

A
WORD
IN ITS
SEASON

1st Series

No. 377

August 2004

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THE COUNTERPART OF CHRIST

Walter Patterson

Genesis 2: 21-24; 24: 15-18, 62-67; Song of Songs 6: 4-10

W.P. I believe that we are to be impressed with the quality that attaches to the assembly as the counterpart of Christ. These passages might help us to see how the assembly in type comes to light as fully answering to all that is set out in Christ, typically in Adam and in Isaac.

In the earlier part of Genesis 2 Adam demonstrates headship and intelligence. What pleasure God must have found in that! And so He operates through the deep sleep and formation to bring into view a perfect answer to man in this place of supremacy. Adam finds that she is himself over again, and he finds great joy in that.

When Rebecca comes on to view she is marked by certain precious features, qualities that are appreciated by the servant. These features were already there, they did not have to be developed. At the end of Genesis 24 we find that she is entirely suited to Isaac and that he finds in her what answers to his heart. We are told that Isaac with "dwelling in the south country" and was "meditating in the field" (vv 62,63). I would think that there must be an equivalence in Rebecca with what these thoughts suggest, so that she can be truly the counterpart of Isaac.

I read in the Song to show how the king delights in features in his beloved that are a reflection of his own glorious person. These thoughts are not simply to be academic with us. I believe that we entered into the appreciation of them where we were this morning. It is such a blessed matter to know the Lord's love towards us, and to understand that the bride is fully capacitated by the Spirit to answer to Him. We can help one another to further enjoy these truths this afternoon.

E.C.B. Eve was perfect as formed by God. Rebecca evidently has a history but she is still presented as fully fit for Isaac. Christ must have what is perfectly suited to Him and we are to have this before

us. No doubt it brings out the necessity of a work of God in us and an appreciation of what is suitable for Christ.

W.P. We are really only able for it, or have a stimulation in our affections to go in for it, as we see what there is in perfection for Christ. Is that the kind of stimulus in our souls that makes us want to be here in that way?

E.C.B. We shall never touch the experience of perfection unless we start with God.

W.P. So in chapter 2 it says, "And Jehovah Elohim built the rib that he had taken from Man into a woman; and brought her to Man". You are drawing our attention to that, it is a divine operation. It seems to me that it has in mind that it is Adam as he is presented here. He is presented in certain light, as exercising headship and moving in such an intelligent way.

D.J.H. I was hoping you might help us as to the detail in verses 21 and 22. Verse 27 of chapter 1 gives the general thought, "God created Man in his image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them", and then in chapter 2, "And Jehovah Elohim took Man, and put him into the garden of Eden" (v 15), but there is rather more detail. I wondered whether it would fit in with your thought as to a counterpart.

W.P. Does it bring before us the thought of divine operations? There have been great thoughts of God in purpose, but there have been divine operations in time. The thoughts have originated with God Himself, but these operations have been great and glorious and in one sense they are too deep for us to comprehend that there should be something that is out of Christ, that what is His counterpart is out of Himself, or Himself.

D.J.H. There is nothing in the woman that is not out of the man, of his bones, of his flesh, but when we think of the glory of Christ as He comes in among us, it can only be a divine workmanship that is suited to be counterpart to such a One as He?

W.P. Just give us a little more help about that workmanship. It says, “for we are his workmanship, having been created in Christ Jesus for good works”, Eph. 2: 10. Do you think that as we come together we are to identify that workmanship in ourselves in view of being rightly at the Supper, and that divine workmanship is to be identified in one another?

D.J.H. There is that which is perfect at any time. It is important to lay hold of that. We are so occupied with breakdown, failure, and so on, but the assembly at any time is perfect. We need to lay hold of that and recognise it. It is only because of that that we can have experience as to what we speak of as union with Christ, because nothing but what is perfect can be united to Him.

W.P. What you say brings to mind Ephesians 5. We often say that the assembly is always perfect, “as the Christ also loved the assembly, and has delivered himself up for it” (v 25). It is a different thought from the one we are pursuing in Genesis 2, but just to understand what it means. What does it mean when we say the assembly is always perfect?

D.J.H. Because it is the work of God it cannot be otherwise, but Ephesians 5 shows what it means to Him. The washing of water may be regarded as a preventative service in view of that perfection being unhinderedly available to Him at any time.

W.P. We are so used in our life here to thinking of things not being perfect, things having to be fixed, or relationships adjusted, that it is hard for us to lay hold of something which was perfect in its conception in the divine mind and perfect in its bringing about and, remains in perfection all the way through. We get the view at the end of Revelation of what comes down from God, having the glory of God, Rev 21: 10,11. How perfection has been maintained all the way through. It is very blessed!

D.A.B. It is not suggested in Ephesians that washing can remove spots or wrinkles. The spotless character of the assembly relates to its divine handiwork and it never ages. I was thinking as to it being ready for Christ to present to Himself glorious at any time. That

passage conveys an impression of One who is like Christ, without spot or wrinkle. There is something ageless about it.

W.P. We look around the companies of the saints and we see how that is not so with ourselves, things change and we get older, but it seems to me that when we come to the Supper and are engaged with Christ Himself and what is suited to Him and with His love, we find a real freshness and vigour marking the saints. Especially our older brethren, how vigorous they are and fresh in their responses to divine Persons. Is that how it might come out into expression?

D.A.B. I remember from a meeting here with Mr Harry Taylor, that the evidence of the Lord's manifestation at the Supper is in the way that the hearts of the saints awaken, He is there in their affections. It seems to me that what happens is that the presentation of Christ evokes the counterpart feature in the saints so that what is expressed is not only for Him but like Him.

W.P. Those are expressions we use a lot about being for Him and being like Him. There might be another application of these passages and that is that His presentation to us is not a general thought. He has something in His affections and mind in each presentation of Himself in each week so that there might be some chord struck in the affections of the saints that answers to that.

D.A.B. The impression might be gathered up in one's spirit, not from anything that was said, although more commonly it will be the outcome of something that has been expressed. That is the counterpart, that what His own express and the answer to Himself is so like Him that it gives an impression of Him.

W.P. The younger persons here today should take note of what you have said, because they might have a feeling sometimes that it is something they cannot understand. It may appear a bit mystical to them, but the fact is that things are expressed in what is said; persons will address the Lord and other divine Persons in thanksgiving, they will use expressions, and it is in those in large measure that we gain further impressions about what the Lord has in His mind for that occasion.

E.C.B. Hence the great value in that meeting of being able to speak with the impression that you have. I do not think the occasion when we touch what the assembly is is for us to get something out of the drawer and say it, but what impression does it make on you at the moment? You get that in Genesis 24 as to Rebecca and Isaac; Isaac lifted up his eyes and saw her and it was something fresh (see vv 64-66). In your earlier reference to Ephesians 5 the washing of water by the word is not remodelling. The fundamental structure is unchanged and it may be that Paul by the Spirit is taking account of the fact that in history day-by-day, things get accumulated and attached to you that are not fitted to what it is, but the washing of water comes by the word and it brings out what is glorious. It is very simple. The section in Ephesians is simpler than we think it is.

W.P. What impresses me is that it speaks about the activities of Christ Himself, "Christ also loved the assembly" and it says "in order that he" and then there is another "*he*" that is emphatic. You get a sense of the Lord's jealousy in relation to what is for Himself (see Eph. 5: 25-27). He is going to have nothing else but that it is exclusively for Him.

E.C.B. To pursue what you are saying, it is as if He says, I am going to have it as I want it, and I can see it all the time, but something else has been picked up. How much has been picked up? I question how much we are able to apprehend what things are aside from moral history. We bring moral history into nearly every scripture, but can we grasp what things are apart from that? The preaching of the gospel should put us on the ground where we can appreciate that no further moral history is required.

W.P. The operation of the Holy Spirit in our minds and in our affections is absolutely central to that. Without that there can be no entrance on our part because the natural mind has no place in the things of God. That apprehension of what the assembly is really can only be as the Spirit helps us.

J.A.B. There is purity too in Ephesians, "having no spot, or wrinkle, or any of such things; but that it might be holy and blameless", Eph

5: 27.

W.P. How pleasurable those features are to Himself! It seems to me that we ought to be setting ourselves for them too. If we have some appreciation of what feature of Himself He is looking for then we should set ourselves to say, I want that for myself and we want that for many local meetings.

H.A.H. In the hymn to the Holy Spirit this morning we sang:

And the Father's thoughts in glory
For His Son are satisfied. (Hymn 121)

It says here "that it might be holy and blameless", but then the Father's thoughts in chapter 1 are the same, "that we should be holy and blameless before him in love" (v 4). I wondered whether there was a link there. He has used our moral history in His ways, and that was necessary in order that His purpose might be realised in a way that would enable us to understand the greatness of His love.

W.P. Is it not wonderful how He has then brought us into an understanding of that? Think of the gospel – He has secured us, worked with us in that way to secure us for Himself and then brought us into an appreciation of what lay behind it all, the love that lay behind it. There had been divine thoughts, but also divine love so that we might enter into them in a full way. It is the most remarkable thing that we are here as creatures and yet are able to speak intelligently about matters that lay in the divine mind and were in the divine affections.

H.A.H. They are the greatest things.

D.A.B. Earlier in chapter 24, the servant prays that God would meet him with his blessing this day (see v 12), and while he was yet speaking, Rebecca came out. It might answer to what God Himself says, "This time" (Gen. 2: 23). There was nothing speculative about what the Spirit embraced, no question about whether He could make this person ready on the journey, but there was something that God presented in answer to His prayer that was suited to God's thought?

W.P. It says, “Rebecca came out ... And the maiden was very fair in countenance; a virgin, and no man had known her. And she went down to the well” (vv 15,16) – it seems to me that these are very precious features and they must give us an indication of how she is going to be counterpart. There must be features there that will be found in the counterpart to Christ.

D.A.B. And far from anything needing to be filled up on the journey, there was, in fact, excess from the very beginning.

W.P. It says she had the pitcher upon her shoulder. You see how close the thoughts of the Spirit are to this one who is going to be the counterpart of Isaac.

J.S.H. I was thinking of Isaac and Rebecca and that it is good to have our eyes lifted up. He saw all that was coming towards him, he saw everything, but she had her eye fixed on him, on the person. Is that what we should have as having Christ before us, having our eyes permanently fixed on Him?

W.P. I am sure that is the way for our blessing. We appreciate features in Christ Himself and then we see that there must be something in correspondence to that, and then we realise that there is a vessel of divine conception, but also a vessel of divine operations in which the Spirit has operated so that presently there is something that really corresponds with Christ. As well as lifting up her eyes it says, “she took her veil, and covered herself”. I think that is worthy of note in the time in which we are. It comes into 1 Corinthians 11, the thought of the veil in view of the Supper.

P.W. Could you saying more as to the veiling?

W.P. It speaks of a woman’s hair, “for the long hair is given to her in lieu of a veil” (1 Cor. 1: 15). The assembly at Corinth was to understand that there was to be what was veiled, what was to be found exclusively for Christ. Otherwise the Supper could not be rightly taken, or indeed could hardly have been introduced. The thought of veiling is opening up the way for the Supper to be rightly understood.

P.W. When Rebecca sees Isaac her reaction is immediate. I was thinking as to our response on a Lord's Day morning. It says "she sprang off the camel", there is an alacrity there, it is not a premeditated movement. It is intuitive and spontaneous and that might help us more in our responses not to feel that we have to say a lot that sounds ponderous and weighty, but it is a spontaneous response to the Lord.

W.P. That is just a practical matter. It tests us as to whether it is out of the drawer, as our brother has said, or whether there is some real fresh living impression of Christ that has impacted on our souls and leads us into an expression of response that has that freshness about it. We have thought of the Lord, coming in as "Leaping upon the mountains, skipping upon the hills", SofS 2: 8. If that is His approach to where love is, then surely our affections should be in liberty.

B.H.C. The Lord presents Himself in His glory and also as a Man of joy. I was thinking how He rejoices over that which is His. He says in His prayer in John 17, "that they may have my joy fulfilled in them". As we behold the glories of Christ as He presents Himself and takes His place in the midst, because of that that we have some appreciation of the assembly and its character. I was thinking as to His joy in relation to what is ministering to His heart and as one with Him we have some sense of the divine viewpoint as to what the assembly is as glorious.

W.P. That is helpful. His joy, there is something that really gladdens His heart in the responses of His own. The cup is a wonderful liberating matter at the Supper; we are drinking into a cup of blessing. It is opening up the whole way in which God is towards us: He is towards us in blessing, His love is towards us and we drink the cup and it gets into our inwards and causes joy in ourselves. It seems to me that it clears away anything that there might have been in our minds about doubt or fear or uncertainty. There is certainty coming into your soul as to how the love of God has come to us.

Perhaps that should be more in our minds. We are sometimes occupied at the Supper with what He has taken away in His death,

but what should be before us is what has been opened up to us through His death and resurrection, the whole line of liberty and divine blessing.

B.H.C. It is very precious! It is a cup of blessing, there are no negatives in heaven, everything is blessed and glorious, undefiled by anything here so that if our hearts and minds are focused on what relates to Christ and His glory everything that was ever against God is out of the way altogether. The cup is a work accomplished and finished to God's glory.

W.P. Indeed. There are no negatives in heaven!

D.A.B. Neither of these passages deals with that moral side. Chapter 2 is an interlude before the moral history of the world and man begins. It all seems to be connected with the day of God's rest.

W.P. That helps. As I was looking for help in the passage, I can see that there is something very distinctive introduced in Adam, pointing to Christ in whom God would have His rest, and there is wonderful intelligence, he is naming things. What would you say about the woman being named, "this shall be called Woman", and then it gives a reason, "because this was taken out of a man". It is remarkable that a reason should be given for her being named.

D.A.B. It would be a reminder all the time of her origin and thus, as the next two verses go on to show, the indissoluble bond that existed. It is something that you do not find in nature. Union in nature is a convergent idea, but with Christ and the assembly it is derivative and on a unique and entirely indissoluble foundation.

W.P. That should help us in our understanding. We often speak about Eve in connection with this passage, but it is not – it is Ishshah.

E.C.B. This chapter is man and woman. I do not think the name Eve is given until after the fall. An interesting subject to explore is why headship in the man was not spoken of until after the fall. There is a level, therefore, in which the church can participate with Christ without such matters being raised or implied. Could you get a view

of the assembly in which everything in it has come out of Christ?
Have you ever had that view?

W.P. That is why we would encourage one another this afternoon that we might have such a view. We do have rather inadequate thoughts sometimes about the assembly, but here is a wonderful view of her.

E.C.B. Sometimes we so far imply that we are it, that we have to deny that we are saying that.

W.P. That is a word for us.

E.C.B. We need to be careful in what we do say, but there is this view in Genesis 2, and in chapter 24, which is of what is entirely suitable. Rebecca has a history, but the woman in Genesis has none. Her own initial history is what comes out of Christ. The gospels speak of Jesus in resurrection and as manifested, but that is not the line in these chapters; the line is that *we* are brought to *Him*.

It is not Him manifested to us, but it is us brought to Him. I wondered whether we would get some impression of the assembly as entirely suitable and uncorrupted by whatever the journey represents. It is not that He manifests Himself and we find we are suitable, but we are brought to Him.

W.P. I wondered whether we might look at that, as to where He is. He has returned from elsewhere. It says, "for he was dwelling in the south country ... Isaac had gone out to meditate in the fields toward the beginning of the evening" (v 63). Rebecca is brought to him in that setting. There must be something in her that is going to correspond with where he is.

D.J.H. Would it be right to think of John 17? I was thinking of what is presented here as the product of the Father's love for the Son, "I desire that where I am they also may be with me, that they may behold my glory ... for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world" (John 17: 24). This is where it is, in the south country. I wondered whether that is an epitome of this chapter, the love which was there between the Father and the Son, and this is the product of

it. The great thing is that it is His desire that they should be with Him where He is. Rebecca is brought to him where he is.

W.P. I like your suggestion as to the area of the Father's love and affection and He is meditating in it. We can think of the Lord in that way and all the blessed enjoyment of His relationship with His Father. The Mount of Olives may be suggestive of that too; there is a place where things are spiritual and there is nothing of the natural there at all.

D.J.H. He says there, "for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world", before any moral question was introduced.

W.P. That is good.

D.A.B. I suppose it was not uncommon for camel trains to pass through this country, but in this train there was someone whose eye was filled with Isaac. It set it apart from all the others as he discovered. I was thinking as to the danger of pretension and claiming what we are not, but the best answer to that is to see the greatness and glory of the real thing and that banishes pretension.

H.A.H. I wondered whether verses 15 and 16 of chapter 24 were what you had in mind in reading were from the Song of Songs, "My dove, mind undefiled, is but one". Then "She is the only one of her mother". It is interesting what comes in the bracket in chapter 22 of Genesis, "And Bethuel begot Rebecca" (v 23). This comes into a chapter which speaks of the wonderful love between the Father and the Son.

W.P. We are to enter into an appreciation of these things. It seems to me that there is nothing that we might speak of as random in divine thoughts. We may not apprehend them initially, but do you think the Spirit helps us to see how in the types the truth is developed and God is not making any mistakes, He is looking ahead. He has looked far ahead in all that He has provided for us and He has looked ahead in relation to the assembly too.

H.A.H. There is nothing random, and while it is very vast and we apprehend it a little at a time, it is all encompassed in divine love.

I.M. There was an expectation on the part of Rebecca in meeting the man, was there not, because it says, “And she had said”, which is in the past? Is there also not an expectation on the part of the saints in regard to meeting the Lord Jesus – yet the reality of it is more wonderful than the expectation, is it not?

W.P. That is very good, expectation and realisation. To what extent are our hearts expectant as we come together, particularly for the Lord’s Supper? How expectant our hearts ought to be for that occasion, but I think for all occasions there should be expectation.

The opening prayer referred to the possibilities of the meeting.

There should be more faith with us that there might be something different in any meeting. There is going to be something special about this meeting that we are coming to. It is the work of the Spirit to put that into our minds and affections.

We have thought about the way that there is a counterpart to Adam and Isaac that there are features that are pleasing and corresponding. Now this is the appreciation by the king of the one that is the spouse, and he is able to say things about her. There are things which come in here which would bear on how we are in the testimony, “Thy hair is as a flock of goats”, which might speak of separation and then there is the idea of the pomegranate, there is something that is of a shared nature that is enjoyed among the saints. It seems to be all part of what is pleasurable to Him.

A.A.C. The pomegranate is behind the veil. Why veiled at this point?

W.P. We might link it with what we said earlier that ‘behind thy veil’ suggests that she has an appreciation that she is exclusively for one, exclusively for Christ. We do our time management, we manage some of our time for the office, some for household duties, some for prayer and consideration, but she is exclusively for One.

D.H. Is it interesting that the two passages in chapter 5 give us what the beloved could say about the Lord, about the bridegroom, but chapter 6 verse 4 is in type the language of the Lord Jesus Himself.

Would it be like our thoughts of Him as we come together so that we are ready for His appreciation, what He finds pleasurable to Himself?

W.P. I like that suggestion. Do you think it is as those features are appreciated in the bride, then she is beginning to shine and there is a development of her affections and she realises that he is so great and glorious that she must be exclusively for him? That helps in the understanding of the passage.

D.A.B. We used to speak of the pomegranate as fellowship in the local meeting. The pomegranate is packed with seeds and sweetness, and they were round the hem of the High Priest's garment, so there might be some idea of fellowship in this pomegranate, but the temple is where the thinking is. I wondered whether there was a suggestion here of an occasion like this where in our fellowship together we can enjoy something that is not on public view or that the world would understand, but it is a reserved enjoyment that Christ is party to, enjoyed among the brethren?

W.P. Such as our meeting this afternoon? I can see that and you are saying it is packed with seeds so there is potential. So, out of an occasion like this where we have in quietness enjoyed things in relation to the Lord Jesus and the assembly, there should be something that is going to go forward and grow with us in our appreciation.

D.J.H. As to the temple and the mind and thinking faculty, I was thinking as to, "But we have the mind of Christ" (1 Cor. 2: 16). It has been referred to as the thinking faculty. It would all show the closeness and union of the assembly with Christ that we are actually thinking the same thing. It would all enter into this would it not?

W.P. That is very beautiful coming at the end of a chapter where the operations of the Spirit are very much in view and what is spiritual. That is what we have been engaged with in this meeting, things that are spiritual and we need the Spirit's help to communicate them to one another. The result of that is this great thought, "we have the mind of Christ".

D.J.H. It has often been said that the truth of Ephesians and what was in Paul's mind in that regard keeps breaking the surface in Corinthians, and I wondered whether, "we have the mind of Christ", goes right on to the fact that the assembly is thinking the same way as He thinks which must be a result of union.

W.P. It must be.

D.A.B. It has often been said that strictly speaking this Song does not rise to the level that the assembly reaches. Mr Walkinshaw spoke of it as love at distance. The Beloved speaks many times of what he sees in her, and he addresses it directly to her. She can speak to others about him, but how much he longed to hear her say something to him. Is that what the counterpart comes to, that she cannot just speak to others about why she finds him attractive but that she has something to say to him?

W.P. I am glad you draw attention to that because I was conscious when I read it that it was in the part of the book where we do not have the fulness of the thought. She is able to interject in chapter 7, "I am my beloved's, And his desire is toward me" (v 10), which is the climax of the thought in the book. I appreciate you drawing attention to that because that is what we should be moving towards. We are able to speak about it with one another this afternoon, but what can we say to Himself?

D.A.B. Particularly in how the Lord feels in relation to Israel, "Praise waiteth for thee in silence", Ps. 65: 1. She says, "I slept, but my heart was awake" (SS 5: 2), but the Lord finds something that is awake in the assembly, His counterpart is active in response?

E.C.B. In regard to what has been said as to the mind of Christ, I can understand the allusion to it being connected with union, but in fact it is connected with origin. The fact that we have the mind of Christ is that God has made the assembly like Him. I speak carefully, she is of His material, and "we have the mind of Christ", is the result of origin, it is not formation.

D.J.H. I am sure that is right, we cannot separate the two, she can only be united to Him because of her origin.

W.P. We get the thought in Corinthians, “so also is the Christ” (1 Cor. 12: 12); so there is something here in a collective expression of Himself. She has these banners, “Terrible as troops with banners?”; it suggests how things are being maintained. We are here in the testimonial scene in the week, but things are going to be maintained and the banner is going to have His Name on it.

D.J.H. It has often been said that God would be worse off, in a sense, with Christ in glory if Christ were not represented here on earth.

E.C.B. Unless Christ is represented here on the earth, God is worse off as far as the earth is concerned by having Him in heaven. These things should raise our thoughts a bit. You would never know what pomegranates were unless you had been in the land.

LONDON

16 November 2003

[The opening remarks have been recalled from memory, as the recording initially was imperfect. E.C.B]

Key to initials

J.A.Burnett, London; D.A.Burr, London; E.C.Burr, London; B.H.Clark, London; A.A.Croot, London; D.awgood, Bexley; D.J.HHutson, London; H.A.Hutson, London, J.S.Hutston, London; I.Mitchell, London; W.Patterson, Glasgow; P.White, London

FAITH

Norman J Henry

**Hebrews 11: 6; Genesis 13: 10, 14-17; 2 Samuel 7: 18, 19;
Ephesians 3: 16-19**

I feel the need of raising the matter of faith – there is no grey area in this scripture, it says, “But without faith it is impossible to please him”. It is impossible to please God without faith. There would be no point in having a preaching of this character if faith was not available, because the preaching is for the obedience of faith. So, if faith is not available from God, what is the point in having the preaching? We might as well go to all the things that amuse people about us. But thanks be to God that faith is available, faith is a gift from God.

Chapter 11 has already started the line of faith in Abel and Enoch, then there is this verse inserted, “without faith it is impossible to please him”. Faith is always required on the earth. I do not think there will ever be a time when faith will not be required on the earth.

This is the dispensation of faith. In the world to come it will be of sight, but faith will still be required then. The redeemed will not need faith in eternity, but in time we need faith. It is not only for the acceptance but for the obedience of faith in what is presented in the glad tidings, which is how our pathway begins. It also involves coming into a life of faith. Beloved friend, I think we need help about living in that principle, the principle of faith. These persons that are referred to in Hebrews 11 were marked by faith. Abel had a comparatively short life and what he did he did by faith, “By faith Abel offered to God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained testimony of being righteous”, Heb 11: 4. That is how you come into righteousness on the principle of faith. You cannot get righteousness without faith. I trust in the preaching you get a sense of being brought near to God, but if you were to be in the presence of God you could not be there without righteousness. You get that by faith. Abraham had it by faith, he believed God and it was reckoned to him as righteousness, God has a basis for

extending righteousness, on the principle of faith and belief. So, to be in the presence of God without that righteousness that He offers would be an awful thing. You know those who will be there before the great white throne will have no righteousness because they never had faith, that is how important faith is. I raise the matter not only of the reception of faith originally by the offer of God, but also a life of faith. At the very outset faith was required. I know Abel is referred to first in Hebrews 11 because he was the first to die and that was at the hand of a manslayer, an awful thing that took place in the life of Abel. He is a great type, his offering spoke to God of Christ and he died for that. Abel died because he offered a more excellent sacrifice, because it spoke to God of Christ, he knew that something had come in between God and man. No doubt Adam went over it, and Abel would look at these coats of skin and see that the link had been broken, and the only way for the restitution of that link with God would be the principle of a death of another. Thanks be to God Abel took that route. Cain offered of the cursed ground, he had no regard of the change of the circumstances in the life of his parents. He offered what God had cursed. God could not take that, but when Abel took of the firstlings of his flock and of their fat and offered it to God, God accepted it, and it says he “obtained testimony of being righteous”.

That is the first great thing in the glad tidings – to become righteous in the presence of God. It is not yet your righteousness in the way of your walk it is the state of righteousness before God, and therefore you are required to have faith for that. The righteousness presented to you in the time we are in is a much greater level according to God because it involves Christ where He is. He is presented that we might become, “God’s righteousness in him”, 2 Cor 5: 21. In Christ is my righteousness. So I need faith for that. If I am going to be in the presence of God I need other than my own righteousness because as scripture says, my righteousness is as filthy rags (see Isa 64: 6), there is nothing I can use. What can you do with filthy rags? You need a righteousness that is in keeping with God, that God is pleased with. That is why the glad tidings are

preached to you today to lay your trust and faith in the Lord Jesus where He is, that you might become God's righteousness in Him.

How is that accomplished? By the work of Jesus – “Him who knew not sin he has made sin for us” (2 Cor 5: 21). How could God do that to His Son, to the One He loved most? He was prepared to take love's way, that you and I might have that righteousness. I cannot think of anything greater, more blessed glad news for you today, than that God is offering you righteousness in the preaching and it is by faith. The difference in the offerings in Leviticus 16 is that Israel had two goats, first one was killed and the other was let loose, sent into a land apart from men, and Israel will come into things on the principle of sight. That is how they will find righteousness in the day to come. The day we are in is righteousness by faith, so there was one bullock and it was slaughtered as the sin offering so that God was appeased as to sin. If anybody here has not faith, I say to you ask God for it. I cannot say I am here to satisfy you, but I know if you believe in what God presents you will be for ever blessed and happy. You will never go back from it, you will have a joy in your soul. If you fail, you might lose the enjoyment of it, but you will never lose it. That is the glad tidings that God wants to instil into you.

It has been said before that there is not one person who will be in heaven that did not at one time sense that they were lost. A sense of being lost is that you do not have any righteousness; God will have no regard for anyone who does not have righteousness.

That is wonderful. Is that not glad tidings to you, something to pin your hope on and get the groundwork in your soul that you have righteousness before God that He is pleased with? Would you want to do that? You will find that the only happiness that you can have is in pleasing God. Those who have gone before are witnesses that they pleased God and they were happy men and women. It says, “For he that draws near to God must believe that he is”. How can you approach God? How are you going to do that? You need faith for that. I think we are apt to forget what is fundamental, the elements of the glad tidings, that God's dealings with you and me are dependent on faith. I do not mean only the initial faith, but your

maintenance of your life is on the principle of faith, “he that draws near to God must believe that he is”. He must believe that God *is*, not was, not only what God did in creation. You might go back as far as the scripture allows you, to His creational power, everything that has been set up, and then how He came out in Christ, the blessedness of it, came out in His Son. Think of God, manifest in flesh – could you think of anything more wonderful to your heart and mind than that the supreme God dwelling in light unapproachable came out in Jesus. We had reference today to what God was in His being and these relationships that existed in a past eternity which were beyond us and never to be disclosed to us. We know what relationships will be in a coming eternity, thanks be to God for that; that is part of the revelation of God, the economy into which He has come. But here it is just the fact that God has drawn near, made Himself available to you and to me and given us faith that we might believe that He is, “he that draws near to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them who seek him out”. You will never be disappointed if your action is real simple faith, drawing near to God. You will get a reward that earth could not eclipse, it is a reward special from God. He will give you assurance in your spirit, He will give you strength for what lies ahead of you. What life does not have ups and downs, difficulties lying ahead, and sorrows? Who would know the changes in the past week? Things change rapidly.

This might be the last preaching. You must leave everything with God, but you know that if you draw near to Him He is “a rewarder of them who seek him out”. He sought you first, He came to you in Jesus seeking and saving that which was lost (see Luke 19: 10). As we often say, He does not need to seek the children, but with us He needed to seek us because our will took us where we went, doing as we wished, without seemingly any restraint. That is the day we are in, when the mind and imagination of men develop not only into utter apostasy from everything of God that He put into creation, but also dropping to the depths. They thought it not good to have God in their thoughts so that they gave Him up in the folly of their minds.

They dropped to depths that were beyond understanding. That is one warning about the technology that is within our reach, that we

must be very careful of, what is introduced into a household because there are things conveyed in these media that are beyond even the basest thoughts that any may have as individuals. It is a depth into which only Satan can take you. Idolatry did not appear before the flood, but it has been said that idolatry did not have its origin in the heart of man; it came from Satan himself. Satan himself is now entering in, attempting access into the minds and hearts of men and women to spoil them for God. I say that as a warning to you.

In chapter 12 we have the leader and completer of faith, not just the act of faith, but the leader and completer of it (see v 2). Who was that? That was the Lord Jesus Christ. Now, why I brought Him in at this point in speaking about faith is that as long as He was here, that blessed Person who is “God over all, blessed for ever” was here, in a place that was suitable according to the divine mind for man to be in. He took that place in manhood with the limitations and the outward restrictions of manhood, which He accepted. For Him it was coming into the condition where faith is required. It was not just an action of faith, but it was a life of faith. From the very outset of that blessed humanity, there was trust. The prophets and the Psalms make touching references to what was here in Him, given to them by the Holy Spirit. How perfect that life was! He committed everything to God. What a blessed life that was. Perfection. He did not receive faith as a gift, we do. There was a holy humanity there, a perfect unique humanity in the Lord Jesus, but it was marked here by faith. He trusted and looked to God for everything. He referred to God in everything. He prayed to God, He spent the night in prayer. That was the life of the Lord Jesus in perfection and that was the life that eventually was given up so that you and I might have an object for faith in His work at the cross and where He is now in glory.

I just touch on Abraham because in chapter 13 of Genesis you have two men. Abraham had been called in chapter 12. Jehovah says, “Go out of thy land, and from thy kindred, and from thy father’s house, to the land that I will shew thee” (v 1). He is the man of faith. He is moving in obedience. It says he “hesitated not at the promise of God through unbelief” (Rom 4: 20). Abraham was a

man that hesitated not; it is the most blessed life, obedience. Mr Darby says the most humble life is that of obedience, because you are obeying the will of another, so it is the manifestation of humility.

This man Abraham was a man who obeyed. We read first of Lot, "Lot lifted up his eyes", God had not told him to lift up his eyes. God at this point did not expect too much from Lot, He left Him to choose it. Even Abraham said to him, you look to the right or to the left, whatever way you take we will take the other. I suppose Abraham knew the tendency, because earlier it says, "the Canaanite and the Perizzite were dwelling then in the land" (v 7). Maybe Lot had come somewhat under the influence of these tribes. It comes to the point where Lot lifted up his eyes searching for something that he could attach his view upon. It says, "it was thoroughly watered ... as the garden of Jehovah". What did he see on earth as he lifted up his eyes and looked towards Sodom and Gomorrah before it was destroyed? It says, "the garden of Jehovah, like the land of Egypt, as one goes to Zoar". He is trying to liven up his outlook, but really there was no faith in it. God had not told him to lift up his eyes, neither are you or I told to lift up our eyes on all this type of thing. It says in verse 14, "Jehovah said to Abram" – He knew that Abraham would obey Him – "Lift up now thine eyes, and look from the place where thou art, northward and southward and eastward and westward". What a variety this man was told to see. If you have the eyes of faith, the outlook of faith, everything becomes so impregnated with well-being and good. He did not see the world in all the desperate conditions of Sodom and Gomorrah that shortly were coming under the judgment of God, as is this world with its depravity. It was such that God had to deal with it as a witness for all time – it says as to those who would live afterwards an ungodly life, it was there to be a testimony of God's judgment against ungodliness. That is what Lot saw and added that he thought it was as the garden of God. There is no link with it. How depraved. Here Abraham is looking up, God is giving him the eyesight of faith. He is a man that lifts up his eyes. In chapter 18 he lifted up his eyes to see the heavenly visitors. In chapter 22 he lifts up his eyes again, to the mountain that God had told him. What faith was in this man, he

was working in the line of promise and he walked these steps of faith of “our father Abraham”. He is set out as an example to you and me. Why should we trust our own intellect? Trust in God and believe His word and do His will. The doing of that requires faith.

In 2 Samuel David had great thoughts in mind. He had set out what I suppose he thought were the best ideas that he could engender before God and God eventually says, you cannot do it.

You are not allowed to do it. You might say his hopes were dashed. David had fought the battles of the Lord, he had the support of the Lord. He comes to this point where he thinks things should change, but God says, “I went about in a tent and in a tabernacle” (v 6). Why should that change? David had certain right thoughts, but he was not permitted to execute them. Not only does God say, what is in your heart to build will be built, but it will be a man of peace that will build it, no doubt looking forward to Christ in type. David now comes to his own house, “also of thy servant’s house for a great while to come”. We need to have faith as to our households that God will operate. That is what this dear man of God is saying, “yet this hath been a small thing in thy sight”. I say to you, friend. Submit yourself to God. It is the line of faith that God will honour, and you will be preserved to the end if you do so. It says here, “and king David went in and sat before Jehovah ... And is this the manner of man, Lord Jehovah?” – I wonder what impressions filled his soul at that point?

Jehovah had given him support. He never lost a war, there was probably no commander like David, he never lost a war, he was always successful because he depended on his God. It comes to this point and he goes into the presence of God and he gets another impression in the presence of God, “he is the rewarder of them that seek him out”. That was what David proved. God the rewarder of them that seek Him out and it says, “Is this the manner of man”.

Who was it that God was conveying to him? I think He conveyed to him impressions of Christ. God also did it to Abraham when Isaac was weaned. Something that came into Abraham’s soul – “he saw my day and rejoiced”, John 8: 56. Here David says, “is this the

manner of man”, he gets an impression of Christ in the presence of God. There is nothing like it!

In Ephesians it is important to see that the Spirit links on with faith. That is another thing we need. You do not get the Spirit without faith. The gift of the Spirit is referred to in two connections, one is by request and the other obedience. You ask a thing of God and you have faith for that, and the other basis is that you obey.

Those are the two things which are used to secure the blessed gift of the Holy Spirit which is offered in the glad tidings. You cannot obey unless you have faith. It shows how the groundwork is faith.

When the Holy Spirit came down at Pentecost it was to a believing company, persons that had faith. You will not get the Spirit without faith. You might say, I am having a job walking my life, I am stumbling here and there, not keeping away from evil, not getting power to overcome and so on – well, you need the Spirit to do that, and I would say to you make sure you have faith and if you have faith then ask God for the Spirit. Here at the most exalted point of Ephesians 3 we have this reference to the Father who is supreme in this economy, “to be strengthened with power by his Spirit” (the Father’s spirit), “in the inner man”. An unbeliever knows nothing of the inner man. It refers to something that is there of the Spirit, “that the Christ may dwell, through faith”. When we take up response to God in eternity there will be no reference to faith, that will not exist, but faith is needed here. “That the Christ may dwell, through faith, in your hearts, being rooted and founded in love”. Is that not a settled state to arrive at? God has met everything in Christ in His work, in the shedding of His precious blood. Now as persons here, as having received the Spirit and being the subjects of His operations, you arrive at something very settled. That is a fine thing to end with in the preaching, something settled. If your conscience is disturbed, I do not apologise. You will go outside and there will be nothing here or in any country to help you. It might have a little more light about it, but it is morally the same, it is set against faith and set against the conviction of the soul. Even Agrippa says, “in a little”. There is no reference that that man ever became a Christian. He was nearly

there, persons can be convicted and still be lost, but you are in a state that God can work in. God is working when the conscience is aroused. In Ephesians there is a settled state and there is a full response to God. Think of this, “able to apprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and depth and height”: that is further than Abraham saw. Abraham did not see as far as that. Here it is a much greater, more exalted place that the believer is brought into in our time, settled in our relations with Christ, “that the Christ may dwell, through faith, in your hearts, being rooted and founded in love”. I cannot think of arriving at a greater result through the preaching, that you are settled, “and to know the love of the Christ which surpasses knowledge”. Can you think of getting an impression of that? To know the love of the Christ. How He loves as God, how He serves. The love of a perfect Man, His love for God is conveyed in that, but think of the love of the Christ which surpasses knowledge. It is so great. He is so great. His love is so great! He was prepared to go to the depths to save me from going there so that I might share in these realms, these heights above. That is the glad tidings and these things it says, “which surpasses knowledge; that ye may be filled even to all the fulness of God”. That is not infinitude, we remain creatures, but it is what is presented in Christ. The fulness of God is in Christ. I cannot think of anything greater in the glad tidings than to be brought into it, the Holy Spirit linking with faith in the present time so that we will touch the highest thoughts. May we all be encouraged to review, to look into our lives and see that our lives are truly lived in faith. May it be so for His Name’s sake.

ORMOND BEACH

14 January 2004

BELIEVING

Steven Eagle

Psalm 33: 8, 9; 2 Corinthians 5: 10; Revelation 20: 11-15

If we are to know God the first thing which is important is to believe that He *is* – that means that you must believe that there is a God.

This is a vast subject for a long discussion, but I would just say one thing for the children to think about. Go outside and take some time to look up into the night sky and look at the stars – recently we were able to view Mars in a way that had not been seen for many years – I would just ask you to take time to look at God’s creation. God made the stars, the heavens, and He made all the animals that live on the earth and *He made you*. The important thing about the gospel is *you*.

The scripture in Psalm 33 should make us realise with whom we have to do when we have to do with God. It says simply, “Let all the earth fear Jehovah; let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of him” – the note says, ‘revere’. When it says, “fear Jehovah”, it is not a terror, it is a reverence of Him, an appreciation of who God is and how great He is. That is what I would like you to have, an appreciation in your heart and in your mind as to the greatness of Who God is. That should be a starting point changing your life forever.

I want to speak about two things; and they are both blessed.

The first is the judgment seat of Christ – at the judgment seat of Christ those that will stand there will go over their histories, everything they have done in their lives, good and bad, everything put before them, and I think one thing that will come out of that is that those that stand there will have an appreciation of God’s view, God’s judgment, and this will bring out worship towards God and towards the One you stand before. The way that you will get to the judgment seat of Christ is not by doing something wrong. We talk about judgment and we can put it in the context of today’s life; if you were to come before a judge, you would have to have done

something wrong, committed a crime. There are many people in court every day for minor offences, maybe doing something that would appear very small, and also some that we would call grossly evil. But the judgment seat of Christ is for people that have been blessed. They are going to be there because they have believed in God and believed in God's work, and they have come to know Him as a Saviour God. That is a wonderful thing! You say, why is it necessary to come before a judgment seat? To see the righteous basis in which you have been brought into blessing, that sin had to be dealt with. God wants that in your life if you have come to know Him as a Saviour God and you have come to believe in His word, you have come to know the Lord Jesus as a Saviour. Again I say that the judgment seat of Christ will be a time to go over your history, and, you know, what is wonderful about that, is that you will be shown the points in your life where God was operating with you and that God was working with you. The points when self-will came in and you were doing the things of your own will, and then the point when you yielded to God's will. You are going to see that; maybe you have done that already. I trust everyone in this room is going to be before that judgment seat. It is a blessed judgment seat. We are only here for time. I you read Ecclesiastes it speaks about time, specific times, "A time to be born" everyone here knows that time, "a time to die" (Eccl 3: 2), no one here knows that time. God does, He knows both times and He controls both those times. We are in time and we can only think in time, but God can think outside of time because of who He is. God made man in His image (see Gen 2: 27), He made man and He gave man perfect conditions to live in, He gave man everything he wanted, He gave man perfection because that is what God saw fit to do and God purposed for man. He gave man life, but man failed – through the sin of one man, sin entered into this world and banished you from the presence of God forever, save one thing that if you today trust in the work of the Lord Jesus Christ you are made suitable to come into God's presence again. It is worth thinking about. One thing to lay hold of is that God has made it simple for you.

Another subject which is exhaustless is the wisdom of God. It is exhaustless because of Who God is. It is foolishness to say, I am going to sit down and study everything about God and one day I am going to reach a point when I will know everything. You never would, you never could. I believe you would eventually come to a point when all you could do was well up in worship and praise toward Him because you would be affected by it. I trust you are affected in the gospel, not because of me, but because of God speaking to you, of Himself. When you stand outside and you look up at the stars, you will feel very small. You will start to realise how great God is in creating the universe, something that is so full of splendour and wonder; and that God is interested in you. If you look at the youngest in this room, look how perfect she is, God made her, and God made you. He has given you a soul, something in you that belongs to Him, that is precious to Him, something in you that never dies, something in you that He wants to be affected and He wants to claim. He wants you to have your soul affected by the work of Jesus. He wants you to think about a cross, the cross at Calvary, think about the time when the Lord Jesus died for you when He took upon Himself the sin of the world, that those that trust in Him will be saved. The work of the Lord Jesus is great enough to save everyone if they trust in Him and believe in Him. How sad it would be, and I say this humbly because it is a warning to us all, if I believed that there was a God, but I did not come to know Him. If I believed that God was great but I did not come to know Him as a Saviour God. How sad that would be! Do you have a hope in your heart of knowing that one day you are going to be before the judgment seat of Christ? It is going to be a blessed place to see God's wisdom worked out, when God worked in your soul that you cried out in repentance towards the Lord Jesus and your life was changed forever and you were secured and made safe, you were saved in time and saved for eternity. We are often reminded that God has dipped into time to work things out according to His will.

God is beyond time because He is an eternal God, but how wonderful, what grace, that God has dipped into time to secure you,

to work out His purposes, and you are part of that if you trust in the Saviour's precious work.

The second thing I wanted to talk about is the judgment according to the great white throne. It is a place, I hope I can explain it in measure. It is a blessed place. The reason I say that it that we see the wisdom of God as to something which is final, the wisdom of God as to judging finally, once and for all, everything that is abhorrent to Him. My trust is that no one here will be there. If you read Revelation 20, it can be quite a scary passage for a child to read but you do not have to be scared, because if you know the Lord Jesus as your Saviour – you are not going to be there –but God is going to deal with sin and the causes of sin once and for all. That is a blessed thing! The reason it is blessed, again in God's wisdom, is that He has made it so that only for a fixed period of time sin is allowed to operate and after that it will be finally dealt with. The great white throne is for the souls who have not trusted in the work of Christ and have not come to know the Lord Jesus as their Saviour.

It is a solemn place. It is a very solemn thing to contemplate, but it is not one for a believer to be frightened of. When we read Revelation locally we were helped as it was pointed out that even at this place of final judgment it speaks about the book of life. Why is it that at a place where God's judgment is going to be seen in its finality as to sin still has the book of life there? I believe it shows God's mercy and righteousness. Do you know about the book of life? If you know Jesus as your Saviour have your name written in that book. Once you are in that book you cannot be taken out of it.

Once you are saved, you are saved for eternity. God can see what lies before you, and not that you would seek to do it, but even if you sin after you have been saved the precious blood of Jesus covers you for that.

It says as to the great white throne, "And I saw the dead, great and small". It must have been a wonderful thing for John to see, "a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled, and place was not found for them.

And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne" –

great and small – it does not matter who you are, it does not matter who a man thinks he is, what he has achieved, he will be there if he has not trusted in the Lord Jesus Christ. “And the dead were judged out of the things written in the books according to their works”.

People often say that if they had a chance to meet God they would have something to say to Him. He would like to say a few things because of the state of the world. You can tell God now on your knees and He knows the state of the world, you can speak to God, you can pray to God and He will give you understanding if you trust in Him, but man does not have a right to challenge God. There will not be a voice for man at the great white throne, there will not be a voice for man to come up with excuses or to say that this or that is not fair. God speaks to men, maybe He speaks to men more than we realise, maybe He speaks to us more than we realise even as believers, but God has given man ample opportunity through His grace and His mercy to come into blessing. Here man will not have a voice. At the judgment seat of Christ, as things are gone over it will draw out worship and praise from each one as to the appreciation of what their lives have been under God’s guiding hand because the Lord Jesus has come into your life, but here – just think about it – man has no voice. The time to deal with matters that concern your soul is now – death is final. Death is final as to the things of this world, but as to the things of God every man will have to go before Him. It says, “the sea gave up the dead which were in it” – think of all those who died in the Titanic who were never found, they will have to be before God, many may be there at the judgment seat of Christ; they will be there in glory because they know the Lord Jesus, but any that died on that ship who did not, they will be at the great white throne. There is no hiding place for man. Sometimes men think that if they die, they can escape from God – do not believe that, that would be folly to believe. First of all believe that God *is*, come to know Him, have an appreciation of His greatness, do not let it scare you, let it affect you, let it move your heart and soul, maybe it troubles you, maybe it is troubling your conscience – I would say that is a good thing that is God working with you, for the first time maybe,

to draw you to know the Lord Jesus, His beloved Son, the One whom He gave to secure you for blessing.

When the Lord comes again, He is coming in triumph. We shared in that this morning, there was a time of triumph. The Lord's coming again, He is coming for you to claim you and take you to a place where there will be no sin, a place where there will be joy and happiness eternally. Trust in Jesus, put your faith in Jesus, go on your knees and ask for help where you are, cry out to Him, become a believer, become a follower of Jesus, become one of His sheep, know Him as a Shepherd, know Him as a friend, know Him as a Saviour, know Him as a Lord, know Him as One who reigns over your life. The kings and rulers of this world, they all have jurisdiction in their capacity, but know the Lord Jesus, know Him as Lord, One that rules your life, guides, shapes and forms it, know One who can help you throughout your Christian pathway. He died for you but He is raised. He is soon going to come and claim you, "the dead in Christ shall rise first; then we, the living who remain, shall be caught up together with them in the clouds" (1 Thess 4: 16,17). Everyone in this room could be amongst the living who remain; the triumph is that when He comes again, everyone that belongs to Him will be claimed. Are you going to be there? Think about it, contemplate it, and do not let it go past. When it comes to the gospel you are not to put it off, you are to make a decision today. Scripture says that, "Today" (Luke 23: 43), make Jesus your Saviour today. For His Name's sake.

DORKING