

A
WORD
IN ITS
SEASON

1st Series

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Contents

WITHOUT ENCUMBRANCE

WHAT SMALL THINGS BECOME

THE CHILDREN'S QUESTIONS

WITHOUT ENCUMBRANCE

Matthew 26: 27,28; John 13: 8

J.L. So many impressions are in our minds as we have come from the Supper that you feel the need of the Lord directing us together, but where we broke bread this morning we had a word as to how every encumbrance and restriction is lifted in view of our part and place in an area where there is no restriction. I suggest these passages with the desire that the Lord may help us together in drawing on one another, as to how we are set free through the gospel, the gospel setting us free from every liability and encumbrance. The young people are to know this and to know the reality of the remission of sins. The way the cup is alluded to in Matthew would, I think, remind us of how the Lord extends the matter as He comes to the cup, alluding to it as "this is my blood, that of the new covenant, that shed for many for remission of sins".

The Lord would serve us thus through the gospel, and the way He befriends us in the glad tidings, to set us entirely free from What would hinder or encumber us in any way, in view of our being with Him in the testimony and in relation to the service of God. I was affected by what we had this morning in this connection, how the Lord Jesus Himself came into a situation where He was held as doing the will of God: "a baptism to be baptised with, and how am I straitened until it shall have been accomplished!", Luke 12: 50. And the passage, too, in Job 37: "By the breath of God ice is given; and the breadth of the waters is straitened" (v 10). The Lord Jesus as Man came into a restricted area fulfilling the will of God, involving His death and all that He undertook for men in effecting redemption.

Men are to be set free from the load of sin and encumbrance, and set free practically, in view of a place in the testimony and part together in the service of God.

E.C.B. You referred, I think, in giving thanks for the cup to our being without encumbrance and I thought of the man who walked and leaped and praised God (see Acts 3: 8). He had been encumbered all his life but he was then without it. The Lord Himself had come

into conditions where He was even encumbered with graveclothes, but He Himself is to be seen leaping upon the mountains and skipping upon the hills. Were not many of the miracles which Jesus did in the gospels really to relieve persons of encumbrance? "Woman, thou art loosed from thine infirmity. And she was made straight, and glorified God", Luke 13: 12. The scriptures you have referred to have in mind the Lord's blood shed for many for remission of sins, and then in John 13 there is His washing our feet; both of those references in their own settings would have in mind our being free from every encumbrance, whether, you might say, constitutional or contracted, in view of the service of God.

J.L. The Lord would serve us, as He does, not only in what He has done by His death but continually in setting us free from what may hinder us. In chapter 11 of John the Lord is acting in power in the raising of Lazarus from among the dead. But then He says, "Loose him and let him go" (v 44). You might say where would he go as loosed? It suggests the part the brethren have in setting a person fully free from what ever may have encumbered in view of their part with Christ.

D.J.H. Only such a Person could relieve us of such encumbrance. I was much impressed this morning as we approached the Supper as to the Person who said "This is my body" and "this is my blood".

J.L. Yes, only He could do it. We tend sometimes to carry in our minds the sense of encumbrance whereas the blood would set us free.

A.J.E.W. We had an impression of the incarnation. The blessed fact of One no less than a Person of the Godhead coming into manhood has really in the perfect wisdom of the divine counsels brought total defeat to the devices of the foe, touching the situation at its root. The foe is left powerless by the surpassingly wonderful manner of divine intervention in a Man.

J.L. How glorious that One of the divine Persons became Man and met the full force of Satan's activity! So that the Jordan fled: "What ailed thee, thou sea, that thou fleddest? thou Jordan, that thou

turnedst back?" (Ps 114: 5), as if death and Satan's forces put up no fight at all, they had to flee and give way.

E.P. Would you think there is a certain completeness in what is said in John 19 after the Lord had died? When the soldier with a spear pierced His side it says "immediately there came out blood and water".

J.L. Yes I think so. Wonderful glory that from the side of Christ as dead on the cross there flowed both blood and water!

R.T. In the beginning of Revelation John says "To him who loves us, and has washed us from our sins in his blood, and made us a kingdom, priests" and so on, chap 1: 5. Does that link on with what you are saying?

J.L. Very good. It is the present tense; it is not presented to us historically. We can experience the constancy of His love every day. We are brought under the authority and sway of Christ. "Made us a kingdom" has in view how God is to be served.

J.A.G. "Jesus, for he shall save his people from their sins", Matt 1: 21: do we begin to learn intimacy on this line so that we are ready? When He says "I Jesus" we know who it is.

J.L. Yes. He is Emmanuel, and I Jesus, His personal name. This is the One who has shed His blood for us, a great matter that every soul can enjoy, every young believer who has confessed the name of Christ can know the assurance and the certainty of the fact that his sins are gone because the blood of Jesus has been shed.

J.A.G. Does that help us to link on quickly with any manifestation that the Lord may give?

J.L. I think it would. So that in the soul that knows Him there is an immediate reaction to the way in which He manifests Himself.

E.C.B. Does this liberate them to sing a hymn and go to the mount of Olives? In reading Matthew 26 one might be almost surprised that they should sing a hymn in these circumstances. But were they not liberated from everything that might encumbered, and in type, ready to move into the spiritual realm ?

J.L. Yes, I would say that. You feel how the singing of a hymn sets us together in affection. You are thinking of the One you are addressing as you sing the hymn. "They went out to the mount of Olives": it is the sphere near to heaven, the point, I suppose, nearest to heaven here, that upward and inward way. I would like to be more acquainted with the hymnbook, to know it better and to have it, you might say, easy of access to my mind. The Spirit would help us as we seek to be acquainted with it.

C.R.B. Could you say something as to what we would understand by the Lord saying "this is my blood"?

J.L. The allusion is to the cup: "this is my blood, that of the new covenant". As we know, this is presented "as they were eating", as they were eating the passover. "Jesus, having taken the bread and blessed, broke it and gave it to the disciples, and said, Take, eat: this is my body. And having taken the cup and given thanks". The Lord brings this forward into Christianity saying "this is my blood, that of the new covenant, that shed for many", He is introducing the preciousness of the unfolding of the divine disposition and the greatness of God's favour that is opened out through His death.

D.A.B. Is it interesting the way that the Lord brings this out in such proximity to such great pressure as was upon Him in this chapter? I have often noticed how what is precious and positive is so interwoven in this chapter with what is wicked - for example, verses 1 to 5, then the section from verse 6, then verse 14; the wickedness of Satan is very close and it must have pressed upon the Lord's spirit, yet He can speak in this way of His own being set so entirely free.

J.L. I think that is very affecting, because Satan is raising all his forces, but the Lord is thinking of His own to set them free, and thinking right down the dispensation. It says "Drink ye all of it".

What an affecting thing that is on the lips of Jesus! And in Mark it says "They all drank out of it", chap 14: 23. If I drank out of it and you drank out of it and we all, each of us individually, drank of this cup, what an effect would be imbued in our spirits as to the

blessedness of the divine disposition and the way God has come near to us in the glad tidings.

A.J.E.W. When you speak of the divine disposition is it a rather interesting detail that the word 'new', as the note tells us, has very doubtful authority? It is *the* covenant as if to suggest that it is not exactly here in contrast with something that has gone before; it stands in its own blessedness as from God, stands by itself as unique.

J.L. That is very fine; it is the unfolding and opening out of what has not been opened out before, the blessedness and fulness of the disposition of God, unconditionally, in His relations with men through the gospel. What the new covenant will mean to Israel when God renews His relations with them in grace, the truth of the gospel means to us now.

D.J.H. The life was in the blood, was it not? Does that help as to what you were, under the Lord's hand, bringing before us yesterday, that life in which God found such infinite pleasure? It would the value of this precious blood and thus it can free us from every encumbrance.

J.L. Yes, and the blood being for the eye of God, God satisfied in respect of the shedding of the blood of Jesus so that He can come out righteously and bless men.

E.C.B. Would you say something as to the reason why Jesus brings in the blood "shed for many for remission of sins" at this point - that is in connection with the cup at the Supper - since we would understand that you would be in the gain of the shedding of the blood (indeed of the passover) before you come to the Supper.

Does this one side of things have in mind a good deal our relief and this other side presented here have in mind directly our being liberated to serve God?

J.L. Yes, I think it has; and completely set free from anything that would hinder us in relation to serving God, because the service of God is the greatest engagement in which we can participate.

E.C.B. So this side of things has in mind our being confirmed in the fact of the service of God being established in righteousness, does it not?

J.L. Surely, set up in righteousness; and God has a righteous basis for forgiving men, blessing them, and setting them up here in view of His praise. So we are not left to be isolated units in the midst of Christendom; we are really set up together in view of what is proper to the assembly for the praise of God.

E.C.B. This is not to occupy us with our sins, even as remitted or forgiven, at that point in the service of God, is it? It is to bring out the glory of the blood and of the divine disposition.

J.L. I think so, and it would give us assurance. If there is one thing that many young people need it is assurance, the assurance of the fact of the work of Christ - the incarnation and the death and resurrection of Christ, and the effect of His work. You have no doubt at all; your faith is settled in a blessed Man who has been into death and who is now exalted in glory.

H.A.H. Does it bear, too, on the public position? Reference was made to the introduction of our Lord's name in this gospel. It is "he shall save his people from their sins", While no doubt that goes on, as you have said, to the way God will take up Israel, does it bear, too, on our position? We can extend it in that sense and include what has come in publicly, those who feel the burdens, as He says in chapter 11?

J.L. Yes, it is not that we come to the Supper with the burden of sin upon us. But the way the Lord presents Himself in relation to the cup in Matthew is to free us completely from every liability and encumbrance and set us free in our minds and in our affections, free to be with Him in the realm of His glory and in relation to His Father and His God.

R.T. Does the drinking being emphasised in Matthew give a sense that we are on new ground entirely?

J.L. I think so. Do you not think that if we each really drink - "Drink ye all of it" - the effect would be to release us from what is inimical to this realm where the Lord is having sway? You cannot have any distance or any sense of doubt at all. If we are each drinking into the blessedness and favour of the divine disposition and what is entirely new, the effect of that is that we are unified in relation to the testimony here and in relation to the service of God. And John would do that for us, John's ministry would set us in the family.

R.W.F. In connection with assurance, is it helpful to see what is meant by remission of sins, that really it is a complete clearance before God? It is inappropriate for us to allow any encumbrance in the light of that, do you think? God's disposition is toward all and the many come into the gain of it, but there is a complete clearance before Him.

J.L. Quite so, and we can continually enjoy that. There might be what is hindering come into our minds. It is not that we come to the Supper having sins undischarged, but the Lord's service would set us entirely free so that we are suitable, ready to be with Him in relation to His glory and His place before His Father and His God.

P.S.W. Would this reference to "my blood" prepare us immediately for response to Himself? We had some sense of the urgency with which the Lord was looking for the response from His own and we would be set free for that.

J.L. In Ephesians the reference is to His blood: "in whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of offences", chap 1: 7. We enjoy that in our links with Him where He is, that the One who shed His blood and in whom we have redemption is now in glory. And we know our place with Him there. So in the opening out of the greatest thoughts as to the counsels and purposes of divine love Paul brings in that allusion to redemption by blood.

J.A.G. The liberty the woman has in Simon the leper's house was brought about by her knowledge of Christ and the knowledge of remission of sins. So the service of God is free to proceed in its fulness despite breakdown.

J.L. The Lord extends that: "Wheresoever these glad tidings may be preached", Matt 26: 13. What an effect that woman's testimony has!

C.R.B. Would the eating and drinking here keep us ready at any time to remember the Lord according to Luke and Corinthians? The Supper as involving remembrance is directly connected with the presentation in Luke and Corinthians, is it not? Does the presentation here involve the moral preparation so that we are ready at any time to be completely free for remembering Christ according to His own desire?

J.L. The eating would affect us constitutionally. We are conditioned therefore constitutionally as we take the Supper, the eating and the drinking. The drinking is in view of satisfaction: "Drink ye all of it".

Think of the fulness of the outflow of divine favour that is available for us to drink so that we are satisfied and full!

C.R.B. So that the uniqueness and glory of the life of Jesus - as related to the blood would keep us occupied with Him in the realms of glory where He is at the present time.

J.L. I think so: and every feature that entered into that life; as the hymn says, 'No trait is lost' (hymn 229), every beautiful feature carried through, it shines in Him where He is.

J.D.N. Paul would give us this assurance that you were speaking of in the fact that he introduces the Supper. Then he says "let a man prove himself, and thus eat of the bread, and drink of the cup", 1 Cor 11: 28.

J.L. Yes, Paul has the light of it from Christ in glory. How near that comes to us, that the Lord Himself gave Paul the special instructions as to the Supper, what he received from the Lord, what he delivered to the saints. And, as you say, he says "let a man prove himself, and thus eat". So you do not prove yourself and stay away, you prove yourself and eat.

F.M.K. "Drink ye all of it": should we see that working out with each other so that we move together as one in the service?

J.L. Yes; if I drink out of it and you drink out of it and the brother next to me drinks out of it, what an effect on the soul constitutionally; that is, you are affected by the disposition of God in grace through the glad tidings.

J.C.E. We learn to move together, and the expression "they went out to the mount of Olives" suggests that they were fully one with the Lord. It seems very restful the way the Lord assures to them the display of things in a time to come, but He just goes on with what is spiritual connected with what is the covenant, the only one.

J.A.G. In 2 Corinthians 11 it is one Man, to present you to one Man. I suppose in Matthew 26, in the section from verse 6, there must have been at least two men. The disciples were indignant, but as Christ is the sole object the things represented by the woman really come into function, I suppose.

J.L. To one Man, a chaste virgin to Christ. Well, it took Israel quite a time to arrive at the fact that God had anointed David. So that it was one man; it was not Saul.

J.C.E. They did arrive at it very fully because they realised that God had anointed him. That was the third great point on their coming to David, was it not?

J.L. Yes it was - a happy time when we arrive at that in our souls, is it not? that we agree with God's choice, that Christ is really God's selection.

J.C.E. I was thinking of the concern that we always have, and which you promoted yesterday, that we should learn more of what the Lord is in the Father's view.

E.C.B. It is often our experience in the service of God, I suppose, that it is not the encumbrance of sins but of things that are not necessarily sins, like distraction and anxiety and preoccupation and worry and all that kind of thing, that we should be released from.

The clearing is with a view to our being actively able to call Him to mind, thus helping us on the inward side of the Supper rather than the testimonial side.

J.L. Yes, because the remembrance is an inward matter. The announcing of His death is public; we announce His death till He come. Anybody can come in and see what we are doing as we take the Supper. But the remembrance is the inward upsurge of the activity of the affections for Christ.

D.A.B. Do the emblems help us in that? They are something that our eyes can see, to take us away from things that would distract us. It is very blessedly simple that the Lord has provided a memorial of that kind, is it not?

J.L. Yes, and the Spirit, too, would help us as we turn to Him secretly even in our thoughts and count on His help.

I wondered if John 13 would further this line, the Lord serving His own. The circumstances are that the betrayer is there, but He is serving them all in the feet washing - "part with me" in relation to the testimony, a heavenly testimony in this dark world, and part with Him in the realm of heavenly associations before His Father and His God.

E.C.B. It is interesting how free Jesus is in this chapter to call attention to Himself: "part with me", "Do ye know what I have done to you?", "Now is the Son of man glorified". It bears on what has been referred to as to there being one Man, does it not?, as if the Lord would close His active service among the disciples with their minds concentrated on Him. He leads them into this realm where the heart is untroubled, do you think?

J.L. I think so. That is why in chapter 14 it is "Let not your heart be troubled". What a release from anything that would hinder the mind and affections! Judas has gone out, and the reference to the Son of man glorified - what a wonderful area of spiritual enlargement and blessing is opened out by Christ in the company of His own in a realm where He is not disturbed by the fact that Judas is ready to deliver Him up!

E.C.B. The Lord is going to lead them into "my peace" and "my joy", is He not? It must have been a remarkable thing to Peter after the experience of Jesus washing his feet, that He says "The cock shall

not crow till thou hast denied me thrice. Let not your heart be troubled": you wonder how He could say that.

A.J.E.W. The very expression "Let not your heart be troubled" is affecting because it puts the matter back upon us in a certain way and raises the question of our full appropriation of what the Lord is setting on. Why should our hearts be troubled? It is as if the Lord is anticipating the way in which our own minds and affections would be working and the way in which we have to do with the Spirit so that we do not, so to say, allow our hearts to be troubled. Things work out in us, do they not?

J.L. That is very good. Does it really raise with us the measure in which the enjoyment of the truth of Christianity and the nearness of our relations with Christ works out practically in an unfettered state in feet washing. It would remove any sense of encumbrance our souls, an untroubled state?

J.D.N. Is this a private service the Lord is doing here.

J.L. Yes, He goes round each one, each individual. One servant used to remind us that John would remind the disciples and say to them, He washed my feet.

J.D.N. What I have in mind is that the Lord would do it in such a priestly way, speaking reverently, that He would not expose us. He may expose us to ourselves.

J.L. He stoops to do it, does He not? He takes the wash hand basin and goes round in that service of love. Think of Him as He came to each one, each individual, and think of the experience that each would have as the Lord attended them in grace and served them in and set them up fully free to be with Himself in relation to the unfoldings that He has in chapter 14, beginning with the Father's house.

D.J.H. In Matthew it was 'all' and 'many', but here it is very personal, is it not? It is each one, according to the need of each. I was thinking of the reference to anxieties and preoccupations. We are all different but He would serve us each, would He not?

J.L. He does not fail to do that.

E.C. Would you say something about having part with Him. He does not say, Unless I wash thee thou wilt not be clean; He says "thou hast not part with me".

J.L. It is a very remarkable expression which I think we should ponder over more; to be near to Christ in this intimate way - part with Him. As we know, it relates to the testimony here, but it relates too to our part with Him in heavenly blessings and enjoyment, as the Lord has us with Himself before the Father.

R.T. Does it go on to John 17? "They are not of the world, as I am not of the world" (v 14); "They were thine, and thou gavest them me" (v 6); "that the love with which thou hast loved me may be in them" (v 26).

J.L. It is very profound because from verse 23 - "thou hast loved them as thou hast loved me: we can understand that we are loved by the Father with the same love as He loves Christ. And in verse 26 the saints are viewed as having capacity to love Christ as the Father loves Him.

R.T. The Lord would lift our sights as He does this service. We might be concerned with the defilement but He is thinking of part with Him in His own realm before the Father.

J.L. Quite so, where defilement can never enter, where there will never be any encumbrance, where sin or death or disease, not one trace of what sin has wrought, will ever enter. It is a realm of blessedness, untarnished, untainted by sin. The Lord would have us to be with Him in it.

E.C.B. These words "part with me" were new light, were they not? Nothing like that had ever been indicated before, and yet the whole substance of Christianity from our side, and in a sense from His, is in it. It is given to Paul to open it up.

J.L. Surely it is. And would you say that in the message the Lord gave to Mary there is a strong suggestion of it?

E.C.B. Yes, I think there is. As was said just now, in John 17 it is "that where I am they also may be with me" (v 24). And the Lord begins to touch that in chapter 14, but He really brings out the blessedness of it in chapter 17. But when He said "part with me" no one had ever heard anything like that before.

E.P. Would you say that the service continues and the "part with me" continues?

J.L. The Lord continually serves us. How He does it is His matter, but it is He Himself who does it. It may be a brother or a sister or a piece of ministry, or it may be in the secret of your communion with the Lord even through the night; He is serving in grace in this way of feet washing and He often does it through the brethren.

E.P. So He says "as I have done to you" - "as". It shows that the character of what He has done and the power of it would be current, a present thing.

J.L. I think what the Lord means to bring out through His service, is capacity in the saints.

F.M.K. So it becomes love's commandment in this chapter, does it not?

J.L. It does. The Lord left the example. The Lord's examples are very fine; this is one of them.

F.M.K. A good example because it is "as I have loved you, that ye love one another".

J.L. Yes. So as was remarked, in chapter 17 the saints are loved with the same love that the Father loves the Son, but then "that the love with which thou hast loved me may be in them and I in them".

Is there not something profound in the way that the saints are viewed as having capacity to love Christ as the Father loves Him?

E.C.B. Paul carries these things somewhat further, does he not, because there is the aspect of things we have through the gospel related to 'by', but here it is 'with', but in Paul it is 'in'? Do you think that takes this as far as you can get it? "Taken us into favour in the Beloved" (Eph 1: 6) is something even in a sense more than this.

J.L. I think that is a good enquiry. In Colossians Christ is viewed as in us: "Christ in you the hope of glory" (chap 1: 27) but in Ephesians the saints are viewed as in Christ.

E.C.B. There is a whole aspect of things in the gospel (largely in Romans) that we have through Him, and by Him, but then there is an aspect of what it is with Him - raised us up together - and then there is the side of in Christ Jesus (Eph 2, vv 6,7,10) and you cannot get closer than that, can you?

J.L. That is very suggestive and I think would raise exercise with us as to what power we have by the Spirit to penetrate into the divine realm in view of increasing in the knowledge of God.

J.A.G. 'As far as' and 'into': is that the result of the linen towel, the feet washing?

J.L. It shows how far Paul could go in the divine realm and in exploring the wealth and blessedness of what is bound up in the knowledge of God.

J.A.G. Completely free from distraction as the brethren have been saying.

J.L. Yes; what a thing it is to be in an area where we are absolutely undistracted! And Paul says "whether in the body or out of the body I know not" 2 Cor 12: 3. So your reference to a man in Christ.

C.R.B. When it says in chapter 13 that He was going to God, that would involve what was inscrutable, would it not? But would departing out of this world to the Father have in mind the fulness that comes out in chapter 17, that we should be consciously in the presence of the Father in another world, but with Christ and therefore restful?

J.L. Is not the Father put over against the world in John? "If any one love the world, the love of the Father is not in him", 1 John 2: 15. The Lord is leaving the world and going to the Father, and that is the realm of affection and relationships into which we are introduced in company with Him.

C.R.B. Where we can know Him as holy Father and righteous Father and Abba Father.

D.A.B. The reference in verse 3 seems to be characteristic according to the note. It says "he came out from God and" 'goes' "to God", as if that is the Lord's objective in His movements. And that is the spirit of things in which He desired to have His own with Himself.

J.L. Surely, He is not going alone. You think of the men given to Him out of the world - *men*, the mature suggestion in the saints, drawn by the Father to Christ, but given to Christ and He bringing them to the Father.

D.A.B. I wondered if there was a connection with Philippians 2 which we had in the meetings here in April. You might say that the Lord knew that God would highly exalt Him, but He takes this downward way. Do we have that in verse 5, that immediately there is that reference to His exaltation He stoops to serve His own. Was that the mind that was in Christ Jesus; the going down mind, even in service to His own, even though what was glorious was in prospect?

J.L. Philippians presents that to us, the mind that was in Christ Jesus. And he says "let this mind be in you", chap 2: 5.

E.C.B. We should be able to answer the Lord's question in verse 12: "Do ye know what I have done to you? ". So that conscious of what He has done, we are then consciously unencumbered. Mr Darby has 'Like Him, to know that glory beam unhindered' (hymn 72).

J.L. Yes. It is the realm where the soul can live in relation to God. Mr Darby's hymns are full of the blessedness of an unfettered experience of being in the presence of God.

E.C.B. So that our normal experience from the service of God, apart from all the aspects of worship and service, should be that it has done us good.

J.L. Surely; it is good to get into heaven together. I said to a brother this morning, was it not good to get into heaven together, to be there in a realm where Christ is everything and in all and where the Father's favour and love are so enjoyed, and the blessedness of

God known in the outshining of Himself in the economy is before us?
Wonderful experience to go in together!

E.C.B. In the week we touch so little what is encumbered, I think. Nearly everything that happens to us, for a moment or two at least, becomes a burden, but what a relief it is and rest to have been in a sphere where there is no encumbrance. So that we are fortified by the service of God, and cheered by it because we have been in the sphere where our souls really belong.

J.L. Yes. Do you think then that the more we get in together, the more we would come out and be on a foreign soil in the enjoyment and character of what is heavenly?

T.J.B. So Jesus says "where I am ye also may be", chap 14: 3. There is a sense of what is normal in that is there not? He says "were it not so, I had told you":

J.L. Is He not opening out His secrets to His friends? Is not the Lord bringing out this great side of friendship in the way He disclosed the secrets of love?

D.J.H. Just a year or so before Mr Darby died he said that for him to be with Christ for ever would not be very different from what he knew now. That is a challenge, is it not?

J.L. It certainly is. That is a challenge because, as was said, we come into the week with responsibilities and the discipline of employment and all that goes along with that, and the family life and exercises in relation to the wilderness; we tend to get jaded by it.

A.J.E.W. Whilst it is going back to the Matthew setting, this freedom from distraction through the week would surely be involved in the Lord speaking at the end of that gospel of "the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit", and then saying "Behold, I am with you all the days, until the completion of the age", chap 28: 20. Surely one point in mind there would be to guard us against distraction.

J.L. I think that is very helpful, because it is divine almightiness and power, is it not? He is not viewed as leaving the earth but He is

viewed as identified with the saints. So there are matters that we can well leave to the Lord and not fret about. The Lord has things in control in relation to the testimony. "I am with you all the days, until the completion of the age". And that will continue, will it not, until the rapture?

F.M.K. The woman at the end of Proverbs was in the gain of that; she overcame the encumbrances, did she not?

J.L. She did. I am quite sure that the Lord would say "My delight is in her", Isa 62: 4. Think of the Lord's delight in the assembly as faithful to Him in His absence!

LONDON

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Key to initials (*All local unless otherwise stated*)

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WHAT SMALL THINGS BECOME

C.C.Ikin

Daniel 2: 34,35; Revelation 11: 19 (1st half); John 1: 32; 2 Corinthians 11: 33; Jeremiah 51: 50 (last clause)

It may not be clear how these scriptures relate to one another, but in each of them what is intensely small becomes immensely great; indeed so great that, in certain aspects, such become infinite. One feels that at a time like this we need to think of what small things become. We live in "the day of small things" (Zech 4: 10) and the word there is that it is not to be despised. So these scriptures all refer to what is very small.

How small this planet earth in which we live is! Within three days it is possible to go right round it by air. And if we would go up into the heavens we would see this small orb as one of the smallest of the planets. Then from it we can look into the heavens and see the stars in the far distance. It takes eight minutes for the light of the sun to reach us, but from these distant stars it has been assessed that it may take millions of light years to reach us. And what is this little earth in the presence of this great universe? And God has indeed made it a beautiful world. Those who go up above the atmospheric heavens say that the beauty of the earth is indescribable, that it is a beautiful blue. This earth God made in every single detail; whether it is vegetation or life, God, "who is over all, and through all, and in us all" (Eph 4: 6), is sustaining life on this orb which He has created. And yet as we look up to the sky we look into infinity; we do not know what is beyond the furthest star. This is infinity; it is a reality, just as eternity is a reality. Infinity is truly a reality, and God alone is connected with infinity, yet this small earth is the place where He is working out His purposes of love and power and glory.

In Daniel it is a stone; not a rock but a stone. It is small, and this stone is set over against the tremendous powers that are in the

world: the power of politics, the power of religion, spiritual powers of tremendous force. Over against them is a stone. It is remarkable that Mr Darby says that, after personal salvation, the two great matters that God has in mind are His government and His purpose (see C.W. Vol.11, p.229). How long God has been waiting in working out His government on this earth! He is the Governor of the universe and He allows empires to function; this was particularly seen with Nebuchadnezzar who was the head of gold in the image which he saw in his dream. Men around us are forming their great combinations in relation to the nations, but these nations are in God's eyes as "a drop in the bucket", Isa 40: 15. God has in mind to bring into His universe what relates to a stone as a type of Christ. Think of Jesus here in the presence of the great authorities, in the presence of Herod when He did not speak a word, and then in the presence of Pilate, the representative of Rome, the civil power that was on the earth at that time. Pilate enquires: "Thou art then a king?", and in answer Jesus says "Thou sayest", John 18: 37. And

Pilate feared: he might well fear, and the nations around us might well fear because very, very soon Christ is coming to take control of the earth. These nations of the earth, whether represented by the gold or silver or brass or iron, will all be removed as Christ comes in His kingdom. That kingdom will be universal; it will go right through from the east to the west, from north to south, a great, all-powerful kingdom. God has in mind to withdraw His own government of the earth which He now exercises, and when He withdraws this government of the earth the most terrible disasters will happen in it.

We are praying, and the prayers of the thousands of persons who know God are holding back the powers that would take complete control. Why is it we have the great eastern block of communism? Why is it we have the combination of nations in the west? Why is it we have Islam, with the combination of Arabic Edomite powers? They cannot move because God is answering our prayers and the whole matter is being held in control until the Lord comes. He is coming as a stone "... cut out without hands" which will smite the image and will itself become "a great mountain" and fill "the whole earth".

Now in the book of Revelation we get another view of Christ. The verse read opens up the second half of the book of Revelation and what we see is the ark in heaven, in the temple. The ark is a most wonderful type of Christ as man. Let us contemplate the humanity of Jesus. It says "the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us", John 1: 14. Think of Him, as a babe in the arms of Simeon; think of what Simeon says of Him; "a light for revelation of the Gentiles and the glory of thy people Israel", Luke 2: 32. Simeon had Christ in his hands, the Ark, so small, a Babe, and yet God manifest in flesh. He was here in the smallest condition in which He could be found, coming within our range. Young people, Jesus has come within your range to be laid hold of by you. He has come within my range. Marvellous fact! Jesus has been here, and the fact that He has been here means that He is coming again. He has gone into heaven where He is now, and His second coming will be correlative to His first coming. In the first the issues as to sin were resolved; in the second He comes, apart from the question of sin, for salvation (see Heb 9: 28). How wonderful to think of the ark as typical of Him!

Then we see Jesus confining Himself to a small area the size of Wales. He would not go beyond that area; the One who is going to fill the earth with blessing thus confined Himself to one small area of territory. What was worked out there was to be infinite. The world, John says, could not contain the books of the things that Jesus did (see John 21: 25). Then also although that scripture refers to what He did in the days of His flesh, every one of us is the work now of His doing, and myriads, ten thousand times ten thousand, will be written on, who have been the subject of the work of Jesus. What He did was so great that only a small part of His works was recorded by the gospel writers. They depict Jesus as man, who was so insignificant to men; He was so small in the eyes of men that He was able to pass through the crowd and no one detected Him. How great was all that was found in Him as man, a Man here amongst men.

At the end of that wonderful pathway Jesus delivered Himself up, and then was seen the greatness of what was effected in His

death. What a reality in God's universe was "the death of the Lord", 1 Cor 11: 26! Everything centres in "the death of the Lord". It is like the ark of the Lord of all the earth going into the Jordan. How marvellous to be a contemplator of it and to see what He is doing. And the glory of it is this, that He is opening up another world. The ark originated in the wilderness, but it is seen here in the temple and that suggests Solomon, because the ark in his temple was at the highest point reached in the history of the children of Israel. "And the ark... was seen in his temple". Stephen saw Jesus in heaven; it just baffled everyone because he could look into heaven and could see Jesus there, antitype of the ark, the One whom I love as my Saviour, the One who has come into my range to be appropriated, the One who, we might say, most feelingly as Man has gone through the weakness of flesh and blood condition, sin apart, and who has gone into death. "If therefore ye seek me, let these go away", John 18: 8. That is how the love of Christ affects me in His death. I want to go that way myself; in figure I am going over the bed of the Jordan and He is staying there in death until I go over. How touching it is! Jesus in His death worked out the will of God so that I might live; not die but live. The way into life is through death. It is a wonderful day when I die with Christ. Have I died with Christ? I may be tested tomorrow in relation to saying this, but nevertheless it is a great matter for the saints to realise that they have died with Christ and their "life is hid with the Christ in God", Col 3: 3. There He is majestically shining out from the glory scene; it is the glory of the Lord. Surely objective ministry is most important. Without objective ministry, a ministry of Christ shining from heaven, where should we be? An objective ministry gives us the truth, gives us facts, quite outside of any work within us to appropriate it. But there it is, and it is to be seen in the shining out of the gospel. Paul speaks of it as "the radiancy of the glad tidings of the glory of the Christ", 2 Cor 4: 4. That is the present moment. Christ is there, and we know He is there, we see Him there. And the ark was "seen in his temple". How important that we should keep to the facts, the wonderful matters that God has established in the purposes of His love! As we were saying, the first thing after personal salvation is the government of

God and the purpose of God. The purpose of God is that Christ, One of the Persons of the Godhead, should be found on this little earth to attract thousands upon thousands of persons to Himself who will be like Him and have their part in the eternal day. And the ark, typifying what is infinite, wonderfully so, had a margin of gold round about, so small. What is it? - two and a half cubits, four feet long, a little chest we might say, and it went a thousand yards, two thousand cubits, into the Jordan, and that two thousand cubits implies faith in those who would follow. Could we see a chest of four feet long, more than half a mile away? It is our privilege now to be in faith conditions, our going into death, Christ going into death, a reality indeed, because through His death has opened up a scene of life in which we are going to be with Him for ever.

How important it is to have preachers! Paul was a preacher. He was one who set the light, and the shining of the light we might say, upon persons; he illuminated and liberated them. Here we are in the last days of the gospel and that gospel is being preached. Along with the gospel is the ministry of the new covenant; that is, God is towards us in love. Surely we need objective ministry and persons who can say what they have seen and know in order that you might see and know and I might see and know. How wonderful it is just to see that that little ark was the centre of the tabernacle! The tabernacle system is a figure of the universe and the universe is going to be filled with that Man, with Christ. It is indeed marvellous to see Him in an objective way, and it is not connected with our realisation of it all. God is going to have His way. This objective is seen in the first three verses of Hebrews, how God spoke in His Son. It says "having made by himself the purification of sins, set himself down on the right hand of the greatness on high". We had no part in that great matter; it was entirely of God.

Now in John's gospel we have the Spirit as a dove. One of the small birds is the dove, and yet the Spirit was wholly there on the Person of Jesus as Man; that is there was that there upon which the Spirit could abide. But the wonderful thing about the Spirit is, that through the great work of redemption and Christ going into heaven,

the Spirit would come upon persons and in persons. The anointing of the Spirit and the sealing of the Spirit is in and upon persons. You can see them. You look round this room; you see the aged sisters, not only is the peace of God upon them but the anointing of the Spirit; you can see it. You can see the Spirit. Then there is the internal work of the Spirit: "he abides with you, and shall be in you", John 14: 17. They were few at Pentecost; certainly there are more here today than there were at Pentecost. There were a hundred and twenty persons; each one had faith, each had been called, each was there on the principle of obedience. They were awaiting the Spirit from heaven and the Spirit came. It was upon them as tongues of fire. When the Spirit comes upon men and women who are like ourselves, it needs to be as tongues of fire. The flesh in me has to be burned up. It is no different now at my age from what it was when I was twenty, no different at all. The flesh is there all the time.

Thank God He has dealt with the flesh. When Jesus was made sin for us, the One who knew not sin, He entered into what flesh meant. There is the flesh there is the world, there is the devil, but the exercise I have here are intense sometimes, as to whether I am in spiritual liberty, because I can very easily not be. It is a great reality that the Spirit came in without measure. There were a hundred and twenty persons, but think of three thousand being added on Peter's preaching; three thousand more persons having the Spirit. Think of Cornelius, the Spirit coming upon him and those with him. He had already come, it was not a fresh dispensation of the Spirit from heaven. He was here in Peter, and what was in the sheet, all those creatures in the sheet, was going into heaven, and Cornelius was going into heaven. It says that while Peter was preaching the word the Holy Spirit fell, as if it was His affectionate embrace of the Gentiles. As we said earlier, Simeon said "a light for revelation of the Gentiles". How was it that Simeon could look ahead to Paul's ministry? Paul opened up in spiritual power for God what was in the nations. How was it Simeon knew the prophets so well in their reference to the restoration of Israel which is only just about going to take place? Simeon saw it as he took Jesus into his arms. So the blessed Spirit is here, and He is here universally without measure.

Surely we need to think more of the greatness of what is here. God is here, He is here in His house, He is known in His house. The blessed Spirit is here and as a consequence God is here. What follows is the importance of subjective ministry. We must have subjective ministry, we must have that which forms us according to Christ, that which, we might say, gets right down in our moral beings. What God is doing here and what He is doing there is a reality, because I am being formed as in Romans, and I am being formed to go into Corinthians and I am being formed in relation to the eternal day. So subjective ministry is essential. I find that in my flesh good does not dwell and I need subjective ministry. Objective ministry may need to be stressed, but subjective ministry is the formation of Christ here, its object being that "as he is, we also are in this world", 1 John 4: 17. So subjective ministry is not to be despised. In the ages gone by, three centuries ago, there was a clash between objective ministry and subjective ministry; and now the Lord would help us to see that both ministries go along side by side, and the servants of the Lord are being very greatly helped. Along with that is the subjective working so that there is substance in the soul. My links with the Lord and with the Spirit are intensely practical and real. We need practical ministry, what will help us in our everyday lives practically. It is remarkable that in the Collected Writings of Mr Darby we have what is Expository and what is Critical and what is Evangelical, but also what is Practical. Practical ministry is that I love my brother, and the great point in this kind of ministry is that things become real. If I just dwell upon objective ministry I am a happy man:

'Thus joyful, bright and free,
I take the heav'nly road;
My soul vibrates with melody,
My song is ever - God!' (Hymn 228)

But joy can turn to misery overnight. We do not measure matters by our joy. Objective ministry will give us joy; we have no part in it, God has done it all. But the wonderful thing about subjective ministry is that it forms something here, and it will go through. What is

subjective is formed and will go through any kind of test. And to put this matter into practical expression, I pass from death to life because I love the brethren (1 John 3: 14); and, "which thing is true in him and in you", 1 John 2: 8. It is very remarkable that the servants who have been here in recent months have nearly always turned to John's ministry. And John's ministry is to get us saturated with the love of divine Persons. Think of the Son saying that he that keeps My word, His Father would love him and that both the Father and the Son would come to him permanently (see John 14: 23). I do not want anything else but this. To get myself out of my own mind is one of the greatest practical difficulties I know. The great thing is that Christ is our life, Christ inwardly. What was formed at Colosse was inward formation; what went into Ephesians was inward formation, and ability to go into God in power. So objective ministry is essential - the gospel; and subjective ministry is essential - the mystery. Paul had both the gospel and the mystery, yet he had such a small estimate of himself that, in the verse read in Corinthians, he could speak of being lowered in a basket. I would love to have been at Ephesus with Paul serving there. He would not be on the objective line too much. He speaks of the preaching of the glad tidings of the grace of God; he speaks of the preaching of the kingdom and that involves power, it involves something being formed in the saints. Then he went down to their households one by one, and we would say, Paul what are you doing? Why are you in tears about a matter? - "with tears", he says "night and day", Acts 20: 31. Such is the effect of the blessed Spirit working through ministry.

Now the final scripture in Jeremiah is concerning Jerusalem. Jerusalem, the earthly Jerusalem here, is a small city compared with other capital cities of the world, it is perhaps one of the smallest. It would be possible to go up one of the mountains round Jerusalem and take a photograph of the whole city. It is so small, so insignificant in men's minds, that it rarely appears in the press. Thank God it does not appear in the press. Why does not Jerusalem appear in the press? Is it our prayers that are holding back the great conflicts that are going to take place on the earth

around Jerusalem? Is it, we may say, that the blessed Spirit of God would say, the time for the fulfilment of prophecy is not yet? It is now the time of the Spirit, the time of the gospel, the time of securing men and women for the assembly, for the holy city which is above. And the earthly Jerusalem becomes a great city, thirty-eight miles round its walls according to Ezekiel. This great city Jerusalem, that is right in the centre of three continents, obviously must be the administrative centre of the world. One of the scriptures that I have particularly thought about recently is "and the cities of the nations fell", Rev 16: 19. All the anxiety there is in government is that there may not be electronic warfare that, with an explosion in say Westminster, the whole city would be razed to the ground. God is holding it back. The beloved servant in 1945, when those two cities in the east went up in flames, just said two words: Fear not.

Tomorrow Jerusalem is coming into mind, but it will not be until the church is gone. The time of the church's entry into heaven is imminent; she is going up substantially, going up in power, going up with the Spirit who has taken us all the way through the history of the assembly. The assembly goes up to heaven in power. It is something to be thought about - meeting the Lord in the air.

Now coming again to this matter of the city, I believe it is something that we need to think more about. There is only one city, it is the Jerusalem which is above "which is our mother", Gal 4: 26: "Jerusalem above": who says that? It is a fact that the city is there, ready for heaven, substantially real. Objective ministry has brought the sunshine, the life and enjoyment of what God has done. There are thirteen references to Jerusalem in the Old Testament. Every Jew would know that the earthly Jerusalem is the great ultimate to which things are to finish up. As soon as we have gone, Jerusalem will be in the press. It makes us very, very sensitive and sober that, as the Lord comes, the assembly goes into heaven. What is left here will be the cities of the nations which fall.

So we look at the holy city; it is a cube, a great entity, but it is finite. It belongs to eternity and in it are the great ministries that have taken place from the beginning of time. Angelic ministry? Yes,

the angels are mentioned in Revelation 21. The law was given by angels; it was their ministry. What was unfolded to Abraham will be there; what God had in mind as to Israel will be there, I think; but one thing is certain, that the assembly is there in this great, this holy city. It is not called a great city; it is the holy city, the new Jerusalem which comes down from heaven. If we look at it from any angle it is the same. If we look at it objectively, it is the same, or subjectively, it is the same. If viewed from north, south, east or west, it is the same; it is this wonderful city, which is in its size the cubic measure of the moon, it is so great. It is only a figure, it is only a type, it is only a symbol. In Ezekiel they are not symbols, they are actual measurements regarding the city, but in Revelation we see this wonderful vessel. We are in it and we are in it now. Why cannot we all be consciously in it? We have to get delivered from petty matters; petty matters hold us up. A matter that is petty can become a mountain and it is good for faith to say, "Be thou... cast into the sea", Mark 11: 23. Faith would do that - even a mountain. God knows what we have to pass through; Satan knows too, He knows the problems. And problems are not issues. An issue may result in disintegration or it may involve schism and cleavage. We think of 1847, and we think of 1908, and we think of 1970. All these things bear upon us and make us humble. But what is before God is to be before us and we are to have the holy city, our mother, before us. It is greater than any of the other cities, greater than Corinth, greater than Ephesus, greater than Philippi, greater than Thessalonica; "the holy city... coming down... from God, having the glory of God", Rev 21: 10. Well, beloved brethren, are we in the enjoyment of this wonderful matter, the city coming down from heaven? May God bless us and help us in this, for His Name's sake.

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THE CHILDREN'S QUESTIONS

God expects young people to be interested in His ways. He wanted the Hebrew children to ask about the Passover. You will remember that a lamb was slain and its blood sprinkled on the two doorposts and on the lintel of the house. For the Christian this is a sign of the shedding of the precious blood of Jesus as of a lamb without blemish or spot. This has been done once for all and by it the believer is sheltered from judgment and redeemed to God.

After the Israelites crossed the river Jordan and came into the land that God had provided for them, they set up twelve great stones on the river bank. The children were expected to ask two questions about these. One question was "What mean ye by these stones?" and the other was "What mean these stones?" The answer to the first question was that the water of the river was stopped a long way upstream whilst the ark passed into and over the Jordan on dry land. For the Christian this means that death had to yield when Jesus died and rose again. The answer to the other question was that the people themselves had also crossed the river on dry land. For us this means that believers have been attracted after the Lord and are standing like those great stones in the homeland of God's purpose.

I believe that the first teenage question in the Bible was asked by a boy and the second by a girl. The boy enquired about the worship of God and the girl asked if she could help her brother. The boy was Isaac and the sheep for an offering that he asked about represented the Lord Jesus who was in life and death so fully pleasing to God. The girl, Miriam, was at the right place at the right time to be used of God. She sought to be of help to her baby brother. We do not know what his earlier name was but he became called Moses and was later one of God's greatest servants.

A little question can lead to much blessing. There is a very touching story from the old coaching days of a little girl hardly five years old. By asking in her childish way 'Do you love God?' she led to the conversion of a fellow-traveller. He was a man who even

dared to question the existence of an almighty Creator and had influenced many for evil. He had been charmed by the pretty ways of the little child, but her question, repeated, 'Do you love God' left him a convicted man when he got off the coach. This led to his conversion. After some years he was able to trace the home of the child's mother only to find that the Lord had taken to Himself that dear child. He told the mother that he was a monument of God's mercy through the influence of her little daughter. Are you ready if the Lord should come now or should call you away?

J.C.Evershed