

A
WORD
IN ITS
SEASON

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"THE GOOD PART"

J.Renton

Luke 10: 38-42; Matthew 11: 25-30; John 12: 23-26; 13: 21-25

At the end of our reading the question was raised as to how our state can be improved - a very important question. We have, of course, first of all to acknowledge that our state needs improvement. The Spirit would help us; we are not to be over-occupied with the low state but rather with how it can be improved.

I would like to speak about the "good part". We can be in the midst of a low state, crying to the Lord for help, and that is good for us, but there is another way. We can be feeling conditions and cry to the Lord about them, but the other way is, we can be with the Lord viewing the conditions; that is where the Lord would have us be. We are often concerned as to whether the Lord is with us, and I suppose many companies of believers think the Lord is with them, or try to believe the Lord is with them. What is far more important is that we should be exercised to be with the Lord; He will not put obstacles in our way if we are really desirous of being with Him and viewing things as He views them. It is open to every one of us.

I begin with this homely incident in Martha's house. "He entered into a certain village; and a certain woman, Martha by name, received him into her house". This was a house open to receive the Lord. Martha was a good sister, she loved the Lord, opened her house to receive Him. It says she "received him into her house". We have had recent ministry on reception. She received him into her house. "And she had a sister called Mary". Luke has his own way of writing. He tells us that there was a manger available for the Babe Jesus before he tells us that there was no room in the inn. He tells us in chapter 7 what that woman did before he tells us what Simon the Pharisee did not do. He tells us here what Mary did before he tells us about Martha being distracted with much serving; and that is what the Lord would bring before us at this time, that we might be like Mary. The Lord says "Mary has chosen the good part".

She chose this way; it was not laid upon her. I do not think many of us choose this way. Most of us are like Martha, let us accept it. But Luke says "she had a sister called Mary, who also, having sat down at the feet of Jesus was listening to his word". She was with the Lord, listening to Him. I wonder what we know of this. I trust we desire to know more of the good part that Mary chose. Luke tells us what Mary did, Mary's attitude, and says that Martha was distracted. Distracted from what? Distracted from the good part that Mary chose. I am afraid many of us become distracted. Martha had a sense of responsibility; it was her house. It is good to have a sense of responsibility, but Martha in her keen sense of responsibility was saying for herself, I must do something, I must be active. Did it help the situation? She was distracted. Dear brethren, there is a better way, there is another way, and that is the good part that Mary chose. I am afraid we often act as distracted from the good part that the Lord would have us fill, to be listening to Him, to take our directions from Him. What has He in mind for us in our localities, the enjoyment of eternal life? Maybe I can spoil that by my own sense of responsibility and feeling that I have to do something, have to be active. We think, what can we do? What can we organise to do something. That is not the way. Martha was distracted with much serving. It was her house; she felt, I have to do something, I take on this responsibility, what can I do? But she was distracted from the good part that Mary chose. "Martha was distracted with much serving, and coming up she said, Lord, dost thou not care that my sister has left me to serve alone? Speak to her therefore that she may help me". She would have Mary with her in her activity which resulted from her being distracted. She complained about Mary because she was not helping her in what *she* thought she ought to be doing. Mary was with the Lord, listening to Him, seeing things as He saw them, looking down on the situation. Martha was in the midst of the situation, wondering what she could do next to help things, as she thought. "But Jesus answering said to her, Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things". Mary was with the Lord, listening to His mind. You might say she was doing nothing. Sometimes, dear brethren, the less we do the better. She

was doing the most important thing of all, she was listening to His word. "Thou art careful and troubled about many things; but there is need of one". I would like to say it to my brethren in this area: "there is need of one", the good part that Mary chose. "There is need of one, and Mary has chosen the good part the which shall not be taken from her". Mary chose it. Most of us are like Martha, let us face it; we think in terms of: What can we do? we will have to do something. There is another way, there is the good part which the Lord commends, and Mary chose that good part. I am sure of this: not many of us choose it but the Lord said "the which shall not be taken from her".

But in Matthew 11 the Lord *invites* us. "Come to me" He says. The Lord would invite every one of us to come to Him, "all ye who labour and are burdened" Martha laboured and was burdened. It is good to labour and be burdened, but not as being distracted from the good part. Who laboured like Jesus? He mentions the cities in which most of His works of power had taken place. Think of His labours in Bethsaida and Capernaum, His labours in Galilee! He said 'woe!' to these cities. It is interesting to realise that before He pronounced woe on these cities He had called out a number from them. That is what He is doing today, the Lord is calling out individuals. Woe to this world! It is about to come into judgment, but the Lord is calling out persons today. Did not Andrew and Peter and Philip all come from Bethsaida? Think of that centurion in Capernaum concerning whom the Lord said "Not even in Israel have I found so great faith", Luke 7: 9. The Lord secured individuals, and then pronounces woe to these cities in which His works of power had taken place because they had not repented, where there was lack of results. The Lord said prophetically "I have laboured in vain, I have spent my strength for nought and in vain", Isa 49: 4. Was He discouraged? Was He disappointed? He was not. He was with His Father, looking down on the situation; He was not in the midst of these cities, looking up to God. "At that time, Jesus answering said, I praise thee, Father, Lord of the heaven and of the earth". In Luke's account of this it says "Jesus rejoiced in spirit", chap 10: 21. He was

not in the midst of these cities, looking up to God; He was with God, looking down on these cities. Oh, we need this, dear brethren. If there is one thing we need to improve our state, *this* is needed. "I praise thee, Father, Lord of the heaven and of the earth, that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them to babes". He was with His Father, having His Father's view of the whole situation, in communion with His Father, seeing things as He saw them. He was able to praise His Father in this situation. "Yea, Father", He says, "for thus has it been well-pleasing in thy sight. All things have been delivered to me by my Father, and no one knows the Son but the Father". We could say something about these things if we were able, but what I want to come to is "Come to me, all ye who labour and are burdened, and I will give you rest". Are there exercises involving labour, are things burdening you, dear brother or sister? The Lord says "Come to me". He does not say, Look to me; He does not say, Pray to me; He says "Come to me", that is, to be with Him where He is, to see things as He sees them, to feel about things as He feels them. "Come to me, all ye who labour and are burdened".

Maybe there are some persons here who labour and are burdened because of conditions. Maybe some sisters, some widows living alone, are feeling the state and are looking up to the Lord and crying to Him. The Lord will hear you, but there is another way and that is to be with Him, having His view of the situation. "Come to me, all ye who labour and are burdened, and I will give you rest". The Lord Jesus was restful in this situation, although His works of power had not had the effect they ought to have had. He was restful with His Father viewing it all. We can be obsessed with difficulties but this is the answer: "Come to me, all ye who labour and are burdened, and I" - "I" He says - "will give you rest". "I", who found rest with His Father in this situation in this chapter, "I will give you rest" in whatever situation you find yourself. Mary chose the good part. Maybe we have not chosen the good part, but the good part is open to us; the Lord invites us: "Come to me". "Come to me"; not, as I said, Pray to Me, or Cry to Me, which in itself is all right. "Come

to me... and I will give you rest". In verse 28 rest is to be known immediately: "Come to me, all ye who labour and are burdened, and I will give you rest". That is the way to restfulness of spirit in spite of what conditions are. The longer-term view is "Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me... and ye shall find rest to your souls". Finding rest may be a more settled experience as a result of answering to what the Lord says: "Take my yoke upon you". What was His yoke? His yoke was committal to the will of His Father who is in the heavens; that was His yoke and the Lord would welcome us to be in the same yoke: "Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me". Then He says "for I am meek and lowly in heart". Where do we learn lowliness, dear brethren? It is so difficult for us to be lowly, so easy for us to be otherwise. We learn it as coming to Him: "learn from me". The Lord has been spoken of here as a great model for us; we learn from Him! "And ye shall find rest to your souls; for my yoke is easy, and my burden is light". The Lord will not put upon us any burden we are not able to bear even if we may feel burdened, heavily burdened; "my yoke is easy", He said. It is easy if we in our measure are committed to the will of His Father who is in the heavens as He was. "My yoke is easy, and my burden is light". The Lord invites us: "Come to me"; come to His side, be with Him in how He views every matter, and then if we do anything or say anything, if we write anything from this viewpoint it will help the situation. We have valuable letters of those who have gone before us which were no doubt written from this viewpoint; I do not know if that can be said of all that we write. "My yoke" is service under His control. The Spirit will help us to fulfil committal to the will of His Father who is in the heavens. May the Lord help us in these things.

In the gospel of John, chapter 12, the Lord is nearing the end of His life here. He said "The hour is come that the Son of man should be glorified". What was the way taken that the Son of man should be glorified? "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except the grain of wheat falling into the ground die, it abides alone; but if it die, it bears much fruit". This is the way in which the Son of man was glorified; in His death; and the result of the death of the Lord Jesus in this character

is that there is fruit like Himself, after its own kind. We were speaking earlier about going down; we see it in the Lord Himself. It is not so much the suffering side stressed here, nor the atoning work; it is the attitude of the Son of man, falling into the ground, dying. It refers to His death; would it refer to His burial? "Except the grain of wheat falling into the ground die, it abides alone; but if it die, it bears much fruit". It bears fruit like itself, fruit like the grain of wheat that fell into the ground and died. Therefore the Lord says immediately, "He that loves his life shall lose it, and he that hates his life in this world shall keep it to life eternal". If there is to be fruit according to the character of the grain of wheat, how is it arrived at? It is not arrived at without moral exercises on the part of those who are to be the fruit. "He that loves his life shall lose it". It is very striking how the Lord immediately says this after verse 24. Some difficulties among us are caused because we love our lives, love ourselves, love our own ideas, love our own activities. "He that loves his life shall lose it and he that hates his life in this world" - very strong language! - "he that hates his life in this world shall keep it to life eternal". What is in view? That there should be fruit according to the character of the grain of wheat that fell into the ground and died. What does it involve with us? Moral exercises, hating of self, detesting anything that promotes self. Do I detest anything that promotes self at the expense of the promotion of Christ? "He that loves his life shall lose it, and he that hates his life in this world shall keep it to life eternal". Life eternal is reached through the conclusion of moral exercises. These are real exercises which we have to face. It is true discipleship, true committal to our Lord Jesus Christ and His will, His yoke. "He that hates his life in this world shall keep it to life eternal". Then He says "If anyone serve me, let him follow me; and where I am, there also shall be my servant". Oh, what a prospect! What an objective to have before us, to be with Him! The Lord does not say, Where My servant is, there will I be; He says "where I am, there also shall be my servant". It was true of Mary in Luke 10; where He was Mary was. Martha was distracted. I need not go over that again but these are the facts. Mary was with Him where He was. "Come to me, all ye who labour and are burdened, and I will

give you rest". It means that we are to be with Him where He is. "Where I am, there also shall be my servant". That is open to every one of us as we face the moral exercises of verse 25 and follow Him. "If anyone serve me, let him follow me; and where I am, there also shall be my servant". The Lord was the perfect Servant; "there also shall be my servant". That is fruit, fruit after the character of the grain of wheat. Then the Lord adds "And if any one serve me, him shall the Father honour". Oh, how blessed to be honoured by the Father! The Lord was honoured by the Father distinctively, but the true fruit of the death of the Lord Jesus is to be honoured by the Father: "him shall the Father honour". It is not honour in this world; it is not even honour among the brethren. I have been impressed with Paul's last days. You would have thought that a servant like Paul would have been greatly honoured among the brethren. What a servant he was! How devoted he was! Localities owed their existence to Paul, under the Lord of course. At the end of his days it does not seem that he had much honour among persons in Asia. Onesiphorus had to seek him out; but oh, the Father honoured him. The Father's honours, dear brethren, are worth far more than any place we may have among the brethren; that will pass away.

In chapter 13 - these are well-known scriptures - we have John in the bosom of Jesus. I suppose only one could have been in the position that John was in, in the physical setting of that table. I suppose they were lying at table, and John was lying in the bosom of Jesus. Oh, how John would appreciate that position! But, you know dear brethren, the bosom of Jesus is open to every one of us, each of us can know what it is to be in the bosom of Jesus. I do not know if we know very much about it. I do not know if I know very much about it, but at least it ought to be attractive to us. It is a setting of love, a setting of enjoyed, experienced love, in the bosom of Jesus. "Now there was at table one of his disciples in the bosom of Jesus, whom Jesus loved". This is the first reference in this gospel to the disciple whom Jesus loved. He speaks of himself later in this way, but I think I am right in saying that this is the first reference to it. He knew Jesus' love by lying in His bosom. That was his experience

and John was in a secret that no one else had. Everyone else said "Is it I?" (Matt 26: 22; Mark 14: 19) according to other gospels, but John said "who is it?" Jesus and he shared a divine secret no one else knew about. This kind of thing is open to us, to be in the confidence of our Lord Jesus Christ. Is anything more desirable? This was John's position. He was with Jesus, in the bosom of Jesus, looking round on the situation, just as Jesus was. Then it says "leaning on the breast of Jesus, says to him, Lord, who is it?" and the Lord indicates who it is, and John and the Lord Jesus shared this secret. We can be in the secret of things. Only John was here, but it is open to all of us to be with the Lord, looking down on whatever situation may occur, and if we are in that setting, if we are maintained in that setting, whatever we do, whatever we say will help conditions, it will improve any situation, it will improve the state of things among us. May the Lord help us for His Name's sake.

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SUBJECTS OF THE LORD'S INTEREST

John 20: 17-23; Luke 24: 33-43; John 12: 1-3

J.R. The suggestion is to look again at these wellknown scriptures. The Lord came to His own in John 20; they were the subjects of His interest, the subjects of God's purpose. The Lord came where the disciples were and the record is all what He did and what He said. In Luke 24 the Lord stood in their midst. It does not say He came but that He stood in their midst; again they were the subjects of His interest and of His own care; He gathered them. The Lord came to Bethany and they did things, they made Him a supper. Martha served, Mary took the ointment; they did everything. What is specially in mind is John 12, where they received Him, where they did things, and everything was so acceptable to Him. These features might engage us for our profit. In John 20 "Jesus came and stood in the midst, and says to them, Peace be to you. And having said this, he shewed to them his hands and his side. The disciples rejoiced therefore, having seen the Lord". They did not do anything. It is the Lord having His way with persons who are the subjects of divine purpose and who are brought into wonderful relationship. The Lord had said to Mary "my Father and your Father... my God and your God". We have often gone over this ground but I thought we might see that the Lord does everything here.

E.C.B. Is there a very blessed sense of the Lord as a servant even in conditions of great privilege like this. As you say, He does everything; He is really serving His own, and less directly perhaps serving the Father.

J.R. Quite so. The disciples are not said to worship, they are not said to do anything. It is the Lord acting, and of course we ought to have some experience of this. It says "where the disciples were": it is the persons He has in mind. It is all a question of His interest in them, they being the subjects of His interest; and we are all such, dear brethren. It is good to be conscious of it. We are all the subject of the Lord's intense interest and affection.

A.J.E.W. Is it interesting that the Lord immediately communicates to Mary those who are the subjects of His interest: "go to my brethren". Mary would stand for something in that relation, the affectionate intelligence to which the Lord could confide where the circle of His interest is to be known.

J.R. Very good. Mary was strong in affection. Was that in your mind? Say more as to what Mary represents.

A.J.E.W. We have sometimes spoken of her as suggestive of the assembly, and if we could carry that forward here, the Lord is quick to confide to the assembly, in figure, where the centre of His interest is and where these activities that you speak of are to be experienced.

J.R. Very good. It is a great matter to regard ourselves as the subjects of the Lord's interest. At the moment He is with His Father in His throne. The Father is over all in a universal sense; the nations are under His control: but the Lord's chief interest is His own, and it is good to be conscious of that, as the disciples were made to feel here.

E.O. Would that be emphasised when it says in the next chapter that it is the third time that He manifested Himself to them, showing His intense interest in the disciples?

J.R. Exactly. Before the Lord ascended to His Father His own are in His mind. "I have not yet ascended to my Father" He said to Mary; the disciples are the subjects of His intense personal interest.

D.J.H. We were impressed this morning at the Supper that, whilst we are in the waiting time, we enter now into eternal relationships. We do not have to wait for the experience of them. Would that be related to this, that immediately, as out of death, He speaks of relationships that are going right through?

J.R. Exactly. It is "my brethren" here, and sonship: "my Father and your Father". I suppose the Lord, when He says "my Father", is speaking in the experience and joy of sonship Himself. "My Father",

He said, "and your Father". The Lord is distinctive in that relationship but we are brought into the same relationship.

D.J.H. And would not "my God and your God" go right through to Revelation 21, the eternal day, God Himself being with them?

J.R. Yes. Of course, the Father would go through to the eternal day too. Relationship, sonship, goes through into eternity.

D.J.H. Yes, I was thinking that all these relationships go through.

J.R. It seems to me that when the Lord says "my Father" He is speaking in the enjoyment of the relation of sonship; when He says "my God" he is speaking as man, and other men are to be with Him in relationship with the same God.

D.J.H. I am sure that is right always bearing in mind the distinctive place that He has in every relationship.

J.R. We are believers who are enlightened as to the wonderful character of these relationships. The teaching we have had is almost ingrained in us, the light of the wonderful character of our relations with Him with the Father and with one another on this level. Of course it belongs to all believers; but we are in the light of it and know something of the enjoyment of it. The Lord does everything here, He caters for the subjects of His interest on the level of the greatness of divine purpose; and we are such. As I said, all believers are such, but we have the light of this.

J.C.E. Do you think one of the objectives that the Lord had was the perfecting of His disciples? I was thinking of the frequent reference to disciples here, and in that sense they are the same as they were before the Lord died, but now they are disciples of One in resurrection. Would that be something to further and complete the formation of these disciples?

J.R. Exactly. First of all He came to them and said "Peace be to you". But then He sends them forth; as He was sent forth, they are sent forth. They are sent forth from this area of His interest in them, His affection for them being realised by these persons. Twice He

said "Peace be to you" and then He sends them forth as He was sent forth.

A.J.E.W. You speak of what He did; He did not just speak, He showed them something. I thought it was a mark of great intimacy and of the confiding love of Christ in those in whom His interest was, as if He would suggest that that interest would not just be passing but would remain, and they were to be brought into the settled sense of relationship and

intimacy with Himself.

J.R. Yes. He showed them Himself, His hands and His side. I know it has been said that His side would refer to Genesis 2, and I have no doubt it does. Nevertheless, His side is mentioned in chapter 19; the only place it is mentioned in the gospels that the spear pierced His side. It would give the a sense of peace that everything was settled, everything was seen to. From that side came blood and water; there was a means of solving every moral question in the blood and water that came from His side. What assurance it would give them! What assurance it gives us to realise that from His own side came the answer to every moral question!

D.J.H. So you can understand that He says "Peace be to you. And having said this, he shewed to them his hands and his side". It was a basis for eternal peace

J.R. Quite so. It was the heavenly Man, the One who was about to ascend; therefore it would be heavenly peace that He brought in, with the assurance that there was a basis for the settling of every moral question that could ever arise.

P.S.W. Chapter 19 is the witness of the one that saw it, but this is experienced in the company. We understand from 1 Corinthians 15 that there were several personal appearances, but is it important to see the collective experience and the answer that the Lord is really looking for?

J.R. I am sure it is.

E.P. Experience is a very blessed matter. The disciples' testimony was "We have seen the Lord". Mary said that she had seen the Lord and that He had said certain things to her, but the collective experience was "We have seen the Lord". It is really sufficient.

J.R. It seems that all that the disciples said to Thomas was just these five words: "We have seen the Lord". That was the testimony to one who was absent. They have affection for him; they want him in too. The relationship in which we are to Christ, is also the relationship in which we are to one another. "My brethren... my Father and your Father... my God and your God". It puts us together on the level of these wonderful, divine, eternal relationships.

E.P. So they rejoiced together. It says "The disciples rejoiced therefore, having seen the Lord". It was joy together, and it is a wonderful experience to rejoice together.

J.R. Exactly. It is a 'together' scene: "where the disciples were". We have often gone over this section but it is good to get the impression that the Lord does all here. He speaks and He shows them, it is from Him to them; and then the Lord looks for the result, He sends them forth. How much has flowed from the Lord to us!

H.A.H. The hands were the hands that had taken the basin, the water and the towel, and the feet of each one of them. He was still serving in love, showing Himself in this way.

J.R. It was His delight to be with them here in His resurrection, and also in the light of heaven, the light of ascension. He would take them with Him in His affections when He ascended.

E.C.B. Do you have in mind that we might be alert to see what the Lord Himself does as He comes among us? Your reference to His side connecting with chapter 19, might specially connect in our minds with the cup, the Lord being with us. Is the question for us to see what He does?

J.R. Yes, there is no doubt that in the cup there is the assurance that from the divine side everything is settled. We would not be in full liberty unless we had that assurance, and that is available for the

very youngest, the assurance that there is a basis for everything being settled, everything being according to the divine mind.

C.B. I was thinking of those other five words: "through fear of the Jews". Was that a positive matter or was it protective?

J.R. We often apply "through fear of the Jews" to the need to keep out every Jewish element, but actually the Jews had just been the means of crucifying their Lord and I can understand them closing the doors, because the Jews might be after them too. That is the actual situation; the opposition in this gospel was very, very real, and it had been the means of crucifying their Lord, the One they followed. There is the application, that we keep out every Jewish element, but there is a touching scene here. They may well fear the Jews when they had crucified the Lord.

C.B. We need spiritual eyesight for that.

J.R. Yes we do. The opposition is intense; it was intense here and it is at the present time. But this is the Lord active where the disciples were in seclusion.

J.C.E. They had to open the doors; the Lord sent them forth. He sent them out into the very circumstances and elements that put Him to death. I think He strengthened them by the impartation of the Spirit.

J.R. Exactly. It is a personal transaction here; He breathed into them. He gave them His own breath to represent Him down here, as you say, in a scene of opposition, yet of testimony, to continue in the same breath as He was here.

R.W.F. Is "the midst" that of which the Lord Himself is the centre? I have wondered as to sensitivity in recognition of the Lord. We sometimes speak of welcoming the Lord, but He was the first to speak here. I wonder if there is that sensitivity with me which would be ready for a communication of this kind.

J.R. I am sure that is a test and a challenge; this was actual, physical here; it is spiritual for us, which is a test to us, whether His presence is real to us. I often wonder (I do not want to be

imaginative), if the Lord actually came in, what would we do? Would we be surprised? His presence is to be as real as that, but it is by the Spirit. It is meant to affect us. As you say, we need to be sensitive. We need to have our eye on Him.

B.W.W. If His presence were corporeal, do you think it would make a difference in fact as to what transpired and how it worked?

J.R. I think it would test us, whether we would be in the same liberty to take part. The Lord could come corporeally. He does not come that way, but He could come that way. He comes by the Spirit and it is a test as to our reality, our affection, as well as our spirituality. Do you think so?

B.W.W. I am sure that is right. I have wondered whether it might simplify what we would say, because we should be fully conscious that He heard all. We want the brethren to hear, because we speak normally for the company, but He would hear exactly what was said and how it was said.

J.R. There is one thing sure, if the Lord did appear corporeally we certainly would worship Him, we certainly would bow in homage together.

B.W.W. Yes. I have thought, in relation to this scene, that He must have been the object of every eye. He would be there, it says, "in the midst", and in a certain sense I would think everyone else save Jesus Himself was forgotten by each of them, and if that is so with us I suppose it would bring in liberty, as well perhaps, as you say, a test maybe, but liberty too.

J.R. Yes; it would give us appreciation of one another too.

C.B. Could we give Him anything to eat?

J.R. That brings us to Luke 24. It does not say the Lord came, but "he himself stood in their midst", in the midst of persons He had to do with, in principle, in His gathering service. If the Lord had His way with us He would gather us. At the beginning of this chapter they are in perplexity. That is often the way with us, things are not very clear sometimes; we are in perplexity. But the Lord appeared to Simon,

and then to these two on the way to Emmaus who would be samples of how the Lord serves His own with a view to gathering them, so that they have the sense of belonging to the Lord and belonging to one another. "Rising up the same hour, they returned to Jerusalem. And they found the eleven, and those with them gathered together". They gravitate towards the company as a result of impressions of the Lord's gathering.

C.B. And there was a good state there to provide something for Him.

J.R. Yes, that comes in. Again the Lord speaks and shows them. He stood in their midst and said to them, Peace be to you. Then He says to them "Why are ye troubled? and why are thoughts rising in your hearts? behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself. Handle me and see". Then "having said this he shewed them his hands and his feet". Then He said "Have ye anything here to eat?" That means, Have you anything for *Me* to eat? When He said in John 21 "Have ye anything to eat?" He meant had they any food for themselves, but here, "Have ye anything here to eat?" is, Have you anything that I can appropriate? They had something that they themselves had been engaged with: "part of a broiled fish and of a honeycomb".

C.B. That is a good state.

J.R. Yes, the state improves; it does not take a long time to improve state. If I have sinned I am in a bad state, obviously; if I repent, my state is improved immediately. Here they were perplexed and confounded, but very soon, as you say, they had something for the Lord.

J.C.E. You even get a good state improved here, because it says they believed not for joy. Joy is a good state, but one tends to have oneself in view. To believe means that there is an object of belief, which was the Lord here. Do you think that after that mention their good state was improved?

J.R. I am sure that is right, and there is always room for improvement. We are told in Philippians to "abound... more and

more", chap 1: 9.

J.C.E. This gospel mentions the word eleven; it takes account of the fact that they were incomplete. The word eleven is not used in John, it is just the disciples. It shows special grace, that in a time of limitation the Lord was pleased to involve Himself in connection with their state and to look for something from them, as was said, something that He can partake of *with them*.

E.C.B. Is it too challenging a question to ask whether we would actually recognise the Lord if He came in corporeally?

J.R. What do you say?

E.C.B. I think it is a question. Both in John and in Luke He showed it was Himself by His hands and His side or His hands and His feet, and Luke refers in the Acts to "many proofs", chap 1: 3. But it does raise the question, what impression we actually have of Jesus Himself and whether we would know Him if He came among us.

J.R. Yes, that is a challenge. It is Jesus Himself in this chapter (v 15) and in verse 36 "he himself stood in their midst".

H.A.H. Would this raise the question whether we can discern the features of Jesus in one another?

J.R. Yes, and it is a challenge as to whether we really know Him personally.

E.C.B. It is a question of what impression we have of Jesus in a glorified condition. Just to be simple, are our impressions of Jesus just drawn from illustrations in the Bible? What impression have we of a Man in another condition altogether? If He came in, would we be saying, Who is this?

J.R. We are going to see Him one day very soon and we will know Him then.

W.J.R.B. Both in John here, and in Revelation, there is a question of turning round. It raises the question of the present appearance of the Lord in relation to the assemblies. In Revelation His eyes were "as a flame of fire", chap 1: 14.

J.R. That is the Lord's attitude to the public profession; the assembly publicly has failed. The Lord appears there "girt about at the breasts with a golden girdle". His affections are there but they are restrained because of conditions publicly. John turned there: "having turned, I saw". The first thing he sees is seven golden lamps, and then "in the midst of the seven lamps one like the Son of man". Therefore it is the general public position that is in view in Revelation 1. The Lord's affections are restrained. It ought to be our concern, as answering to the Lord's mind for us, to know Him with His affections unrestrained in a secret way; but generally His affections are restrained. Therefore while we ought to have love for all the saints our affections have to be somewhat restrained too because of any dishonour to the Lord in the public profession.

D.A.B. Does it help to refer again to the thought of learning the Christ, which was in one of your scriptures yesterday? In Revelation it was a manifestation in a form with which John was not familiar. The manifestations at the end of the gospels seem to be in a way with which they were familiar, the Lord appeared to them as they had known Him.

J.R. Yes. The Lord says here "Why are ye troubled? and why are thoughts rising in your hearts? behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself". Much depends on our personal links with Jesus Himself.

D.A.B. I wondered if that is another aspect of His side. That is really where we ought to be. If we do not recognise somebody it is probably because we have not been in his company.

E.P. It says of those two that their eyes were opened and they recognised Him. Do you think they joined the company with opened eyes? It says "they found themselves, and those with them, gathered together, saying, The Lord is indeed risen and has appeared to Simon"; then it says "And they related what had happened on the way". They would say, Our eyes were opened and we recognised Him; and they brought that into the company.

J.R. Very good. The nearer we are to the Lord Jesus personally the more we will appreciate His own. When they have their eyes

opened they come to where the others are, they gravitate to the company. The Lord did not tell them to go there, but when their eyes were opened and they recognised Him they say "Was not our heart burning in us...?" and "rising up the same hour, they returned to Jerusalem".

C.J.G.B. Does this show what the Lord had in mind that He could say "I myself"? Do you think there is something that has gone through at the Lord's supper that would bring great intimacy as we have our attention fixed upon Him?

J.R. I am sure if we have our attention fixed on Him we will get on better together, we will get on well together locally, because this scripture is suggestive of the local setting, it is "their midst". It is not "the midst" as in John, it is "their midst" here, in the midst of these persons who are available in that locality at that time.

G.A.P. Would "Handle me and see" show the nearness to which the Lord Himself has come? And would that be something to be promoted with us, to be aware of the nearness, and the reality, of His manhood?

J.R. Quite so, "Handle me and see"; He showed them His hands and His feet. His feet had gone after Simon; His feet had gone after these two, followed them in the wrong direction all the way to Emmaus. It is the grace of the Lord's gathering attitude.

A.J.E.W. Is it interesting that, having referred to His hands and His feet, He then speaks of flesh and bones? The hands and the feet would be the members that entered into the activity which you speak of, but the flesh and bones would really be the essential condition in which He was before them, and is it not to impart to us in some spiritual sense a peculiar impression of the tangibility of the presence of Jesus, the reality of it?

J.R. The substantiality or tangibility: exactly. This is what we need more than anything else, what I need more than anything else, this personal experience with Jesus Himself.

C.B. We need also to value those two hundred volumes of ministry you were telling us about including fifty years of teaching of Mr Taylor as to Christ and the assembly. These two in Luke 24 had Christ in their hearts and then they returned and were in the gain of the assembly.

J.R. Yes, I have been impressed with the lavish way in which the Lord has showered teaching and ministry upon us. It is almost like the parable in Isaiah: "What was there yet to do... that I have not done...?", chap 5: 4. There is abundance. The Lord Jesus was the operator, the One who made the stars; I often wonder why He made so many, and I wonder why He gave us so much in the way of instruction and ministry and example. We are enlightened and therefore responsible.

C.B. I was impressed with the hymn we sang this morning:-

O gracious God, Thy pleasure
Is in Thy Christ made known. (No.66)

J.R. That is good. The fifty years of Mr Taylor's ministry related to the local assembly and what is proper to the local assembly: the service of God, administration, relations together; fifty years of volume after volume relating mainly to local conditions. There is no doubt in my mind that Mr Raven had a profound impression of Christ. Read his ministry: it is Christ. Mr Taylor had a profound impression of the assembly; these two go together and we have all that wealth.

R.W.F. Is the question now, not how much we know by heart but how much we have in our hearts? "Was not our heart burning... ?", and the Lord raises the question: "why are thoughts rising in your hearts?". Is it a question of the love of the truth?

J.R. That is right. How much are we formed by what the Lord has so lavishly given us? Now in chapter 12 of John the Lord *came*, "came to Bethany". The end of Matthew says "being in Bethany" (chap 26: 6), and in Mark it is "when he was in Bethany" (chap 14: 3); He happened to be there. But here we read that He came to Bethany, came to these persons in this locality, and it would seem

that they did everything. The Lord was the object of their attention and their activity in this place. We need to think of this, that while we appreciate being the subjects of the Lord's interest, He is to be the object of our interest and our response, as we have here. It says "they made him a supper". There is no word about what the Lord says or what the Lord does. They do it, it is their appreciation of Him being manifested here. "Martha served, but Lazarus was one of those at table with him. Mary therefore, having taken a pound of ointment" and so on; it is what they did. When the Lord comes to us, is He not worthy of our attention and our response in a full-hearted way?

D.J.H. So Lazarus was one of those at table with Him. There were others there but Lazarus was with Him. Should we be with Him, do you think?

J.R. It is the result of chapter 11. They were the subjects of the Lord's affection and His interest all through chapter 11 but in chapter 12 there is a result for Him. He is the object of their attention and activity.

D.J.H. Yes, I was thinking of what was said earlier, that if He came into the midst our eyes would be on Him; we would lose sight of one another in that sense. Lazarus was just with Him.

E.C.B. They would have had to have this outlook all the time, would they not, not just on the occasion when the Lord came in? There must have been a degree of preparation. Mary would have had Him as an object before He actually came, and Martha invited Him because she wanted Him.

W.J.R.B. Does death have a peculiar bearing on us? If you have a brother sitting next to you, and the next week he has been taken, it has a profound effect upon you.

J.R. We have just had experiences like that in our city, of much illness and the Lord taking two. We had a double burial last Tuesday, but I think I can say the effect is that it has put us together in affection and appreciation for one another, just as these persons were here, they were together in their activities. We can pass

through other kinds of exercises where we might not be of one mind, but the Lord's dealings with us would have in mind putting us together.

D.A.B. It does not say that Martha had much service here. I wondered if that suggested a greater sense of readiness on her part, so that all the work that might have been a burden had already been completed, and when the Lord came things were ready.

P.S.W. The Lord would be the object of Martha's service, not her own part in it, and Mary's service had the Lord as an object and the result was to affect the whole company, the house was filled.

E.C.B. Had they not all proved the individual service of the Lord in chapter 11, not just as a family but each one?

J.R. They had indeed, because the Lord had His own touch with Martha and with Mary, and of course distinctively with Lazarus. I know this is a resurrection scene it does not go as high as John 20, but we are speaking of this setting of the Lord being the object and the Lord receiving. The Lord caters for us in a very full way but we have the privilege of catering for Him and that is what they do here.

E.C.B. Even if this is not on the level of John 20 does it not stimulate us to be all we can for the Lord at the level at which we are?

J.R. That is exactly what is in mind.

C.B. Would there be a difference between servile service and love service?

J.R. That is right. This is love service, service with the Lord Jesus as the object.

C.B. In Luke 10 there is a little bit of servile service with Martha but here love takes its place.

J.R. That is right. The Lord brought about this change, and is He not worthy of receiving from us increasingly?

B.W.W. Is it of some interest that before what any one of the three named ones does or how Lazarus is placed, there is this general

statement "There therefore they", without saying who the 'they' are, which is a very wide expression into which we all can come?

J.R. Exactly. It is a collective matter. We are all the subjects of the Lord's intense interest. Where we come short sometimes is that the Lord is not sufficiently the object of our activities.

J.S.P. Would it be right to suggest too that the way in which Mary moves in this chapter follows on the sitting at His feet and hearing His word (see Luke 10: 39) and would that be a stimulus to us to be more occupied with Himself in order that there might be for Him that which is wrought out in us?

J.R. Yes, that must be so, for where did Mary get this substance? It says "Mary therefore, having taken a pound of ointment"; she must have had it.

J.S.P. I thought she had acquired it in Luke 10.

J.R. Quite so, and the personal experience in chapter 11 of John too, it would all be cumulative in Mary's soul and appreciation. She had the ointment of pure nard of great price and anointed the feet of Jesus and wiped His feet with her hair which was herself. The house was filled with the odour of the ointment. It is all there in herself; we are to be like this. Experiences we go through, personal sorrows, even church sorrows, are meant to yield this kind of thing.

E.C.B. So we limit the extent of this scripture if, for instance, we confine it in our minds to the Supper, but do you not think it is a question whether we realise that in a meeting like this there is intended to be something for the Lord and for God?

C.B. What influence we have in the house would be a good exercise. What are we bringing so in that everybody would get the benefit of our appreciation of Christ?

J.R. Yes, what influence and quality do we bring in. Those of us who are getting older ought to represent this kind of thing specially, because the whole house benefited. That would include young people.

LONDON

20 November 1983

Key to initials

(all local unless otherwise stated)

C.Beale; C.J.G.Brodie, Ealing; W.J.R.Brodie; Ealing; D.A.Burr;
E.C.Burr; J.C.Evershed; R.W Flowerdew; D.J.Hutson; H.A.Hutson;
E.Oliver; E.Palmer; G.A.Palmer; J.S.Pugh; J.Renton, Edinburgh;
A.J.E.Welch; B.W.Ward; P.S.Warren

THE THRONE, THE KEY AND THE SURE MERCIES OF DAVID

A.Macdonald

Isaiah 9: 6,7; 22: 22-24; 55: 1-3

The scripture before us in the reading mentioned the key of David, and I thought we might consider from the Scriptures what is of David, David being a beautiful type of Christ. Isaiah puts it in its moral order the throne of David first, then the key of David and then the sure mercies of David. I want to be simple and use language that even the youngest can understand, and I wonder if we know what the lordship of Christ is. I think that the throne of David would suggest that we come under the lordship of Christ. We might have gone to the end of Genesis, which others have done before us. Someone asked Mr Raven what the general theme would be in the book of Genesis and he said, Well, in the book of Genesis you get three outstanding features: one is blessing, the next is dwelling and the third is rule, but he said the way we come into them is in the reverse order, we have to come under rule first. And what a blessed rule it is as we think of who the King is and what His name is! A young girl came to me the other day and asked me whether it would not be wise for her to go to a counsellor. We are thankful for what the government provides in the way of counsel, and you go to doctors for counsel, but I could not help but refer her to Christ. I said the best and the surest counsel that you can ever get is from the Lord Jesus Christ. That is one of His names - "Counsellor"; "His name is", not will be, but is. This is a present help available to us and it is to be found as we come under the sway and the wondrous rule of Christ. What a name He has! "Wonderful, Counsellor, Mighty God, Father of Eternity, Prince of Peace". Some of the truths are being challenged at the present time - men who have great minds are trying to undermine this, to undermine the Scriptures. We need to beware of that. The enemy knows his time is short and if he cannot put us to the stake, if he cannot bring about martyrdom, he will bring about corruption. That is exactly what happened in the history of

Israel. It has often been said that the time of the sufferings of the martyrs was an exceedingly bright time in the history of the church. Christians were very bright then, but it is when the pressure is taken off that we have a tendency to be like Laodicea and lie back, and we are neither hot nor cold. And what does the Lord say of that? "I am about to spue thee out of my mouth", Rev 3: 16. Oh, one would trust that we may realise, beloved brethren, that we are in the last few days of the church's history here, and may there be deep down fervency in our hearts and love for Christ and a waiting for His appearing - "thou hast kept the word of my patience", Rev 3: 10. Think of the patience of Jesus, how He is waiting, waiting for the public display of His bride! That is the word of His patience: are we keeping it? He says, Thou hast kept it. Think of what He will make us! He is able to do it: "Wonderful, Counsellor, Mighty God, Father of Eternity, Prince of Peace". This is in relation to government: "the increase of his government and of peace": wonderful! No matter how strong a government is in this world, one day it may be peace and another time they do not know; the most powerful governments on the earth today are fearful of what may happen tomorrow, all the elements are there for a general conflagration and I do not want to be here to see the next one. It is a wonderful promise: "I also will keep thee out of the hour of trial", Rev 3: 10. It is not like Noah who had to go through the flood but it is more like Enoch who was translated; the world was so bad that he was translated and that is what we are looking for. Thank God we will not have to go through it! I think the Lord's coming is imminent, His patience entering into it. But one's great exercise is, Are we ready for the Lord's return and are we fervent in our hearts and in our love for Christ?

Well, we begin with the thought of rule, as it says: "the throne of David". It is an administration of rule. And what a wonderful administration we are under! We are not under law, we are not under bondage. That is what Paul is speaking about in Romans 6: "we are not under law but under grace" (v 15); and in chapter 3 of 2 Corinthians he is contrasting what we were as under law, under the old covenant. The old covenant may have begun in glory but the

new covenant subsists in glory and will go right through. It is a wonderful thing to be able to speak of the new covenant and of being under the rule of Christ. You say, Is it linked? I know they are different subjects but they are linked because He is our King and we have only one King; there is only one centre of God's universe of bliss and that is Christ, and everything we have and everything we rightly desire we get from that blessed One and He is able to maintain it. No matter how small we are, maybe just the twos and the threes, it is a tremendous comfort to know that He is able to maintain us right to the very end till He comes for us. He is able for it, He is so great. His government is not irksome. One would appeal to the young to commit themselves unreservedly to Christ, to come under His lordship. What God wants to do in His sovereignty is to take you out of the kingdom of darkness and translate you into the kingdom of the Son of His love. David means 'beloved'; he was beloved of God and selected by God; he was not man's choice; man's choice was king Saul. Without a trace of a doubt man's choice will always fail but God's choice will never fail. What God has begun in us, if He has begun a work in us, He is going to complete. We may have to go through discipline, thank God for it, but what He has begun in you and me He is able to complete and He is going to complete it for His glory. It is not to make anything of ourselves. Paul says that in 2 Corinthians 4, we are just earthen vessels in order that the surpassingness of the power may be of God and not from us (see v 7). That is where the power is, it is of Him and not of us.

So here we have the throne of David. It is a wonderful regime to be in, it is a throne of grace, grace reigning through righteousness. And we are still in that day. Does anyone want to change that? It is the reign of grace, the throne of grace, the throne of David. David represents the great dispensation of grace, and how it was reigning in David's day! I do not think anyone who loves the Lord Jesus would want to change for one moment the reign of grace, and it is through righteousness. God has provided a righteous basis in the precious finished work of Christ and that is absolutely unaltered, no

one can touch it, and the guarantee of that is that God in His mighty power has raised that blessed one from amongst the dead. I was struck the other day in reading something by Mr Darby, that God's power was seen not only in the resurrection of Christ from amongst the dead but also in His exaltation and in that He is given a name which is above every other name that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow and every tongue confess to the glory of God the Father (see Phil 2: 10,11). I have been pondering that since, God's power entering into His exaltation of Christ and where He has put Him. Oh, that we may have our eyes upon Christ where He now is! He is no longer in the grave; there were those who sought Jesus in the grave; He is no longer there, He is in the glory and He has been given a name which is above every name. As the hymn says: How sweet the Name of Jesus sounds in a believer's ear! (No.54). If you consider David's men who sat at his table, there was not one of them who deserved to be there. What kind of men were they that came to David in the cave of Adullam? They were in debt, they were downcast, they could not bring anything to David, but they came and were received by David and it says "he became a captain over them", 1 Sam 22: 2. And one of the first things that David said when he began to reign was "Is there not yet any of the house of Saul, that I may shew the kindness of God to him? " 2 Sam 9: 3. What a standard that is - the kindness of God! They looked and finally someone said, There is one but he is way off in Lodebar (and that means a place of no pasture) and his name is Mephibosheth and he is a son of Saul's son. He was not able to come himself so David sent and fetched him. Ah, it is wonderful; in one sense every one of us in this room has been found by Jesus just where we were. He has gone out, He has travelled the distance and He has found us just where we were and He has brought us, He has carried us. Mephibosheth was carried. One would trust that we may retain the spirit of Mephibosheth with us all the way through. None of us can boast, none of us have any plea. Mephibosheth said, I am but a dead dog. You say, That is terrible language to use. No, that is the right language to use, he could not have used any better. If it was not for you David I would not have had a thing; and neither would

Saul nor would any of the subjects have anything if it was not for David. He alone met the enemy, met Goliath and slew him completely. Israel was brought from under bondage; if it had not been for David where would they have been? Ah, if it had not been for Christ where would you and I have been? David is a type of Christ and the types all fall short, but we have in the Lord Jesus Christ our glorious Saviour One who never fails and will never fail. Oh, how wonderful to be under His sway! How wonderful to eat at the king's table continually! That is what happened to Mephibosheth. His lameness would not be seen there. What do we do when we see the brethren coming into the meeting room on Lord's day morning? We are at the King's table as it were and I think we need to see the very best in one another and to prefer one another as better than ourselves; that is the Lord's way. We cannot boast. The throne of David is a wonderful sway to be under.

Then we have the key of David: "the key of the house of David will I lay upon his shoulder". Our ways are not God's ways. We might have thought, if God is going to work this thing out, surely He will bring in a great display; one of the mightiest kings of the earth He is going to raise up and He is going to use him. No, that was not God's way. Think of what it was: "For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given". It began in that lowly way, how God drew near to us in Jesus, and yet all the Fulness was there in that Babe as He was lying in a manger. As His parents brought Him into the temple Simeon by the Spirit of God realised that that little Babe He had in his arms was the Lord Christ, the full mature thought. He never ceased to be what He was and yet He came into lowly manhood in such a way in order to attract our hearts to Him. Now we have the key of David - I know that this type falls short because this is just a type, but this section we can use I think by the Spirit of God in relation to the key of the house of David - and it is laid upon His shoulder. As one has remarked before I believe the key of David has in view what has been opened up to us, beloved brethren, in the last one hundred and fifty years or more, what we have been recovered to. It was so at the beginning just as Paul received these

things. One feels that we need to remain humble and to be in constant self-judgment before God if these precious things are to be maintained to us to the end. Let us not presume to be anything or anybody; let Christ be everything. This recovery was during the time of the terrible Spanish inquisition, when Adnio Polcario of Spain, that beloved martyr, because he was reading the Scriptures was arrested, and without any attorney he was put in the midst of that party of inquisitors and they asked him three questions. They said to him, In your understanding what is God's way of salvation given for men? And without hesitating he said, Christ. And the second question was exactly the same as the first, What is God's way with men in relation to salvation? And again he said, Christ. And the third time they asked the same question and his answer was, Christ. He did not waiver. They had three questions that were different; they thought that there are at least three ways of salvation but none of them was in relation to Christ. That man did not have a chance, they took his head off and burned him, that is what they did to that beloved man, that martyr who was true to Christ. We can understand how safe it is for the key of David to be upon Christ's shoulder and no one else's. What are we resting on? What are we putting our trust in? One would appeal to the youngest heart here, the young lads, the young girls, the old in this room, what are we putting our trust in? Is it in the Lord Jesus Christ or is it in some other? But this is the key of David, and the key of David, thank God, has opened up to us, not only rule and right administration, but it has also brought in a sweet psalmist of Israel. The last words of a man are very important, and it is in his last words recorded in 2 Samuel 23 that David brings those two thoughts forward: he speaks of rule and yet he says "And the sweet psalmist of Israel saith" (v 1). I believe that opens up to us the great thought of the service of God. Oh what has been recovered to us! The Lord has opened that door to us. How thankful we should be! What privileges we have been brought into! What does the world know about the service of God? If you asked anyone in the street they would not know what to say, they would point you to some church or something. They know nothing; not that we know anything as we should, we cannot boast,

but Christ has opened that door to us and it is still open and it will be open to the end because no man can shut it. How certain it is! Oh that we might hang on Him! You say, Well, if I am to get the blessing of this what am I to do? You do not have to do anything, just hang on Him. It says in Luke that they hung on Him to hear (see chap 19: 48). That is important; what the Lord may say to us hang on to. It says "they shall hang upon him all the glory of his father's house". How true that is! Think of what was hung on Christ - all the glory of His Father's house, to speak reverently, and the offspring and the issue. David would say that: the offspring and the issue too. He is "the root and offspring of David", Rev 22: 16. And all the vessels: that brings in you and me. Oh, that it may be true of everyone in this room - all the vessels. You say, I am just a very little vessel, about the size of a cup, or it may be a thimble; nevertheless there is room for you there. Hang on to Jesus, put your trust in the Lord Jesus Christ. If you have a question go to Him, get on your knees, get into His presence and ask Him about it, that is where you will get the answer. Where did the psalmist get his answer? When he went into the sanctuary, then he knew (see Ps 73: 17). It is when we go into the divine presence that we learn things as they should be learned and we get the divine mind. "As well the vessels of cups as all the vessels of flagons"; I suppose the flagons would be much larger. You will find good company there, young people, you will find Peter hanging there, you will find Paul and John there, they would be large vessels. We may feel our smallness but it is good company to be in.

Now in chapter 55 God is speaking and we are still in a day of grace; it is the glad tidings and it is very wide in its aspect: "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters;... come, buy". You say, I have no money. That does not matter: "without money and without price". What a God we have to do with! Why is it that the glad tidings can be preached? Do not forget the chapters before this one. I had a habit of skipping chapters and I did it once in a reading with Mr Taylor. We learn by our mistakes. The previous Tuesday I had given a word on "I am for peace" (Ps 120: 7) and just spoke about the man of peace. And so our beloved brother brought it up in

a very fatherly way in the next city reading and said, But Alan, you forgot that peace is only won through conflict, you must not overlook the war. So when we come to this chapter we must not overlook the 53rd chapter, the sufferings of Christ. I do not know of anything that will soften our hearts like going over and over and going back again and again to the holy sufferings of Christ; we need to go back to it and we need to be retained in it. If our hearts are to remain soft we need to go back to Isaiah 53, to the holy sufferings of Jesus. I think about twenty one times Isaiah mentions He, He, He; no one else, there is only one glorious Saviour. That is why the Ethiopian eunuch asked Philip "concerning whom does the prophet say this? of himself or of some other? " Acts 8: 34. Philip the evangelist; what an opportunity for you! God opened the door for him and beginning at the same scripture he preached unto him Jesus. That man could readily see, when he heard that living powerful word by the Spirit through the evangelical man Philip, that he must go out of sight. And wonderful it was! they were in the desert and yet he could say "Behold water; what hinders my being baptised?". Never mind about anyone else, what hinders me from being baptised? I believe, beloved brethren, that the only way to blessing is just to know what it is to go out of sight. The Lord is not going to leave us in the water; when you baptise a little one you do not leave it in the water, you bring it up again, but it is in view of another world of which Christ is the centre. How wonderful this is! So we get the teaching in chapter fifty four but in chapter fifty five we get the preaching, and that is the order on Lord's day, the reading in the afternoon and then the preaching afterwards. So this fifty fifth chapter is like the preaching after the afternoon reading. It says "I will make an everlasting covenant with you, the sure mercies of David". Is that not wonderful? And that is available for any one. You cannot trust persons in the world, you cannot trust what is of the world because it is here today and gone tomorrow. You see constantly in the newspaper where persons have invested all their savings in something and someone has absconded with it and they have nothing; that is like the world. But not so in the things of God, they are cumulative, you grow in your soul and was wealthy we become

spiritually! It is a wonderful thing to think of God reasoning with us. You spend money for that which is not bread and you labour for that which satisfieth not. "Hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness. Incline your ear, and come unto me; hear, and your soul shall live". I think that is what we want to see in our local meetings - life. In one sense life is found alone in Jesus; I think that is the burden of John's gospel, you get attraction to Christ first and then you get affection for Christ next, but you get attachment to Christ at the end of the gospel; "Art thou attached to me?". And that is where life comes in, when we are attached to that blessed One. He is worthy of our all.

But this is in relation to the sure mercies of David that never fail. May we be encouraged for His Name's sake.

NEW YORK

22 October 1983

EXTRACT

Our religion should not be altogether a religion of regrets.

(J.N.Darby: Volume 19 page 229).

THE CHILDREN'S OBSERVING

More young people than ever are now taking an interest in God's creation around us. There are many bird-watchers, flower-seekers, those who study wild animal life, or tend tropical fish and - when the evenings are dark and clear - the star-finders. All this has its value, but especially so when by this means is learned about divine wisdom and the new creation. I often wonder how many of those who observe these things realise that they themselves are being observed by a loving Creator to whom they owe a responsibility! He is called in the scripture the "Observer of men", that is of mankind including of course the youngest of children.

From the Scriptures we learn particularly of three things upon which God looks. You will often have seen the *rainbow* in stormy weather. As the day declines and the sun goes lower, the bow is seen higher and higher in the heavens. It is God's covenant, or promise, of blessing against a background of judgment and He said to Noah, "I will look upon it". The Lord Jesus Christ is now in heaven and, for faith, there is in Him a display of God's faithfulness. We cannot take in the full glory of Christ any more than we can look upon the sun's full light. But like the array of various colours into which the raindrops diffuse the light we can see His distinct and distinctive glories.

Centuries later God said to Moses, "when I see the blood I will pass over you". This was the blood of the yearling lamb for each household, which was put on the doorposts and lintel of the house on the night of judgment. It was a type, or picture-lesson, for us of the shedding of the precious *blood* of Jesus. This gives us as believers on Him safety from judgment and cleansing from all sin. It is to be noted that the day on which the children of Israel entered the land of God's promise was the day of the year on which the lamb must be taken, and after four days be slain. Thus as we enjoy God's purpose in Christ we remember that His death has secured it for us, or rather us for it.

It confirms the Christian, especially in prayer, to know that God looks upon His own *word*. In this way we can, as it were, hold Him to the promises which He has made. It was to Jeremiah that He said, "I am watchful over my word to perform it". The prophet had seen in a vision a rod of almond, a tree which is perhaps the earliest to come into blossom in the Spring. The word itself means 'watchful'. Are you keen to read God's word?

J.C.Evershed