw yesterday that God worked on the line of what is spiritual: “that which is born of the Spirit is spirit”. God is a spirit.

We are not yet fully spiritual, even though we also have a spirit and God has given us His Holy Spirit; but at the moment we are not completely in a spiritual state. But the natural state must be set aside so that a spiritual state can be brought forth. It is said in 1 Corinthians 15 “that which is spiritual was not first, but that which is natural, then that which is spiritual”. This is figuratively presented to us in the fact that the land of promise was on the other side of the Jordan, and they had to cross the Jordan to reach this land. This means accepting death as the end of all that belongs to the natural.

E.O. Do we have this in John 12 in Bethany?

A.J.G. Yes, there was the dead man Lazarus, whom Jesus had raised from the dead. Lazarus had died to all that Bethany represented as a place. But he lived with Christ as one out of death.

D.Pf. Do we have an example of this in Ephesians: “Wake up, thou that sleepest, and arise up from among the dead, and the Christ shall shine upon thee”, Eph 5: 14?

A.J.G. I think that goes further than any relationship with the old man. It is something to judge the flesh, but something else to accept death in relation to the natural. Of course, we still have to allow the natural while we are here, so we cannot remove it completely, but the spiritual should have the first place with us.

W.E. Mr Raven writes about the more we have divine Persons before us, the more we could or would increase in true knowledge.

A.J.G. And then we see what the objective is. Thus the Father, through His own glory, raised Christ from the dead, and all that the Father can find His pleasure in is now on the other side of death in Christ. The Spirit has come from Christ in glory, so that through the Spirit we may have life in Christ and also live in relation to things that are above.

A.S.T. In this connection, would you help us about the difference between raising the dead and quickening?

A.J.G. The raising of the dead brings them to a whole new ground, but quickening means that they also live there.

A.S.T. Is quickening connected with the development of the spiritual?

A.J.G. I think that is right. I think it is important that we always remember what the Lord says here, that the Father judges no one, and that He has given all judgment into the hands of the Son. One reason is that they all honour the Son as they honour the Father. The Father makes sure that the Son should not lack honour by becoming a man. But then it is still important that no thought of judgment should be associated with the name of Father. The character of the Father is stamped on the whole world of blessings that God will bring forth, it is pure grace.

E.E.P. Is it your thought that you have with the Father the thought of rest? “For the Father himself has affection for you” (John 16: 27), but it takes the work of the Son to bring us on to the right ground to enjoy it, and it takes the activity of the Holy Spirit to be sustained and to enter into rest.

A.J.G. Yes, chapter 6 presents the Lord as food to us, that is, spiritual life can only be preserved among us on the basis of the principle of nourishment by the living bread that has come down from heaven. But in chapter 6: 63, the Lord says, “It is the Spirit which quickens, the flesh profits nothing”. That is why we are dependent on the Spirit to value the living bread and to appropriate it.

E.E.P. We not only receive these glorious thoughts from God in relation to His intentions regarding His rest, but also all the activities of divine Persons so that each one of us can come into that rest.

A.J.G. Yes, that is right.

A.B. May we also think of Luke 15: 24: “for this my son was dead and has come to life, was lost and has been found”?

A.J.G. Say something more, please.

A.B. I wanted to ask if this was one of those of whom it says, “whom he will” (v 21)?

A.J.G. Quite so, we can see that God rests in a scene of life, and one of the Godhead has become Man, so that we may have life in Him.

We have no part in Godhead, but we share in the life of a Man who is God in His Person. He has brought about a way of life as a Man that is excellent, and through the Spirit we are part of this life. In the present time we are sustained by nourishing ourselves from the living bread that has come down from heaven.

P.Sch. Is it the same as what we have in 1 John 4? There it speaks of completion in terms of rest, and it goes on to say: “as *he* is, *we* also are in this world”?

A.J.G. Yes. Therefore there is no fear in love, as it is said. We know that, as He is, we too are in this world.

P.Sch. Is this the completion in the rest that God has before Himself?

A.J.G. Yes, we can say these are final conditions.

O.D. Why does the Lord use the words, “Verily, verily” mostly twice, when everything He speaks is true?

A.J.G. Yes, but the Lord would like to emphasise this for us. When the Lord says, “Verily, verily”, He is pointing out something He wants to impress us with in a special way.

O.D. Is this like an oath?

A.J.G. Yes, there is such a thing. The Lord thus emphasises the truth that He brings to light.

C.deK.F. Why does verse 51 state that the Lord said, “the bread withal which I shall give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world”?

A.J.G. The Lord had a world before Him. God had a world before Him; in Genesis 1 we see how He called living souls into existence, first those that swam in the water, then those that flew in the air, and finally cattle and beasts of the earth, so that there was a great world of life in infinite variety; and then He brought forth man, male and female, and set them over the whole position, over this whole world, that they might represent God in all creation, and to keep all creation under the influence of man for the pleasure of God. The Lord speaks of a world in this way here.

C.deK.F. One has a wonderful impression of the greatness of what was before the Lord in His service.

A.J.G. That is why everyone who is drawn to Christ is included in this world. Living souls are gathered to have a part in this world in which God rests.

E.E.P. And the heavens give colour to this world, because here in this chapter 6 it is very often said: “from heaven”.

A.J.G. It is living bread from heaven. “I am the living bread which has come down out of heaven”, the Lord says.

D.Pf. Why is the thought of the voice brought in here in this chapter regarding divine activities?

A.J.G. At the beginning of this chapter we see the man lying by the pool and the Lord speaking to him. The Lord did not touch him. In many miracles the Lord touched the person in question, but in this case He did not, it was about the power of the voice. I believe the Lord showed how souls are quickened through the voice of the Son of God. Then the Lord said in verse 25 that the hour is coming and now that the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and which they that have heard shall live. I believe that this has come about in our souls in a moral way, that the Son of God went into death to bring in the testimony of God’s love, and that has brought us to life.

W.E. The Lord has brought life and incorruptibility to light. Is this what it is?

A.J.G. Yes, in Himself He has brought life and incorruptibility beyond death to light, and we share in it through the Spirit. Thus we are incorruptible to the extent that we remain in Christ. Soon we will have incorruptible conditions in our bodies, but at the moment we can abide in Him through the Spirit, who has proved Himself to be the incorruptible One. The temptation in the wilderness showed that in the Person of Jesus there was a Man who could never be corrupted.

A.S.T. Is life in verse 26 being traced to its source? “For even as the Father has life in himself, so he has given to the Son also to have life in himself”; and He gives us life.

A.J.G. I think that is the idea. Thus, life is traced back to its origin, as you said. It is wonderful language that the Lord uses here, that He could say that the Father also gave the Son to have life in Himself. It is part of the construction of this Economy that one of the Godhead has accepted the condition as a man, so that He should have life in Himself as a Man; and that is why He can give life to those the Father has given Him.

H.G. Can we bring in the verse here that our life is hid with the Christ in God?

A.J.G. I believe hidden with Christ in God is in our life in the present time. It is not known to the world. At this moment, Christ is withdrawn from the view of the world, and we find our lives in the assembly. It is in things that are morally above, and it is hidden with the Christ in God.

A.S.T. There is no degeneration in life, because it comes to us. But we are elevated into life itself.

A.J.G. Yes, that is so.

E.E.P. Can one bring in the verse that says that we live by faith, not by sight, and faith comes through hearing?

A.J.G. Well, everything in Christianity is in faith, but life is through the Spirit.

P.Sch. Would verse 23 of Romans 6, link with this where it says, “but the act of favour of God, eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord”?

A.J.G. This is also very much before us here, because eternal life is something that we enjoy in the present moment, it is enjoyed in the Spirit in the present time.

E.B. Can you say something about chapter 6: 40? as to my Father’s will? The Lord had nothing but the will of His Father before Him, as we also see in chapter 5.

A.J.G. All that the Father has before Him, and wants to secure for His world, He has given to the Son, and the Son brings about the full answer to His objective. He presents Himself as food for our souls to

be sustained, and He raises us up on the last day. Therefore everything is handed over to the Son, so that He can bring it through.

E.B. Therefore the will of the Father is directed towards the saints through the Son.

A.J.G. Quite so, and the saints are held together for the Father. The Lord says, “I will raise him up at the last day”, that is, the final thought is life in the Son beyond death.

E.E.P. Therefore, what we actually expect then is what we already now enjoy in the Spirit.

A.J.G. That is right. The only difference, of course, is that we are now in a weak and mixed state; but then we will be in a glorious state, which is completely spiritual, even our bodies will be spiritual.

E.E.P. But this verse 40 is a wonderful consolation for all of us, that we can leave everything in His hand when everything is in order on our side.

A.J.G. Yes, and I think verse 39 is very important, for there the Lord speaks of the work of God in its entirety: “that of all that he has given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up in the last day”. Thus we have the Father as supreme, how He gives everything to Christ and draws to Christ, and how the Lord receives everyone who is drawn to Him, and how He sustains Him throughout His life, presenting Himself as food, and then all raised at the last day.

A.S.T. Why is the expression used: “but should raise it up in the last day”?

A.J.G. There the Lord considers the work of God in souls as a complete whole.

C.deK.F. It is said once: “raise it up” (v 39), and at least twice: “raise him up”, vv 40, 44.

A.J.G. Yes, not the smallest particle of God’s work will be lost, and every single person included in the work of God will be raised on the last day.

E.E.P. Should this “it” perhaps also help us in relation to maintaining unity in all things?

A.J.G. Yes, I think so. This is not about so many individuals that the Father has. If the Father has the individual, each has his own value as a son, but we also have the idea of God’s work in its entirety.

E.B. Can you help us here again with regard to verse 40: “every one who sees the Son, and believes on him, should have life eternal”? What is seeing and believing? What I see, I do not need to believe anymore.

A.J.G. I think seeing is more in the sense of perception of who He is. The testimony of God’s love has come to us in the Son.

P.Sch. Is it a help that the Lord says, “Come and see”, John 1: 39? That helps our faith.

A.J.G. That is certainly the case.

Fr.Mö. Does the Father first draw us to the Son, that we may look at the Son and see in Him the features of the Father, and then be drawn to the Father?

A.J.G. Through Christ we come to the Father. “I am the way”, says the Lord, “No one comes to the Father unless by me” (John 14: 6), so that the Father draws to the Son, and the Son leads to the Father.

A.Chri. Can you help us about chapter 9: 35, 36: “Thou, dost thou believe on the Son of God? He answered and said, And who is he, Lord, that I may believe on him? And Jesus said to him, Thou hast both seen him, and he that speaks with thee is he”.

A.J.G. Yes. What question do you have?

A.Chri. Can this help us as to the question that was asked regarding seeing and faith?

A.J.G. It certainly involves a work of God in us to appreciate that Jesus is the Son of God. Once our eyes are opened to appreciate that Jesus is the Son of God, then His descent into death is for us the great witness of divine love; and His rising that He may take His place

before God as a Man, that we may have life in Him is a wonderful expression of divine love and wisdom.

P.Sch. Does divine love help us in the epistle of John, when he says “as” there and brings before us what Christ is? “... as *he* is”, just as He is pure, and as He is in this world, 1 John 3: 3; 4: 17.

A.J.G. The Lord is presented to us as the One in whom we learn the truth.

E.E.P. In chapter 6, the word “come down” very often occurs. Is this in order to help us, so that we are not only satisfied with the fact that God has made a provision, but that we should also be spiritual and governed by the Spirit, knowing where everything came from?

A.J.G. The Lord came down from heaven to die, that is, to end the state of flesh and blood. He accepted flesh and blood conditions in order voluntarily to end this condition in death and then ascend to where He was before; that is, the Son of man has ascended to where He was before, and life is in Him. The Spirit quickens, the flesh profits nothing; and that is why we are completely dependent on the Spirit to understand these things. At the same time, however, we can also nourish our affections and thoughts from the fact that Christ came down from heaven and died. This is what He means when He refers to His flesh and blood. Our affections and thoughts should be nourished by the fact that He voluntarily came down and voluntarily died, and then ascended to where He had been before. Thus the thoughts of God for man are now expressed in Christ as a Man where He is. It is a new state of life for man, which was brought forth in Christ beyond death, and we share in it through the Spirit. It is a whole new area of interest connected to Christ where He is now. That is why the Lord says, “*he* also who eats me shall live also on account of me”.

H.Mö. And then He also speaks of the will of the Father.

A.J.G. Yes. Say something more, please.

H.Mö. I only thought that the Lord had accomplished everything in a wonderful way according to the will of the Father.

A.J.G. It is important to see that. The Lord presents the Father as supreme, the will of the Father rules everything. The Son has come in devotion to bring the good of it into our hearts. Thus we see how the Father and the Son and the Spirit work together in view of our being placed in life in Christ beyond death, in order to have our place in the rest that God Himself has brought about in Christ.

W.E. The Father loves the Son, and if we love the Son, the Lord Jesus, we delight the heart of the Father.

A.J.G. That is right.

E.E.P. The expression “comes down” occurs six times in chapter 6. There were six days of creation, and after that came the day of rest. If we understand this coming down in all its meanings, are we then equipped for the rest that God has before Himself?

A.J.G. Well, it is very touching that He came down from heaven. He has brought the heavenly to us in Himself.

A.S.T. Does not life in us have to be nurtured over and over again?

A.J.G. That is something very important. Many of us suffer from this, spiritually speaking, that we do not pay enough attention to the fact that we need to feed ourselves spiritually according to what the Lord has set out.

A.Chri. Is this food and drink?

A.J.G. Yes. We must first eat His flesh and then drink His blood, that is, to make His death our own, and also the love that was expressed in His death. Then the Lord says: “*he* also who eats me shall live also on account of me”. This is Christ, where He is, as the centre of the interests and pleasure of the Father.

C.deK.F. Peter seems to have an impression of it in this chapter, not as a revelation from the Father, but rather as verse 68 shows, what was valued in his soul.

A.J.G. That is very striking. Because when the twelve were asked, “Will ye also go away?” Peter answered, “Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast words of life eternal”. And then he said, “and we have believed and known that thou art the holy one of God”. It is striking

that he valued Christ in this light. Peter seems to acknowledge that things must be morally in harmony with God, and that the Lord personally represented what God looked for in man. Holy conditions in manhood were in the Lord Jesus there under the eye of God.

E.E.P. That is why “spirit and truth” come first and then “spirit and life”, which we have here today.

A.J.G. Quite so. Things must be true, as we said yesterday. God is true. He must have right moral relations in everything and this is ensured in Christ as the Holy One of God.

E.B. Would you say that some suffer from not feeding enough of Christ? Can you say a little more about that?

A.J.G. In natural things, we must eat our meals every day. We know full well that if we neglect our meals, we will suffer in our health. The same can also be applied to spiritual things. If we do not always acquire the food that God introduces to us in Christ, then we will suffer spiritually. That is why, after God in Genesis 1 had created man, “male and female created he them”, that He would then give them instructions on what to feed. As soon as God brings forth life, He also brings food to light, so that this life may be preserved.

K.Pf.Sr. When the children of Israel came into the land, they fed themselves on the fruit of the land, of roasted grains and unleavened loaves.

A.J.G. Yes, quite so. We must have the unleavened bread in the wilderness and also in the land. And then there was also the food which was peculiar to the land, and they ate it. This is included in what the Lord says, “*he* also who eats me shall live also on account of me”.

E.B. Do you think it is important to have constant vigilance and then a constant link with the Lord?

A.J. G. Yes, that is right.

E.E.P. Is it interesting that verse 60 says, “Many therefore of His disciples”, but then He spoke to the twelve in verse 67?

A.J.G. Yes, many turned away and did not walk any more with Him. Spiritual ministry tests us. We are held by the natural much more than we think, but the spiritual ministry here tested the disciples.

E.E.P. Is it interesting that this new unfolding that Peter received, “thou art the Holy One of God”, is what this gospel confirms?

A.J.G. It is interesting to see that this was the impression that Peter and those who were with him had received from Christ. Undoubtedly, his impression of Christ continued to grow. We can see from the first chapter of the 2nd epistle of Peter what impressions he had received from Christ, as a result of being on the mount of transfiguration. There they had received an appreciation of Christ as the centre of the Father’s affections. But here at this point in chapter 6 they received an appreciation of Christ as the holy One of God, that is, conditions of holiness must be there first before restful conditions can be enjoyed.

E.E.P. Is it important that it first says “believed” and then “known”?

A.J.G. Yes, that is so. But then the Lord had also spoken words of life eternal to them, He had not preoccupied them with what was going on in the world around them. They were words connected with the purpose of God which the Lord had spoken to them.

W.M. Can we associate Hebrews 10: 19-20 with this, because the blood of Jesus and His flesh is spoken of?

A.J.G. Well, the blood meets the demands of God, and the flesh refers to His death, which brought to an end our old man, who could never please God. Therefore, in the acceptance of death, we can enter the presence of God—the sanctuary.

Reading 4—Wednesday afternoon

John 9: 1-12, 24-38; 10: 1-5, 14-18, 27-30

A.J.G. In these chapters we have hostility to Christ. At the end of chapter 8, they took up stones that they might cast them at Him; in chapter 10: 31 they again took up stones that they might stone Him. But the man born blind, who was the subject of God's work, had his own experience with this enmity, that is, the work of God was shown in the presence of opposition. Life develops only if we confront the opposition, so that the more we read in chapter 9, the more the man born blind increases in strength. It is good that we keep in our minds that God has a world of life before Him, and the very fact that the saints have to confront the opposition to the truth becomes the means in the hand of God to bring them on in the truth.

Therefore, the first feature of life in Genesis 1 was that the earth brought forth grass. Outwardly, there is nothing weaker than a small blade of grass, but we see the power of life in it as it makes its way through the earth. We see this in the man born blind. The power of life came to light with him when he had to confront the opposition. So he was born blind, that the works of God might be revealed in him.

A.S.T. Is there any meaning in the fact that the works of God are in the plural?

A.J.G. These are all the details in which the work as a whole is shown. Do you think so?

A.S.T. I believe that. Details come to light throughout the chapter.

A.J.G. From a spiritual point of view, we are all blind from birth, but when we then receive light from Christ, then the light becomes life, so to speak, and the purpose is that, the more this light is attacked, the more the power of life in victory over everything that is opposed to it comes to light.

C.deK.F. The Lord went out of the temple in the previous chapter, and in chapter 9 the opposition to the Lord is needed to drive this man born blind out of the temple.

A.J.G. That is why God does not intend that those in whom He works should remain in the world, whether in the religious world or the political world or in any other feature of the world.

E.B. What does the mud from the spittle that has been put on the blind man's eyes mean?

A.J.G. I think the spittle speaks of the excellence that is in the Person of Christ because of who He is, and that connected with earth, resulted in the mud that was put on the eyes of the man born blind. This is an allusion to the fact that Christ became Man and that He was recognised as the sent One, namely because He came in a certain way from God to present the light of God to man and to make it effective through His death.

E.E.P. Have the eyes of our hearts been opened in this way?

A.J.G. I think so. We have the sovereign work of God to open our eyes, and yet we see the moral principle coming in, as the man was obedient. No one comes to the blessing if he is not obedient to the gospel. That is why the gospel is proclaimed for obedience of faith. It is very interesting in this way that, while on the one hand everything is due to the sovereignty of God, the moral principle is always brought in.

E.E.P. Our obedience becomes increased the better we learn to observe things. This man here observed things well.

A.J.G. Yes, and the more obedient we are, the greater our blessings. So the Lord said, "Go, wash in the pool of Siloam, which is interpreted, Sent". Because the man was obedient, he was brought into moral correspondence with Christ. Christ was sent, and the man was also sent.

E.E.P. I thought, when we read it, that he is now one who speaks the same language as his Master who had helped him, v 27.

A.J.G. What are you referring to?

E.E.P. What is said in verse 27: "I told you already and ye did not hear".

A.J.G. Yes, he presented what their true state was to the consciences of those who opposed.

E.B. What does the water of Siloam represent?

A.J.G. Well, the pool of Siloam means, “Sent”. The man should wash his eyes in the water of the pool that meant, “Sent”. I believe that this includes that light comes into the soul when one apprehends who Christ is, who has been sent by God. That is why John’s letter says: “And *we* have seen, and testify, that the Father has sent the Son as Saviour of the world”, 1 John 4: 14.

Ques. Is there any meaning in the fact that the man stayed where he was, and the Lord came to him?

A.J.G. This seems to emphasise more the sovereign work of God rather than the plight of the man.

C.deK.F. Why is the work of God first shown to the neighbours? It reads: “The neighbours therefore, and those who used to see him before ...”

A.J.G. It may be that it is the grace of the Lord that connected him at first with a more compassionate element than with a hostile element. The neighbours were largely sympathetic. The parents were not exactly opposed, but they did not commit themselves; but the Pharisees resisted, so the ordeal that came upon this man became ever greater as he progressed.

W.Schr. Why do the disciples associate the blindness of the man with sin?

A.J.G. Well, there was ignorance on their side. It was impossible that he was born blind as the consequence of his own sin.

A.S.T. Do we not often tend to think more about man’s need than what the heart of God is?

A.J.G. That is true, and it is striking when we look at the work of God as it manifests itself in persons while tremendous power in the world is against it. It is a great testimony to God when one sees the work of God in persons who overcome the world.

E.B. Is it not interesting that he clearly confessed and said in verse 9, “It is I”?

A.S.T. He did not go and show them the works of God, but the works of God proved themselves.

A.J.G. That is something very important. If we are faithful to the work of God in ourselves, it will manifest itself. Now, it is one of the most important things that we should be victorious over the world in all its features. The Lord’s last word, before He turned to the Father, was in John 16; 33: “I have overcome the world”, as if the Lord wanted to show that He came out of the world as One who had overcome the world. I believe that the Lord had it before Him that before we leave the world, we too should overcome.

Ques. Was this man a living witness to the work of Christ?

A.J.G. Yes, and to the work of God. We must always remember that the conflict exists between Satan and God, and man is the battlefield. The pleasure of God is in men, the delight of wisdom was in the children of men, and the sabbath was on account of man. Man is in the thoughts of God, and man is also the point of attack with Satan. That is why Satan has devised a great world system with manifold divisions to keep man in bondage in this world.

Now, the work of God desires to take man out of this world system completely. Thus, in his first letter, John exposes the whole world and says, “the whole world lies in the wicked one”, 1 John 5: 19. In those in whom He works, the work of God gives a complete victory over the world.

A.S.T. He secures this by a Man, “a man called Jesus”.

A.J.G. Yes, and others are then brought into moral correspondence with Him. Chapter 10 shows that these individuals are then gathered into a flock.

E.E.P. This flock is gathered because the sheep have seen and learned a great deal in relation to the works of God from one another.

A.J.G. Quite so. Each of them have had an intimate link with the Shepherd.

E.O. Is it important to see the definiteness of the man here? He says, “he has opened mine eyes”.

A.J.G. It is very interesting to see this man getting bolder and braver.

W.E. In Luke 16 the rich man’s eyes were opened when he was in hades and in torment.

A.J.G. What do you think about it?

W.E. Because it was eternally too late for him.

A.J.G. Yes.

E.E.P. Does this courage that we see here only come to light when we confess the Name of Jesus? He says, “A man called Jesus”.

A.J.G. Well, this is a good start. The man was characterised by the fact that he said only what he knew. He even said, “If he is sinful, I know not. One thing I know ...”. But afterwards he made it very clear that He could not be sinful, for he said, “If this man were not of God he would be able to do nothing”.

C.deK.F. Is this really the work of the Spirit, because the man was supported when he testified?

A.J.G. Yes, that is the case. “One thing I know ...”. He stood firm.

E.E.P. This should always help us, and will it always help us, if we only talk about what we know from our own experience?

A.J.G. Yes, quite so.

W.Schr. He was very simple and associated it with his obedience. He said in verse 11, “and having gone and washed, I saw”.

A.J.G. It is very interesting that he himself insisted that he was obedient.

C.deK.F. Afterwards he spoke of the obedience of the One who had helped him, v 31.

Th.B. What the man said to the Pharisees was much shorter than what he said to the neighbours.

A.J.G. That is also interesting. He opened up everything to his neighbours, because they were friends; but he was very short with the enemies.

E.E.P. Do you think that if we make long speeches, then it opens up the way for compromises?

A.J.G. Yes.

R.D. Naaman initially refused obedience, but then he went down into the Jordan.

A.J.G. Yes. God used his servants to help him—first a little girl and then his servants. But the man here had no help, so to speak, only the work of God in this man is demonstrated. It is very interesting to see the works of God in Genesis 1 showing how life developed. At first it was just grass, as a blade of grass comes out of the earth, and then it was other things, like herbs and fruit trees. Then we have living souls in the water. They had scales and fins and were thus able to pass through the water without the water being able to enter them. Then there was the fowl that could fly above the earth. This is something in which we should all develop, the ability to rise above the earth in the Spirit. Then we have the different types of cattle. Undoubtedly, these all represented certain characteristics of the glory of God. Thus, Genesis 1 is very important in relation to the gradual development of life in all its diversity, and I believe that this person reveals the way in which life manifests itself.

W.Schr. The opposition even used a lie to deny life. They say, “we know that this man is sinful”.

A.J.G. Yes. The opposition always has its origin in the father of lies. This is another feature of John’s writings—that he traces things back to their origin.

A.S.T. Thus the man was honoured when they said: “Thou art his disciple”.

A.J.G. And then it came to light that the man would check everything, whether they were of God or not. He said, “If this man were not of God he would be able to do nothing”. On that point, they

cast him out. They did not like what the man raised as to whether things were of God or not.

E.E.P. The man came to a conclusion here in relation to all his exercises, for he thought about how things were for God.

A.J.G. Yes.

Th.H. Does this confession have a parallel with Gamaliel and his utterance? He said in the council that it would become clear whether the work was of God or not.

A.J.G. I think you have in your mind what Gamaliel said in the council in Acts of the Apostles chapter 5. It says in verse 38 and 39: “for if this counsel or this work have its origin from men, it will be destroyed; but if it be from God, ye will not be able to put them down”. Therefore, it is a feature of God’s work that it traces everything back to God. Thus this man said, “If this man were not of God he would be able to do nothing”.

W.Re. Do we have that in Romans 10: 10? There it reads: “For with the heart is believed to righteousness; and with the mouth confession made to salvation”.

A.J.G. Yes, that is the confession. This man here certainly took his position: “If this man were not of God he would be able to do nothing”. But then he was cast out. It is very interesting that it says, “Jesus heard that they had cast him out”, that is, there was one who was interested in the man and spoke about him to Jesus.

A.S.T. Is it interesting that he says in verse 31: “But we know that God does not hear sinners”?

A.J.G. Do you think that he is referring to something that could still be of God in the Pharisees?

A.S.T. I wondered if he did not have an awareness in his soul that he was not entirely alone in this matter.

A.J.G. It is a good thing to speak in such a way that the work of God can respond to it in other people as well.

E.E.P. Is this an encouragement for the brethren who stand alone and remain faithful to the testimony in any locality, so that they have this confidence, that the Spirit, the wind, blows where He wills, and that God can add another by such awakening?

A.J.G. Yes.

E.B. Does “and having found him”, mean that the Lord had pursued him?

A.J.G. Yes, I think so. The Lord was already outside. One can perhaps say that the Lord was stoned morally, for they took up stones, that they may cast them at Him, and so He was already outside. Now He finds the man who was cast out to make Himself known to him as the Son of God. This means that although the Lord had been cast out of this world, he rose from the dead and became the beginning of a new world. It says in Colossians 1: 18: “who is the beginning, firstborn from among the dead”. Therefore He is risen from the dead the beginning of the world which will remain for the pleasure of God. He is marked out as the Son of God in power by the resurrection of the dead, Rom 1: 4.

E.E.P. In this unfolding on the part of the Lord in verse 35 to 38, the two were alone; the enmity was eliminated, and the neighbours were not there either.

A.J.G. That is right. We see that with the personal work of the Lord with the woman in John 4 and the result is that she came to know Him as the “Christ”. Here the personal work of the Lord in this man had its result in getting to know Jesus as the “Son of God”. There was a certain finality in the exercises of these two people.

E.E.P. The man was already so closely connected with the Person of the Lord Jesus that he recognised Him immediately and said “Lord”.

A.J.G. “And he did him homage”.

Rem. The verses up to verse 35 show that the man born blind was true to what he knew.

A.J.G. Yes, and because he was so true and so faithful to God's work in himself, he was cast out.

C.deK.F. Why is so much emphasis being placed on right and wrong hearing in this chapter?

A.J.G. What are you referring to?

C.deK.F. I thought of the way in which the man speaks of hearing; he hears and the Lord hears, and the Pharisees hear. In the next chapter, we have the right hearing, which is to hear His voice. Is chapter 9 the introduction to this?

A.J.G. Well, that is interesting because we already had the hearing of the voice of the Son of God this morning.

Ques. Is it good for us if we are cast out?

A.J.G. Quite so, because it brings us in accordance with Christ. Therefore it is said: "therefore let us go forth to him without the camp, bearing his reproach", Heb 13: 13.

K.Pf.sen. This is true assembly material.

A.J.G. Yes, that is right. This is where we come to chapter 10. Chapter 10 begins the collective side of truth in John's gospel; and we find that it is now about those who have been cast out and who then move as a flock.

H.Mö. Casting out is probably the result of confession.

A.J.G. It was the consequence of being faithful to what he knew.

K.H. Does casting out of the religious world correspond to what we find in chapter 10, that He calls and leads out His own sheep by name?

A.J.G. That is right. It is interesting that the calling by name in chapter 10: 3 has in mind that He leads them out. Once the souls are out, I do not think that they are called by name, for they will move together with the other sheep as a flock. The calling them by name seems to be connected with the exercises of becoming free from the things that are against God. Therefore, the Jewish fold was something which God had worked in order to set them free from.

P.Sch. Is the fold connected to darkness as in chapter 8: 12?

A.J.G. Yes, that is right. The Lord said, “he that follows me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life”. It is worth remembering how often and how much the Lord has the thought of life before Him. He gives eternal life to the sheep.

A.S.T. Is there any reference to sonship at the end of the previous chapter, because the Lord first reveals Himself as the Son of God and says, “he that speaks with thee is he”?

A.J.G. I think so, that is, the Lord connected the man with Himself.

A.S.T. This “with thee” shows that there was a close bond.

A.J.G. This is something very important, because the sheep are the saints, who are characterised by this matter, namely that as a result of God’s work there is a close connection between them and Christ, so that they recognise the voice of the shepherd and reject the voice of every other.

H.Mö. That was a complete devotion.

A.J.G. Yes, devotion to follow the shepherd, but it is actually about divine feelings. Usually the sheep know the voice of the shepherd, and the shepherd knows every single one of His sheep.

E.E.P. When danger approaches, the sheep go together much more.

K.Pf.Sr. But the Lord goes before the sheep.

A.J.G. It is very interesting that Christianity should take this form. One cannot think at all that the saints should be independent of each other; they should move together as one flock, and the one voice of the shepherd is there for the whole flock. So the saints, when they are attentive throughout the earth, will find that the same ministry is given to them all, in whatever part of the earth they may be, because there is one Shepherd for all the flock and also one voice for the one flock.

A.B. Can we think of Mary in John 20? When she had heard the name “Mary” she also received the message: “Go to my brethren”.

A.J.G. I think so. I also thought of the other Mary, who sat at the feet of Jesus and listened to His words. You could say she was also a

characteristic sheep. Her only thought was to listen to what the Shepherd had to say.

C.deK.F. Do you have an impression in this connection of the Spirit with the Lord Jesus in verse 3 of this chapter?

A.J.G. “To *him* the porter opens”. Do you connect that with the Spirit?

C.deK.F. Yes. I thought of how you brought before us the thought of the work of the Holy Spirit here, and how the Lord Jesus is connected to it and carries it on.

A.J.G. Surely, that is right.

J.deR. Is not the fifth verse a great consolation if we follow the Lord in faith: “But they will not follow a stranger, but will flee from him”?

A.J.G. Yes, they do not know the voice of the stranger. Here the Lord presents the truth, so to speak, in its normal characteristics, and it is a normal feature of the sheep to hear the voice of the shepherd and not to know any other voice.

A.S.T. The expressions “his own” in verse 3 and 4 are very touching.

A.J.G. Yes, His own sheep. We have the same expression in chapter 13 that He loved His own who were in the world. Now the Lord in verse 14 seems to bring in the idea of great reciprocity between Himself and the sheep. He says, “I am the good shepherd; and I know those that are mine, and am known of those that are mine, as the Father knows me and I know the Father”. So He now brings us to very elevated ground, because He introduces that the same kind of close, mutual knowledge that exists between Him and the Father should now develop in the sheep in relation to Himself.

E.E.P. All because of the rest?

A.J.G. Well, it leads there. The Lord leads His sheep. We come to verses 27 and 28, because the result of the sheep hearing His voice and following Him is that they come into eternal life. This is so if we come into line with the Lord’s service to us. Peter could say, “thou hast words of life eternal”, John 6: 68. The Lord always wants to put us in the direction of God’s purpose and pleasure.

E.E.P. So the man of whom we read in chapter 9 was one who now found himself here in this flock and as such came into the good of these relationships; probably he was occupied with the ministry which is before us today that there is one flock and one Shepherd.

A.J.G. It is very interesting that the Lord brings the other sheep: “And I have other sheep which are not of this fold”, John 10: 16. So John represents the truth of the one body, the Jew and those from the nations are brought together into one flock.

A.R. Does Psalm 23 fit in here in regard to the good Shepherd?

A.J.G. There David speaks of Jehovah being his shepherd. It is David’s experience of the Lord’s grace towards him, and it is truly the experience of the Lord’s grace towards him on his responsible path. So his soul is refreshed, he is led in paths of righteousness for His name’s sake, experiences the benefit of the fellowship, that is, a table is prepared before him in the presence of his enemies. But I believe that what we have in John 10 goes beyond that. Psalm 23 was David’s personal experience of the grace of Jehovah to him on his path of responsibility, but here the Lord presents Himself as a shepherd who leads His flock and brings them into eternal life. That is, that we are already being introduced into heavenly things in order to find our part in it together in the power of the Spirit.

K.H. If we consider this prophetically in the order of the Psalms, Psalm 22 is the sufferings of the Lord, Psalm 23 Him as the Shepherd in His present activity and Psalm 24 then as the King; then this Psalm also has a present meaning for us.

A.J.G. I think that these psalms also apply to us. As you say, Psalm 22 is the Psalm of suffering, Christ in His atonement as the foundation of everything. And, as you say, Psalm 23 is His pastoral care for us as individuals, and Psalm 24 brings in the light of the day of glory, so that our heads rise in view of the King of glory coming in. Every time we break bread, we remember it. We proclaim the death of the Lord until He comes.

E.B. Why is there this double assurance? In verse 28 it says, “I give them life eternal; and they shall never perish”, and verse 29 says,

“and no one can seize out of the hand of my Father”. Once they have eternal life and shall never perish because the Son holds them in His hand, and then “no one can seize out of the hand of my Father”. It is a double assurance.

A.J.G. Yes, that is so. The Lord took the opportunity to say, “My Father, who has given them to me is greater than all”. The Lord always sought to make much of the Father. In chapter 14: 28, He said: “for my Father is greater than I”, and here he said, “My Father ... is greater than all”.

A.S.T. Could you open up to us verses 17 and 18 where it is said that the Lord lays down His life that He might take it again?

A.J.G. It is very important that we keep this whole verse before us: “because I lay down my life that I may take it again”. He actually had to give His life to accomplish salvation, but it happened in view of Him taking it again, so that in life beyond death He brought out the character of life, into which we too are to be brought. Then not only did this happen, but there is also the fragrance of Christ’s love all over the scene. I believe that the more we touch the present enjoyment of the divine purpose, the more we get an impression of Christ’s love, both of Christ’s love for the Father and of Christ’s love for His own. Everything was brought about in the power of Christ’s love. What do you think about it?

A.S.T. Yes. And were not the forty days in resurrection also connected to it, even if it were not yet final?

A.J.G. By taking His life again and moving on the earth for forty days among His disciples, I believe that the Lord was accustoming them to spiritual conditions; for the Lord came in through closed doors and presented Himself to them living, and therefore the world could see nothing at all of these movements of the Lord Jesus.

E.E.P. In verse 17, we see His obedience to death, and thus we should be exercised in relation to our obedience and the obedience of faith.

A.J.G. And that we should pass into that which is spiritual, for the spiritual alone is final.

K.H. Is it not clear from what He says that He is one of the Godhead and acts in authority?

A.J.G. Yes, and yet, as One who has become man, He did not desire to lay down His life without the authority of the Father, even if He had the power to do it. He had the power to give His life because He is one of the Godhead. That is why chapter 19: 30 states: “and having bowed his head, he delivered up his spirit”. That was His own act. But because He became man, He did not want to do it without authority from His Father. Thus, in Christ, there was a complete connection between the Godhead and what corresponded to the position of manhood that He had taken up.

C.deK.F. It is quite significant how often the Father is mentioned here: the work of the Father, the commandment of the Father, the Name of the Father, and then He also speaks of the love of the Father?

A J.G. And then we have this remarkable verse that we have already touched: “On this account the Father loves me, because I lay down my life that I may take it again”. We have in Ephesians 3 in the apostle’s prayer that we know the breadth and length and depth and height, and that we may come to the scope of all that the Father has before Him, and then he adds, “and to know the love of the Christ which surpasses knowledge”. I believe that this is Christ’s love for the Father and for the saints; the whole position is brought about by the power of Christ’s love, and in eternity we are sustained in this position by the power of Christ’s love.

E.E.P. May I ask if we are included here in the “me” in verse 17: “On this account the Father loves me”? It is said beforehand: “one flock, one shepherd”. Are we here also included in the “me” in the love of the Father, because the Lord said to Saul on the way to Damascus, “Why dost thou persecute me?”

A.J.G. In the word of the Lord to Saul, “Why dost thou persecute me?” there was without a doubt the light of the body of Christ, so that in it we have the thought of the one flock. But here, where the Lord says, “On this account the Father loves me”, it is to Christ personally.

W.Schr. So the greater side is that He laid down His life for the Father, it is greater than that for the sheep.

A.J.G. Yes, He gave His life in relation to the will of the Father, in order to take it again. But everything was before Him, for it is the whole realm of the good pleasure of the Father which He wanted to bring forth, and for this pleasure we are necessary. God did not need to enter into an Economy, and the Persons of the Godhead did not need to come into any relationships, as the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, as God has been revealed. It was only in view of the fact that man should be brought into the knowledge of God. That is why Christ, in His movements in devoted love, had the Father and His will before Him. But this will include us.

E.E.P. That is why we are now also in the hands of the Father, not only in His hand.

A.J.G. Yes.

W.E. Did not the burnt-offering point to this? It ascended to God.

A.J.G. Yes, you refer to this as something like the burnt-offering: “On this account the Father loves me?” It is the fragrance of Christ’s sacrifice that is constantly before God. “A continual fire shall be kept burning on the altar: it shall never go out”, Lev 6: 13. I believe that every time we speak to God in the name of the Lord Jesus, even in such a simple matter as when we give thanks for our food, it means that the fragrance of Christ is brought before the Father again.

A.R. Is this already the case when we say: ‘In the name of the Lord Jesus’?

A.J.G. Quite so. The Name of the Lord Jesus—how much He means to God!

E.E.P. When the man born blind said, “A man called Jesus”, God recognised this and helped him.

A.J.G. Yes.

K.H. Can you say something about the saying, “lays down his life for the sheep”; it does not say for all people?

A.J.G. The Lord laid down His life for those that the Father had given Him. From a different point of view, He gave Himself as a ransom for all, and that became the basis for the testimony of the glad tidings. But the sheep are those which the Father gave Christ and in which He worked.

Rem. That is why it is touching that verse 14 says, “I know those that are mine, and am known of those that are mine”.

A.J.G. Yes, the fact that the Shepherd laid down His life for the sheep becomes the bond between the sheep and Himself.

E.E.P. That is why we should not be afraid of the stones.

A.J.G. You mean the stones they picked up to cast at Him? Yes. The disciples must have been aware that this enmity directed against the Lord was also against them. They were with the Lord and saw the enemies picking up stones to cast at Him.

Reading 5—Thursday morning

John 14: 1-7, 15-28; 16: 7-15

A.J.G. In our previous considerations, we looked at some of the earlier chapters of John's gospel, and we thought in particular of God's activities, which have the purpose of the rest of God in mind. So we have in Genesis 1 the six days of activities, starting with God saying, "Let there be light", in order to work in the light, and on the sixth day, typically, Christ and the assembly are brought on to view, as "God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness", and He created them, male and female. When this point was reached, God introduced His rest and sanctified the seventh day.

But when we come to the gospels, we find that the Lord says, "The sabbath was made on account of man", and in the epistle to the Hebrews in chapters 3 and 4, the Spirit of God stresses that we should enter into the rest of God as into something present. God's rest will, of course, actually be in the world to come and in eternity. But what will actually be in the world to come and in eternity should already be known in the assembly by the power of the Spirit, not only as a matter of light, but also in such a way that we possess it in a substantial way. Christ is before God, He is the Man who fully answers to God and who upholds the true light concerning God; but then the assembly, as united with Christ, is brought in to give an answer to God in sonship and to maintain all that is due to His Name in the testimony. Where this is the case the conditions are provided in which God can rest. Now God has worked in wisdom in view of all this. In our second reading, we considered a part of Proverbs 8 that shows that before He began His activities, God used wisdom in all that He wanted to do. The expression of divine wisdom lies on the one hand in the incarnation, that is, that a Person of the Godhead became a Man, and then on the other hand it also lies in the coming of the Spirit to dwell with men, for it is said that the pleasure of wisdom was with the children of men. That is why men in sonship have been in the thoughts of God from the beginning. But this could only be accomplished in a way that was able to satisfy the heart of God, namely that one of the Godhead became a Man, and then in the fact that redemption was accomplished by the death of the Son of God, that the Spirit might be

given to men; and in the Spirit we share in the life of Christ. That is why we have looked at chapter 3, which says that the Son of man must be lifted up, and then in chapter 4, where we see that the Spirit is active in ensuring that worshippers are secured. Then we considered chapters 5 and 6, where the Father is presented as supreme, and in which the Lord is viewed as heavenly food for us, so that we may be enabled to move from the natural into the spiritual. Yesterday we looked at the man born blind in chapter 9, in whom the works of God are manifested in a Man who is completely victorious over this world and who came into the appreciation of the Son of God as One who opens up another world in Himself. Then we had the idea of the flock and the shepherd, for these are the normal characteristics of Christianity, that the saints move together as a flock, guided by the voice of the Shepherd, and are led into eternal life. This may indicate to the brethren who were not here what we had before us.

Now, in chapter 14, we come to the great matter of divine purpose. It is interesting that in chapter 13: 31 we have that God is glorified in the Son of man. It is the glory of the Son of man that He has done it. It was necessary that God should be glorified in relation to sin, for no moral questions can remain unresolved. The holiness of God is justified on the cross, and His rights are established, and so God is now free to open up to us the thought of His purpose. But the purpose of God lies on the other side of death; and so the Lord taught the disciples that He would go out by way of death. Peter even wanted to be with the Lord at the time; he says, Lord, why cannot I follow thee now? But the Lord insists that He must first pass through alone, as the ark went two thousand cubits before the people. They had to keep these two thousand cubits apart, so that the glory of the ark, as it went into the Jordan, and how it overcame the Jordan, should always stand before their hearts. This leads us to chapter 14, where we have the full extent of the divine purpose in connection with the Father's house.

Thus the Lord speaks to the disciples of "my Father's house", and He tells them enough to show them that it is something very extensive, there are many abodes. It is consistent with what we have in Ephesians 3 that there are heavenly and earthly families, all named

of the Father. But one family, the assembly, is very distinguished, and the Lord focuses on what is due to the assembly. The great distinction of the assembly is that its place is with Christ where He is. Therefore the Lord says, "That where I am ye also may be".

E.E.P. Does "also" mean that it has a current application?

A.J.G. Yes, definitely. Thus, on each Lord's day morning, the Lord gives us a fresh taste of His love, and He desires to bring us to the consciousness of union with Himself. This is the distinguished glory of the assembly, that it is united with Christ, and that it is with Him in every position He fills as a Man.

A.S.T. In verse 1, Jesus says, "ye believe on God, believe also on me". Is that because we come to the knowledge of the Father in Himself?

A.J.G. That is right. It is by Christ we come to know the Father.

A.S.T. Is that not related to verse 7?

A.J.G. That is right, because the Lord says, "and henceforth ye know him and have seen him". The Lord just desired to take His place as a Man in the presence of the Father, and the Spirit was about to come. Thus the whole truth comes into our hearts as we apprehend it in Christ. The Father's love rests upon Christ with all its pleasure, and He responds to it in a perfect way, and we are brought into the same love with Christ and afford an answer to it through the Spirit of God's Son.

E.E.P. Is it important that the heart is spoken of?

A.J.G. He does not want our hearts to be dismayed. In verse 27, He says again, "Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it fear". In the light of the fact that Christ is there in the presence of the Father and the Spirit is here, we come to restful conditions.

W.Schr. When He says, "believe also on me", does He have His departing out of the world before Him?

A.J.G. Yes. He intends that we believe on Him where He is now and how He is, and I believe it goes further than our own knowledge of the Father. I believe when the Lord says, "believe also on me", that

this is related to the prayer in Ephesians 3: “that the Christ may dwell, through faith, in your hearts”. This is Jesus as the Christ before our hearts; the anointed head of the whole system of blessings that God has before Him.

W.Schr. Was that the shortcoming in chapter 21 when they went fishing?

A.J.G. Yes, they went away from the Lord. But that is a chapter that shows the wonderful grace of the Lord in the restoration.

C.deK.F. I wondered if you might have something to say about the fact that here at the beginning of the chapter the Lord says, “ye believe on God”, and then in chapter 16: 27 it says, “because ye have had affection for me, and have believed that I came out from God”, and in verse 30 they say, “By this we believe that thou art come from God”. He speaks of God before He speaks of the Father.

A.J.G. Well, they had accustomed themselves to the knowledge of God. Abraham knew Him as Almighty God, Israel knew Him as Jehovah. So it was nothing new to believe on God, but they should now believe on Christ. The Christ should be in our hearts by faith. The apostle pursues this in prayer in Ephesians 3, and it leads to us being filled to all the fulness of God.

E.B. In the sixth verse, does the Lord indicate to the disciples that He is the Centre? “Jesus says to him, I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father unless by me”.

A.J.G. Quite so. Thus the Lord opens up what He says: “No one comes to the Father unless by me”. That is: “I am the way”. Then He says, “He that has seen me has seen the Father”. That is: I am “the truth”. And then He says, “because I live ye also shall live”. It is, I am “the life”. The Lord is leading us through the whole position here.

E.E.P. These three thoughts are mentioned for our sake in this order.

A.J.G. Yes, they are in relation to us, so that we are consciously brought to the Father.

E.E.P. Would you say, in relation to a way, that it has a beginning and an end, and hence the rest that is coming is brought before us?

A.J.G. Yes, I think so. The Lord would like us to be brought into the full thoughts that the Father has before Him. But then there is a present realisation included in it. Therefore the Lord says afterwards in verse 23 of this chapter, when certain conditions are prepared for Him: “my Father will love him, and we (that is, the Father and the Son) will come to him and make our abode with him”. But then the Spirit is come; so we have conditions in which the Father and the Son and the Spirit can dwell. This shows that where we offer right conditions, there is a dwelling for God.

E.O. Is it therefore important that we pay attention to verse 4?

A.J.G. What are you thinking about?

E.O. I was thinking that we know where He has gone.

A.J.G. The Lord spoke of the Father all the time. I have often gone over in my mind how the Lord spoke to the woman in John 4 of the Father, and I can understand that the woman would have said to herself, Who is the Father? We were brought up in the light of Christianity, but for the woman it was a whole new thought. Thus the Lord spoke continually of the Father, as if He wanted to give them an impression that this was the great thing to which they should come, namely to the knowledge of the Father. Now when God introduced the human race, He brought it in on the principle of begetting and of generation, and of fathers and sons. With the angels He did not work according to this principle—with angels we have no generations. But God introduced the human race according to the principle of families and generations, so that man would get used to the thought of father and son. When “the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us” what they saw was “...a glory as of an only-begotten with a father”. One can see in it that God had prepared the ground centuries before, so that we could get used to this idea of knowing God as Father.

E.E.P. So these unfoldings from heaven serve not only to show how great the Son is, but also show that the Father is behind all that the Son does.

A.J.G. Quite so.

A.S.T. Does the Father's house involve spiritual conditions and the house of God more moral conditions?

A.J.G. I think that helps. The truth of the house of God first came to light in Jacob's dream, and moral questions arose with Jacob, so that he said, "How dreadful is this place!" but then he was brought into line with it. But when the Lord speaks of "my Father's house", He speaks of eternal conditions, and eternal conditions are spiritual conditions, because God is a Spirit; and it says in the scriptures: "that which is spiritual was not first, but that which is natural, then that which is spiritual", 1 Cor 15: 46.

H.Mö. Was it necessary for Philip to ask this question so that the disciples could understand the position regarding the Father?

A.J.G. It is very impressive, as it is said: "And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us (and we have contemplated his glory, a glory as of an only-begotten with a father), full of grace and truth". Then it goes on: "No one has seen God at any time; the only-begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, *he* hath declared him". Thus God introduces Himself to man in this light; in the light of the beloved Son in the bosom of the Father, which shows that God had this in His mind: to bring man in.

W.E. Our hearts should not be troubled. The footnote [in the German translation] reads: 'Or shaken'. The kingdom of God and of Christ is called "a kingdom not to be shaken", Heb 12: 28.

A.J.G. It is important to see that we have come to final conditions. We are so accustomed to the weakness on our side and the disintegrating conditions in Christendom that we find it difficult to grasp that, with Christ above and the Spirit here, the final conditions for the rest of God can already now be secured. That is why the place that the Spirit has in these chapters of the gospel of John is so important; for all the thoughts of God can now be realised to the extent that the Spirit has freedom among the saints.

E.E.P. When it says: "Let not your heart be troubled" (it is not said, 'your hearts', but "your heart"), is this a reference to the one heart, that all were one heart and one soul?

A.J.G. Well, the Lord wants that to be the case.

W.Schr. We often say that it is good for us that the Holy Spirit has come, as the Lord also says; but after this passage we should not forget that it is good that the Lord is above.

A.J.G. The Spirit could not come until the Lord had gone above. This is clear after chapter 7 of this gospel, where it is said “for the Spirit was not yet, because Jesus had not yet been glorified”. Then Peter says in Acts 2 that Jesus is exalted by the right hand of God and having received the promise of the Father, He has poured out the Holy Spirit; thus the present day, the day of Christianity, is marked by the fact that the Spirit is here to the full degree. But the position, as you say, is that Christ is in the presence of the Father.

C.deK.F. Why does the Lord say in the third verse: “that where I am ye also may be?”

A.J.G. This shows the excellent place held by the assembly. If we therefore fall asleep, it is not that we go to heaven when we die, but that we depart in order to be with Christ.

Ques. What is included in the idea of preparing a place?

A.J.G. This place was prepared because the Lord went there as a Man. I do not think there is any need for more preparation than this. A Man is there in the Person of Christ, and also in glorious Sonship, and this is the representation of what is in God’s thoughts for those who are part of the assembly.

A.S.T. That is why every person who is in Him is there.

A.J.G. Quite so, and He is not only there, but is also in lasting favour with the Father; we are taken into favour in the Beloved.

E.E.P. I think the preparation of the place impresses us a lot. I also thought of the other place where we follow the man with the pitcher of water and prepare the passover where he goes in. Is there any indication that this must be characteristically in agreement?

A.J.G. Well, the Lord had the place prepared for us when He Himself went there, and then the intention of God is that there is something corresponding to it down here. That is why the Lord brings

in the thought of the Comforter, for to the extent that the Comforter has His place with us in a practical way, we can enter into divine thoughts and respond to them in the present moment. This requires moral conditions on our side, and so the Lord brings in the object of the presence of the Comforter by saying: “If ye love me, keep my commandments”. The Holy Spirit is given to those who obey Christ.

W.Schr. Is it a consolation that He gives here: “I am coming again and shall receive you to myself, that where I am ye also may be” (v 3), and that He then sends another Comforter?

A.J.G. Quite so, we must carry these words of the Lord constantly in our hearts; for I believe that nothing gives us such a great awareness of the place which the assembly has in the heart of Christ as these words of the Lord Jesus: “I am coming again and shall receive you to myself, that where I am ye also may be”. Then we find that the Lord uses a similar language in chapter 17, where He speaks to the Father. He says there in verse 24, “Father, as to those whom thou hast given me, I desire that where I am they also may be with me”. I think we must carry these thoughts in our spirits and hearts, because they give us an idea of what the assembly means for Christ.

A.S.T. The present form in verse 3: “I am coming again” should help us in our present exercises.

A.J.G. It does not say: ‘This is how I will come back’—in the future, but: “I am coming again”, that is, it is always present before Christ.

E.B. Can you say something about the commandments in verse 16?

A.J.G. From verse 15 onwards, it is about how we should be already prepared with right conditions, so that we may now enter into all that the Lord has spoken of by the power of the Spirit. But first of all, the Lord speaks of the Comforter to us in such a way to recommend Him to us; He says, “but ye know him, for he abides with you, and shall be in you”, and in verse 16 he says, “that he may be with you for ever”. This is to lead us to treasure the Spirit in a personal way as a Comforter, not simply as a power or as the One who gives us understanding, but in a personal sense.

A.S.T. How far does the expression go: “for ever”?

A.J.G. The first thought of Christ was that He would be with us here for the whole history of the testimony, but I think it goes on to eternity, it goes on to the eternal day, for we have a remarkable expression in the second epistle to John in verse 2: “for the truth’s sake which abides in us and shall be with us to eternity”. That must include the Spirit.

A.S.T. I wondered if the Lord did not also refer to the length of time the Spirit would be with us, as opposed to the short time when He wanted to stay with them.

A.J.G. That is certainly the case.

K.H. Is it very important to recognise that the present dispensation is characterised by the Spirit abiding in and with believers?

A.J.G. That is very important. The Lord would like us to have an increased personal knowledge of the Holy Spirit, so that the Spirit can be worshipped personally because He is God; and it is very touching that He stays with us for ever, even though we often offer Him very poor conditions.

J.deR. Can you tell us the difference between coming in verse 3 and coming in verse 18?

A.J.G. In verse 3, the Lord says that He will come to take us to Himself, that is, to say, He wants to take us to Himself where He is. But verse 18 is about the Lord visiting us here, in the place of His absence. He visits us. That is why we have this passage in Acts 1: 21: “It is necessary therefore, that of the men who have assembled with us all the time in which the Lord Jesus came in and went out among us ...”. The Lord went in and out. In contrast, the Spirit comes and remains.

E.E.P. Is this the thought of rest in connection with the Spirit, He remains?

A.J.G. I think so. If we are submissive to Him, then He brings about conditions among the saints, where the Father and the Son can come and dwell among us and abide with us.

K.M. The coming in and going out: was that during the forty days?

A.J.G. Not only during the forty days, it began at the baptism of John and continued until the end of the forty days, and now the Lord comes in, as He says, “I am coming to you”. In verse 21, He says: “but he that loves me shall be loved by my Father, and I will love him and will manifest myself to him”. I believe that on the Lord’s day morning, we are looking for the Lord to reveal Himself to us.

E.E.P. Is this especially John’s language?

A.J.G. I think so.

C.deK.F. What is the meaning of abiding in this chapter? We find in verse 17 that the Lord says that the Spirit abides with us, and then He speaks about divine Persons. He says in verse 23, “and we (that is, the Father and He Himself) will come to him and make our abode with him”.

A.J.G. We can see that this is the idea of finality. He suggested to the people of God of old that they should prepare a sanctuary for Him, that He might dwell among them. We come to this in verse 23 of this chapter, that certain conditions are set out by the saints so that God may dwell among us.

C.deK.F. I would like to ask if we have any of this at the end of Ephesians 2, the “habitation of God in the Spirit”?

A.J.G. Yes, the truth of the present time is brought to us. But in this chapter of the gospel of John, the Lord emphasises in particular that appropriate conditions are prepared. There are many Christians who have the Holy Spirit, so that in this sense God dwells in them, but they are not characterised by keeping the commandments of the Lord and keeping His word. Therefore, they do not offer suitable conditions in which God can dwell.

E.E.P. Is the individual addressed here so that we all feel the responsibility individually in this regard?

A.J.G. Yes, the Lord is showing the individual things here, so that provision is made for the most difficult day, when perhaps only two or three are available. But I do not believe that the Lord thinks that there should be single saints, but when He says, “If anyone loves me”,

that is something that should mark us, that is, where these conditions find themselves, certain results follow.

A.S.T. Do we have to distinguish between brethren who are isolated and those who isolate themselves?

A.J.G. John on Patmos is an example of the former. He had not isolated himself. That is why he was in accord with the brethren in his compassion and outlook, although he was isolated.

E.E.P. That is why we see here the possibilities offered to this one flock.

A.J.G. Yes, it is important to see that the flock follows characteristically as a result of hearing the voice of the Shepherd. The Shepherd then leads to eternal life, that is, to the enjoyment of eternal conditions here in the presence of death.

P.Sch. The Lord says to Peter in chapter 21, "Follow thou me". Is this the voice of the Lord to everyone? When we do this, we are not isolated, but we are with Him, and we are all with Him.

A.J.G. That is the case. We already have the thought of following in the first chapter of the gospel of John, that two disciples of John the baptist heard him speak and followed Jesus. This thought of following runs through the whole gospel, and it is also the final word in the last chapter, as you say.

E.E.P. Is it also the idea here that if we are in the presence of the Lord and progress with Him in His movements, we will come to things that are greater? For the Lord says, "My Father is greater than I", John 14: 25.

A.J.G. Yes, the Lord always directs our thoughts to the Father, so that we may have an appreciation of the Father's supremacy. The Father is a name of grace and affection, and the assembly may know the Father in a very outstanding way—Christ's Father and our Father, but each family gets a certain impression of the Father. Because the Lord is the Head of all things, He is the Head of every family, and the Head of every family is the beloved Son of the Father. That is why every family is held in a certain sense in the light of the Father.

A.S.T. Are the references to love in this chapter very interesting: the love of the disciples, the love of the Lord and the love of the Father, because they really relate to eternal conditions?

A.J.G. Yes, I think so, but please say a little more what is in your mind.

A.S.T. We should be holy and blameless before Him in love.

A.J.G. This means not only in the enjoyment of the love of the Father, but also the conditions of love amongst ourselves. That is why the Lord commands us to love one another. He says, “This is my commandment, that ye love one another ...”. It is therefore necessary that we do not allow anything to come in to affect the conditions of love among the saints. But it must be love governed by the truth.

C.deK.F. Does the Lord not mean this when He says: “he will keep my word”? I thought that the Lord had before Him that this love should be seen among the saints.

A.J.G. Yes, quite so.

H.Mö. Is this the thought in chapter 13: 34: “A new commandment I give to you, that ye love one another”?

A.J.G. The fact that the Lord commands it shows how important it is.

W.E. Do we have such spiritual and God-pleasing conditions in the Lord’s word to Philadelphia?

A.J.G. Quite so. There are two things in this chapter in verse 21 and 23 to have and keep the commandments of Christ and to keep His word. We will come to nothing if we do not keep the commandments of the Lord. The first commandment, and what must be kept first, is probably in 2 Timothy 2: “Let every one who names the name of the Lord withdraw from iniquity”. This enables us to find those with whom we can go forward together. As we move forward together, the next commandment is in the first epistle to the Corinthians, which is the Lord’s commandment and orders the ordinary movements of the saints. The other great commandment is that we love one another here in the gospel of John. When we move together in this way, we do so

in right and happy conditions. If these commandments are not kept, then we do not have conditions in which the Spirit of God is free to reveal to us the truth of God; but if they are kept, then the truth can be opened up among us. But then something else is necessary, and that is that we keep Christ's word. This includes everything He has said and what He may say so that things are preserved in life.

E.E.P. Keeping His word includes the Spirit being there.

A.J.G. Yes, whatever the Spirit may say.

J.deR. Can you say something about verse 17: "whom the world cannot receive ... but ye know him"?

A.J.G. Yes, if the saints go forward with the Spirit, it is a complete mystery to the world, and it is God's intention that this should be the case. The world cannot receive the Spirit. The world does not know the Spirit and does not see Him. In this way, God lifts things up completely from the reach of the world.

A.S.T. I think that is very important, because we have a tendency to think that we have to justify ourselves in our position before the world.

A.J.G. We have to be content with being unknown. They said of the Lord, "He has a demon and raves", John 10: 20. The more we move in the stream of the Spirit, the more we will be a mystery to the world, and we will be despised by it.

A.R. We read in the first epistle to John, "For this reason the world knows us not, because it knew him not", 1 John 3: 1?

A.J.G. In chapter 16, the Lord refers again to the Comforter. He even says in verse 7, "It is profitable for you that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Comforter will not come to you; but if I go I will send him to you". Thus the Lord emphasises the importance of having the Comforter with us in a conscious manner. In this chapter we are told that the testimony of this should be maintained in the world.

W.E. God has not given us "a spirit of cowardice, but of power, and of love, and of wise discretion", 2 Tim 1: 7.

A.J.G. That is very important that God has given us the spirit of power, and love, and wise discretion, and the Spirit is with us as the Spirit of truth.

A.S.T. The reference to the Spirit and to “you” in verses 6 and 7 shows the place that the saints have in the heart of Christ?

A.J.G. Yes, that is the idea. In a sense we fill the same place that the Lord Himself filled in the days of His flesh, to be on the one hand for the pleasure of God, and on the other hand to maintain the truth of God in the testimony. For this to be made possible, the Spirit has come. He has come as the Spirit of truth, and He exposes the world.

E.E.P. Is it important that we recognise the Spirit as One who has been sent?

A.J.G. Yes, I think so, but please say more about what you are thinking.

E.E.P. I believe that we are considering things more in relation to the Holy Spirit when we see that heaven is behind it, that is, the place where He came from, from with the Father and from the area of the Father, which you spoke of in terms of rest. Thus, restful conditions that are to be among us are truly among us when we see that divine power is behind everything.

A.J.G. It helps us a lot if we take note of the fact that God has everything in perfection in Christ; He wants this to develop in the saints through the Spirit. Thus, on the one hand, there should be a complete answer to God and on the other hand there should be a representation of God. That is why evil is dealt with in accordance with God in the assembly, and the truth concerning God is maintained in testimony and walk.

C.deK.F. We have the fulness of what is sustained by the Spirit here in the words: “all the truth”.

A.J.G. “He shall guide you into all the truth”. It is wonderful to remember that “all the truth” comes to light in relation to God, and a perfect answer to it in men. This should be close to our hearts in our localities.

H.G. Should we not speak of the present truth in this sense?

A.J.G. Quite so. What the Spirit is emphasising at the moment is the present truth.

J.deR. I have a question about the epistle to the Colossians, where it is said that all the fulness of the Godhead dwells in Him, and in Ephesians 3: 19 it says: “that ye may be filled even to all the fulness of God”. Can it be the case with us that all the fulness of God dwells in us?

A.J.G. We are filled to the fulness of God. This means, I think, that we are able to give an answer to the way God has come forth. Not that the fulness of God is in us, it is bodily in Christ. But the assembly is fully capable of being in correspondence with it.

W.E. Did the Lord not say to His disciples that when the Spirit came even greater things would be brought before them?

A.J.G. Quite so, because it is now the day of greater things. When the Lord was on this earth, He was limited in this sense, but now the Spirit is given without measure, so that people, that is, the saints, can be brought into the full thoughts of God and find strength in the Spirit to be brought into correspondence with these thoughts.

E.E.P. So we also limit the activity or ministry of the Lord if we do not recognise the Spirit, for He was sent here. The Lord goes to the Father to send Him, “I will send him to you”.

A.J.G. Yes, the presence of the Spirit is essential, because it is a matter of bringing man into the things of God. In the service of Christ, of course, there was no error or defect, but man could not enter into these things until the Spirit came. Therefore, the wisdom in which God works not only includes the incarnation: that one of the Godhead became Man, but also includes the coming of the Spirit, so that life in man in Christ Jesus may appear.

A.S.T. What was expressed in a Man is now expressed in myriads of men.

A.J.G. The assembly is the fulness of Christ. It does not add anything to Him, but it is the vessel in which all that is in Him is expressed.

E.E.P. Is verse 8 important? I would like to know what you think about it.

A.J.G. We see this especially in the opening chapters of the Acts of the Apostles, such as in Acts 5. There Peter says in verse 32, “And we are his witnesses of these things, and the Holy Spirit also, which God has given to those that obey him”. This affected their consciences, that some had not obeyed Him because their leaders had not received the Holy Spirit. It was obvious that they had not received Him. It says: “But they, when they heard these things, were cut to the heart”. The presence of the apostles, the believers, was a testimony to others in Jerusalem that they were disobedient to God. He convicted them of this sin.

E.B. Does it not show the unselfishness of the Spirit that He makes nothing of Himself, but everything of Christ?

A.J.G. It is really wonderful that the Spirit takes this place to receive from Christ: “he shall not speak from himself; but whatsoever he shall hear he shall speak”, John 16: 13. This is in accordance with the way in which the Lord was in His ministry, for in John 12: 49 the Lord says, “For I have not spoken from myself, but the Father who sent me has himself given me commandment what I should say and what I should speak”. Thus the Lord was here according to this principle, and now the Spirit is here according to this principle.

W.Schr. In chapter 16: 15 we then have all three divine Persons working together.

A.J.G. Yes, we have the Father and the Lord and the Spirit in one verse.

E.Schl. What did the Lord have in His mind when He says he will “announce to you what is coming”?

A.J.G. The Lord had in mind the whole truth, which Paul would later bring to light, the whole mystery in which the word of God is

completed. Of course, the Spirit also gave John in Patmos the light on things to come; therefore, I do not know whether we can limit this verse to Paul.

E.E.P. Is verse 13 very important? We have read: “I am the way, the truth ...”, and now the Lord protects the Spirit and says of Him, “the Spirit of truth”.

A.J.G. Quite so, in this way He is here as the Spirit of truth. It is important to see how God was put in a bad light by the serpent when sin came into the world. The serpent said to the woman, “Ye will not certainly die”. This shows that the serpent introduced the thought to the woman that God was a liar and that He was not good. Well, God has countered this doubt, and He is now making Himself known as the One that is true and also as One who is altogether good. He brings in the good in a complete way and confines evil to the lake of fire as the final vindication of God.

A.S.T. You referred to Paul’s service. Would you say that it was according to the same principle as the speaking of Jesus and the speaking of the Spirit? He refers to what he had received.

A.J.G. Yes, for whatever he had received, he received it from the Lord through the Spirit.

A.S.T. Is not that an important principle that we must always recognise?

A.J.G. It is something very important and also encouraging that the Spirit is here as the Spirit of truth and that He leads into the truth. We live, of course, in days when the truth revealed by the apostle was given up by the assembly; for one-hundred and thirty years the truth has been recovered. But it is not recovered in a random way, but in a proper way, because the Spirit leads into the whole truth. I believe that if we look back on the history of the past one-hundred and thirty years, we can see that the truth has been properly recovered, which shows that the Spirit guides us into the truth.

C.deK.F. Does the Spirit use human vessels for the service of guiding into the truth?

A.J.G. Yes, He certainly does.

K.M. This guiding into the truth is not only doctrine.

A.J.G. No, first the truth is opened up to us as doctrine, and then it is brought forth in the saints. It is often done through resistance to the truth, so that the truth comes forth in greater determination and power.

P.Sch. Can we say that the Spirit of truth gives life to the word?

A.J.G. Yes, certainly.

W.E. We should remember the word: “Remember your leaders who have spoken to you the word of God”, Heb 13: 7.

A.J.G. Well, that is part of the Lord’s care for us, that He gives us leaders, and so Deborah says in her song: “For that leaders led in Israel ... Bless Jehovah”, Judg 5: 2. She rejoiced in the fact that there were leaders.

Reading 6—Thursday afternoon

John 17

A.J.G. We all recognise that this chapter is unique because the Lord was not under any restriction when He spoke to the Father. When He spoke to the disciples, He was under certain restrictions, for He said that there were certain things that He could not speak to them. But when He spoke to His Father, He was under no limits. That is why His prayer gives us an impression of the relationship that existed between the Father and the Son. And this prayer applies all the time, where Christ is above and the Spirit is here.

The Lord says, “Father, the hour is come ...”. Before, He had said, “the hour is coming and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and truth”. Therefore, this day of the Spirit was in the thoughts of Christ long before, and now He says, “the hour is come”. He asks to be glorified so that He may glorify the Father, and He immediately speaks of wanting to give eternal life to those whom the Father had given Him. This shows how much the idea of eternal life was in the Lord’s thoughts, namely that the saints, in the presence of death, should enjoy what cannot be touched by death; and thus, in the power of the Spirit, should anticipate what will be fully established in the day of Christ.

C.deK.F. The Spirit could not come before the Lord Jesus was glorified.

A.J.G. We have that in chapter 7, that the Spirit was not yet, because Jesus was not yet glorified. But when the Lord took His place above and poured out the Spirit, a day was brought in when all the thoughts of God were made available to the saints.

E.E.P. How it must have moved the heart of the Father when the Son spoke to Him, as He Himself comes to the completion of all that was necessary for Him to do in order to bring forward this glorification.

A.J.G. Yes, it is about this wonderful hour: “the hour has come”. What deep feelings were in these words, and I believe that this would also help us to get an ever-increasing impression of the present time. Therein lies a certain triumph for God, that He is already establishing

His thoughts in the presence of evil in the world, and in a relatively small number of people. But God always establishes in testimony what He will later bring out in public. It is therefore important that the saints fully know what eternal life means before the day of eternity comes.

E.B. Could you say something about verse 2: “as thou hast given him authority over all flesh”?

A.J.G. This refers to the fact that the Lord has won His rights over all through redemption. Through redemption He now has the right to give the Holy Spirit as He pleases. Thus it is the Father’s thought that the Lord should give the Spirit to all those whom the Father has given Him, for eternal life is understood and enjoyed in the Spirit in the present moment.

A.S.T. What does it mean when He lifts His eyes to heaven?

A.J.G. It is an attitude that speaks of His links with the Father. At the tomb of Lazarus, it is also said that He lifted up His eyes.

A.S.T. I wondered if the heavenly thought here is particularly before us?

A.J.G. Surely that is the case. God’s greatest thoughts are connected to the heavenly. It has often been asked why God maintains the thought of heaven and earth in eternal conditions. One can understand that heaven and earth are connected to His ways, but in eternity He has a new heaven and a new earth.

E.E.P. Would you say that this looking up and lifting up His eyes to heaven is for our sake because He, as a divine Person, knows exactly what is in heaven and what is going on in heaven?

A.J.G. This directs our thoughts to heaven and a heavenly Father, so that on another occasion the Lord speaks to the Father as Lord of heaven and earth. But God seems to take up the heavens as opposed to the earth, to give us an impression of the immense greatness of His thoughts and ways. Yesterday we referred to Isaiah 55, where verse 9 says, “For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts”. If we

look at heaven in relation to the earth and see how immensely higher it is than the earth, then we should get an impression of the immense greatness of God's ways and thoughts.

Here in verse 1, the Lord speaks as one who recognises His place in this Economy. Thus He says; "Father ... glorify thy Son". The Father is the highest, the Son is in a subordinate place in relation to the Father. But when we come to verse 5, the Lord speaks in a way that shows personal equality. He says, "and now glorify *me, thou* Father, along with thyself, with the glory which I had along with thee before the world was". This should always be as a light in our souls, that while we know God only in the Economy into which He has entered, which includes mutual relations between the Father and the Son and the Spirit, at the same time the Persons of the Godhead are personally equal.

E.E.P. The 16th chapter ends with: "I have overcome the world", and now the Lord Jesus takes this attitude and reveals to us all that He has to say to the Father. In order to understand this, we must also maintain and preserve this attitude.

A.J.G. He is now free to open up to us the thoughts of God in relation to this wonderful time. But what you draw our attention to is very important, that the Lord ended by saying to the disciples, "I have overcome the world".

E.E.P. I thought this was the key to the thought of rest, because here we arrive at: "I have overcome the world".

A.J.G. We must be conquerors of the world if we want to have a full share in these precious things that can be known by the Spirit. The Lord went out of the world after He had overcome it. I believe that many of the exercises that are now emerging among us are destined so that we become complete conquerors of the world before we are taken out of it.

E.B. In verse 3, eternal life is associated with the knowledge of God and with the knowledge of Jesus Christ. Can you say something about the nature of this knowledge?

A.J.G. I think that is to be preserved in a practical way while we are in testimony here. Mr Taylor said many years ago⁶ that the knowledge of the only true God saves us from idolatry, and the knowledge of Jesus Christ, whom He sent, frees us from lawlessness. We must be freed from these things in order to have an effective part in the testimony.

A.S.T. “That thy Son may glorify thee”—what is included in it, for in verse 4 He says, “I have glorified *thee* on the earth”?

A.J.G. The Lord refers to what immediately follows, that is, the giving of eternal life to those given to Him by the Father. When the Lord was cast out of the world, I think, the enemies of Christ were surprised to find that there was a company of disciples on the earth who received power through the Holy Spirit, and that the Name of Christ continued in power; and increased; and so far it has been continued.

A.S.T. They were elevated to a heavenly position of things while they were still here.

A.J.G. Yes, I think we can see that it is in the thoughts of the Lord that everything that appears in Him personally in a perfect way, should also be seen characteristically in His own. He was the heavenly One, but it is said: “such as the heavenly one, such also the heavenly ones”.

W.T. In the first epistle to Timothy it says: “Lay hold of eternal life”, 1 Tim 6: 12. Do you have that before you?

A.J.G. Being continually in the enjoyment of eternal life is the secret of victory over the world. In the enjoyment of eternal life in our own soul and among our brethren, we are completely superior to the world, and this is essential if we want to be in the world for God, whether for His service or for His testimony. Thus the Lord constantly reverted to the Mount of Olives, which shows that His life was in the spiritual realm while He was publicly engaged in the testimony.

C.deK.F. I thought you might say something about how everything here in John is brought to a conclusion. In the fourth verse, the Lord

⁶ eg Ministry Mr James Taylor—New Series, vol 7 p306

says, “I have completed the work which thou gavest me that I should do it”, and in the 19th chapter we read that He said, “It is finished”.

A.J.G. Yes, God attaches great importance to completion. We have already referred to Genesis 1 and to the activities of God there, and at the beginning of Genesis 2 it says: “And the heavens and the earth and all their host were finished”. Then it goes on: “And God had finished on the seventh day his work which he had made; and he rested on the seventh day”. That is why completion is something very important with God. The Lord said that it was His food to do the will of Him who had sent Him, and to complete His work; and in the second epistle to Timothy, Paul says, just before he leaves this scene (in chap 4: 7): “I have combated the good combat, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith”. The Lord has sorrowfully to say about Sardis, “I have not found thy works complete before my God”.

E.E.P. Do you think that we should see how God has operated and has completed His works, that we too, should be exercised regarding completion on our side?

A.J.G. Well, if we see that God works in view of completion and does not rest until He has reached completion, then I think that will help us practically to bring things to completion. That is why we must listen attentively to everything the Spirit says and see that we are in line with the truth that is being presented to us.

E.E.P. Is this how we are built upon the teachings of the apostles and the prophets, and is that what is accomplished?

A.J.G. The Lord gives gifts, including the apostles and prophets and evangelists and shepherds and teachers, with a view to a perfect end. It says: “until we all arrive at the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, at the full-grown man, at the measure of the stature of the fulness of the Christ”, Eph 4: 13. Thus, in any service to the Lord, in which we can all have a part, we should always have in mind a perfect result for God.

I think we should see that we have finality before us from verse 24 to the end. But before we get there, we see the Lord expressing His desire for us in relation to two particularly striking

features, one is sanctification and the other is unity. These two things that the Lord emphasises are important while we are here, namely that we should be sanctified by the truth and that we should be one, just as He and the Father are one.

A.S.T. The glory of God's activities is seen in the fact that they are all worked out while we are here.

A.J.G. Yes, that is so. Thus God overcomes all the apparent wisdom of the enemy, if one can call it wisdom at all, and sets up His thoughts among the saints in the victory over the world in the presence of evil.

A.S.T. Do we need to understand what the Lord says in verse 16: "They are not of the world"?

A.J.G. The Lord presents them with a perfect standard: "They are not of the world, as I am not of the world". I believe we must always remember what we started with in the first reading, that we are not born of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God, that is, according to our derivation, we are of God. Much may come in with our flesh, but when we have come to a judgment about it and learn how to make ourselves available to the power of the Spirit, then we can be here in accordance with what we are in our derivation, namely from God.

C.deK.F. Is it significant that the Lord Jesus first speaks to the Father as a "Holy Father" before He speaks of sanctification?

A.J.G. That is very telling. It expresses the deep feelings of the Lord that He was able to address the Father in this way. It shows that the Lord certainly wants us to stand completely aside from any defilement of this world. Hence Jude says at the end of his letter: "But to him that is able to keep you without stumbling, and to set you with exultation blameless before his glory". God is able to do that.

W.E. When it says, "They were thine, and thou gavest them me", can we think of God's purpose before the foundation of the world?

A.J.G. Yes, we belonged to the Father before the foundation of the world according to purpose, but in time, I think we were given Christ. In any case, it is about, "They were thine". The Lord says, "and all

that is mine is thine, and all that is thine mine”. I believe that nothing should bring forth more sanctification in us than when we read these words of the Lord.

H.G. Is this to be associated with the inheritance of God in the saints?

A.J.G. Yes, God has His inheritance in the saints. It is precisely the word “saints” that means those who are sanctified, who are set apart for God. But here the Lord shows that the name of the Father is the great power by which He had kept the disciples; and He asks the Father that they may be preserved in His Name.

H.Mö. Does the Lord not have the full extent of His work here before Him?

A.J.G. Quite so, He has. I think the great value of this chapter is that the Lord has the full scope of the testimony in His thoughts, and what is essential for the saints to be preserved in relation to it.

E.O. The Lord says, “... I sanctify myself for them”.

A.J.G. Well, that is such a very fine word. That is, He set Himself apart. Of course, as to Christ it was not moral sanctification, He did not need to be morally sanctified in any way, but He separated Himself personally and in His position, by taking His place outside this world in the presence of the Father.

E.E.P. Can one say that the expression “They were thine” is related to the Father, and that when He says, “and thou gavest them me”, we see the activities of the Son? When we see the activities of God, we see the activity of the Father, but also the activity of the Son, and the activity of the Spirit.

A.J.G. That is the case. The Lord does not mention the Spirit in this chapter because He does not need to, for the Father knows the Spirit, and He knows the place He fills. In chapters 14, 15, and 16, it was necessary for the Lord to speak to the disciples and to us of the Spirit, so that we may learn to appreciate the Spirit and honour Him.

E.B. He says, “that they may be all one, as thou, Father, art in me and I in thee”. Can you say anything about this oneness?

A.J.G. Before this oneness, however, we see how important sanctification is, because it is so essential that this sanctification should be something real with us. To the extent that the enemy succeeds in bringing in any element of the world among us, he breaks that unity apart. True unity can only exist in the power of sanctification.

E.E.P. You should not apply this to your brother or to your sister in the locality, but you apply it to yourself.

A.J.G. We must always remember that the Lord says, “my assembly”. He says, “... hades’ gates shall not prevail against it”, Matt 16: 18. But the fact that He says, “... shall not prevail against it”, shows only too clearly that they are always trying to get in. That is why we must be so vigilant, because each and every one of us can become the means by which Satan comes in.

W.Schr. The truth has a great place here.

A.J.G. Yes, it has.

W.T. Verse 23 says, “That they may be perfected into one”. Is this going a little further than being one?

A.J.G. This is looking ahead to the final result in the heavenly city. But our brother was referring to the truth. In verse 17 we have: “Sanctify them by the truth: thy word is truth”. This is the truth concerning God, as God is known. Thus the Lord makes much of the Name of the Father. We find in the first epistle of John in what He says to the young men in chapter 2 that the Father is contrasted with the world. It reads: “If anyone love the world, the love of the Father is not in him”, chap 2: 15. Then it goes on: “because all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father”. When we are taught in this way in the Name of the Father, we learn to love what the Father loves and to hate what the Father hates.

E.E.P. Should not this title and phrase “Holy Father” in verse 11 touch us deeply as the name of love that includes the service of love?

A.J.G. Yes; but it is the Father as He was known by Christ as a Man who was in this world. The Lord says, “I am no longer in the world, and these are in the world, and I come to thee”. There would be no point, reverently speaking, of referring to the Father as a “Holy Father” if the Lord had been in heaven. But the Lord was in the world, and He knew exactly what the world meant, and from this point of view He speaks to the Father as a “Holy Father”.

C.deK.F. It was necessary that they should be preserved because He says, “I also have sent them into the world”.

A.J.G. Quite so.

A.S.T. Surely being sanctified through truth must include the service of the Spirit?

A.J.G. Quite so. Please say a little more about it.

A.S.T. You said earlier that there is no reference to the Spirit in this chapter, because it is not necessary.

A.J.G. But everything that actually matters in the saints in connection with these expressed desires of the Lord is indeed effected by the Spirit.

A.S.T. So it is important that we understand how these things are effected.

A.J.G. As we said earlier in a reading, the consideration of God’s activities shows us very clearly that God finds all His resources in Himself, be it in the Father, the Son or the Spirit. God does not need to go outside His own self to bring His thoughts to fruition.

Rem. God is all in all.

A.J.G. We will finally arrive at this, then men will be brought in, and God dwells with men. “God himself shall be with them, their God”, Rev 21: 3.

W.E. The word tells us what we have to do with regard to unity: “... using diligence to keep the unity of the Spirit in the uniting bond of peace”, Eph 4: 3. The Spirit has come and baptised all into one body.

A.J.G. That is true, and that is why we must, as it is said, use diligence to keep the unity of the Spirit with all long-suffering. But on the other hand, when we move on this ground, it saves us from not maintaining unity. But unity can only be brought about if we all have the same object before us.

A.B. Did John touch sanctification when he fell dead at His feet in Revelation 1?

A.J.G. Well, there was something very serious in what he saw, that the Lord was moving in the midst of the seven golden lampstands, His eyes like a flame of fire, and He had a great zeal for God. Perhaps we do not know enough of this sight of Christ. What do you think yourself?

A.B. I thought that is why he could be shown Philadelphia.

A.J.G. Yes, that is so. John was in complete harmony with the thoughts of Christ, and yet when he saw the Lord in this attitude, that He was walking in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks, he fell at His feet as dead. But the Lord laid his right hand upon him and said, "Fear not", Rev 1: 17. It must have been a great joy for John to find that the Lord in Philadelphia has an assembly that is entirely in keeping with His thoughts. It is remarkable that the Lord introduces Himself to the assembly in Philadelphia as 'the holy, the true', and He truly comes before us in this character in the 6th and 7th chapter of this gospel. In chapter 6 Peter professes Him as 'the holy one of God', and in chapter 7: 18 He says, "but he that seeks the glory of him that has sent him, he is true, and unrighteousness is not in him". Therefore, the only way in which we can maintain conditions in the assembly suitable for God is to keep Christ before us as the holy, the true, that is, by fully corresponding with all that God looks for in man on the one hand, and being faithful to the Name of God in our testimony on the other.

A.S.T. When the Lord says, "I sanctify myself for them", is that related to chapter 10; 17, where he says, "I lay down my life that I may take it again"?

A.J.G. Yes. The Lord has taken a place in the presence of the Father through His death, and we must learn our place, and what we are in Him; but the moral element of death must come in on our side.

Rem. This is in a way connected with Ephesians 5, that He loved the assembly and gave Himself for it.

A.J.G. Yes, so the Lord has before Himself to present the assembly to Himself glorious.

E.E.P. John 17 often mentions “giving” and “given”.

A.J.G. It shows that the whole thing is purposed. There is nothing random about divine activities.

But now we are talking about unity, which is so important. The Lord says in verse 21, “that they may be all one, as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us, that the world may believe that thou hast sent me”. I hardly believe that any testimony is as effective as the testimony of unity among the saints. As it is said in Acts 4: 32: “And the heart and soul of the multitude of those that had believed were one”. Immediately thereafter, we find in chapter 5 that Satan tried to break the unity by bringing in an element of corruption through Ananias and Sapphira.

W.E. Verse 13 says, “And now I come to thee. And these things I speak in the world, that they may have my joy fulfilled in them”. One of our brethren wrote about this: If a person is converted, he can rejoice. But if this converted soul continues to have closer links in the Spirit or in love with the Person of the Lord Jesus, the joy that is associated with it is immeasurably greater.

A.J.G. Yes, and the Lord desired that His joy in us is complete, namely the joy of being here in fidelity to the Father and of fully conforming to His heart.

E.E.P. Would what the Lord says: “I have given them thy word” (v 14), and in verse 22: “And the glory ... I have given them”, lead to this unity?

A.J.G. Yes, “thy word” is the word of God in testimony. This is the light in which God has now been made known, in order that He might

be represented and carried on in testimony. Then the Lord gives us the glory of sonship, so that here, strictly speaking, we are not servants, even if we can also in a sense see ourselves as servants of the Lord; but here we see that we should stand in the testimony, and in freedom as sons, and also with the affections of sons.

C.deK.F. Do you think that the apostle Paul has before him the fulness of this part of the chapter when he writes to the Ephesians at the beginning of the first chapter?

A.J.G. Of course, there we have a complete representation of the Father's purpose. But in Paul's letter to the Galatians, he says that God had revealed His Son in him, so that Paul not only proclaimed that Jesus was the Son of God, but in the movements of Paul we can see all the freedom and dignity of a son. We may have the awareness that our measure is very small, but I believe that the Lord here desires that we stand in the testimony as those who have the same affections for God that also characterised Him.

C.deK.F. I thought of the words of the Lord Jesus here: "that the world may believe that thou hast sent me" (v 21), as if the special witness is given here in the position they occupy.

A.J.G. Yes, I think we can see that in the initial chapters of the Acts of the Apostles. We see the saints in wonderful unity, and a testimony was presented in them, which could not be contradicted. It may be that in the days near the Lord's return that the Lord may bring us back to the characteristics seen in the early days of Pentecost.

E.E.P. I wondered if verse 21 did not test us very much inwardly, for there is a oneness there, so to speak, on the inner side, and then, as has already been said, towards the world in the testimony. If one is missing, then the other cannot be.

A.J.G. No, we have that in Ephesians 4: 4: "There is one body and one Spirit". The Spirit brings forth the feelings of the body among the saints. That is the inner side. Then we have: "one Lord, one faith, one baptism", that is more the side of the testimony and may include suffering. When the sufferings began in the Acts of the Apostles, we find that this only brought forth greater unity.

But now the Lord speaks in verse 24 of His desire that He has concerning us. He says, “Father, as to those whom thou hast given me, I desire that where I am they also may be with me, that they may behold my glory which thou hast given me, for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world ...”. This is a glory that we behold; we do not share it with Him, but we only behold it. It is a glory that is connected with Christ as a Man, and yet we understand that He was loved in His person before the foundation of the world. From all eternity there was love between the persons of the Godhead. But now here One is seen as a Man and in sonship, loved by the Father, so that we may learn in Him what the Father has in His mind for man, even though the Lord always stands out distinct as One who is unique and always has precedence.

A.S.T. Does this have a current application, or will it be in the future?

A.J.G. It will be in its fulness in the future, but I believe that it is already now known in the assembly, that is, it is possible for us to behold Christ in this way by the Spirit.

K.Pf. Does this link with 2 Corinthians 3: 18?

A.J.G. It says, “looking on the glory of the Lord”. Yes, I think that is included. The verse shows that we should all be in it. It says: “But *we* all, looking on the glory of the Lord, with unveiled face, are transformed ... from glory to glory”, so that we pass from one to the other. I believe that this includes the fact that we grasp Christ as “the Christ” to whom God has entrusted to bring to pass His purpose, but because He is one of the Godhead, He has come into this position as a Man, so that these thoughts may be for our benefit. That is why it includes for us that we apprehend the whole structure of this dispensation.

H.G. Can this be combined with Ephesians 3, that we are able to apprehend with all the saints?

A.J.G. Yes, “the Christ may dwell, through faith, in your hearts”, v 17. If this is the case, we are able to apprehend with all the saints in our hearts what the breadth and length and depth and height is, and

then we know the love of Christ. That is what keeps us in the centre of these things. Thus we have the love of Christ in expressing that we should be with Him where He is.

E.E.P. I was thinking that what we see here in these chapters is that the divine Persons support each other so that this is achieved and that it depends on us?

A.J.G. All divine activities are done in the view of man, and the Spirit is essential, even if He is not mentioned here, in order to consciously introduce us to all this.

W.E. Should the light and glory that are in the city of the living God already shine in the assembly according to the thoughts of God?

A.J.G. That should be the case. Things are small and weak in our eyes, but this is how God works, for it is His glory, His honour, to hide a thing. He works very great things among the saints in conditions of external smallness and weakness, and thus He hides things from the world around us. But we should keep our eyes open so that we may see the moral glory of what God does in the saints.

A.S.T. And that opens our eyes to the active love that existed before it was even expressed.

A.J.G. Yes, that is so.

E.E.P. Are there deep feelings here when the Lord says, “Righteous Father”?

A.J.G. Yes, I think so. But now we come to the finality in the last verse. The Lord says, “And I have made known to them thy name, and will make it known; that the love with which thou hast loved me may be in them and I in them”. There are two things here; first of all, that the love, with which the Father loves Christ, should be in us. This is not exactly what we have in verse 23, which says: “... loved them as thou hast loved me”. It is a precious truth that the Father loves us as He loves Christ. But now the love that the Father has for Christ should also be in us; and this is possible through the Spirit of the Father. It is wonderful that the Spirit accepts the character of the Spirit of the Father in order to bring the affections and feelings of the Father

into our hearts, so that we, as true sons, can be in complete accord with the thoughts of the Father. What a wonderful grace that the Father brings us so close to Himself. Then the Lord continues to say, “and I in them”. This shows that there is something in the saints that is in agreement with Christ for the pleasure of the Father. So the Spirit is also ready to carry out the activity of the Spirit of God’s Son, so that the feelings of the Son towards the Father may be expressed in our hearts in the power of the Spirit of God’s Son. This gives us an idea of how close God has brought us to Himself, that we may, through the Spirit, share in the Son’s thoughts of love in relation to the Father.

C.deK.F. Therefore, does the Lord say: “my Father and your Father, and to my God and your God”, John 20: 17?

A.J.G. Yes, the Son says, “My Father and your Father, and my God and your God”, and the Father says, “This is my beloved Son”.

Ques. Do we share the joy of the Father in this way?

A.J.G. Yes, and also the joy of the Son. What were the feelings that were included when the Lord said, “Abba, Father”? We too should take on this language, not as a mere saying, but we should enter into these feelings.

E.E.P. How this should affect us when we see how the Spirit has knowledge of all that is in this prayer between Son and Father here, and He is now working to make this available to us in our hearts.

A.J.G. I think so. We can see that the last verses (vv 24-26) show very clearly that finality is reached in the saints, and also the conditions in which God can find His rest.

POWER

28th May 1959

Acts 1: 7-11

2 Kings 2: 9-14; 6: 14-17; 13: 14-19

We have spoken, dear brethren, of the day of the Spirit in which we find ourselves, a day when there should be an answer in the saints in the power of the Spirit of God to all the thoughts of God concerning man.

It is great grace that we should be found among those whom God has received: “he has chosen us in him before the world’s foundation”, as it is said, and each of us is personally foreknown, and each has a name, as the Lord says: “... your names are written in the heavens”, Luke 10: 20. All this should come into our position here in the testimony. What I am thinking now, by reading these scriptures, is that our Christianity should be marked by Christ, and it should be entirely in the power of the Spirit. The world, or rather, the part of the world in which we are, has embraced Christianity, but the world has pressed its own character and its own characteristics on it, so that Christianity viewed publicly is completely different from what God would have it. But the Acts of the Apostles brings Christianity in its beginning to us and the writer of the book brings Jesus before us in the first verse. He reminds us of the gospel of Luke. He says: “I composed the first discourse, O Theophilus, concerning all things which Jesus began both to do and to teach”, and then, in the second verse, he brings in the Holy Spirit, saying, “until that day in which, having by the Holy Spirit charged the apostles whom he had chosen, he was taken up”. Thus he brings Jesus before us, and Jesus as the One who was taken up. The phrase “taken up” appears four times in this first chapter. That gives us the impression that Jesus is recognised in heaven. He is the One acknowledged of God. Christianity should be marked by Him, and the power for it is not from men, but from God. Then everything should be through the Holy Spirit. Well, if we compare this with Christianity in public, I think we will see that what is around us is completely different on each side. The man of the world appears in public Christianity, and human resources are the

origin, thereby keeping the whole system going. We remember, in Acts 3, Peter said to the lame man, “Silver and gold I have not”. Silver and gold are the great resources that people possess to keep their world going, but Peter rejected them. Yes, he had none, and apparently the Lord had no money about Him either. He had to ask another to show Him a denarius. I am not saying this, dear brethren, so that we do not want to use money, but I just want to show that Christianity, as it was introduced, was not dependent on human or natural resources, but it was entirely dependent on the Spirit of God. I believe that God wants to bring us back to the features that characterised Christianity in the beginning. He wants to give us an impression of these two things: that Christianity should be marked by Jesus, and that the power for this is the Holy Spirit of God. It must be more and more important to us to keep Jesus truly before our minds and before our hearts, as the standard of the Man whom God has before Him, and the Holy Spirit keeps Him before us as the only power by which we can respond to the thoughts of God. Thus, in these verses in Acts 1, which we have read, the Lord says to the disciples, “It is not yours to know times or seasons, which the Father has placed in his own authority;” but then He says, “but ye will receive power”. It is about power.

You will remember when the gospel was about to be introduced to Europe, Paul and those with him were particularly dependent on the Holy Spirit. They wanted to go in a certain direction, but the Spirit of Jesus did not allow them. They were forbidden by the Holy Spirit to go in a different direction, and therefore they had to submit themselves to the Lord in subjection. Then the Lord told them to go to Macedonia. A man from Macedonia appeared before them in a vision, and when they got there, they could not see a man. All they could see were certain women praying on the banks of the river, and they sat down and spoke with these women. They were an image of weakness that the world does not take account of, but they represented those in whom God was working, and when Paul spoke to them, the Lord opened the heart of Lydia, that she would attend to what Paul said. She showed real spiritual instincts; she was baptised and her house, and then she invited the apostles into her house by saying: “If ye have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house and abide there”, Acts 16: 15. Thus the Lord established basic activities

in Europe. He had received a house, a baptised house, where the truth entrusted to the apostle was received. When they went to prayer, a certain woman followed them with a spirit of Python; and after many days the spirit was cast out, and Paul and Silas were cast into prison. How different are the ways of God from the ways of men. God came into the Western world with His testimony, and it did not correspond at all to the thoughts of men concerning power. The servants moved in weakness that they felt themselves, and so they were now thrown into prison, and then the Lord intervened with an earthquake, and the foundations of the prison were shaken. Philippi was a Roman colony, and the prison was actually under the power of the Roman Empire, and it was shaken to its foundations. The apostles were brought out and the jailor was converted, and with it another baptised house was set up. Now the man was there. The man was there in the jailor, and in this remarkable way the testimony was established in Europe. The assembly in Philippi was perhaps the best product of the apostle's ministry. I also appreciate, of course, what he set up in Ephesus; but when he wrote to the Philippians from the prison in Rome, the Philippians still went on with him in full fellowship in the gospel, while all who were in Asia, including Ephesus, had turned away from him. I mention this only to show that the power in which God brings His testimony is completely different from the power that the world wants to use: and we should understand this and be protected from taking refuge in human means. Therefore, we must always remember that Christianity should on the one hand take on the character of Jesus and that the power lies in the Holy Spirit of God on the other.

The apostles saw in Acts 1 how Jesus was taken from them. It says, "And having said these things he (that is Jesus) was taken up, they beholding him, and a cloud received him out of their sight". They saw Him being taken up. This gave them an impression of a Man in whom heaven was well pleased, a Man who was taken up to heaven. And then two men stood by them and said, "This Jesus who has been taken up from you into heaven, shall thus come in the manner in which ye have beheld him going into heaven", that is, the dispensation should end as it began. It began with Him being received into heaven, and the Spirit being sent down, and it will end with Him coming again. And when He comes, He will come as they have seen Him going into

heaven, that is, there is no change, the dispensation should end exactly as it started. I think we have that presented in these two men who gave the disciples this impression that the Man they saw and who was taken up to heaven should mark the whole dispensation to its end.

That is why John is on a similar ground in his letter. It goes back to what was from the beginning. He lived in the days when Christianity was already corrupted and people were already talking about development. That is why in his letter he goes back to what was from the beginning, “the word of life”, he says, that is, the expression of life in a Man, as he had known it in Jesus.

I think all of this is presented to us in the history of Elisha. It is very interesting that Elisha served in Israel, that is, in the ten tribes who had departed from the centre of God; and that is why this represents for us the present position in Christendom, where the truth has been publicly abandoned. We must acknowledge that we are in it. We cannot expect things to be outwardly in great power. It was impossible that things could be in great power in Israel after they departed from Jerusalem, and from God’s king, who was the son of David. Thus the position in Christendom today is the same, namely that the deviating from the truth characterises Christendom everywhere, and we cannot expect conditions of great power. And yet the power is present in the Spirit and is at our disposal, but only if we have the right conditions for it, and only if we have that One, who is God’s standard of man, before our thoughts and our hearts.

Thus the time had come when Jehovah wanted to take Elijah up to heaven by a whirlwind. He is a type of Jesus as the Man who was taken up to heaven. What a faithful servant Elijah had been. We do not need to be occupied with his weakness and breakdown. We can learn a lot from all these details; but let us look at Elijah on Mount Carmel, where he stood firm for the rights of God in the presence of four-hundred and fifty prophets of Baal and the four hundred prophets of Asherah. How he kept all that was due to the name of God! That is why he is in a special way a type of Jesus as the faithful and true witness, of the Man who has been taken up to heaven.

Now, Elisha understood that Elijah was to be taken away from him and that he should remain in the place of the testimony in his absence. That is precisely our position; that the man in whom God finds His pleasure has been received into heaven, and that we are still here in the scene of the testimony, in order to maintain the testimony in conditions of external weakness, which had been maintained in such fidelity by Elijah. That is why we can well understand Elisha saying: "... let a double portion of thy spirit be upon me" And Elijah says, "Thou hast asked a hard thing: If thou see me when I am taken from thee, it shall be so to thee; but if not, it shall not be so", that is, the Spirit wants to identify Himself in power with those who hold in their hearts the Man who has been received into heaven, and who understand that He is God's standard in Christianity, even if the world may take other standards; even if the world makes Christianity something worldly, the truth remains, and the Spirit is the Spirit of truth. And we should see that we are governed by the truth, whatever those around us may do. Thus it is said, "And it came to pass as they went on, and talked, that behold, a chariot of fire and horses of fire; and they parted them both asunder; and Elijah went up by a whirlwind into the heavens. And Elisha saw it, and he cried, My father, my father! the chariot of Israel and the horsemen thereof!" It was not the chariot of Elijah, but the chariot of Israel. It is a matter of taking up all the resources available to the people of God. "The chariot of Israel and the horsemen". It is a matter of understanding that the resources available to us are spiritual resources, first of all in the Holy Spirit of God Himself and then also by angels. For angels are spirits. "Who makes his angels spirits and his ministers a flame of fire", Heb 1: 7. These are the two great resources for the testimony of God now, namely the Holy Spirit of God on the one hand and the service of angels for all that man may do. Thus we find how angels were used in the initial chapters of the Acts of the Apostles. The apostles were thrown into the prison, and an angel opened the gate of the prison and told the apostles to go and stand, and to speak in the temple all the words of this life. What life? It was the life that was to be seen among the saints, a life that was completely different from the life of the world, a life marked by unity and love, and a testimony for Christ. The angel opened the gate of the prison, and the apostles went and

stood in the temple, as they were told. And then the government sent to have the apostles taken out of the prison, and when they sent there, they found the gate of the prison closed, and the guards standing by, and despite that the apostles were no longer there. One can well understand how baffled they had been. The resources of the testimony are spiritual, and it is imperative that we understand that, on the one hand, it is about the power of the Spirit of God, and on the other hand, it is about the service of angels.

In Hebrews 12 myriads of angels are mentioned among the things we have come to, and in the first chapter of this letter it is said that they are all sent out in service for those who are to inherit salvation. That is why I believe that Elisha meant this when he said, “My father, my father! the chariot of Israel and the horsemen”, that is, that Israel, the people of God, had spiritual resources at their disposal. Then it says, “Then he took hold of his own garments and rent them in two pieces”, that is, he renounced all that he was in himself. For us, dear brethren, it is about learning to dismiss the old man and to put on the new, because as is the heavenly, so are the heavenly. And then it says, “And he took up the mantle of Elijah ... and went back and stood by the bank of the Jordan”. We are not told that he wore the cloak of Elijah, but he took it, he had it with him, that is, he was constantly reminded of the measure of the man who had been received into heaven. And we should keep thinking about this, of the measure of Man who has been received into heaven; the work of the ministry tends this way, for it is said: “... until we all arrive at the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, at the full-grown man, at the measure of the stature of the fulness of the Christ”. The thought of the mantle is that it is the measure of the stature of the Man who went to heaven.

You will remember that Paul wrote to Timothy to bring the mantle he left at Carpus'. I believe that Timothy was to be reminded of Paul's measure, because the Spirit of God allowed Paul to present himself as an example. He says, “Be my imitators, even as *I* also am of Christ”, 1 Cor 11: 1. Therefore Timothy was to bring with him Paul's cloak, that he may have the measure of Paul continually before him as the measure of a servant. Paul was not perfect, but he was very

much in agreement with Christ and revealed in himself what is possible in a person of like passions to us.

And now in chapter 6 of this book we see how the king of Syria surrounded Dothan because Elisha was there. The king of Syria would like to take Elisha captive, and it is said, “and they came by night (that is, horses and chariots, and a strong army) and surrounded the city”. The servant said to Elisha, “Alas, my master! how shall we do?” Elisha was completely at peace, but not so the servant, so that Elisha asks Jehovah to open the eyes of the servant: “Jehovah, I pray thee, open his eyes that he may see. And Jehovah opened the eyes of the young man, and he saw; and, behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha”. Elisha, we can say, was the bearer of the testimony, and the horses and the chariots were around Elisha. God cares about the testimony of our Lord; and all His angels are available to do anything that must be done for practical protection. Elisha’s eyes did not need to be opened, but they had to be opened to the young man; and I believe that the epistle to the Hebrews is written, among other things, so that we may have opened eyes for the fact that spiritual resources are abundant in support of the testimony. The Spirit Himself is here as the Spirit of truth, who guides us into all the truth, and who is particularly concerned about how the saints proceed; for the Holy Spirit says in the epistle to the Hebrews, “To-day, if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts”, Heb 4: 7. Therefore, when one of us becomes careless, when one of us permits other things, the Spirit sees that they control us more than the things of God to which we are called. The Spirit therefore says, “To-day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts”. Therefore, the Spirit diligently ensures that we move forward and also cares to what extent we correspond to the truth that has been presented to us. But combined with this great provision in the Person of the Spirit, we have myriads of angels sent out for the service of those who inherit salvation.

Well, in this last passage, which we have read in chapter 13, it is a question of having appropriate conditions. The king of Israel came down to Elisha. Things got worse and worse in Israel, and Elisha was about to die, he fell ill with the disease from which he died.

The king of Israel came down to him, and wept over his face, saying, “My father, my father! the chariot of Israel and the horsemen thereof!” as if he had absorbed what Elijah had said years earlier. But did he himself have faith in it? It is absolutely true that we have spiritual resources at our disposal. The Spirit of God is here in undiminished power, and all angels are at the Lord’s disposal to support His people, but it is a question of the conditions we are providing. Therefore the prophet said to the king first of all: “Take bow and arrows. And he took a bow and arrows. And he said to the king of Israel, Put thy hand upon the bow. And he put his hand upon it: and Elisha put his hands upon the king’s hands; and said, Open the window eastward. And he opened it. And Elisha said, Shoot. And he shot. And he said, An arrow of Jehovah’s deliverance”. This means that first of all the king had to obey the prophet, and help came in when he obeyed. But then the king was tested. The prophet told him to take arrows and strike the ground. The prophet did not tell him how many times he should strike; he left this to the feelings of the king; and the king failed, that is, he did not go all the way. He struck three times and then stayed. In this way we are also tested whether we really go all the way in the rejection of the flesh in one form or another, so that the power of the Spirit is unhindered. The king struck three times and paused. And it is said, “And the man of God was wroth with him, and said, Thou shouldest have smitten five or six times; then wouldest thou have smitten the Syrians till thou hadst consumed them; whereas now thou shalt smite Syria but thrice”; that is, they were only partially successful, because the king did not go all the way.

I think we should learn this from these scriptures, dear brethren, it is easy enough to see that what characterises Christianity—the thoughts of God are connected with an order of man according to Christ, and the position is maintained only in the power of the Spirit of God. The test for us is whether we really keep these things before us and whether we go all the way by preparing the conditions in which the Spirit of God can act unhinderedly. I believe that if we are helped in this by the Lord, then we will be surprised at what things we are being brought into. Undoubtedly, the Spirit of God has for all of us a complete correspondence to Christ in His thoughts. It reads: “the Spirit and the bride say, Come!” The Spirit and the bride

have one mouth and one thought, so to speak, and say: “Come” to the Lord Jesus. If this is truly our wish, then we will also make sure that we have suitable conditions for the Lord Jesus among us. May the Lord bless the word to us!

APPENDIX

The two articles which follow should have been included in Volume 3 of this series; and neither of them was given in Germany. However, one was overlooked when the collection was being assembled, and the other only came to light as this final volume was being finalised. The first article first appeared in a periodical magazine in 1943; the second has been transcribed from a recently discovered recording of an address in 1950.

Scripture quotations in these two pieces may be from the Kling James Version or the Darby Bible

SPIRITUAL SATISFACTION

John 4; 10-14

Genesis 26: 12-22

Numbers 21: 16-18

I have in mind the possibility of being satisfied with the things of the Spirit. Scripture speaks of the things of the Spirit, saying, “they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit”, Rom 8: 5. Much of the weakness amongst us is because the saints are not satisfied with the things of God. If we were satisfied with the things that properly belong to us as saints, we should not turn aside to things that are questionable, or which would be damaging to our souls. In John 4 the Lord proposes to the woman that for the asking she might receive living water, and He makes the proposal attractive, saying that “whosoever drinks of the water which I shall give him shall never thirst for ever”, v 14. “Never thirst for ever” is an emphatic negative. The Lord would thus impress us with the possibilities of finding satisfaction, and having the source of it within ourselves. Looking at things from the natural standpoint, the woman referred to the well on which the Lord was sitting and said, “Sir, thou hast nothing to draw with, and the well is deep; from whence then hast thou that living water?” It requires a good deal of labour to produce a little satisfaction, to draw a little water from a deep well, and that is characteristic of the sources of supply to which men turn, and to which we as saints will turn if we are not satisfied with better things. So the Lord at once proposes to her that He is prepared to give her that which will satisfy, the water that He will give “shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life”, and one drinking of that water shall “never thirst for ever”. It is encouraging that the Lord puts it on the ground of our asking. He says, “If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink; thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water”. There is no condition. It is a question of our understanding who Christ is, and of the infinite resources that are at His command, and His ability to give the Spirit, and whether we want to be satisfied. The Lord puts it in

such an attractive way that the woman says, “Sir, give me this water, that I thirst not, neither come hither to draw”. Then He puts His finger on the secret of her life, and says to her, “Go, call thy husband, and come hither”. That brings to light much of her history, which until that moment she doubtless thought was unknown to Him, but He makes it clear that He knew all, so that she says, “Sir, I perceive that thou art a prophet”. Now, if we are to have in full enjoyment the liberty of the Spirit known in this way as satisfying us, we need to have a transaction with Christ. The Lord was there with the woman and her impression of the interview was “a man, which told me all things that ever I did”. It is a good thing to have to do with Christ in that light, One who not only can, but does, put His finger on everything that we have done, and the underlying motives of that in which we have sought to find satisfaction, making us feel we are in the presence of One in whose presence all things are naked and open. But she was not repelled. If we have to do with the Lord in that light, we find that the same One who can make known to us the inmost secrets of our motives, and the springs of our being, is the very One who has been into death in order that all that we discover in ourselves, and the springs of it, should be judged according to God, and removed. So what is in mind is that we should find a Man—one speaks reverently—a Man to whom to live. It is not a question of legal effort or attainment, but of being set in relation to Him who has been raised from among the dead. One order of man has passed out of God's sight—and we are entitled, as believing the gospel, to take that home to ourselves—and another Man has been raised by God from among the dead, and it is for us to live to Him— “to be to another, who has been raised up from among the dead”, Rom 7: 4. It is as we have our hearts in that direction that the support of the Spirit will be practically realised. The result with the woman is that she is to be secured as a worshipper. An unsatisfied person is never a worshipper; a worshipper is one fully satisfied. It is touching that the Lord should open His conversation with the woman by saying, “Give me to drink”. He was proposing to her that she should give Him to drink, and at the end of the gospel the Lord says on the cross, “I thirst”, a most touching expression, indicative of the desires of the Lord and of God Himself to be ministered to by men. This lies at the root of it, for we are taken

up to minister to God. The assembly's greatest privilege is to serve the blessed God, and to minister to His pleasure. An individual who learns to recognise the Spirit and the possibilities that lie in the Spirit, will in due time find his or her place effectively in the assembly.

In John 4 the truth is put before us objectively; the proposal is from the Lord's side, in its attractiveness, encouraging us to ask—"If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink; thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water". When we come to Genesis 26, it is the other side, the side of exercise, and that, too, under the two-fold figure of sowing and digging. It says in verse 12—"Then Isaac sowed in that land, and received in the same year an hundredfold", which shows that the sowing was right. The point is where he sowed in that land, not in Egypt. Scripture says, "he that soweth to his flesh", not the flesh generally, but taking account of the fact that the flesh in me may take different forms from flesh in someone else—"shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting", Gal 6: 8.

So, it says, "Isaac sowed in that land". I believe the sowing largely refers to what we give our minds to. If we give our minds to heavenly things, the things connected with our Lord Jesus Christ, the things properly ours as saints, we shall reap spiritual things. Isaac sowed in that land, in contrast to Egypt, and he received an hundredfold, "and the Lord blessed him. And the man waxed great, and went forward, and grew until he became very great. For he had possession of flocks, and possession of herds, and great store of servants". That is the line on which spiritual substance is acquired.

Then what follows in regard of the wells is a question of things being held and enjoyed in freshness. A springing well indicates freshness and consequent enjoyment, and that is what we need. It is possible to have a good understanding of the outline of the truth and yet to have no enjoyment, no freshness. Sowing is more the positive line, but digging is suggestive of the exercise that will get rid of what is hindering. We all know what things are hindering us, we do not need to look far to see what is hindering us if we are not in the enjoyment of divine things; not that one would make joy or experience

an object, but we can test ourselves. If things are not enjoyed in freshness, it means the wells are stopped up, and need to be unstopped. Self-judgment enters into it, to do away with the things that hinder, so that there may be opportunity with the Spirit to engage us with the things of the Spirit. I may say there are infinite things within the scope of the Spirit—"the Spirit searches all things, yea; the deep things of God", 1 Cor 2: 10. If only we are prepared to move on these lines, we shall never be without fresh fields opened up by the Spirit.

So these wells were unstopped, and the truth which had been known in the past is brought into evidence again, the same names were given to the wells, the same features of the truth known now in freshness. And then it says, "And Isaac's servants digged in the valley, and found there a well of springing water". They are going to move on this line of digging so as to secure fresh wells. That is what I have in mind, that there should be the exercise on the one hand to sow in the right land, and on the other, energy to dig, that is to get rid of what hinders. So we find the Philistines contend for the wells that Isaac digged, claiming them when dug. It is like persons who, as the Spirit of God brings fresh features of the truth into view, immediately lay hold of them by mere mental effort, and deprive them of their freshness and preciousness. But the heavenly minded man goes on on this principle of digging, and on this line he says, "the Lord hath made room for us".

Now in Numbers 21 it is a question of the Spirit recognised collectively. John 4 and Genesis 26 are words to us individually, but Numbers 21 has in view the Spirit recognised and the gain of it enjoyed collectively. So it says they came to Beer; "that is the well whereof the Lord spake unto Moses, Gather the people together, and I will give them water". It is a question of recognising the Spirit as we are together. Thank God we know something of that, and it is a matter always to be kept in mind. And here the nobles have a particular responsibility.

Those who lead among the people of God, to speak simply, have a particular responsibility to dig the well, and dig it with their staves—a most remarkable thing to dig a well with staves. Staves may suggest certain experience with God, but I believe they suggest also

dependence, for after all, the practical working out of these matters, the digging of a well, making room for the Spirit to come in so that the things of God are ministered in freshness according to the need of the moment, always requires dependence. No mental effort will secure it. It is a question of humbly waiting on the Lord that He may give what is needed.

“Then Israel sang this song, Spring up, O well; sing ye unto it”. It is a question of the attitude of our minds and hearts as we are together, that the Spirit of God should be free to bring His present mind before us in freshness, and then there is the responsibility of the nobles, “by the direction of the lawgiver”—all is under the hand of the Lord—“with their staves”.

May the Lord give us all to know more of the possibilities that lie in the Spirit, particularly that we might find satisfaction in the things of God. If we are satisfied with the things of God we shall not turn aside to things that are damaging.

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From Words of Grace and Comfort, 1943

APPREHENDING CHRIST

Exodus 16: 13-15

Luke 21: 37, 38

1 Timothy 6: 13-18

Philippians 3: 8-14

I have read these four scriptures, dear brethren, with the desire to bring before you four aspects, four settings, in which Christ may be apprehended by us. Each of them distinctive and each of them important in its place.

Exodus 16 gives us the manna; that is Christ as the food appointed by God for the wilderness. When one speaks of the wilderness one speaks of our position as in this world where Christ is not, and the ordinary circumstances of responsible life in which we have to move. We are here, I need not say, dear brethren, for the will of God; that is the only reason why we are here. We have been redeemed by the precious blood of Christ and God has in that way established incontestable right to each one of us in a most absolute way. He has in mind that we should be with Christ eternally, but for the moment, as regards most of us, He is pleased to leave us here; that is in His will, and it is well for us to understand that we are here for the will of God. We have no right to have any other object before us than that our position here in the world as redeemed is to be here for the will of God. And so Romans 12 speaks of our presenting our bodies a living sacrifice unto God, “a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God” (v 1), and our not being conformed to this world, but being transformed by the renewing of our mind in order that we may prove “what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God”, v 2.

Well now our position as here in the wilderness for God’s will needs to be sustained, or rather, we need to be sustained in it. As in natural things, so in spiritual things, the principle of being sustained is by the appropriation of suitable food; and God in His grace has provided food for His people in the wilderness, food suited to that position. This chapter presents to us that, having been brought out of Egypt, they found themselves without food. Just before, in the previous chapter, they found themselves at Marah and the waters were

bitter; and that is an experience which we often find—that, to be here for the will of God, we find that the circumstances that He orders in His will are not at all to our natural liking and may not be at all what we would have chosen or what we would have expected; so that bitterness in that sense confronts us. But then Moses cried to Jehovah and Jehovah showed him wood; not a tree, but *wood*, and he cast it into the waters and the waters became sweet. There is no doubt that the wood refers to *the manhood of Jesus*; but in the circumstances which the will of God has appointed for us, it is a great comfort to see that the Lord Jesus Himself as having become Man entered into the ordinary circumstances of human life, sin apart, and went through those circumstances on the principle of uncompromising obedience to the will of God. As He is contemplated in those circumstances and marked by that principle, there is that which is attractive to the renewed mind, the renewed spiritual being. So the waters become sweet as made attractive by seeing the Lord in relation to the ordinary circumstances of human life. And so it was at Marah that God made them a statute and an ordinance and said, “If thou wilt diligently hearken to the voice of Jehovah thy God, and do what is right in his eyes, and incline thine ears to his commandments, and keep all his statutes, I will put none of the complaints upon thee that I have put upon the Egyptians; for I am Jehovah who healeth thee”, Exod.15: 26. That is, God has established this principle of obedience to His will as the principle which is now to govern a believer’s life; and as that principle is followed we will be immune from all the diseases, all the complaints, which mark people of the world. And so it is, dear brethren, that we find it so in experience, that the more we are simply governed by God’s will, the more we are freed from anxiety, the more we are freed from discontent, the more we are freed from all the elements of bitterness which characterise the world around us. It is a great thing to see that as redeemed to God and in the world for His will the principle of obedience to that will in all things is the governing principle of a believer’s life.

But then, as I say, that needs to be sustained, or rather, we need to be sustained in relation to it; and the manna comes in as a presentation of Christ as food for our souls to sustain us in that position. The people when they murmured (I am referring to verse 6)

were answered by Moses, who said: “In the evening, then shall ye know that Jehovah has brought you out from the land of Egypt; and in the morning, then shall ye see the glory of Jehovah”. Well now, in verse 13 where we read, it says, “And it came to pass in the evening, that quails came up and covered the camp; and in the morning the dew lay round the camp. And when the dew that lay round it was gone up, behold, on the face of the wilderness there was something fine, granular, fine as hoar-frost, on the ground”. I believe at this point the quails were given by God in such quantities that they covered the camp in order that they might understand that God was quite able to do *anything* in the way of power to meet *any* exigency. But then that is not what He wants us to learn. He does not want us to learn to expect great displays of divine power to operate on our behalf; that is not His way. He can do it if necessary—and will do it if necessary. He could show Elijah an earthquake and a fire and a wind in order to assure Elijah that, if it is necessary, He can use *any* power, absolutely irresistible by man, to accomplish His end. But then that is not His way, and therefore while in the evening they were allowed to see that divine power was there, it was divine power that got them out of Egypt.

Yet on the other hand, in the morning, they were to see something different, they were to see the glory of the Lord. And in this setting, there is no glory so great as the wondrous fact that He who is God Himself in grace became a Man and in wonderful grace entered into the ordinary circumstances of human life, sin apart, and moved in those circumstances in obedience and daily dependence and confidence in God, and contentment too; in order that as thus moving He might become the food and the support of His people. That is great glory indeed. It shows how wonderfully God can come down in grace and adapt Himself to the needs and exercise of His people, and how in doing that in type, He has in mind that Christ should become not only our food in wilderness circumstances, but that in the very appropriation of Him in those circumstances, He Himself should become endeared to us.

And so we can understand that God said that there was to be an omer of this food, this manna, laid up before Him, He would have

it before Him. In the 9th chapter of Hebrews we have Paul, the writer of the epistle, telling us what there was in the holiest, and he refers to the ark and he says, therein was “the golden pot that had the manna”, v 4. We are not told elsewhere that this was a *golden* pot, but in the speaking of it in the light of Christianity, it says it was a *golden* pot, as though he would emphasise the glory of it. But there are specific tests in connection with the wilderness circumstances of God’s people here of grace that has come down so low. As the hymn says, ‘Christ, once humbled here’ (Hymn 79); come down as a babe and grow up, and be a boy, and be subject to His parents, and work in conditions not attractive to the natural man, and all that kind of thing. And in those circumstances work and move daily on the principle of obedience and of dependence and of contentment.

So if anyone wants to understand something of the moral excellence of Jesus as Man here, I would commend to them not only to read the gospels but also to read Psalm 16, for instance, and other scriptures which give us an understanding as we look at them carefully of the moral excellence that marked Jesus in His pathway here. And so there was this manna. It says, “And when the dew that lay round it was gone up, behold, *on the face of the wilderness* there was something fine, granular, fine as hoar-frost, on the ground”; something very small, something that being very small would fit in to any circumstances, and the more you test it out, dear brethren, the more you will find that the principle of obedience to God renewed daily, the principle of dependence on God coming into expression daily, that these principles will fit into *any* circumstance and lighten *any* burden.

And so, dear brethren, this is the first presentation of Christ that I desire to bring before you; not to go into much detail as to the manna as the hymn puts it so beautifully ‘Of Christ once humbled here’, but especially in the ordinary circumstances of human life in which we have to move according to God’s will. And I do not think we shall ever get very far in practical, effective, identification with God’s testimony, or in ability to move in privilege in the service of God if we do not know something of what it is to be here in the wilderness according to God’s will and for His pleasure. Indeed, I

believe I may say that, morally speaking, feeding on the manna is like the development of acacia wood; that is, acacia wood is figuratively the kind of manhood that can stand in the testimony. And if we are to develop the kind of manhood according to Jesus Christ that can stand in the testimony, we must know what it is to feed on manna and go through wilderness circumstances as governed by God's will and affording Him pleasure in those circumstances.

And there is something more before we leave this chapter on the manna, and that is that as you read the chapter you find that they had manna for six days and then there was a sabbath. And that is indeed the idea, dear brethren, that six days feeding on manna leads in principle to rest, leads to a sabbath, and in the gospel of Matthew, He says, "Come to me, all ye who labour and are burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me ... and ye shall find rest to your souls", Matt 11: 28,29. That is, the appropriation of manna day by day leads to rest.

Well now I pass on to Luke 21 in order to draw attention to the principle upon which the Lord lived as here now in testimony. Not now the ordinary circumstances of human life, but here as in testimony for God, though for the moment it is not the side of testimony that I want to suggest because that I suppose is seen in connection with the scripture read from Timothy. But what is particularly in mind is in verse 37, it says, "And by day he was teaching in the temple", that is the side of testimony and service, "and by night, going out, he remained abroad on the mountain called the mount of Olives". It is put here as not something done on one particular night; it is put here rather as that it was *His habit*. As we remarked this afternoon, at the end of John 7 we read, "And every one went to his home" (v 53), and then at the beginning of the next chapter it says, "But Jesus went to the mount of Olives". That again confirms that the idea is that it was His habit. Now the idea of a mountain, as the mount of Olives, is that it is a sphere which can be entered upon while we are on earth and yet is above the level of the earth. The mount of Olives suggests a *spiritual sphere*, and in the case of the Lord Jesus I have no doubt that what is referred to is the continual communion which He had with His Father. We were saying this

afternoon that the eternal life which the apostle discerned as contemplated in Jesus was with the Father. It had that character, it was lived in relation to the Father. It was characterised by communion with the Father, the Father's interests, the Father's pleasure, the Father's world, was that in which the Lord Jesus really found His life.

Now dear brethren, for us these things involve the Spirit, which is what the mount of Olives has in mind. The mount of Olives has in mind a sphere to be known here on earth that can be resorted to in the power of the Holy Spirit but lies outside of the world itself and is above its level. Now that is something for us to ask ourselves about as to how much we know of it, because it is quite clear that it is the principle upon which the Lord Jesus moved. His life was lived with the Father. It says in verse 38, "all the people came early in the morning to him in the temple to hear him". That is, when the morning came, He would again take up His place of service and testimony, and in that position, He would encounter opposition, as He did. But what lay behind the position publicly which He filled in service and testimony, and all the opposition He encountered in it, was that He had spent the night abroad on the mount of Olives. I am not suggesting, of course, that it is physically possible for us to do without sleep. I am not suggesting that, but I am suggesting, dear brethren, that if we would be maintained in spiritual power in the position that we are to fill here in service and testimony, we must see to it that this principle of resorting in the power of the Spirit to heavenly things which are really ours and in which God intends we should find our life, should not be given up; should not be neglected.

And so in the passage we were reading this afternoon John says to the little ones, the little children, He told them "if what ye have heard from the beginning abides in you, ye also shall abide in the Son and in the Father. And this is the promise which *he* has promised us, life eternal", 1 John 2: 24,25. It is a great thing to withdraw in our spirits, to the system of affection which belongs to us and into which we have entrance in the Holy Spirit. It says, "The Father loves the Son, and has given all things to be in his hand", John 3: 35. There is a system of divine affection established now, it is subsisting in the Son, having its part in the Father, and we through grace have our part

in it. The Thessalonians were “in God the Father”, 1 Thess.1:1. And so it says in the end of the first epistle of John, “we know that the Son of God has come, and has given us an understanding that we should know him that is true”, 1 John 5:20. That is, God has come out now in full revelation in love according to His will. It is apprehended in Christ and “we are in him that is true, in his Son Jesus Christ”. That is, God has set us before Him in Christ and in Him we are in the abiding position of love. We are loved of the Father, we are loved of the Son, and I may say we are loved of the Holy Spirit. For He has taught us as having taking up His abode in us and keeping us livingly in touch with Christ where He is and the Father known in Him, so that whatever arises here we may find our resource, our retreat in a scene of love where Jesus is and where the Father is known and where we belong. We belong there: we are in Him that is true, that is, in God, “we are in him that is true, in his Son Jesus Christ”. That is a fixed position, and the Holy Spirit enables us to withdraw into it and to enjoy it; and that all the Father’s *things* are ours. Not only the love of the Father but the Father’s things are ours because they are all of Christ and all that is Christ’s is ours. It says in the epistle to the Corinthians, “all are yours; and *ye* are Christ’s, and Christ is God’s”, 1 Cor 3: 23. Wonderful position, wonderful position that we are in these affections, that all things are ours because we are Christ’s, and Christ is God’s.

So the whole system of the Father’s pleasure, and all that is so soon to be brought into display, seen by the Spirit and centring in Christ is all ours, and we may enter upon it and withdraw into it. Indeed the Father’s Spirit is seen in that character, the power to dwell in our hearts by faith and to enable us to understand “the breadth and length and depth and height”.

Well now what I have been saying touches on what we have spoken of this afternoon as to the enjoyment of eternal life, and it is most important that we should know something, and increasingly so, of the enjoyment of eternal life, if on the one hand we are to be furnished with right substance and right feelings in the service of God, and if on the other hand we are to be effective in the position of testimony, so that we are not overcome by the world in which we have

to render testimony. And so I commend this verse to you, dear brethren, that “by night, going out, he remained abroad on the mountain called the mount of Olives”. We gather from the first chapter of the Acts that it was on the mount of Olives that He was taken up into heaven. It says the disciples, after they had seen Him go up, that they returned from the mount of Olives to Jerusalem, about a sabbath-day’s journey. The mount of Olives represents our retreat in the power of the Holy Spirit; Jerusalem is the sphere of testimony and it is near, it is only a sabbath-day’s journey off; the one stands in relation to the other. So if there is to be power in testimony in Jerusalem then we must know something of the mount of Olives.

And so that leads me now to the epistle to Timothy where we have the Lord Jesus presented to us as having witnessed before Pontius Pilate “the good confession”. That is, it is now Jesus in the position of testimony. Of course He was in that position from the moment that He went forth as anointed by the Holy Spirit. I am not in any sense limiting this thought of testimony in the case of the Lord Jesus to His testimony before Pontius Pilate; because He was faithful in testimony, the faithful and true witness from the moment He went forth in testimony as anointed by the Holy Spirit until the moment that He lay down His life. And so it says, “I enjoin thee before God who preserves all things in life”. That is a great thing that, as having any little part in testimony, and incurring opposition and feeling it, and understanding that the opposition if permitted might go to any lengths, it is a good thing to be before God, and before God who “preserves all things in life”. That is to say, it is God that we rely upon, the God who “preserves all things in life”, and he says, “and Christ Jesus”, “I enjoin thee before God ... and Christ Jesus who witnessed before Pontius Pilate the good confession”. It tells us in the gospels, in the gospels of Matthew and Mark and Luke, it was reported that before Pontius Pilate that the Lord said *two words only*. In each of those three gospels it is recorded that Pontius Pilate said to the Lord, “Art *thou* the King of the Jews? And he answered and said to him, *Thou sayest*”, Mark 15: 2. And then accusations are made and He answered him, “not so much as one word”, Matt 27: 14. So that it says the governor *marvelled*, Mark 15: 5. In the gospels of Matthew and Mark especially, and Luke perhaps to a lesser degree, but the gospels of

Matthew and Mark especially present the Lord Jesus in testimony here was “led as a lamb to the slaughter, and was as a sheep dumb before her shearers, and he opened not his mouth”, Isa 53: 7. It presents the Lord in that character as committing Himself to Him that judges righteously (1 Pet 2: 23), and not answering a word in personal defence; but if the testimony required it, answering at once. So if it was a question put to Him involving the testimony, “Art thou the king of the Jews?”, He immediately answered, “*Thou sayest*”; but if it is a question of personal accusation He answered not a word. But then when it comes to the gospel of John we find that according to record there, He said a good deal to Pontius Pilate, and that He was there in faithfulness in witness to the truth. He said before Pilate, according to John’s gospel, “I have been born for this, and for this I have come into the world, that I might bear witness to the truth”, John 18: 37.

That is an important matter, dear brethren. I was saying at the outset that we are here for the will of God, and what is involved in that among other things is that we are here identified with the truth. We are here in order to walk in the truth, and we are here as occasion requires to testify to the truth, the truth as to God, because all that the enemy has brought into this world is a denial of the truth unto God. And now God has made Himself known, “we are in him that is true, in his Son Jesus Christ”, 1 John 5: 20. We have a fixed known position in His love. He has come out in righteous grace and in holy love, and so, dear brethren, it is a question of God in His real nature and His moral attributes being expressed by the saints, and testimony as the occasion requires being borne to the truth. That is what we are here for. Now in that position, the Lord, I need not say, He has been a faithful and true witness; indeed He presents Himself in that way in the first chapter of Revelation, and He is presented in that way also, or rather presents Himself in that way to Laodicea, so that is “the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God”, Rev 3: 14. And so it says here, “Christ Jesus who witnessed before Pontius Pilate the good confession, that thou keep the commandment spotless, irreprouchable, until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ”. The commandment I take it is all that was enjoined upon Timothy in this epistle, and he is to keep it spotless,

irreproachable, and indeed, dear brethren, as we draw near the end, I believe that God expects a higher standard.

It says in the prophecy of Ezekiel if you remember you get a man with a measuring reed, and the reed, if I remember rightly, was six cubits long, but then it says that every cubit was a cubit and a hand breadth (Ezek 40: 5), which seems rather anomalous, but the Spirit of God is suggesting to us that there is a measuring-reed with a precise standard of six cubits long, but then it is as though the Spirit says that now in these closing days the standard has got to be more exacting. It has to be a cubit and a hand-breadth each cubit, which is a remarkable thing, and I believe in that way God would exercise us that as the end approaches we are to see to it that God is looking for a higher standard of things. Indeed, He is looking for nothing short of perfection, and if we are to have perfection before us, we can only have it before us in every setting in Jesus. And so he says, “that thou keep the commandment spotless, irreproachable, until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ”, that is the public appearing, “in its own time the blessed and only Ruler shall shew”, that is God, “the King of those that reign, and Lord of those that exercise lordship; who only has immortality”; He has it, He has it Himself. We are going to take on immortality; it says, “this mortal must put on immortality”. We are going to take it up by the power of God, but God has it, “who only has immortality”. That is, however man may seem, however great they may appear to be in opposition, they are *only mortal*. God only “has immortality, dwelling in unapproachable light; whom no man has seen, nor is able to see; to whom be honour and eternal might. Amen”. That is, that the approach in our exercises is before God, but also before Christ Jesus.

Well now, finally I come to Philippians because it is not now a question of Christ as food for the wilderness, but Christ as exemplifying to us the importance of eternal life, and entering into it livingly and enjoying it while Christ is in the position of testimony here, Christ as in heaven; as it says in the first epistle of John, “we know that if it is manifested we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is”, 1 John 3: 2. Not ‘as He was’ but “as he is”. This third chapter of the epistle to the Philippians presents to us Christ as He is

and where He is, apprehended by Paul as the expression in Himself, that is in Christ, as God's calling on high has a place, "the calling on high of God in Christ Jesus". Christ Jesus is, as we often say, the Man of God's purpose. That is to say, He is the One who has from the very outset been in the mind of God. God's purposes are bound up with Him, and it is a great thing to apprehend that in Him God sets forth His calling of place, it is called "his calling on high" in order that we might be impressed with the exalted and elevated character of it, "the calling on high in Christ Jesus". Let me refer for a moment to a well-known verse in 1 Corinthians 15, the Spirit of God says, "the first man is of the earth, earthy: the second man, out of heaven", v 47 KJV.

I would just ask you, dear brethren, to consider that for a moment, "the first man is of the earth, earthy". Adam was never more than that, he was never any more than that. Even in innocence before he fell, he was never any more than that, "of the earth, earthy". "The second man", that is the Man Christ Jesus, is "out of heaven". What kind of manhood do you think, what kind of glorious manhood, what supreme moral excellence in manhood is to be found when one of the Godhead Himself becomes Man, manhood that is characteristically out of heaven? And think of the grace of God that has called us that we should have part in that order of manhood, as Paul says, that I may know Him, that I may be found in Him, found in Christ. Not a trace left of what Paul was as a natural man, and yet it *is* Paul, identifiable as such, and he knows himself as such, "a man in Christ", 2 Cor 12: 2. Think of the glory of it, dear brethren, the calling is that every one of us has been called, that we should be found in Christ; as it says, "such as the heavenly one, such also the heavenly ones". We *are* heavenly already, and as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly. And hence we may well desire to get an impression by the Spirit of what Paul speaks of here as "the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord". Paul is here speaking near the end of his days, a devoted servant of Christ, and in no way relinquishing the exercises connected with the testimony and the welfare of the saints, although he was a prisoner. But here he is as a brother, as an individual saint, and he allows us to see the kind of thing that is occupying his mind as he draws near the end of his course. He has Christ in glory before his heart as the One

in whom he himself is about to be found, he is going to be found in Christ, and he says, I would like to know Him, I would like to apprehend and take up the moral excellency that is found in Christ Jesus. And so he would accept every exercise that came upon him as the means by which God would grant further to promote in Paul correspondence with Christ Jesus.

And so in the second chapter of this epistle we are told, “let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus” (v 5), that is to say the epistle is full of the thought of Christ Jesus, and we are intended to contemplate Christ Jesus, not as He was, but as He is, and yet as that wonderful mind that was in Christ Jesus came into expression in that stoop, and in obedience even unto death. But then the apostle says, Let that be in you. And now the apostle has before him that he is to be found in Christ, and he says, Whatever it involves I want to reach it; he says, that I may “know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings”. I believe he means that he saw in the sufferings of Christ such moral excellence, that he wanted to have some part in them, the sufferings of Christ, “the fellowship of his sufferings, being conformed to his death”. He found moral excellence in the dying of Jesus, the death of Jesus, and he wanted to be conformed to it, so to speak the moral road by which he would reach this; his resurrection from among the dead when he will be found entirely in Christ.

So he says, “Not that I have already obtained the prize, or am already perfected; but I pursue, if also I may get possession of it, seeing that also I have been taken possession of by Christ Jesus”. And then most encouragingly he says, “Brethren, I do not count to have got possession myself; but one thing—forgetting the things behind, and stretching out to the things before, I pursue, looking towards the goal, for the prize of the calling on high of God in Christ Jesus”. The goal is at the end, and the prizes that we shall get at the end, and the prizes at the end are to be found wholly in Christ, in all the moral excellence that that involves. Even as to our bodies, as it says at the end of the chapter, we look from heaven, “we await the Lord Jesus Christ as Saviour, who shall transform our body of humiliation into conformity to his body of glory”, v 20,21. So that our calling, the calling on high

of God, is to be found in *every way* in Christ and conformed to Him both morally and bodily.

Well now in the light of that, dear brethren, may the Lord help us to take character from Paul and be marked by one thing; one thing, not to be diverted from it. If we have one thing before us, that is Christ known now in glory, as the expression of God's mind for us, then I say we will move on the lines that I have indicated as appropriating manna in wilderness circumstances, as availing ourselves of eternal life and contemplating Christ in faithfulness in testimony. As having Him before us where He is and as He is, the great end that we are to reach by the grace of God, and the more we have Him before us, the more we shall find that God will use everything to promote that end in moral conformation in us now. May the Lord bless the word.

CRANFORD NJ

10th June 1950

From a recording—and not therefore revised by Mr Gardiner

Books of A J Gardiner's ministry

Books published by Stow Hill Bible and Tract Depot

Piety and Other Addresses—*New Zealand, 1946/47*

Christianity as Characterised by Mystery—*Australia, 1947*

Christianity a System of Glory—*Birmingham, 1948*

Education in View of the Assembly—*Barbados, 1949/50*

Eternal Life—*Dorking and Portsmouth, 1951*

The Worship of God—*London, July 1953*

The Substantiality of Christianity—*London, July 1954*

Collected Articles of Ministry

There are seven volumes in this series; two were published originally before material for another five came to hand—

Volume 1—*articles from 1929-1951*

Volume 2—*articles from March 1951-1960*

Volume 3—*articles from 1937-1950*

Volume 4—*articles from 1951-1954 (including three-day meetings in Valence in 1954)*

Volume 5—*articles from November 1954-1959*

Volume 6—*notes of three-day meetings in—*

Ilford, September 1951

Nottingham, April 1953

Ealing, May 1959

Volume 7—*articles from 1960-1969*

The contents of these seven volumes have also been published in a ten-part series of books in the same size as the earlier ones listed above.