

A
WORD
IN ITS
SEASON

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JEALOUSY

J.Mitchell

Numbers 25: 6-13; Song of Songs 8: 6, 7; 2 Corinthians 11: 1-3

It is in mind to say a word as to jealousy. I hope that one will be helped to convey some deepened impression of the love of Christ for us, and indeed of the love of God for us. Jealousy is the result of love, and in two of the passages the jealousy of God is seen representatively in persons; that is, it is not direct but is seen in two men, Phinehas and Paul. While the Song of Songs relates to Solomon and the loved one, it is a reference to Christ and the assembly, and jealousy in that passage is a reference to the direct jealousy of Christ for His assembly. I believe these are things of which we need a deepened understanding, and to allow them to work in our souls and our affections, so that there may be in us responsive jealousy to the love of Christ and the love of God. It is a great thing that God should have persons here who are jealous with His jealousy. It involves a certain fervency on their part. What marked the church at Sardis was lethargy and the church at Laodicea is satisfied outside of Christ. There was no jealousy in either of these churches in the way that I am speaking of it. One would be careful in saying that because we must take account of what there was at the beginning of the period that is represented by Sardis in the way of devotedness and jealousy for the truth; but the Lord refers in His address to that assembly to what it had become. As is often the case it had a good start, but in the passage of time things are inclined to degenerate; and therefore the need of patience with every one of us, as seen in Philadelphia: "Thou hast kept the word of my patience", Rev 3: 10. That is that things are not degenerating by time, as day follows day, and days go into weeks, and weeks into months, and months years; the same consistency of jealous love is seen in the personnel of that assembly. That is one of the things that is involved in that expression, "Thou hast kept the word of my patience" and it is always an exercising thing. Shortly after the 1970 division someone said to me that he was afraid that brethren might

weary of the small numbers and turn to other things, and I believe that did happen; but the possibility is always with us as we go on in the trying circumstances in which we are. Some circumstances are more trying than others, and we are not immune from things that generally lie upon men. The apostle Paul speaks very feelingly of Epaphroditus who was "sick close to death" (see Phil 2: 25-30) and also of another, Trophimus, whom he had to leave behind at Miletus sick (see 2 Tim 4: 20). These things seem to be all the more testing in the circle of those who are devoted to the truth. What is called for is patiently going on with the truth, working out righteousness day by day and considering for God in every circumstance, whether in the testimony or individually and in our households, in our localities, or universally, because priesthood - and that involves the jealousy of love - is a universal matter. At a critical time in the north of Scotland, when things seemed so difficult, Mr Taylor sen said, You do what is right. That is the responsibility of everyone; no matter what anyone else does, you do what is right. That is a word for us at the present time. I need hardly say that when we speak of what is right we mean what is right in the sight of God, not what is right according to man's judgment, or to my estimate or anyone else's. Christ is the One who has fully set out things for us. Think of where He now is for God's pleasure and of every feature of righteousness seen in Him! He said at the beginning of His public service: "Suffer it now; for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness", Matt 3: 15. That is said in the assembly gospel and is in view of our taking on this character of righteousness and working it out in the circumstances in which we are.

In Numbers there is a crisis in the history of the children of Israel at the end of the wilderness journey. Their position here was rather like that of Romans 8. That is, they are in the plains of Moab but looking over the Jordan to the land. The purpose of God, sonship, is in view: "As many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God" (Rom 8: 14), and victory is in view. With the children of Israel there is a little stoppage in the work of God proceeding in them and it is not until the source of that is dealt with in

righteousness, and in the exercise of the jealousy of God, that they go forward. Prior to this they were given the Spirit typically and we are thus a company of persons who have been ennobled. That is what we have in Romans 8: noble persons. What God thinks of them! As the enemy comes up to attack in the first place, God Himself takes on the issue. The matter of Balaam proceeds entirely outside the cognisance of the children of Israel; God was for them and who could be against them? Then there is a systematised teaching of worldliness among the people and this is met, not by God Himself directly but mediately through men. When that state of things exists among the people of God He meets it through men and women who are prepared to be faithful to the truth. O, dear brethren, we need to see what God is proceeding in at the present time, what He has for Himself in the testimony and what is the end in view. Then we also need to see what the enemy is at, to have our senses exercised to discern good and evil (see Heb 5: 14) and not to label evil 'good' or good 'evil'. We need to be priestly persons who are able to discern and have a right judgment; and not only to have a judgment of things but to be persons in whom the exercise of the jealousy of God can be seen so that things are dealt with; and as it says here, "the plague was stayed".

One of the things that Balaam is forced to say of Israel is that she "shall dwell alone and shall not be reckoned among the nations", Num 23: 9. That is an important matter to re-emphasise, dear brethren. What has happened in the testimony, where we have had to separate from so many of our brethren, only calls out greater emphasis on separation. Separation is nothing new. It is in Paul's doctrine before the days of breakdown: "Come out from the midst of them, and be separated, saith the Lord", 2 Cor 6: 17. Paul says that when the assembly of God in Corinth was intact. In days of assembly breakdown, as in 2 Timothy, there is greater emphasis on it; and in our own day, when there has been so much devastation and so much unfaithfulness where the truth has been ministered, the emphasis is even greater still. Because persons are externally near to us it does not mean that separation is any less real. The nearer

persons are to the light, the greater the defection, and therefore the greater need for separation. Let us remember that. Let our dear young brethren remember that. Let us remember that there was a critical period in our histories when the rights of Christ were at stake and when certain persons were callous in regard to them. We need to have a right judgment of these things and keep ourselves clear of such defection; and too to keep clear of the persons, because principles and persons go together. Therefore there is a need to re-emphasise the need for separation from iniquity. Balaam failed to curse God's people but he succeeded in teaching the Moabites to cast a snare before them and to corrupt them into socialising with that which would undoubtedly hinder their entrance into the purpose of God. Let us make no mistake about that! What God is moving towards is the saints in the full light of His purpose. What the enemy is against is just that. Mr Stoney says that the enemy does not press you to give up Christianity as such but to give up the highest thoughts of it. I believe that in these days the Spirit of God is bringing before us the highest thoughts of Christianity and is helping us in power - "Strengthened with power by his Spirit in the inner man" (Eph 3: 16) - so that we might realise these glorious high thoughts of God: "The calling on high of God in Christ Jesus", Phil 3: 14. But at the same time there is a power abroad to cast a snare before the saints in order that they may be hindered from going in for what God has for them. It is a very sorrowful picture here. There is a man, a prince, who seems to have no sensitivity as to the feelings of the brethren. We need to have regard to the fellowship. If it means nothing more to you, it should at least mean this, that you have regard to the consciences of your brethren. What may seem all right to you may not be acceptable in the consciences of your brethren.

This prince here seems to be absolutely unaffected by what was proceeding in the feeling of the sorrow for what had happened in the matter of Baal-Peor; He did what he did "in the sight of the whole assembly of the children of Israel, who were weeping before the entrance of the tent of meeting". Think of that, dear brethren! We need to reflect on and value the way that God has been for His people all along and, when these accusations had been made, God

Himself came into the conflict. "He hath not beheld iniquity in Jacob", Num 23: 21; that is God's view of the saints and Balaam is forced to utter it. Let us therefore have a view of the saints that corresponds with God's view; let us value one another and be moving more in each other 's affections, and let us regard the consciences of one another. Let us value the fellowship for what it really is, not merely for what there is socially in it for us. Thank God for that, in a right sense, for the protection that there is in the fellowship of the saints.

May the young people never be outside of it. There is an atmosphere here in which you will grow in the truth. But let us move forward from that and value what there is in devoted affection among the saints for the interests of Christ, and get that kind of thing into our own affections and be deepened in it and moving in the affections of one another. It says, "Phinehas, the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron the priest, saw it". No doubt there were other persons who saw it but this man saw it. He "rose up"; he acts for God. What need there is for us to act for God, to act in this way to stay a plague among the people. I believe that the enemy's current activities lie in the interference with the rights of the Lord in the local assembly, coupled with the allowance of worldliness. What Phinehas sees is the element of worldliness that is there, the element of socialising with the world in its worst form, and he acts against it faithfully. We remarked that priesthood is universal. That is something that we need to understand. There has been a good deal of history, and it weakens us at times so that we get afraid to act for God in matters when action for God is required. Let us be strengthened in what is due to God and in what He has in His saints and is going to secure in an even deeper way among His people, and let us not be afraid to act for God in circumstances that need action. Not that we are to act when things do not need action; we need to discern when action is required and when it is not required. We need to discern when God Himself is working, as He does with Balaam in the prophecies, and when it needs men to work. We need to be wise as to these things, and I believe that the Lord as Head, through the Spirit, will give all the wisdom that is needed so that action is forthcoming at a time when action is needed. So this priest is given the everlasting

priesthood. What a thing that is, the everlasting covenant! Think of being maintained right to the end, there being a line of faithfulness in faithful men "Such as shall be competent to instruct others also", 2 Tim 2: 2. Let us value such persons, faithful men who have stood in the truth. Let there be a coming forward of the younger men and younger women who, if the Lord leaves us here, can take the place of those who have stood in their day and who have experience in the truth. May we be encouraged as getting the gain of their experience. Lying behind this is God's love for His people. It comes out in detail in Balaam's prophecies; God is bound up with His people. One may say, reverently and carefully, He is inseparable from His own. God has His interests here, how vast they are! but He has a peculiar interest in His saints and He is bound up with them on the earth at the present time. Particularly He is bound up with persons who are concerned to remain faithful in the truth. He will see to it that there will always be such but let us on our part understand something of the divine jealousy, divine love, as it is towards us at the present time, so that we may be reflecting it in our actions.

Now I want to speak briefly from the Song of Songs. There the lover is speaking and says, "Set me as a seal upon thy heart, as a seal upon thine arm". I wonder if there are persons exercised in that way here today. No doubt there are. I wonder if there are any who are casual or indifferent, who are somewhat cold to the rights of Christ in love over them. Think of what He has given for you, dear brother, dear sister! Think of what He has given for the assembly!

Here is a vessel, which is undoubtedly typical of the assembly, and which says "Set me as a seal upon thy heart". There is no question that the assembly is a seal upon the heart of Christ. In the garments of glory and adornment that were Aaron's the twelve tribes were there, set in settings of gold, "as the engravings of a seal", on the shoulder-pieces of the ephod (See Exod 28: 11,12). Then they were also on the breastplate of judgment, and every time that the high priest went into the presence of God, there in the strength of his love (and there is no love as strong as the love of Christ) he carried the saints into the presence of God. We think of Christ: "If we are

unfaithful, he abides faithful", 2 Tim 2: 13. You see the stones set in the settings on the ephod there and on the breastplate. They are there in a fixed position. There is no question of any one of the stones falling off, or any of the engravings being blurred so that it is not clear what is seen there. The saints in the affections of Christ are there indelibly and in fixity. How wonderful that is! and to rest in the fixity of the love of Christ for His assembly: "Christ also loved the assembly, and has delivered himself up for it", Eph 5: 25. But this bride wanted to be conscious of it. What an exercise that is! Not only that I should understand the love of Christ but that I should be conscious of its fixity and strength and power. How restful that will make us, dear brethren, in the circumstances in which we are! Christ will unquestionably see His assembly through in this period of testimony. As we think of the shoulder of Christ and of the way that He has carried everything for God in love, He will carry the assembly through, there is no doubt about that. Let us therefore be deepened in the consciousness of the love of Christ, in the sense that He will see everything through here. Then the answer to that is that "Jealousy is cruel as Sheol". Let us be prepared for that side of things. Love will not tolerate anything that hinders its outflow. Christ will not tolerate anything that hinders the flow of affection between Himself and His assembly. In The Revelation John saw him as "girt about at the breasts with a golden girdle", chap 1: 13. It is not the desire of Christ that His love should be restrained. It is not that love was not there; it was there, but because of the conditions in the local assemblies it had to be restrained. What comes into expression in those seven letters is jealousy: "Jealousy is cruel as Sheol". When Sheol has a grip on somebody or something, it does not let go; and love is like that, it will not let go. Let us yield ourselves then to the searching character of what the Lord in the jealousy of His love may have to say to us, to each one of us, and to our localities, and then to the saints universally. Let us yield to what the Lord may be saying in the jealousy of His love, in the way that He is exposing matters for what they are, and the way in which He is bringing out matters in their true light. What is in mind is that He should have a pure people here on earth in the testimony at the close of the dispensation,

uncorrupted by anything. The epistle to Timothy brings that on to view: He has "brought to light life and incorruptibility by the glad tidings", 2 Tim 1: 10. I believe one of the points of life and incorruptibility coming into that epistle is that it should be taken on by us in the darkening state of things in the assembly. O, the deterioration there has been, dear brethren! What part we have had in it, every one of us! But the Lord is appealing to us in the strength and power of His love that there should be that devotion and energy with every one of us to what belongs to Him, that we might be like Timothy, of whom Paul said, "I have no one like-minded who will care with genuine feeling how ye get on", Phil 2: 20. Let more of that come to light, let the jealousy of Christ's love in its searching character have its way with us so that every matter that is extraneous to the exercise of His love may be judged by us, that there may be this pure testimony at the close of the dispensation, and that there may be even now that which can minister to His own heart. Paul had that in mind in writing to the Corinthian saints. He had much of a corrective nature to say in the first epistle, but in the second he went through a good deal of exercise. In addition to the exercise of soul that he went through, the Lord put him through circumstantial matters so that he should be on a sympathetic plane with the Corinthians to whom he had written the first letter. The second letter generally is a letter that is marked by joy and by the apostle ungirding himself and exposing in himself the jealousy of God that lay behind the writing of the first epistle. As we come to the end of it what is clear is that, although there was a general state of repentance among the Corinthian saints, there seemed to be still some who were unaffected by the apostolic letter. Dear brethren, let us each one of us search ourselves. Thank God for every one that has come through the crises of recent years. Thank God for every one that is here; but then as here, dear brethren, may I be permitted to enjoin you, as one would seek to enjoin oneself, to search ourselves and see that we are thoroughly committed to what the Spirit is going on with among the company of people to whom we are attached. Let us see that we are part and parcel in life of what is proceeding there, that we are not like those, some of whom did not seem to be able to judge

themselves from the first epistle and with whom Paul has to take issue, having to assert his apostolic authority. He said in the first epistle that he would not come to them because he would have to come with a rod; but then he has to say that he will come and if he comes he will know the power (see 1 Cor 4: 18-21). All that is in view of our searching ourselves, that we are not just merely attached to a company of saints that is acknowledged of God (what a great privilege that is!) but that we might be in relation to God's interests vitally among the company of persons who are so, and that we may be having our living part in it. May the Lord encourage us. Behind all this is His love. What Paul says here is that he was afraid that they "should be corrupted from simplicity as to the Christ". The footnote tells us that it refers 'not to a personal trait, but to the doctrine as to Christ; what a faithful heart retained in simplicity, as taught in the truth'. May we be faithful persons. May our affections be in it, and may we retain what has been committed to us in simplicity, for God's glory. Amen.

LONDON

18 January 1975

DIVINE DISCLOSURES EFFECTIVE

A.J.E.Welch

John 4: 28-30; Acts 1: 21,22

It just impressed me that every disclosure of Christ is to be productive. It is a thought which would follow the point of stirring up which we have just had. From His side, every disclosure of Jesus is perfect in itself, but the efficacy of that disclosure involves what takes place in ourselves and the way in which the Spirit is free to act in us and among us to bring in a result pleasing to God. From the divine side the movements of the Lord Jesus, and His voice to us, and what He may disclose of His person to us, are perfect. Christianity involves, however, that things are operating in the saints, operating in men, and that God is securing delight for Himself in what those operations are yielding. Every occasion of assembling is to be marked by fresh and rich fruit of that kind; every working through of personal exercise with the Lord is to bring a result of that kind.

Though we be in days of smallness in an outward sense, an immense volume of God's work is developing under the ever-skilful touch of our glorious Head in heaven. Every touch of His is to find effect.

So this woman in John 4, of whom there would be no need to read a great deal in detail to get the point of the scripture, was stirred up by a disclosure of Jesus that was personal to herself. It had in view more than what was personal to herself, but it was, as a disclosure, personal to herself. There may be what is personally disclosed to us in our links with Christ, and in moral history, and it is to be available for the furtherance of what the Lord is doing. It is to extend, as this woman's action would suggest to us. The Lord covered a lot of ground with her; how skilfully He uses time to cover ground with us! We may not always spend a long time in the Lord's presence, but the Lord can do much as we are rightly in His presence; how richly He can reward every desire to ensure His presence with impressions that, so to say, crowd in He loves to do it, to furnish us with rich food and nourishment, stimulation, and

refreshment of spirit through deeper and deeper entrance upon the links with Him which are to characterise every one of us. The Lord brings out something in this woman; she makes progress. The Lord speaks of the greatest matters to her, briefly at least, and He intimates to us that He is not speaking thus without result. We see very little of the consequences extensively in this woman, but the Lord would assure us that not a word of His was wasted; not a disclosure of His was misspent, even in such a woman's case. So her testimony is clear: "Come, see a man who told me all things I had ever done". The Lord had covered much ground to give this woman a sense that whatever she had done, the Lord knew it and had told her about it. "Is not he the Christ? They went out of the city and came to him". So the stirring up was, to that extent at least, extended. She becomes a testimony of a clear, positive, definite kind, and there is at least the fruit from her testimony that they went to Jesus. Her testimony was powerful to that degree at least. Just what effect there was among them, we cannot say, but they "went out of the city and came to him".

In Acts 1 we have a collective touch, reminding us of what is peculiarly precious to Christ, to find His place and part in the assemblings of the saints. So the word is used, "Of the men who have assembled with us all the time in which the Lord Jesus came in and went out among us". There were those who were in peculiarly close touch with Christ in the course of His service, viewed now not so much as individuals but as part of a company. What should be available in the maintenance of the testimony is complete, as seen in this number twelve. That is an important element, beloved brethren, that what is complete is among us, that there is no want of any element spiritually and testimonially that the Lord would sustain in His interests. Although we are in a time of brokenness the moral and spiritual force of the number twelve still remains, suggesting something which operates in love but is none the less complete, in a certain sense, for the administration of heavenly things. This is the completion of the twelve. Is any one of us going to be unavailable, even in this city, so that the twelve, in its bearing upon us, is not

here? Shall we not all be concerned that we may be available? There is no scope for any one of us to be missing from the effective part we may have in impressions of Christ in the assembly. What touches we get at the Supper! It is the prime time for what I am speaking of to operate effectively. As the Lord comes in in the glory of His person, and in the glory of the moment of His incoming, He discloses so much to those He loves, those who are drawn in love to Him. What a time it is! The Lord would make it increasingly effectual in what is fully and freshly, and in a certain radiant buoyancy, available to sustain the pleasure of God in all its features. So the one who was to fill out the number of the twelve was to be of "the men who have assembled with us all the time in which the Lord Jesus came in and went out among us". If there was one that was not there for the whole time he was, in that sense, not a qualified person to take up this service. That is to remind us of the necessity of being thoroughly in the flow of what the Lord is doing, and not being missing from the disclosures that He is pleased to make of Himself. It is remarkable how the Lord secured in twelve men at the beginning a basis for the testimony to sound out and to continue right down to the present time. There are many features in the twelve that we may think about, not always positive features, but the fact remains that the Lord secured through His service twelve men who became a basis for the testimony to go out. It went out from Jerusalem, and later in a wider way as Paul was brought in, and it comes right down to us at the present time. One longs that there may be available, in such a city as this, what is so full of potentiality in the interests of Christ that a certain completeness enters into the whole course of the service of God and the testimony. It will appear as all that is disclosed in the Person of Christ becomes effective among us for God's praise.

LONDON

8 April 1975

THE HOUSEHOLD

D.J.Hutson

Acts 16: 14,15,32-34; 28: 30,31

I have just an impression, dear brethren, relating to the area of the household. It is not without significance that matters which have been raised among us as to the incursion of certain elements of the world against which we need to be warned find their scope in the household. I believe the Lord would stir us up in this connection as to the importance of this area where He operates and where (as our brother has been speaking of disclosures) disclosures can be made to us, may we say on the way to the assembly. We remember the early references to the household, in connection with Abraham, showing that there is nothing new in the mind of God in the place and importance that the household setting should have; and then we remember too when the Lord Jesus was here that the household setting of things was not absent. There were times when He withdrew into the house and, when disclosures were made, that which was not for the general ear was disclosed to His own in the house. That would enter into what our brother has referred to in the beginning of Acts in the reference to "the men who have assembled with us all the time in which the Lord Jesus came in and went out among us", speaking of the baptism of John and right through.

Think of the wonderful privilege those men had of assembling with Jesus and being with Him in the house, in the inner side of things where disclosures were made, where the parables were opened up and their meaning given, and where in nearness to Himself they had manifestations of His glory. So the setting of the house was of great value. I believe that, as we realise the value of it, we would be the more concerned to guard and protect it, so that the conditions that are found in our houses might be such as are truly, as we sometimes say, bulwarks of the assembly; and if they are the bulwarks they will come under attack, so we would be on our guard in relation to them.

We have often been reminded of these scriptures in Acts 16 and the importance of the household setting in relation to the

testimony coming into Europe. It is noticeable that when we speak of baptism, for instance, we speak of household baptism; it involves our families, our children being brought into it, but it is the household side of things which is stressed; that is, it is not confined to the persons but extends to that area of things where we live, and the question would be whether everything that is in our household, not only the persons, is in accord with baptism; that is the closure to one order of things in which this world is alive and the making way for the light of another world and another Man who is the centre of it. So here we have this woman. Jesus is not here now but the Holy Spirit is here, the testimony is going forward, the Lord is still operating, and a disclosure is made to this woman. The Lord opened her heart "to attend to the things spoken by Paul", and the effect is that, being baptised "and her house, she besought us, saying, If ye have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house and abide there".

The apostle was free to go there and he found conditions which were suited to the testimony; he found, may we say, a base of operations where he could be for the time; and what an important house it became, when we see all that sprang out of it. The very fact of our being here in the testimony in Europe at the present time is the result of the answer that this woman made to the disclosures through the Lord opening her heart to attend to the things spoken by Paul.

Then this other house comes to light in Philippi, Paul immediately drawing attention to this matter. The jailor wanted to know what he should do that *he* should be saved, but Paul immediately extends the matter in relation to his house: "Believe on the Lord Jesus and thou shalt be saved, thou and thy house. And they spoke to him the word of the Lord, with all that were in his house". Then he took them, he laid the table, "and rejoiced with all his house, having believed in God". So we can see that the testimony is proceeding forward in relation to households. This is the Pauline testimony, the wonderful light which belongs to us in our day.

I just read at the end because it seems to show that though the times may be difficult, and though there may be limitations (we have already referred to the smallness of numbers and the limitations of the present time) yet it seem that this is an area in which it is still open for disclosures to be made, where there is liberty. I believe if we are concerned to maintain right conditions in our houses that, whatever privations we may yet have to face (the privations that some are already facing in other parts of the world), the household area is a place where the truth can still come to us, where disclosures can be made. Paul is "in his own hired lodging"; it would relate to a household setting where the apostle was free to receive all who came to him, "preaching the kingdom of God, and teaching the things concerning the Lord Jesus Christ, with all freedom unhinderedly". So although in the end of this book we leave Paul as a prisoner, we have a sense of liberty, a sense of the opening up of things with "all freedom unhinderedly". I believe, dear brethren, this would stimulate us, stir us up in relation to our houses. What an important area they are! Whatever conditions of privation may yet come upon us I believe that right through to the end of the day the Lord will give us liberty in our houses so that there may yet be fresh manifestations of Himself. We would be concerned to protect this area so that this might be maintained, that He might be able to disclose Himself to us and that we might be able to answer to it, and thus the service of God might proceed. How we are reminded of that in these days where in so many places the household provides for the service of God as making way for the assembly.

The Lord would give us this word to stir us up that we might be concerned as to conditions in our households, because I believe this is the important area at the present time that the Lord would have us pay attention to in view of the continuation of the testimony until He come. In His Name.

LONDON

8 April 1975

THE ULTIMATE AND THE IMMEDIATE

J.Renton

Revelation 22: 7, 12-14, 20-21

The coming of the Lord is the great ultimate in Christianity. Our great ultimate objective, therefore, is to be the coming of the Lord. The ultimate as it is set before us and occupies us is meant to result in something immediate. It is very interesting that the apostle John, the one whose ministry was reserved for the time of public breakdown, should be the one to give us a view of the ultimate. The first chapter of this book, Revelation, presents the Lord Jesus appearing in a certain attitude which was occasioned because of the failure of the assembly publicly. Towards the public position, Christendom, the Lord has maintained that attitude right down through the centuries to our own time. It is encouraging therefore that John, the one who had this light as to the Lord's attitude in chapter 1, should be the one to expand before our vision the greatness of the ultimate that divine love has in view, the ultimate of this dispensation. This is very significant and very encouraging. The more we feel the breakdown to which we have contributed (we always held the doctrine that we are part of the breakdown, but now it is not only a doctrine but we are conscious of having actively contributed to it) the more we shall understand how the Lord feels about it. I think the ultimate end in view in the ways of God is the world to come, and the ultimate end in view regarding the purpose of God is eternity. John shows us these great ultimates that God has in mind. The more we feel the breakdown, the more the ultimate is meant to strengthen us and fortify us.

In that great chapter regarding the resurrection of the saints, which is another view of the ultimate, Paul's conclusion is, "So then, my beloved brethren, be firm, immovable, abounding always in the work of the Lord", 1 Cor 15: 58. The ultimate as put before us and engaging us is meant to have an immediate effect in the way of committal, in perseverance, and stability and balance; this would be the immediate effect of having a fresh view of the ultimate. The

ultimate will be ushered in by the coming of the Lord, which will be when the assembly will be complete and will appear in creature perfection. This is near, as we know. We have always held that the Lord's coming is near. It would be obvious to say that it is nearer than ever it was. Everything points to the Lord's coming being near. Great results will show themselves when the Lord comes. Many families will be secured; the Old Testament families will all be completed; the Lord will put these saints in their families, and the greatest of all the families, the assembly, will be complete. For the first time the Lord will have the assembly as a complete, perfect vessel for His pleasure.

The first four verses of Revelation 21 show us the order of things in eternity. The great ultimate in view in God's purpose will be an eternal, fixed order of things, an unchangeable order of families for God's pleasure, and God all in all. Then from verse 9 the apostle John sees the place that the assembly will have in the world to come. The world to come is obviously the conclusion of all God's ways, however difficult to understand some of His ways may have been. There will be a manifestation that will justify all God's ways, and the assembly will have a unique place in administration in that wonderful world to come, of which we speak, of which maybe we ought to speak more than we do. I read these verses in which the Lord says "Behold, I come quickly". "I come quickly" is the ultimate. The uninstructed or doubtful believer might wonder that the Lord says "I come quickly". He might count the number of centuries there have been since the Lord said "I come quickly". If we had some impression of the great capacity of the assembly we would understand why it has taken so long. The Father has had the allocation of time and has devoted two thousand years to the formation of the assembly. It is so great, its capacity is so vast, that a certain time had to be allowed for its formation. Think of the moral fibre that enters into the personnel of the assembly! Think of the assembly complete after all the history of it, the history of persons and the work of God in them, and the moral fibre through conflict, through sufferings including martyrdom, in all these centuries! But

the Lord's outlook is "Behold, I come quickly". That is the *ultimate*, but the *immediate* effect upon us is to be this: "Blessed is he who keeps the words of the prophecy of this book". Now dear brethren, we have much committed to us to keep. If the enemy had his way he would deprive believers of certain things they ought to keep. The Lord's word to Philadelphia was "Hold fast what thou hast, that no one take thy crown", Rev 3: 11. Think of the crown that has been granted, and the ministry that has been given. There is something we have to keep. We are in the midst of a giving up attitude; many are giving up things of value. "Blessed is he who keeps". The more the *ultimate* occupies us the more the *immediate* effect will be to strengthen us to keep and hold fast and give up nothing that the Lord has imparted to us.

In verse 12 the Lord says "Behold, I come quickly, and my reward with me, to render to every one as his work shall be". The Lord is "the righteous Judge", 2 Tim 4: 8. Everything will be fair, everything will be right. If anyone ought to get a reward, he or she will get the reward. The Lord appreciates every little bit of response to Himself, every little bit of faithfulness, whether it be at school or in the workshop, wherever it may be, and He forgets nothing. "My reward with me... I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end". What is to result as to our immediate circumstances? "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". The ultimate is "Behold, I come quickly, and my reward with me" but the immediate effect is to be "Blessed are they that wash their robes". It is not a once-and-for-all thing, as we are often taught; it is to be a continual process. Are we going to be careless? There is a good deal of carelessness around us. Are we going to be careless or are we going to see to our associations, our contacts, all that kind of thing? "Blessed are they that wash their robes". In the light of the ultimate there is to be an effect on the immediate. It applies to each one of us, dear brethren.

In verse 20 "He that testifies these things says, Yea, I come quickly. Amen; come, Lord Jesus". It would be good if every one of

us responded thus. Then the immediate result is to be "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with all the saints". Do not we need grace? The remark was made as to how ruthless and how rough we have been. That word 'beauty' that occupied us in the reading might read 'graciousness': 'To behold the graciousness of the Lord'; 'Let the graciousness of the Lord be upon us', Ps 27: 4; 90: 17. "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with all the saints". We are always in need of grace. How do we handle situations? How do we handle one another? I would just say again that the occupation with the ultimate would help us on this line. The immediate would be "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with all the saints". May we all be encouraged. We are about to be ushered into the ultimate. Let us be faithful in the immediate, the daily toil, whatever it costs.

GRANGEMOUTH

18 May 1973

SOME FUNDAMENTALS - THE DEATH OF CHRIST

It is an amazing fact that the Originator of life came into this scene to die. His death was a divine necessity. If ever God was to have a universe of bliss for His own eternal pleasure, and man be brought into it, sin must be removed, and that involved the death of Jesus. In the death of Christ was the solution of the whole question of good and evil. On the one hand we see the intensity of the love of Christ for God and man, and on the other the bitter hatred of man and the power of Satan. The devotion of Christ to the will of God shone out in its magnificence. He became "obedient unto death, and that the death of the cross", Phil 2: 8. We see, too, the perfection of the victim who put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself. The love of God in giving His only-begotten Son was manifested in its splendour, and at the same time His intense holiness and the majesty of His throne. What a lesson book the death of Christ is! The four gospel writers set out in detail the circumstances that surround the death of Jesus and in contemplating the infinite depths of their meaning our souls are moved to worship.

The old, old story of Jesus and His love is well known; how He was here for thirty-three and a half years as a holy babe, a child, a boy, a man, always absolutely delightful to God. Although Pilate testified that he found no fault in Him whatever He was by wicked hands crucified and slain, having been delivered up by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God. As lifted up on the cross He was for three hours exposed to the taunts and hatred of men; then the sun hid its face in darkness for three hours during which God meted to the sinless One His holy wrath against sin.

Those agonising words, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" (Matt 27: 46), rang from His blessed lips as His holy soul was made an offering for sin. Then, having uttered a loud cry, the Son of God, the Saviour of the world, actually expired. In no other way could our sins be dealt with. He "himself bore our sins in his body on the tree", 1 Pet 2: 24. He exhausted the judgment and the believing sinner can righteously go free. Hallelujah! What a blessed Saviour!

If we thus know our sins forgiven through His sacrifice we should also see that our sinful state is not forgiven but that in the cross of Christ God *condemned* sin in the flesh. Indeed, "Him who knew not sin he has made sin for us, that we might become God's righteousness in him", 2 Cor 5: 21. So in the death of Christ the whole question of sin (the root) and sins (the fruit) has been fully and completely settled to the entire satisfaction of God, who has been wholly vindicated, indeed glorified, in respect of every challenge to His holy throne resulting from the incoming of sin.

W.E.Ellis

THE CHILDREN'S CALL

We all know well that when we are called it is because we are wanted. In God's ways, His call is one link in the chain of blessing - a chain that can never be broken. Happily for Adam, even when he hid himself for fear, he answered God's call. He thus found that his Maker would provide for him as a sinner what he could never provide for himself. For Christian believers it is not only that we need a Saviour but that we are wanted for the pleasure of Him who has provided such a Saviour.

You will remember that when God called the boy Samuel he answered at once "Here am I", although he did not yet know Jehovah. The early history of this great servant is most encouraging for the boys - and girls also - for at least two reasons. His simple readiness to learn, led to a deep knowledge of God, and the little services he did - such as opening the temple doors - were rewarded beyond anything he could have expected.

Centuries later, the only daughter of Jairus at twelve years old must have been about the same age as Samuel when he was first called. She heard the voice of the Son of God speaking directly to her, when she appeared to be lifeless. It seems that she was not called by name but a very loving word in her own language was used. "Damsel, I say to thee, Arise" were the words of Jesus (put into our tongue), and He also took her by the hand. This shows to us that there is always help to obey, however impossible it may seem. She was to be given food to keep up her strength. Now that the Lord is in heaven the Holy Spirit is here to give us power and to enable us to feed on Christ.

The Lord once called to Him a little child and no doubt spoke his or her name. The fact that such young ones are mentioned seven times in the early verses of chapter 18 of Matthew's gospel shows that they were linked in His thoughts with the greatest privileges. The chapter is one which mentions God's kingdom, the assembly, the angels, our Father who is in the heavens, the Lord's name and then the precious words "For the Son of man has come to

save that which was lost". No wonder He could speak of "these little ones who believe in me"! Are you one of them?

J.C.Evershed