

A
WORD
IN ITS
SEASON

1st Series

No. 33

December 1975

Contents

[PRESENT RESOURCES](#)

[DIVINE ACTIVITIES](#)

[GATHERING](#)

[SOME FUNDAMENTALS - THE COMING OF THE HOLY SPIRIT](#)

[THE CHILDREN'S DAYS](#)

PRESENT RESOURCES

E.M.Walkinshaw

2 Kings 6: 14-17; Luke 24: 45-49; 1 Corinthians 1: 30,31; Philippians 4: 13

I am thinking, dear brethren, of the resources that God has for His people and for the maintenance and promotion of His testimony.

They are often brought to light in a dark day when apparently everything is weak and has gone to pieces, but God has wonderful resources; and we can take encouragement from the fact that He is in charge of His matters and we are not. He graciously brings us into them as we are related to Christ, but they are His matters and He does what He will in His own affairs and He has wonderful resources available. The Lord would open our eyes to this, perhaps the eyes of young men and young women as with the eyes of this attendant. The world power, which Syria represents, I suppose was very great at this juncture, but in whatever circumstances Elisha is found he seems to be perfectly restful, I think because he is in the secret of God. That will always keep us restful. A little later you find that someone is sent to take his head off, he is in the most appalling circumstances of famine among the people of God; he is sitting in his house and the elders are sitting with him; grace has shown itself in him, his power has been exercised so that grace should be known, but it would appear to have been despised; but the man of God, the prophet, is in the secret of God and he is perfectly restful. I think the Lord would help us to be that. In circumstances of famine, world power apparently successful, he is a man who is with God maintaining what is due to God and, I do not doubt, restful in his spirit and buoyant too.

In this passage he has an attendant. I would like to be an attendant of the man of God. I do not mean exactly of any particular person who might be designated that or designate himself that, but to be an attendant upon that feature, shall I say, that is expressed in a dark day. Those men that have gone before us unquestionably were men of God, and they had attendants. Would you not like to

be, you younger men and women, an attendant of a man like Mr Darby or Mr Raven or Mr Taylor sen? The word 'attendant' contains in it the word 'attend'. I wonder if you give attention to what God has said among His people through those men. It abides, it is not lost, it is the truth; and if the truth was the truth then, it is the truth today. I would love to encourage especially younger men and women to attend upon what God has given in the recovery for His people so that His testimony might go through. There is an awful neglect of it; we will not say too much about that but rather keep to the positive fact that each of us can be an attendant upon the man of God. It says that when they "rose early and went forth, behold, an army surrounded the city". What a situation! I suppose a situation that could be likened somewhat to today, outwardly everything surrounded, the world power apparently dominating. How much damage has been done by the world! The real issue is Christ or the world. The world has crept in, and I think where there is departure it is always in that direction. Here they are surrounded, and of course the attendant is very much like us even though we be attendant; he said "Alas, my master! how shall we do?". That is the cry of many today; they hesitate, they are at a loss what to think. Are you like that? There are many in this city, I understand, that are at a loss what to think. Sometimes I have to confess I am, and I do not doubt each one of us here would admit that at some time or another in his exercises with the Lord he has been at a loss what to think. "Alas, my master! how shall we do?" - everything has gone on the face of it, the opposing forces are successful, what shall we do? He is still an attendant; we may know the terms of the ministry and the truth and follow it up, and that would be honoured, yet at the same time, in the depth of exercise in perplexing situations, we may hesitate and be at a loss what to think. I think there are some among us like that, maybe the young people, and I would be very sympathetic. My youth was not like yours, my youth was when the Lord was using Mr Taylor sen in a most influential and powerful way, and for nearly fifty years there was no division; but you young people have come into peculiar circumstances, but the Lord has not changed. If I may repeat Mr Stoney: If the worst had not happened you would not have

realised the Lord was equal to handling the worst. However bad the circumstances the Lord is equal to handling them.

Now what this young man needed was his eyes opened; how often we need that! Elisha says, "Fear not, for they that are with us are more than they that are with them". Then he says, Lord, open his eyes. That would be our prayer for our younger brethren, if they are hesitating and at a loss what to think or say. And it says "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"; he saw the resource, the unseen resource that God had, because his eyes were opened. Now we have a resource, dear brethren, and I think the Lord would open our eyes to it so that we might see the power available for the maintenance of the testimony.

Elisha said earlier, "My father, my father! the chariot of Israel and the horsemen thereof!" (2 Kings 13: 14); not to take Elijah to heaven but to continue God 's testimony here. So the resource is there, dear brethren; what is needed is that we should pray for one another that our eyes might be increasingly opened to see it, that round about one who in this instance was the vessel of the testimony was the mountain full of horses and chariots of fire. So in that day those that were for the testimony were more than those that were against it. But what grace was shown! What was his attitude? What power was available to the man! The king of Israel says as to these persons, "Shall I smite them?" The eyes of the young man were opened, the eyes of the Syrians were closed. Shall we smite them? No, he says, put a repast before them. What a day of grace we are in, dear brethren, a day of grace, food available! Oh that many might hear that God has visited His people in giving them bread! What a repast it was, set before them in grace. Grace is predominant, although there is the severity of God - "Behold then the goodness and severity of God" Rom 11: 22. So if grace reigns and God has visited His people to give them bread and shows them the resource that He has to carry through His testimony, any despising of that might well bring His severity. We are to take heed: "if thou shalt abide in goodness, since otherwise thou also wilt be cut away"; that

is, cut off from what is of God down here as suggested in the olive.

We need to be watchful, to be prayerful, so that we might be maintained and kept in lowliness in the goodness of God in what is for His pleasure down here in the testimony.

I read from Luke because there we find the Lord Jesus referring to "the promise of my Father". We have often noticed that He interpreted the Scriptures to them: "He interpreted to them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself" (v.27); but then it says "he opened their understanding to understand the scriptures". You might be an attendant upon the ministry and the Scriptures but if your understanding is not opened you will never understand them. It is very necessary to see that; "he interpreted to them". We have the interpretation; I do not doubt the application was right when it was said that in the books we have the interpretation of the Scriptures. God has given it to us in Mr Darby's Synopsis and Collected Writings, Mr Raven's ministry, Mr Taylor sen's ministry, a great unfolding of the Scriptures, the ministry of the recovery which is progressive and is still going on. One thing I think I can see the Lord is doing, and that is He is consolidating us in what He has given in the recovery so that it might not simply be held and known by persons who are attendants but that they might be formed in it.

Then what He may do is His matter; we may continue a little, on the other hand He may take us; and when we say 'us' we mean all the saints. In the meantime I believe He is forming us according to the truth so that there should be a substantial answer in persons to what He has given progressively over the last one hundred and fifty years, and my responsibility is to put myself in touch with Him to see what He is doing. Will He help me? 'Lord, open his eyes'. Of course He will help me, He will help any exercised believer, help them to see where He is and what He is doing. So here it says "he opened their understanding". You ask Him to open your understanding. "Think of what I say, for the Lord will give thee understanding in all things", 2 Tim 2: 7. He does not say, If you think about it you will be able to work something out and arrive at certain conclusions. "Think of what I say", that is your responsibility, your privilege, but "the Lord will give

thee understanding" is what He will do. He will honour your thinking about what Paul says; and, after all, the ministry of the recovery is Pauline in its character, not forgetting John of course; but John does not add anything to Paul, he comes in in his own distinctive way to establish in life what Paul has already taught, so that things should be living; and that is what the Lord is doing, I believe, at the present moment. Then He speaks of power - interpretation, understanding and power; He says, "ye will receive power, the Holy Spirit having come upon you", Acts 1: 8. Now we need to recognise this, that our resource, what God has given us, lies in the Holy Spirit. What an advantage we have over those in previous dispensations in that we have the indwelling Spirit. Here of course it is coming upon the saints so that there is power; not only is there the privilege of having the Holy Spirit but there is power to do things effectively so that God should be glorified in it. So the Lord here says, "Behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you; but do ye remain in the city till ye be clothed with power from on high". What a clothing that is, beloved brethren! I suppose it is akin to the anointing, that is, God's wonderful committal to His people, but the clothing suggests that the Holy Spirit is upon us so that our resource, our strength, our life, all that we have, all that we think, all that we say, all that we do is in His power. That is the simplicity of the truth which is available and into which we are to enter. Now does the breakdown change that resource? What do you think? You may say 'no' and act as though it has; that is what I find. In dealing with it as an abstract truth I would say it is impossible. The Spirit is unchanged, and yet when I act I often do not act in the light of that; but faith laying hold of it would act in the light of it so that the resource is still available for what may be needed at the present moment.

Then I wanted to come to this simple fact that I think the Lord is still speaking and still acting among His people. You may say there is no Mr Taylor sen, no Mr Raven, no Mr Darby, but we have often reminded one another that more than any of these servants is here because the Spirit of God is here in the assembly, and the Lord may yet raise up leadership among His people. I think there is leadership

generally, but He may raise up leadership in a universal way; He may not, He does what He will in His own affairs. It is not for me to say that He will, nor is it for me to say He will not, that is His matter. My matter is to relate myself to Him and be vigilant, watchful as to what He is doing among those that are in the bond of the truth. That he is doing something I am convinced. I have mentioned one of the things that He is doing; no doubt He is doing other things too, and we need to wait upon Him and be with Him, finding our resource in the Holy Spirit that He has sent.

Now in Corinthians we find what has actually been called God's great resource - Christ. "Of him are ye in Christ Jesus". Some were saying "I am of Paul, and I of Apollos, and I of Cephas", even saying "I of Christ", no doubt they thought that sounded superior; if they had said 'we are' they would have been nearer the truth; but "I of Christ", what divisions! But he says "of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who has been made to us wisdom from God, and righteousness, and holiness, and redemption; that according as it is written, He that boasts, let him boast in the Lord". We are not left with very much if anything to boast in save the Lord. I well remember reading (I have forgotten where it is) the simple remark of Mr Darby's in which he said that Jeremiah lived to see everything taken away and being lost that God had given, until he was brought back to the God alone who had given those things. How wonderful that when everything appeared to have gone, God Himself remained in the soul of Jeremiah despite all that he suffered. Now "He that boasts, let him boast in the Lord"; because after all our whole resource is in Christ Jesus: wisdom or whatever it may be is in that Person and He has been made that to us from God. We need to understand this, dear brethren, as the Corinthians needed to understand it; and I think the fact that Jesus is added to Christ means that it is intended to be formative, it has what we call a subjective bearing. It is not just that you are to know the fact but you are to appreciate it and experience what it is to find your whole resource in that Person no matter what the circumstances may be. Do we find that, dear brethren? What about the younger men and younger women, do you find your

resource there? I would urge you to go in more for the things of God, set yourself for them, read the Scriptures, pray over them, go over them with the Lord, read the ministry, go over it with the Lord, and you will find He will form you according to what you read. It will no longer be a theory, no longer be Mr So-and-So's ministry or what was said in the meeting, but you will be formed in it, it will become your own, and that is the divine intention. So He is made these various things to us - wisdom, righteousness, sanctification (or holiness) and redemption, "according as it is written, He that boasts let him boast in the Lord". Then I draw your attention to the fact that Paul goes on to the great and glorious truth of the presence of the Spirit here and of the Spirit being our alone source of power, our alone source of thought and 'action, word, deed, whatever it may be; I think that is the force of "the spiritual", the source of everything for them is in the Spirit.

Now just briefly I touch this word in Philippians. Paul says "I have strength for all things in him that gives me power". Now, as we know, Paul's circumstances at this juncture were not very congenial; still he does say "I know both how to be abased and I know how to abound". I do not doubt that in certain parts of Paul's life he was cared for, he knew what it was to abound, but he knew how to comport himself in the circumstances whether he was abased or whether he was abounding, "In everything and in all things I am initiated both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer privation". How the circumstances of the apostle changed! Would he be elated if he was apparently successful? Would he be downcast if he was apparently unsuccessful? He knew how to behave himself in all these circumstances, and God put him in these circumstances no doubt for that purpose. When he wrote this he was in prison, but he says as from the prison, "I have strength for all things in him that gives me power". There is no thought of defeat whatever because he was in the secret of God. He was like Elisha, he knew his resource, he drew upon it and was sustained in whatever circumstances he was in. Now I do not think that he is referring exactly to service here; perhaps you could not exclude it, but he is

referring rather to the strength that he found in Christ and the Spirit for enduring everything that came upon him in the testimony. He was made equal to it by Christ and by the Spirit. It is only in that way, dear brethren; let us not boast in our own strength or our own knowledge, our own ability, whatever it may be; let us understand that if we have strength at all our strength is in Christ and it is known in the Holy Spirit. Nothing at all nourishes the saints or the body of Christ save what comes from Christ Himself. It is essential that we should understand that. However excellent an address a man may be able to give, however clearly he may lay out the terms of the truth, he will not nourish the body of Christ unless it is coming from the Head, and as coming from the Head it brings food, it brings life, it brings all that is requisite for the building up of the body of Christ.

Nothing, may I repeat, can build up the body of Christ save what comes from the Head. So here he found strength in Christ, that was the secret of his being carried through. May the Lord help us all, dear brethren, to see what resources there are, however dark the day, to see God's testimony through, and may we each relate ourselves more to Christ into whose hands God has placed everything.

CROYDON

13 July 1974

DIVINE ACTIVITIES

Genesis 24: 15-21, 26, 27; Luke 22: 7-13; John 4: 21-24

W.D. These passages refer to divine activities. It is a very important matter to understand their continuing character. The present time is marked by intense activity on the part of the Trinity. This is not just to provide us with subjects for ministry but to help us as to the level of our activities in the coming week, that they may correspond in character with the activities of the Godhead. We touched this morning the thought of capacity, and the assembly as the vessel with the greatest capacity to praise and respond to God. That capacity is formed as the result of the activities of divine Persons in the present dispensation. The scriptures read (I should like the brethren to bear in mind the background in each one) show the activities of divine Persons, and also the disclosure of certain secrets in relation to those activities, as if They were active to bring something hitherto unknown before the persons who were the subjects of Their service. In Luke we find the Lord concerned that there should be this guest-chamber where He would eat the passover with His disciples and where the passover was to be prepared. This is a character of activity which finds much correspondence at the present time. The great pattern remains; when the Lord rose from the dead, the first day of the week was for Him a day of the greatest activity. From early morn until late at night, according to John 20, He was unceasing in His activity. There was the disclosure of secrets, hitherto unknown, which entered into the formation of the capacity of this wondrous vessel the assembly.

A.A.B. The activities of divine Persons are to be understood by us and then activity is to mark us in the way of response. We had a touch this morning as to the things that were hidden and have now been made manifest, and the result is glory to God. There is an answer.

W.D. The greatest capacity of the assembly is seen at the end of Ephesians 3. The capacity is so great that Paul ends that ascription by saying "To him be glory in the assembly in Christ Jesus unto all

generations of the age of ages". The formation through the activities of the Trinity has been such that there is that answer.

A.A.B. Even the suggestion of the large upper room furnished would carry some significance, would it not?

W.D. It would be a reminder to us of the level of the activity at the present time. Much activity takes place in the world; it is a restless age - it seems to be almost a sign of the apostasy. But here we have activity on the level of an upper room furnished, which would be some allusion, I think, to the assembly as a sphere where the holy secrets that are in the Lord's heart can be disclosed; and they can be disclosed in no other environment.

J.M. Would those who were found together in the upper room in Acts 1 be attracted by those secrets? Would that be the result of what the Lord says here?

W.D. The crowd of names is mentioned there. It has often been pointed out that the Spirit's comment is not on the number of persons but "the crowd of names", as if there had been something distinctive formed in each. No doubt it was the result of the Lord's activities and ministry during the three and a half years in which He had been present amongst His own, showing that there is a great positive result reached in activities of this character.

J.M. They would all be persons of capacity, would they not? Mr Taylor sen referred to Mary the mother of Jesus, what she would be able to tell the saints.

W.D. That should make us responsive to the gatherings of God's people. Even whilst we are sitting in a meeting the formative process is going on. The very fact that we are in an environment where certain holy things are being spoken of, and spoken of at the level of the upper room, has in itself a formative effect. Even with the children, something is being formed in an environment of this character.

C.S. It says "A man will meet you". Is that divine activity?

W.D. "Carrying an earthen pitcher of water"; we should find that man. It is important to bear in mind that the Spirit of God does not stand related only to that part of the service in which we minister praise to Him. All the time on the Lord's day, from the time we get up in the morning, even while we are sitting together around the emblems, the Spirit is serving us. An expression was used some years ago: the Spirit's augmentary service. It is perhaps not used so much now but it is one of the treasures in the spiritual realm that should not be discarded.

D.S. Why is this against a background where there is a satanic movement in progress?

W.D. It shows that the enemy is against the disclosure of these divine secrets. They are so attractive that, once they are entered into by the persons to whom the Lord imparts the knowledge of them, Satan's power is really broken. There is something attractive about what the Lord discloses as a result of His activities and it is really the principle upon which we would encourage our young people to break bread, that they feel drawn into an environment that is so attractive and they hear things there in relation to the Lord and His work and His Person that they hear in no other environment.

J.S. What is the difference between what is publicly declared in the declaration of God and this secret side that is revealed to persons?
It says in John "the only-begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him", John 1: 18.

W.D. While it is public it is only of value to those persons who apprehend it. In the Lord's ministry here upon earth, and His going into death and His resurrection, there has been a public testimony borne to the way God has come out, but it has only been of benefit to those who have been affected by that testimony.

J.S. In revelation are divine Persons moving sovereignly from Their own side, taking up persons and revealing certain things that relate to the inward secret longings of God Himself?

W.D. The principle of revelation enters into all our lives. You are justified in regarding the fresh touches the Lord gives you at the

Supper under His headship as having the character in principle of revelation.

A.A.B. Capacity to take in impressions at the Supper would be produced by the workings of divine Persons. What we receive forms us as we go through the week and work it out, and is therefore substantial.

W.D. So the environment is distinctive in Luke; it is a guest-chamber. It is to promote the line of the family in restfulness and the sense that everyone is in perfect freedom; the Lord is amongst us and the Spirit is free.

H.F. We were impressed this morning by the careful way the Spirit served in order that the longings of the Persons of the Godhead whom He served might be answered to.

W.D. We need enlargement as to the Spirit's service at the Supper. When the emblems are going round is your mind inactive or active? If inactive we lose the gain of the secrets that the Lord is seeking to disclose. What I mean by inactive is that you may think there is a hiatus in the proceedings until the emblems go back on the table, whereas, if your mind and affections are active, the Spirit of God would open your heart to a touch from Himself and from the Lord.

A.A.B. When the Lord says "This do in remembrance of me", would it include that? What do we think about when the emblems are going round? If we turn to the Spirit, do you think He would help us in thinking of the One of whom the emblems speak?

W.D. Yes, you take advantage, while the emblems are going round, of the Spirit's augmentary service, so that the deep meaning of the loaf and the cup comes home to your mind. The Spirit would help us too to understand something when the box is going round.

H.F. Has the Spirit been in the preparation: "A large upper room furnished"? Would the furnishings be the saints, prepared, ready for response and sustained by the Spirit?

W.D. For the believer, all his activities on the Lord's day have in view the Lord's supper, when we are together in the guest chamber,

listening to the unfolding of divine secrets. You may say, I have the children to get ready. Nevertheless, in our minds, we have the idea of preparation.

J-n.M. It says "follow him into the house". Does that mean that the man with the pitcher of water is active all the time and that you have to keep following him?

W.D. Exactly, and there is a lead given by the Lord which impresses you as being a spiritual touch. Sometimes from the thanksgiving of even the youngest brother you get a spiritual touch.

J.M. You are not only brought into the house but it says, "He will show you a large upper room furnished". Is that the expansion of it?

W.D. A simple thing taken up brings in expansion and increase. In Genesis 24 the secret disclosed to Rebecca was that she was to be the bride of Isaac. What a secret! Hitherto unknown - there was no thought in her mind of this glorious destiny that was to be hers, as the one who was typically the Holy Spirit acted, converging on the moment when He would disclose this blessed secret to Rebecca.

His activities are quite remarkable as he takes account of the maiden. It says, "And she went down to the well, and filled her pitcher, and came up. And the servant ran to meet her, and said, Let me, I pray thee, sip a little water out of thy pitcher". When the truth as to addressing the Spirit was first brought to our attention we used to relate this scripture to the response we gave to the Spirit at the Supper, but it was helpfully pointed out later that this is a wilderness setting. It seems to emphasise the importance in our week-night gatherings not to overlook the opportunities to give the Spirit a sip, because in so doing we will, shall I say, liberate the Spirit to give us a touch at the meeting for ministry on a Tuesday night.

J-n.M. In verse 14 the servant says "that I may drink", but when he addresses the maiden herself he uses the word "sip". She says "Drink, my lord!" Have you any impression as to the difference in the terms used?

W.D. Would it not be some allusion to the undemanding character of Christianity? How the Spirit of God would come into our gatherings

and measure what is there, and in His infinite grace take it, giving us to feel that the activities of divine Persons come so near to us.

J-n.M. Would it also involve that she came up to the first requirement, so that the servant wondered?

W.D. Are we giving the Spirit of God cause to wonder continually? When we come together on Tuesday evening do we give the Spirit of God cause to wonder at the area there is for the disclosure of divine secrets, that there are persons whose activities are not related to this world but to God's world?

J-n.M. How would we be aware of that?

W.D. I think we are aware of it in a definite impression that a word is from the Lord.

A.A.B. The maiden is marked by alacrity. The Spirit would have satisfaction in the truth being taken on immediately.

W.D. What the servant took account of was her activity. As the week proceeds are we marked by activity as to the secret line of things? Younger brothers should be exercised to be active on a Tuesday evening; the Spirit of God would take account of that and wonder.

A.A.B. There is great encouragement for the brethren in a young brother giving a word in freshness, and the Spirit too receives something from that.

W.D. The sisters also welcome freshness in the meetings; they look for what is vital, something that imparts a touch to their spirits. Of course an old brother can be fresh, but there is something in what a young man has that is particularly delightful in that way, as Rebecca was here.

J.M. The idea of revealing secrets is connected with the prophet (see Amos 3: 7). Scripture speaks of a young prophet. I was thinking of what was revealed to Samuel as a young man, as to the conditions in Israel at that time.

W.D. To say, as has been said, that there is nothing in the way of fresh ministry would imply a restriction on the power of the Spirit to bring in what is fresh. It may be that there is no distinctive universal gift, but the activities of the Spirit would bring out something fresh, of which perhaps you can find no record in the written ministry.

J.M. I am sure that is so. It is a slight to the Spirit to say that there is nothing fresh. While everything has been revealed, everything is out, you still get fresh touches by the Spirit.

T.R. How active the servant is when there is a movement on the part of Rebecca. She went down to the well and immediately the servant ran to meet her. The Holy Spirit would lend special help to the young as there is movement towards the well.

W.D. The well speaks of the inexhaustible resources of the Spirit of God. In the small gatherings the brethren find these resources inexhaustible. We are so fearful of falling into the error of pretension that we tend to limit the Spirit of God in His activities, whereas our exercise should be to provide the conditions continually for His unrestricted activities. That is why it is so important at the present time to settle the brethren, not to let local eruptions get out of proportion, either in our thoughts or our conversation. In the face of any local irritation we should keep ministering the truth at its highest level. The truth is the greatest corrective to low conditions, a greater corrective than administration. That is the divine way.

D.S. In John's gospel, where the Lord feeds the multitude, He says "Make the men sit down", chap 6: 10. We all feel challenged at the ministry meeting. The disciples would be little what was available: "What is it for so many?" But under divine control it is more than enough.

W.D. What marked that occasion was that the Lord was immediately active. It persons deliberately restrict the number of meetings they attend (for no good reason) they are putting themselves out of the area of divine activities in the environment in which they are most likely to proceed.

H.F. If there were not such activities and such meetings, how would the piping and the harping and the trumpeting be heard and understood as in 1 Cor 14 (vv 7,8).

W.D. That shows the value of the weekly ministry meeting.

H.F. Mr Taylor sen spoke of Monday night being the meeting for prayer and the answer being given on the following night.

W.W. David prepared material for the building of the temple but he says to Solomon "Thou shalt add to it", 1 Chron 22: 14. Is there not always scope in relation to these things for "adding to it"?

W.D. That is very encouraging. As you look around on the public breakdown you say to yourself, How can it be true that the latter glory of the house is to be greater than the former? But the scripture in Haggai (see chap 2: 9) is obviously a reference to the substantiality of what is reached in the way of formation.

J.S. You spoke at the beginning of the reading of there being greater capacity in our day than at the beginning. Would you say more as to that.

W.D. As the dispensation proceeds, formation is taking place all the time under the activities of divine Persons. The thought at the end of Revelation that "the Spirit and the bride say, Come" (chap 22: 17), that they say it together, is that there is some correspondence formatively to the Spirit's service.

A.A.B. I was thinking of what you said earlier as to the conditions in which divine Persons can operate, the guest-chamber, and here the environment of the well. On our side there has to be correspondence.

W.D. Hannah took account of the growth in Samuel, and we should be able in our children to take account of the growth that is there.

Parents have a responsibility to point out to their children that to break bread is a normal thing for a young person. Mr Taylor sen's teaching is that it is a responsibility of the parents to place before their children the importance of these great matters (see N.S. Vol.54, p.240; Vol.78, p.40).

J.M. I am glad you say that, because we have tended to forget that it is normal for the children to come in.

W.D. It is not that you force the children but, as a matter of teaching from the earliest age at which they are able to take in teaching, you instruct them that in a Christian household it is a normal thing for them to break bread.

A.A.B. So that the desire of the children to remember the Lord would be a token of committal to His interests. Perhaps the teaching has been neglected.

D.S-s. If a child said it would like to take the emblems, it might be only a natural thing with the child. What would you look for?

W.D. I am not thinking so much of the child's side; the need for a work of God is absolutely essential. What I am trying to emphasise is the responsibility of the parents not to leave their responsibility aside.

D.S-s. So Christian parents would be exercised to draw their children by way of attraction into Christianity.

W.D. The paternal side is important, but a mother may have to do it. Hannah did it with Samuel.

J.S. Does not the incident of the colt show that the principle of preparation comes into it? No man had ever sat on it but there comes a time when the Lord has need of it. The children are here for the Lord and the time comes when the lord has need of them for the testimony.

W.D. The Lord obviously has need of them.

GRANGEMOUTH

19 January 1975

Key to initials

A.A.B. A.Brown; W.D. W.Dickson (Edinburgh); H.F. H.Fentiman; J.M. Jas.Munro;

J-n.M. John Munro; T.R. T.Rogerson (Alnwick); D.S. D.Steven (Glasgow);

C.S. C.Spinks; D.S-s D.Spinks; J.S. J.Spinks; W.W. W.Wallace

(all local except where otherwise shown)

GATHERING

E.C.Burr

John 11: 49-52; 2 Thessalonians 2: 1, 2; Acts 27: 44; 28 : 1-6

It will no doubt be clear to those who have followed the reading of the scriptures that I would like to say a word with the Lord's help about gathering. It would seem from these scriptures, and from others, that gathering has long been in the divine mind; scattering is not in the divine mind, gathering is the divine mind. We find for instance in Ezekiel, in relation to Israel, that God says that He will gather His people, that is the Jews, out of all the countries where they are scattered (see chap 11: 17); and it says, I will both search for my sheep and gather them (see chap 34: 11-13). And if that nation is yet to experience millennially the blessings that God has in view for them it will be because they have been divinely gathered. It will not be because they have returned to their own land in apostasy and politically and with resources outside themselves, it will be because they have been gathered by the Shepherd of Israel.

The section we read in John 11 involves great things as to its scope. Caiaphas who was high priest that year makes this kind of political speech to the people saying that they did not understand that one Man should die for the nation rather than that the whole nation perish; and the Spirit makes the comment that he prophesied; as if, in spite of his being a political high priest, the Spirit was able to intrude and make him say what he would not himself have said; and what he said was not just that One was going to die for the nation; he prophesied that He would gather together into one the children of God scattered abroad. Now this actually took place; He did gather into one the children of God who were scattered abroad. It is not that He did it by His life, it is "I, if I be lifted up out of the earth, will draw all to me", John 12: 32. By being lifted up out of the earth, which involves His death, He has gathered together into one the children of God scattered abroad. He has become the great attractive centre for those in whom the Father is working. The brethren will remember the title of one of Mr Raven's addresses: The

Lord the gathering point for all and He is that, and He remains that in the present day. What was prophesied of by Caiaphas in this section actually took place as a result of His death, and His burial, and His being raised, and His ascending, and the Spirit coming. At the beginning of the Acts the children of God scattered abroad were gathered together into one. It was seen there, not for long, but seen there; the prophecy came true. It is a solemn thing that, according to the Pentateuch (see Deut 18: 22) this might have served to accredit Caiaphas. What a solemn thing that is, that his prophecy actually came true, and therefore people would know that he was a prophet, and yet he was a politician. All these things are a sad and interesting commentary on the way in which what is worldly had intruded into the church. But what Caiaphas said came true, at Pentecost the children of God scattered abroad were gathered together into one. There were people there of every kind on whom the Holy Spirit was able to come, albeit as cloven tongues of fire, but He came on them, and there is one Spirit. One thing to grasp in your soul as one of the fundamentals of the truth is that there is one Spirit, and if persons are given the Spirit there is still one Spirit. You are not given one Spirit and I another. It is a remarkable thing in John's epistle that it says, "he has given to us of his Spirit" (1 John 4: 13) and in Ephesians 4: 4 "one body and one Spirit". (Those verses in Ephesians 4 I feel fairly confident are a statement of one of the creeds of the early church - "one body and one Spirit") and, "in the power of one Spirit we have all been baptised into one body", 1 Cor 12: 13. As soon as the Spirit came and He, the one Spirit, sat upon each one of them, this prophecy of Caiaphas came true, and the children of God scattered abroad were gathered together into one. There were Parthians and Medes and Jews and people from every nation, Cretans and Arabians, people from every quarter to take account of it; and they were gathered together into one in the power of one Spirit. They were gathered together because Jesus had been glorified. They were not gathered together by ecclesiastical dictate, or invitation, or by the power of man; they were gathered together into one because Jesus was glorified and the Spirit had come. And the prophecy of Caiaphas came true, and it remained true, at least in

the teaching that runs into the epistle to the Ephesians. The sense that "through him we have both access by one Spirit to the Father" (Eph 2: 18) is a manifestation that He had gathered together into one the children of God scattered abroad; Jew and gentile representative in a racial sense of all the nations of the earth. The Jews and the rest is how the Jews looked at it, but in Christ the Jews and the rest were baptised into one body, and by the cross He made both one and slew the enmity. And He makes that effective by the word of the cross and by the power of the Spirit, and through Christ and by one Spirit we have access to the Father. It is a manifestation that what Caiaphas prophesied of came true. He prophesied (and he did not know what he was saying) that He should gather together into one the children of God who were scattered abroad, not that nation only. Thank God it was not that nation only or where would we be, any of us here? Jews have been converted (and you remember what Mr Darby says, 'You know I love a Jew when they love the Lord, how rarely are they brought'; he found delight in those who had the promises having their part in the assembly) but most of the assembly now consists of gentiles, not the Jews only, but the children of God scattered abroad gathered together into one.

The substance of Paul's ministry, and of John's gospel, all tends in this direction that the children of God, and not that nation only, were to be gathered together into one. "And I have other sheep which are not of this fold: those also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one flock, one shepherd" (John 10: 16) is parallel to the prophecy of Caiaphas. As I say, if you had looked at them, looked at their histories, you might have said, These are not the children of God, how can they be? They are distant, aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and from the promises, but they are persons on whom God can put His Spirit. It is the result of the work of Jesus that there were persons there in the beginning of the Acts on whom the Spirit would come. You might have said, They are just a random crowd come up to Jerusalem to see the sights and to be there at Easter or for the Passover, and to stay there for this famous crucifixion; but God sees them, or some of them at least, as the

children of God scattered abroad gathered together by the One who said "I, if I be lifted up out of the earth, will draw all to me", John 12: 32. The result of that is that there is one body and you see it straight away as a manifestation of one body. As I say, it goes on into Paul's ministry to the Ephesians and it runs on right down to the present day. I do not speak of its totality because we do not see it, but we see enough to know that the gathering together into one not only took place but was sustained.

Sadly breakdown has occurred in the history of the church. Many of us speak of these things as if we had no part in them. A lot of us say, for instance, that sin came in, it is a common expression. I hear it from preachers, even preachers of the gospel; they say that sin came in, almost as if the door was left open and it happened. But sin 'came in' because the working of sin was in the members of men and women because of Adam's sin, and people are constituted sinners not merely by what is spoken of as original sin but by the fact that they commit sins themselves. If you do not think you are wrapped up in the package of sinners just consider whether you have ever committed any sin. You do not need to go back to the doctrine of original sin, you only need to look at your own life to discover that sin has come in, and sometimes you feel that you have to enter into the responsibility that by one man sin entered into the world. Have you ever felt that that was you? Adam has been dead for centuries but have you ever felt that perhaps it was you through whom sin came into the world? Of course it came in through Adam, but the feeling that you yourself have been a means of sin entering into the world, as you are by every sin you commit, is something that is calculated deeply to sober even the most active and alert of us. And breakdown has entered into the church, but it has entered into the church because you and I have broken down. An element of it entered into the church when two parties could not agree on how their widows should be treated in the Acts: and further when a man and a woman professed to be doing something for the assembly when what they were really doing was seeking glory for themselves; it was met then but it came in again and continued right on. It has

impressed me very much that the church history books make a great deal of the fact that Constantine embraced the Christian faith as if that was a great victory for Christianity; it was one of its biggest defeats. If Constantine was converted, thank God, but the alliance between the church and the world, which he instituted, has been one of the biggest defeats that the church has ever suffered. And you can follow breakdown right down to the present day. So the best thing beloved, when you talk about breakdown, is to say what I did in it. I hear at the present time a great deal of what we did and I hear very little of what I did. If you want to get the point of breakdown the thing is to dwell on what I did and not so much on what we did. I think that is where you feel that breakdown has come in, it has come in in yourself.

Now there is going to be an answer to that; the section I read in Thessalonians shows that. Paul says to this beloved young assembly that he would not have them upset; he begs them "by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to him".

Our gathering together to Him will not in substance reconstitute His gathering together into one the children of God scattered abroad; that exists before God in any case. God knows now perfectly who make up the assembly; He knows you, He knows whether you go to make it up or not, He knows whether you are here this evening as a believer on the Lord Jesus Christ and whether you have the Spirit.

He knows whether the man passing by has, too. I am not saying what he is doing on a Saturday night, (people go about their own business), but God knows precisely who forms the assembly or the body of Christ actually at the present time. As I say, our gathering together to Him will not in substance reconstitute His gathering together into one not that nation only, but the children of God scattered abroad; what it will do will be to bring it again into demonstration. It is not in demonstration now. If I walked home from this meeting room I wonder how many different churches I would pass on the way. I suppose quite a number, and it is all evidence that the gathering together into one is not to be observed at the present time. I speak of what is outward, I long for myself and

for the brethren that they might have their hearts enlarged to the extent of what God has before Him and what Christ has before Him. I long that we might all enter more into the fact that "we, being many, are... one body" (1 Cor 10: 17) and that not just ourselves but the whole of what will be the Christ's at His coming. I know that in a certain sense you could say that the emblems remind you particularly of those who are immediately available, but the "many" and the "body" is as extensive as the totality of what Christ has at the present time; and I venture to urge the brethren to let their hearts also expand themselves so that narrowness may not hinder us by diminishing in our view the extensiveness of what Christ has. But for the moment we do not see this gathering together into one, not of that nation only, but of the children of God scattered abroad. They are still scattered, but at our gathering together to Him we shall see assembled everything that Christ has. What a day that will be when you and I for the first time see the whole assembly! Are you looking forward to it, seeing the whole assembly from the inside too, you part of it, and to see the whole thing, something that you have never seen before? Whatever consciousness you may have of it in the power of one Spirit, to see the whole assembly at our gathering together to Him! It shows how He is able to transcend man's failure in responsibility and man's breakdown, that our gathering together to Him will not just be Paul and the Thessalonians, it will be you and me and Paul and the Thessalonians and everyone who has believed in Christ and who has the Spirit. What a thing that we should see the whole assembly as being part of it! Will you not long to look round at that moment, not just to check up who is there (you will not know most of them) but to see the vast extensiveness of what one Man secured through His death. This, again, will be the answer to the prophecy of Caiaphas.

The interim is marked by failure and breakdown and shipwreck, but He did gather together into one that nation and the children of God scattered abroad, and He will yet do it again. He will do it in actuality. Will you be there? I shall be there. Will everyone here be there in that day? Who else do you know that will be there? Who

else do you know that will be the Christ's at His coming? Have you ever taken the trouble to find out anybody else who is looking for the Lord Jesus Christ as Saviour? Have you ever sought to be the means of converting anybody to looking for God's Son from heaven? Have you ever cared enough about another soul to long that they might be there in the day of our gathering together unto Him? Would you not like to be someone who, under the Lord's hand, has helped to swell the multitude that will be Christ's in that day? Would you not like to start tonight? Would you not like to start being more active in the Lord 's service so that even by you someone might have been brought not only to know Christ but to know the assembly. Some of the old hymns speak of it (not that we sing them, not that they are all doctrinally impeccable), hymns like, 'Will there be any stars in my crown'; will there be any stars in your crown, anyone that you have secured for Christ in the day of His rejection because you thought it mattered enough to get somebody else converted to your Saviour and to the knowledge of the assembly and of the truth? Have you ever tried to lead somebody in the Episcopalian Church into the knowledge of what the assembly is, or into the knowledge of the fact of the Head and the body so that they do not need a clergyman? Have you ever tried to induce anybody to understand that assembly experience is possible even in a broken day? They will be there when we gather together unto Him but it would be good if they had some preliminary experience, and we could serve the Lord by being evangelical in relation to the assembly. To be evangelical in relation to man's sins is one thing but to be evangelical in relation to the assembly is a very distinctive service not only to men but to Christ. Therefore I say that the prophecy of Caiaphas was fulfilled in the beginning of the Acts and it will be manifested to have been fulfilled when we gather together unto Him. The interval is sad, the interim is grievous.

This ship in Acts 27 set sail - you wonder at the similitude - with Paul and others on it. Of course Paul was being taken off to prison, but you think of the great ship that set sail, and of the way the testimony sailed out of Jerusalem and into Antioch and into Europe

by way of Philippi - I know that actually most of it is over land - but you can think of this great ship sailing that way. Think of it coming to England and Ireland and America, and think of the way that the Lord operated in the last century in relation to the fact that there had been shipwreck in what was so fair. I think we have little conception of what the assembly was intended to be as the vessel of the testimony. We are so intimate with the breakdown, so intimate with what has happened, what we have shared in, that we have little conception of the fairness of this vessel which first embarked when the Spirit came, initiated largely by Peter, cared for and adorned in the ministry of Paul, multiplied under the service of Paul, fed and nurtured by Christ as the assembly's Head, nourished and cherished as a man would his wife or his own flesh. Think of it in its pristine character. Perhaps we cannot imagine it; the truth of it lies in the Spirit. It set out on seas that were themselves at first fair, but storms blew up and things were thrown overboard. How much has been thrown overboard in the public history of the church; and in Christendom things are still being thrown overboard in the hope of saving the ship, but the ship is already wrecked. The tragedy is that men do not see it, and churchmen do not see it, and they are willing in the present day even to throw overboard such things not only as the deity of Christ but the existence of God in the hope of getting the ship through, but it is already wrecked. We, beloved, are here in the last days after the shipwreck. When the shipwreck actually took place who could say? We know that within Paul's lifetime everyone in Asia had turned away from him. It is easy to calculate what a short period that was. It is thought that Paul was martyred in A.D.69; Jesus died in about A.D.33; there is a range of 36 years, and Paul was not ministering all that time. Paul was not converted at the beginning, then he spent time in Arabia, and then in one place and another; but within the space of about thirty years the church had come into its pristine existence, had been adorned by the ministry of Paul, and all in Asia had turned away from him. The thing had gone up to its zenith and it had come down to "thou hast left thy first love" (Rev 2: 4) in a very short time. I do not attempt to put a date to the shipwreck; all I know is that some able to swim and some on broken

pieces of the ship have actually come to land. I trust they all feel safe. There are many who cling to particular doctrines as to Christ, thank God they do; thank God for everybody who still loves the Bible, wherever they are. I even have quite a feeling when going into a hotel in this country - it is a long time since I needed to - you find a Bible in the bedroom. You thank God for that. I have my own but the next man might not; thank God there is a Bible there and, if he is idle, he might read it. Well, may he be idle, may he have a spare moment, may he open it somewhere. Thank God that the Bible is still here. Thank God for everyone who insists on the existence of God. Thank God for everyone who insists on the deity of Christ and the presence of the Spirit as a subsisting thing here, thank God for it - "some on broken pieces of the ship" (A.V.) And there is the shore of this island Malta, littered no doubt with pieces of the ship, and everyone on the ship has got safe to land. And what does Paul do? Does he have an inquest? Does he say, If you rummage about enough we could get all the bits back? Does he say, We will be able to start again? He was a wise architect; I daresay he could have built a ship as well as a house. I think if he had been given the bits he could have put the ship together again, but he does not. All Paul does is to gather a bundle of sticks together. I think that collectively that is about all we can see at the present time. We cannot see the ship save as the Spirit gives us any concept of what this great vessel not only was but is and will be; we have that by the Spirit. I wonder if you think of yourself as any more than a stick in a bundle. Do any of us think that we are in the bundle as some special kind of wood, that we are a bit better wood than the other stick? All you are is a stick; Paul gathered sticks into a bundle. That, beloved, is a thing that needs to go on now. The barbarians (I suppose they were gentiles, people that had come in not from "the nation only"), they had lit a fire and there was at least some heat in the rain and the cold, there was at least a little comfort. There is at least a little comfort in every place where saints gather to the name of the Lord Jesus as apart from iniquity. Is anyone concerned to improve the heat and the conditions? I am not talking about raising the temperature, I am talking about improving the

comfort; Paul gathered sticks into a bundle, I think that is all that we can think of in relation to what we may speak of as the recovery. We cannot speak of being the assembly but we gather in the light of it and on the principle of it. We certainly cannot speak of being the body of Christ; we gather on the ground of it and in the light of it. There is a bundle of sticks. A bundle in a sense represents the totality of what was there originally but it is reduced just to these small dimensions, you might say dimensions that one man is able to handle. Think of Paul's service. He says in chapter 20: 33 "these hands have ministered to my wants, and to those who were with me", and in chapter 28 the same hands are ministering to his necessities and those with him; that is, he is gathering sticks into a bundle because it is necessary for Paul and necessary for those with him; "having gathered a certain quantity of sticks together in a bundle".

I venture to suggest to the brethren that this is needed still. Paul did it, as if Paul sees what will be required following all in Asia departing from him, that someone will have to gather sticks into a bundle. Are you prepared to be Paul? I am not using the title or the name in any sense in the way in which it has been used in the past. The service here was menial, lowly, humble, quiet - I will go softly all my days, but I will gather sticks into a bundle. As I said, the purpose was not to raise the temperature, it is too easy to do that, brethren. Remember that where no wood is the fire goes out (see Prov 26: 20); that in its context is a thing to remember. But here is a fire that must be kept going. The external conditions are wet and cold; they remind you of nothing so much as the external conditions in Laodicea, the Lord outside, the church neither cold nor hot, the Lord knocking, things wet and cold; but Paul gathered a certain quantity of sticks into a bundle. The question is, beloved, whether we are prepared to humiliate ourselves into service as lowly as this. As I say, it is a quiet, lowly, humble, patient service; it is only service, that is all it is. The result, you might say, is that there is more warmth for a while and then more sticks to be gathered. I think where Paul would start in gathering the sticks would be in what is nearest to him. I do not

think he would think of going over to the other side of the island in order to gather sticks. Malta is not a big place but it would certainly be a long walk. I think that Paul would start right where he was in gathering sticks. If he could gather sticks in just moving his hand to one side or the other I think it is those sticks he would gather first. I think, when Paul had got the fire going and maintained, he might begin to think of other sticks, he might, like Jesus, be thinking of other sheep, and they should be in our minds; but the first place to start gathering sticks is in what is nearest to you; and it would have been no service to anybody to have started scattering sticks.

Certainly it would have been no good playing a game on this day, would it? Lady Powerscourt said that to Mr Darby: Let us put our toys away. So, start with what is nearest in gathering sticks. Of course you are careful what you gather. There are things that you cannot gather into this bundle. You cannot gather what is clerical, you cannot gather clergymen as clergymen, you can gather them as believers if they will come into the bundle, if they lay aside copes and vestments and that sort of thing, gather them. How much Mr Darby longed after his fellow clergy. People who are persisting in going on with iniquity, you cannot gather them; but they can depart from iniquity and become a stick available to be gathered into the bundle. You cannot, you dare not, gather iniquity into the bundle; you dare not gather what is merely organisational, you dare not gather what is merely a matter of profession and claim and pretension. What needs to be gathered are what I might call true sticks. They will be tested; you could not gather a stick that did not believe in our Lord Jesus Christ; you could not gather a stick that did not believe in Him as Saviour; you could not gather a stick that had not the Spirit. I do not think you would mind if they got warm by the fire but they could not be gathered into the bundle. But there are sticks that can be gathered. Beloved brethren, start nearest to where we are and gather the sticks. There have been localities where the gathering of sticks needed to be done in the very meeting room where the breaking of bread is, as near as that. You would not even have to have a very long arm to collect those sticks, but the thing is to gather a certain quantity of sticks into a bundle. You will not be able to build

the ship again, it is not possible; the essential materials in many respects are missing. Things that adorned the ship have gone.

Apostles, where are they? Prophets, what can you say as to prophets? Evangelists, do you know an evangelist? If you do, lead me to him. Do you know a shepherd and a teacher? These are things that adorned the ship but many of them are not visible now.

Gifts of healing, have you ever met one? Things that adorned the ship - governments, helps. Have you ever met a help, have you ever met a help in the assembly? You should have done, for these things adorned the ship. Some of them have gone not to be recovered, gifts of tongues gone not to be recovered. You cannot build the ship again, but what you can do is to gather a certain quantity of sticks into a bundle. There is a need for it, especially after a shipwreck. I do not here dwell on the viper; the conditions were enough to bring to light something that was unsuitable. Nobody had to go around as a snake catcher, or snake charmer. Oh, no, the warmth and the heat brought out into the light what was inconsistent with the bundle of sticks that Paul was gathering. You might say to yourself, How did Paul come to gather a viper? You might be very clever, cleverer than Paul, and say, Paul, what are you doing? we see you gathered a viper, we could have told you that was a viper. I think Paul would say, I was gathering sticks and I knew that there was the power in the bundle to drive out anything that was unsuitable to it, power to drive out evil by the maintenance of the principles that belong to the bundle. Beloved, we need that, we need the moral power amongst us to drive out evil. Evil is not meant to be driven out by argument, we need the moral power that exposes evil and it is shaken into the fire and everyone is able to go on. There is very little time wasted over that incident. The people hung about gaping for quite a long time, they thought Paul would swell up or fall down, but Paul in fact did neither. I think that they watched Paul gathering more sticks; I guess that is what he was doing. The bundle is in a sense the earnest of what there will be at our gathering together to Him. It certainly is not the whole thing, but it is gathered in the light of the principles that govern the whole thing, it is gathered in the light of the assembly, it is gathered in the light of the one body, it is gathered on

the ground of separation from iniquity being God's principle of unity, it is gathered on the ground of grace being the power of gathering.

All that enters into Paul's bundle and it is the earnest of what there will be when we gather together to Him.

Well, beloved, it should command our interest and our activity.

If we are gathering sticks like this we shall not have a free hand for other things, certainly no free hand for throwing stones. May the Lord help us, may He remind us that gathering is what He began with and what we shall end with, and it is what is to mark the present time. We can only gather in humility and weakness, lowliness; you could say humiliation again and again and again; but, beloved, let us not forget in our humiliation that a bundle of sticks can still be gathered and that warmth is what will be promoted by it. Let us addict ourselves to it for the rest of the time for His Name's sake.

BROOKLYN NY

27 November 1971

SOME FUNDAMENTALS - THE COMING OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

Just before He was carried up into heaven the Lord instructed His disciples to remain in Jerusalem until they were clothed with power from on high. He also said, "John indeed baptised with water, but ye shall be baptised with the Holy Spirit after now not many days", Acts 1: 5. Previously He had promised them that He would beg the Father who would give them another Comforter, to be with them for ever. On the day of Pentecost, after waiting ten days, all were together in one place when the Holy Spirit actually came.

John the baptist had said of the Lord Jesus, "He shall baptise with the Holy Spirit and fire", Matt 3: 11. John was privileged to see the Holy Spirit in a bodily form descending as a dove from heaven and abiding complacently and uniquely upon Jesus at His baptism less than four years previously. But when the Holy Spirit came at Pentecost there was suddenly a sound out of heaven of a violent impetuous blowing which filled all the house where they were sitting. There is no suggestion this time of the sensitive feet of a dove, but there appeared to them parted tongues as of *fire*, and it sat upon each one of them. "They were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and began to speak with other tongues as the Spirit gave them to speak forth", Acts 2: 4. Moreover, by the reception of the Holy Spirit, they were all baptised into one body and that remarkable vessel the assembly was formed (see 1 Cor 12: 13).

The coming of the Holy Spirit caused a great stir in Jerusalem. All were amazed, although some mocked. Peter took the opportunity to address the crowd, who could see that something extraordinary had happened, and quoted what had been foretold by the prophet Joel that in the last days God would pour out of His Spirit upon all flesh. Then he was able powerfully to witness to the glory of the resurrection of Jesus and His exaltation to God's right hand. He whom they had crucified, God had made both Lord and Christ. This powerful testimony by the Spirit resulted in three thousand souls being added in one day. God still delights to give the Holy Spirit to those who believe in Jesus if they are obedient to His word, and this

results in their becoming an integral part of Christ 's body, the assembly. Individually they can experience the love of God shed abroad in their hearts, and are given the inward power by the Spirit to walk pleasing to Him. By the same power they can worship God and witness for Christ, and know a joy which can only be experienced by the presence of the Spirit within.

What happened at Pentecost was stupendous; a divine Person, one of the Trinity, came into this scene, not in incarnation but, remaining as His name implies the Holy Spirit, He took up His residence in human beings. So His presence is to be realised and revered. He is fully able to take charge of the affairs of the assembly until the Lord comes. May we all give Him the place that is His.

W.E.Ellis

THE CHILDREN'S DAYS

From Moses, the man of God, we learn that we should number our days so that our hearts should become wise. His desire was not just to count the days. To *number* them would be to see something distinct in each one as to the ways of God. Even the old creation has a voice each day, and night unto night shews knowledge.

No doubt from Miriam, his sister, Moses learned about the day on which he was placed in the ark of reeds by the river bank. He was about three months old, so possibly that day of his life was number ninety - the same as the number of his Psalm! Although it led to his salvation he would not remember it and most of us cannot remember the day of our baptism. But we do know that this was done in faith. In thinking about it our hearts become "wise unto salvation, through faith which is in Christ Jesus". We learn also to refuse everything that made it necessary for Jesus to die.

As he grew up Moses found that he had to make a choice. He could have the treasures of Egypt, which must have been very attractive - we have seen some of them in museums. Or he could suffer along with the people of God to whom he really belonged; and a day came when he chose to do this, without hesitation, as being the greater riches. Scripture calls it "the reproach of the Christ". In our time we should say that it is being a true and devoted Christian.

Actually, in His wisdom, our God gives us no choice but to do what is pleasing to Him even as Moses did. But He is very patient with us so that we should be obedient from a wise heart and not just from duty,

Another important day was when God called to him "Moses, Moses". He was then about eighty years old but you can think also of a young boy who was called by repeating his name: likewise a young man and a very old man, besides a woman into whose house Jesus came. Persons are called because they are wanted, and God wants us each day to receive fresh lessons from Him. One of the prophecies about the Lord Jesus was that His ear would be opened every morning to hear as one who was ready to learn. In this, as in

all things, He has left us a model. Are you walking in His steps as the apostle Peter learned to do?

J.C.Evershed