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## **“THAT WHICH WAS FROM THE BEGINNING”**

**Luke 9: 28-36; 1 John 1: 1-10; 4: 1-6; 2 Timothy 3: 10-17**

J.D.G. I was thinking of “that which was from the beginning”, the certainty of what we have been brought into. My mind turned to John’s epistle and to Luke’s presentation of the transfiguration because I think there we get the introduction, as we have been taught, as to the fellowship of the Father and the Son which the apostles were introduced into, “they entered into the cloud: and there was a voice out of the cloud ... hear him”. That leads on through John’s epistle to “hears us”, and then in 2 Timothy the man of God is exhorted to use as an anchor for his instruction those through whom he has learned things and also the Holy Scriptures. I thought we could consider these things together and get some understanding of them in relation to our present exercises.

The transfiguration has various aspects attached to it. One thing was to confirm the apostles, particularly Peter, James and John as to who the Person was that was there, Christ. The lowly Nazarean was indeed the King of Glory. Through their ministry they strengthened the dispersion. Peter strengthened the dispersion in his epistle when he speaks about being eye witnesses of *his* majesty, and “this voice we heard uttered from heaven” (1 Peter 2: 16,18) – that was the Christ. Then there is the other matter of “hear him” – that was picked up by John and extended to “hears us”, and also picked up and enlarged upon by the writer to the Hebrews, “God ... has spoken in the person of the Son” (Heb 1: 1,2). This is the introduction of that blessed matter that the Father insists on, the dignity and authority that attaches to His beloved Son, “hear him”.

That is to carry on during the dispensation that we are in. We will get help as we go on to the other scriptures.

1 John brings out something of the glory of the fellowship from John’s point of view which is a little different from Paul’s point of view, but there is a merging together.

D.T.P. There is a distinct purity that relates to what is from the beginning as we see it as God has set it out in Christ for us. It is very attractive because it is in that glorious Man.

J.D.G. That comes in in this section. I was also attracted to look into Luke's side of things because Luke got his impressions from the twelve. Matthew has impressions which are personal, Mark may have got his through Peter, but Luke got it from eye-witnesses and attendants on the word (see Luke 1: 2), which would be the twelve.

He brings in, as we know, in regard to the Lord's Supper a touch from his acquaintance with Paul's teaching, but here he is giving us something that came from his conversation and enquiry with the twelve. At first Peter, James and John thought it was a wonderful matter for their Master to be speaking with Moses and Elias, and it was so. They were Old Testament saints, who will have a part and place in the kingdom, but divine Persons had more in mind. We always have to be on the look out for what is coming in in the scripture because these are the Holy Scriptures and we have the setting forth of and the opening up of the truth. Moses and Elias did not, according to the scriptures, participate in the experience of being in the cloud. "And they feared as they entered into the cloud", I understand that is Peter, James and John. They were being introduced into another fellowship. Judaism, as far as it was, was finished. Moses and Elias would be linked on with Christ as speaking about His departure from Jerusalem in relation to what was going to be arrived at through death, the kingdom. They had their place in the kingdom, but they had no place in this blessed realm which attaches to Christianity.

R.G. Do you think that as Luke presents "his departure" there is more to it than just His dying, but it introduces what goes right through to His ascension, the coming of the Spirit, Paul's doctrine and all that belongs to the mystery and is opened up in this dispensation?

J.D.G. I think so. That carries forward into John's epistle too, "that which was from the beginning", but it is going to continue. There is a fellowship being established which we are brought into as we will

see when we come to John's epistle. The Lord's departure was out of this world, as John says in His gospel, to the Father.

R.G. I was impressed with what you said about the relationship between divine Persons what they are introduced into, but now we should be in the fuller understanding, the Spirit having come?

J.D.G. That is right. In saying these things, it has been pointed out that they did not understand that they were being introduced into the fellowship of the Father and the Son. But when we come to John's epistle they understood. They not only understood, they had experienced.

R.T. I was thinking, "he went up into a mountain to pray" would connect with the new system that is coming. Luke makes a good deal of praying, "and as he prayed"; there is some entrance apart from all that is around into this new system of things?

J.D.G. Yes. Prayer would carry Him in communion into the Father's presence, and as entering in there, "the fashion of his countenance became different and his raiment white and effulgent". It shows the power of prayer, which is another line, but it is an interesting line too that comes in here. We need to be sustained in the presence of prayer. Scripture shows here that there is a need for the Holy Spirit. The disciples are a little deficient in the passage, but what they communicate to us is right, as Luke affirms, "having fully awoke up they saw his glory". Luke must have had that assurance from the three of the twelve who were in this experience, they were fully aware of what was happening. They were not fully intelligent. Peter proposes three tabernacles; Christ is distinguished, but that is not the divine mind: Christ is to be distinguished alone. There is the speaking in the dispensation which has its origin in the utterance in this passage where the Father insists that any speaking comes from Christ, the Spirit coming into that in His own way as He comes to take His abode in us, announcing to us what is to come, speaking about Christ.

M.G.W. Could you say something about the cloud?

J.D.G. It is evidence of the divine presence. The disciples would be partly acquainted with the thought because they are Jews at this point, Peter, James and John; they are on their way to understanding things more fully regarding the Lord Jesus, but the cloud would remind them of the Shekinah glory. The cloud that was there in the tabernacle in the wilderness; the cloud that filled the tabernacle when it was erected by Moses; the cloud that filled the temple when service took place. Here they were entering into it; but they were to learn later that it was in a new way.

Ques. When it says, “hear him”, does that indicate the ministry of glory? They had heard His voice already. Was this something that was supreme?

J.D.G. The Father’s commendation, “*This* is my beloved Son” and then ears are to be opened exclusively to His speaking, what comes from Christ. “God having spoken in many parts and in many ways formerly to the fathers in the prophets, at the end of these days has spoken to us in the person of the Son” (Heb 1: 1). That is what is coming out in this scripture. The Father’s announcement: the one who caught on to it was the writer of the Hebrew epistle in a very full way.

M.G.W. Is the Lord directing them to another order of things entirely that was heavenly? It was not an earthly inheritance, it was not all that they had in Judaism, but He is directing their hearts to another arrangement of things where He shines and He is the head and centre and there for us to view. Is that right?

J.D.G. I like your word ‘heavenly’, because it suggests that it is the heavenly atmosphere, it is an out of the world condition. A fellowship that is an out of the world condition of relationship and being, centred here in the Father and the Son, and these men are brought into it. Moses and Elias are not brought into it; these persons are brought in to it. It is Christianity in its essence.

J.S. Do you think Mary had got the point of this when she was sitting at His feet listening to His word? The Lord commends that, He says, “Mary has chosen the good part”, Luke 10: 42.

J.D.G. It is a very fine example of one who has been instructed by the speaking of Jesus. It comes in after this – sitting at his feet listening to His word. It is a very fine helpful reference because it shows that she is in line with the Father’s thoughts about Christ. You can understand how the Lord says, she has chosen the good part because it is the part that the Father would desire for all of us, to “hear him”.

D.C.B. Could you just say more about this chapter coming into your mind as “that which was from the beginning”?

J.D.G. The link between the two is the fellowship of the Father and the Son, “that which was from beginning ... which we have seen ... and our hands handled”. Here is the beginning of it. Gradually the apostles came into an understanding of who He was. What links Luke gospel with 1 John was the fellowship of the Father and the Son. It is an incipient matter here, not fully understood by them; there is the need for the Holy Spirit before you can understand it.

D.C.B. Does it emphasise that things are not added, there are no innovations since this, things are established – principles especially – in hearing Him at the beginning and they continue from the beginning?

J.D.G. That is very helpful. It has been taught amongst us that at the time of John’s epistle there were those who desired to add some new opinions to what had gone before. Christianity had become somewhat dated at the time of John’s writing, although that was not all that long after Christ, but John is affirming what began with Christ, and takes you back to the scripture in Luke, “hear him”. The link in my mind was the fact that this presentation by Luke is an introduction into the fellowship of the Father and the Son which John develops in His epistle.

C.K.R. Is light a characteristic feature of this fellowship? It is a bright cloud, it is light and they are not overshadowed by it, it is not a darkening influence, but the purity of divine light. Is that not a characteristic and great blessing of this fellowship that has such a feature?

J.D.G. Yes it is. John says in his epistle, “in him is no darkness at all”, this is it in its essence. The cloud overshadowed them but it does not darken them. It is the presence of God, the presence of the Father, taking the form of a cloud to express itself. They were aware that they were in another atmosphere, but there was also a voice out of the cloud saying, “*This* is my beloved Son: hear him”. There is a mediate thought in the cloud because man is not able to be in the presence of God in absoluteness – “dwelling in unapproachable light” (1 Tim. 6: 16) – so there must be a mediate thought in the cloud that He was able to be there near to men, also expressed in Jesus, but there was an additional thought of the divine presence in the cloud.

C.K.R. There would be divine light and divine speaking. The source of that speaking now is the Lord Jesus Christ.

J.D.G. That is right, and by extension the Spirit speaks, and by extension those that know “God hears us”.

R.T. The reference to “beloved Son” gives a distinctive character to the speaking.

J.D.G. There is only One, “*This* is my beloved Son, hear him” – there is only One, there is no other one in the mind of the Father. It is God speaking in Son that is being emphasised. It was formerly through the prophets, now He is speaking in Son, and this is being emphasised here, but then a touch of the economy comes in here, not only the Person of the Son, but the relationship, “my beloved Son”.

Ques. Could you compare the side of the fellowship of the Father and the Son with the Corinthian aspect of fellowship?

J.D.G. I thought as we consider John’s epistle that that might come in. Paul came into the fellowship that was established by the apostles. I do not mean that he participated in their fellowship – I think that was exclusive to the twelve – but he comes into the fellowship that they report to us, “we have seen and bear witness, and report to you the eternal life, which was with the Father, and has been manifested to us: that which we have seen and heard we

report to you, that ye also may have fellowship with us; and our fellowship is indeed with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ”.

Then the message that comes in John’s epistle is “if we walk in the light as *he* is in the light, we have fellowship with one another”. That is where we are today. I think that is where Paul came. I think what he saw in Damascus was fellowship established in the principle that “if we walk in the light as *he* is in the light, we have fellowship with one another”. He says, you have been called into the fellowship of God’s Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. Authority is emphasised, but I think he saw this fellowship described here which he came into, which he persecuted, but he came into it and the Lord helped him in developing the truth in his side of things. John is insisting on the maintenance of “that which was from the beginning” and it speaks of Christ, “that which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes; that which we contemplated, and our hands handled, concerning the word of life”. What a fellowship they had, they handled Christ, there was substance there, they saw the expression of eternal life that was with the Father. The days of His flesh would enter into that, but also the time of the forty days.

R.G. It says, “last of all he appeared to me also”, but before that, he says He appeared to Cephas and to the twelve, so that the link with the twelve apostles is manifestly in Paul’s mind. But then he speaks about his appearing to him. Is that the idea of the flesh continuing, “our hands handled”. That must have been before death and resurrection; after resurrection, and then in the scripture you read in chapter 4, you see the manifestation of the flesh in the way that it speaks of Him. It says, “every spirit which confesses Jesus Christ come in flesh is of God; and every spirit which does not confess Jesus Christ come in flesh is not of God”. It is the same Man, but a different condition, but the same Man manifested Himself to the twelve, to Paul and now to us, do you think?

J.D.G. It is confirmation of what John says in his gospel, “the Word became flesh”, John 1: 14. At the time John lived there were those who were trying to say that the Lord was only an apparition, and was not substantially in flesh. According to the scripture, “the Word

became flesh”; that goes through death and resurrection in another condition. The Lord Jesus is a real and living Man. We will touch on that in chapter 4, the necessity of understanding Jesus Christ come in flesh. Here is an assurance, “we have heard ...”, that is the twelve apostles. Most of them had passed off the scene when John wrote this, but he writes down his testimony.

R.T. It is a beautiful reference, “which was with the Father”. Is that where it all began?

J.D.G. Yes, that is what I thought. That is why I was encouraged to read Luke’s presentation of “hear him”, because they entered into the cloud. The other writers do not give it in the same way, but there is an entrance into an area where they witnessed the character of life that was there. It is a sphere and character of life which was with the Father manifested to us, it was in Christ that it was seen, expressed in Jesus.

R.T. I think it is very beautiful to think of the economy coming into view and this Man being here in these conditions. It opens up the whole heart of God.

J.D.G. It is a very intimate expression of fellowship, Paul in the Corinthians is more a public side of fellowship, but this is an expression of what is within in the sphere of eternal life. That has come down to us. We do not have fellowship with the Father and the Son as the apostles had, they had a distinctive fellowship with the Father and the Son, both in His sojourn here in the days of His flesh and also in the forty days. What they witnessed when He was in the spiritual condition, not in the body of flesh and blood but in the spiritual body, they became accustomed to it, but they saw something of the expression of a fellowship there that they entered into. What a blessed matter for men to share with the Father and the Son in the fellowship that existed between them. It is not deity, the Father is deity, but relationship in the economy involving Christ in His manhood. It is in His manhood. It is not something that existed before the incarnation, this beginning is a beginning involving the

incarnation and not before it, “That which was *from* the beginning”, not “*He* was in the beginning” – that is John’s gospel.

R.T. Is the power of this fellowship demonstrated in the early Acts in these twelve men and the way they conducted things in His absence?

J.D.G. Yes, they continued in the fellowship of the apostles, in the breaking of bread and prayers. That is what flowed out from the intimate side. It became a public testimony that there was a fellowship there and persons were attracted into it. “What shall we do ... Repent, and be baptised, each one of you”, Acts 2: 38. What a joy to Peter’s heart to proclaim the Lord Jesus made both Lord and Christ, then they came into fellowship with the apostles. They experienced these things.

G.A.B. Could we say that the twelve had a great advantage in entering into that fellowship, but we are not exactly at a disadvantage; we have fellowship with the apostles? Could we just get some help as to how we can draw upon what was there available in the fellowship with the twelve?

J.D.G. I think we draw upon it by the Spirit opening up the truth of scripture to us and by the experiences that we have in the power of the Holy Spirit as gathered together. This is no ordinary meeting, I do not mean it is special from any other fellowship meetings, but it is not an ordinary gathering together of men and women. The power of the Holy Spirit is here, who opens up to us the truth that is in scripture that gives us the power to enter in spirit into the fellowship that we have in communion with divine Persons.

G.A.B. There is a great deal conveyed to us in the scriptures which have been written, partly by the twelve, but it is by the Spirit that we can draw upon that.

J.D.G. That is right. If it is only our minds that are fed, there is no benefit to us. There would be nothing formed of God in me if I am only taking into my mind. It has been said, the Father did not give His Christ to suffer to become a plaything of the human mind. It is by the Spirit that we enter into these things. That is our link. As we

have said already, when they were on the mount they did not fully understand, looking back they did, and when the Spirit came, their understanding was opened. That is when the thing became living to them.

R.T. Would the names of the twelve apostles being in the foundations of the city show us how this is going through? Would it cause us to appreciate the apostles' teaching?

J.D.G. I thought that. They have a special place in the city. We speak a lot about Paul's ministry, and that is right, but these men's names are in the foundation of the city: there is something expressed in them that is fundamental to the holy city. We have been instructed in Paul's ministry involving the walls and the gates, but the foundation was laid. What was morally and spiritually in these twelve men, that character of the fellowship, must go through into the holy city.

R.G. Do you think it is significant that the foundation of the city is seen in the twelve apostles? The foundation is not normally seen, but the names of the twelve apostles are seen, so that what is built upon takes character in some sense from what the Lord was able to communicate to them.

J.D.G. So the ministry of John would contribute to what is fundamental in our souls? You find what is foundational in Paul's ministry too, but this is the twelve, they are distinguished in that sense by the Lord in the city. You can understand how the fellowship is maintained to us. It is a very precious fellowship that we have, and the message that comes into this section is to help us to maintain it in a living way without shadows or dark spots in it all. There is the wherewithal to maintain it as walking in the light.

D.T.P. Does this really need to be laid hold of in the soul before the service of praise goes out? It really starts in the Acts and that would be essential for us as we lay hold of this; it really makes way for what flows forth on the first day of the week?

J.D.G. The foundations of the city are necessary for the structure and it is within that city that the praise of God is heralded forth. What

we are speaking about is not imaginary, it is not “cleverly imagined fables” (2 Peter 1: 16), it is a real and substantial fellowship that has come down to us. The message confirms that, “which we have heard from him, and declare to you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not practise the truth”. There is to be sincerity with us.

J.S. Do you think that is why it says, “if we walk in the light as *he* is in the light, we have fellowship with one another”? It means that our lives are governed practically by the light.

J.D.G. So that the experience of the cloud has a permanent effect on us, spiritual experiences, the divine presence has an effect on us. We come out from there and walk in the light as He is in the light so our fellowship continues with one another.

J.S. I was thinking of the light that has come down in that way, come down through the apostles and it should not be theoretical with us, but “if we walk in the light” – that is, there is a present practical answer to the light as it comes to us. We are governed by it.

J.D.G. That is right. We have to walk in the light, we have to be formed by it, “become sons of light”, be formed by that light. Light becomes law, it becomes practice.

J.S. I was thinking about what you were saying about the foundations. It says the wall of the city had twelve foundations and on them twelve names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb. I suppose that as we take on the apostles’ teaching it would be a foundation in our souls in the way of fellowship.

J.D.G. One fundamental aspect of the teaching is that you persevere in the breaking of bread and prayers (see Acts 2: 42). That is a fundamental expression in our lives of our nearness to the teaching. It becomes practice – they persevered in the teaching, breaking of bread and prayers. There is some evidence of the fact that there is substance in our souls that belongs to the work of God.

R.J.C. There is no greater fellowship than the fellowship that we are brought into. We have the divine mind regarding it in Christ when He was here and when He rose again and ascended. These things are open to us as we apprehend and lay hold of the apostles' teaching. There is something unique about their teaching.

J.D.G. You spoke of its origin being in the divine mind. On the mount there was a transfiguration in relation to the kingdom, but divine Persons had more in mind to bring forward than that and that is seen in Luke's gospel, the expression of them entering into the cloud. They were to be introduced into Christian fellowship. They had a special place in it, the apostles, but what develops from that is Christian fellowship. There is no need to add anything to it as it came from the apostles, it is according to divine thought and then Paul builds on that.

In 1 John 4 you have to be protected and protect the fellowship. There is a side of respect for the fellowship, a side of protection and there are many spirits gone out into the world. It is noticeable that they go out, because many are gone out into the world, they have taken something of Christianity with them and added what is not of God to it, what really belongs to Satan in its essence. Then there is the reference here, "greater is he that is in you than he that is in the world". There is a power within us to hearken to what is of God. It says, "We are of God; he that knows God hears us". I understand Mr Taylor once said when he was speaking about "hear him", and by extension 'hear them'. Here John is picking that up, what was really unfolded, Christ would speak and then by extension the apostles would speak, "he that knows God hears us" and then it comes down to our day in the Timothy epistles, who we have to hear and who we have to listen to. "He that knows God hears us", that is characteristic. I suppose it is what he speaks about in his epistle, begotten of God, born of God. We belong to the family, the children of God. What is really in our hearts and souls we will have an ear for what is right and be attuned to understand what is right. We need to be kept.

Ques. In chapter of 2 of John's epistle he says, "As for *you* let that which ye have heard from the beginning abide in you" (v 24). I wondered whether that was what you were referring to now? That which was from the beginning in chapter 1 refers to the Lord personally, but there is "that which ye have heard from the beginning", and it is very much in the context of the unction, before and after the way in which things are secure by the Spirit and according to what was established at the beginning.

J.D.G. "Abide in you" – that is important, not only heard about it but "abide in you". There is a need to be thorough in our committals and thorough in our exercises, that what is in us is of God, "he that knows God hears us". There is much speaking in the world today and it is affecting Christendom and is affecting the truth. There are many of God's people there in Christendom, in the churches of the systems of men, who are being exposed at the present time to all kinds of influences where man after the flesh has been allowed to have authority and speak in relation to divine things. We have to be aware of that and not be influenced by such a spirit.

J.S. Scripture says, "He that has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the assemblies", Rev 2: 17.

J.D.G. You may get somebody in Christendom speaking the truth because morally he is personally right – although they may not be positionally right – but we are in a place where we have sought to exercise divine principles to separate from what is publicly going on with evil, seeking to go on with the truth. We are in an atmosphere where the Spirit is free to operate in the temple. That is an important thing so the truth can come out as we converse together.

J.S. Do you think one of the prime things for the Spirit to be free to operate in the temple is the recognition of the Lordship of Christ and His headship?

J.D.G. Yes, and where the foundation is Jesus Christ too.

J.S. I am sure that would come into it. As you say the foundation is Jesus Christ and Him crucified, that is the disallowance of every other kind of man.

J.D.G. So the consequence of discussing the truth where man after the flesh is allowed is in direct opposition to what scripture exhorts, “Jesus Christ, and *him* crucified”, 1 Cor. 2: 2.

J.M. It says of the Lord Jesus, “He does all things well” and in connection with that it says, “he makes both the deaf to hear, and the speechless to speak”, Mark 7: 37. I was thinking how hearing comes before speaking. If we do not hear right we will not speak right.

J.D.G. That is true in physical matters and it is true in spiritual matters too. It says, “he that knows God hears us”, that must be true too. There are all kinds of speakings in the world and young people have to be careful what they read. If you are reading anything that is ministry, you must be absolutely assured that the person is sound in the truth or you will become damaged.

J.M. I feel challenged, have I got an ear for Jesus speaking? It says of Him, “Never man spoke thus, as this man speaks”, John 7: 46.

J.D.G. We have to be exercised that “he that knows God hears us”. If they were that kind person, of God, they would certainly have an ear for the truth. I say again, this setting here in the time of John is set in Christendom where there are those who are real and there are those who have gone out and carried the truth with them with which they have set up their own systems. The young people need to be careful what they read. I came across a reference the other day of Mr Taylor’s – he would not read anything that was ministry unless he was absolutely assured that the person was fundamentally sound in the truth. There are books published as ministry going around in the world and in Christendom, maybe some are all right, but you have to know who you learn things from.

G.A.B. Can you help us as to what is involved in “every spirit which confesses Jesus Christ come in flesh is not of God”?

J.D.G. I would understand it to be the reality of His humanity. It is a very important matter, as I understand from teaching, to be clear about the insistence of “Jesus Christ come in flesh”. The incarnation was a real matter, a divine Person left His first estate and took up a body that was prepared for Him and became a Man. That humanity

goes through death into resurrection. It says in Hebrews, “he lives in the power of indissoluble life” (7: 16), that is a reference to Christ in His humanity not His deity. “Jesus Christ come in flesh”, or Jesus Christ coming in flesh, is an assurance that the Lord is a real and living Man. One day He will appear to us, one day we will see His face at the rapture, but one day He will appear to this world as a real Man. It is not an apparition. There were all kinds of teaching going on at the time when John was writing and he is seeking to rescue saints in relation to the errors that were going about because great failure came in after his departure. We know the church history and how the church publicly failed. It had not failed completely when John wrote. I think it is for our day that we may be preserved that whatever persons say, “Jesus Christ come in flesh” is a real matter.

G.A.B. I think it is vital to grasp this. This was the beginning of what you have been speaking of earlier. Some have thought of Jesus Christ as perhaps an extension to Judaism, or some other description they could find, but this was really the beginning of something that was entirely new.

J.D.G. You are referring to the incarnation, what followed through from that? The Holy Scriptures are accurate, “the Word became flesh”, John 1: 14. It does not say the Word became flesh and blood because that was not going to continue. That Person who came into manhood had in mind in accordance with the purpose of God to remain in that condition, a condition of flesh, not flesh and blood. The same order of humanity would go through into a spiritual body, but it is flesh.

R.G. I think it is important, especially for younger persons, to realise that the Person of whom we are speaking is still alive. He is in a different condition from what He was when He was here, either before or after resurrection, but His humanity continues and it continues in life and that is the One who speaks to us still. I am speaking about that because it is the contrast to every other thing that man might bring before you. In other so-called religions, there is no life after death, it ends in death, but this is one where there is life continuing.

J.D.G. That is in the “power of indissoluble life”, Heb. 7: 16. It is in the Hebrew epistle. It is not a reference to His deity, it is a reference to the fact that His humanity continues. I think what we are saying is true.

J.T.B. There is a reference to, “we are of God”. Does it take us back to John’s gospel, “not of blood, nor of flesh’s will, or of man’s will, but of God” (1: 13), so as born in that sense we have links and desires according to what is brought out here.

J.D.G. That is what I thought was involved in “he that is of God” (John 8: 47), we have been born of God, we have a parentage that is of God. We are partakers of the divine nature and as born of God we have right instincts to listen to what is true, but we need to protect ourselves. The Holy Spirit of God is the power that is within us. “Ye are of God, children, and have overcome them, because greater is he that is in you than he that is in the world”. That is a great matter that young people can call on the power of the Holy Spirit and have power to go against the current of the world and all its thinking.

T.D.B. What would you say about what the Lord says in front of Pilate, “Every one that is of the truth hears my voice”, John 18: 37?

J.D.G. Do you think it would be in line with this, “he that knows God hears us”? There is something wrought – would it allude to being born of God, “Every one that is of the truth”?

T.D.B. Would it also carry the thought of those who are formed according to this order of humanity.

J.D.G. That would be right. New creation would be involved in that, there is a work of God in you. There is nothing of the old thing at all, there is something in the believer as the recipient of the Holy Spirit that is of God. There must be a work of God there before the Spirit is received. That would be seen when Peter was preaching to Cornelius and others, the Spirit fell upon them before he finished speaking because there was that ‘of God’ in them that the Spirit could identify with, even before they were baptised.

J.G. I was thinking of eternal life and the way in which we enjoy speaking of Christ through the Spirit. The epistle ends, “in his Son Jesus Christ. He is the true God and eternal life” (5: 20), so that the communications that we enjoy together with one another quite clearly have their origin in Him. There is an increasing need for us to work this out practically. We speak about hearing His, God’s, voice in the meeting for ministry but it would be much wider than that would it? We get communications from heaven on all occasions, do we?

J.D.G. I would not limit it to that, would you? Communications from heaven are all the time, “He that keepeth Israel will neither slumber nor sleep”, Ps. 121: 4. The Spirit is always available. You get impressions of Christ all the time, just flashes when you touch communion with a divine Person. I am not being unreal, I do not mean we do not go about our businesses and do things, but you cannot limit the impressions of Christ coming into the soul. Communion is a state that should always exist in the believer’s life.

R.T. Would all this remind us of the great resource there is in the fellowship? Not to think of the restrictions of it but there is a wonderful system of supply in the fellowship to maintain us apart from the world?

J.D.G. There is a wonderful supply of resource in the fellowship. There are resources in divine Persons, and there are resources in the saints as being formed in the work of God.

R.T. “From this we know the spirit of truth and the spirit of error” there is the Holy Spirit within us and there is the need for using Him to test things so that we know what is right and what is wrong, we know what is in keeping with the family of God and what is not.

J.D.G. In 2 Timothy, where there are things coming in – remember John wrote after 2 Timothy was written – what we have been speaking about remains. Paul writes in relation to a broken day but he is speaking about the continuance of the truth and he is trying to exhort Timothy, “*thou* hast been thoroughly acquainted with my teaching, conduct, purpose, faith, longsuffering ... But *thou* abide in

those things which thou hast learned, and of which thou hast been fully persuaded, knowing of whom thou hast learned them". That is one anchor for the soul, "knowing of whom thou hast learned them".

We might have read in chapter 2 as well where he says, "the things thou hast heard of me in the presence of many witnesses, these entrust to faithful men, such as shall be competent to instruct others also" (v 2). The saints are the witnesses. There is a line of protection for us in ministry. Any one of us who seeks to minister, whatever aspect it is, in the local meeting or whatever, the saints are the witnesses. They are to protect us, keep us within the banks of the river, keep us saying what is right in accordance with scripture, carrying each one with him. Chapter 3 of this book is not gift that he is speaking about, it is man of God, and that is open to all the saints here in this room. "He" is not a masculine thought exactly, it is expressed as a masculine thought, and maybe in a sense it applies more to brothers than sisters, but I do not think it does exclusively.

The principle of a man of God could be in a sister because they are able to exercise themselves in their own sphere and protect the saints as well as nurture them.

M.G.W. Is the beloved apostle speaking not as the official apostle but as a man formed in Christ?

J.D.G. I think so. It has been remarked that when you come in contact with the apostles personally you find not just their authority as derived from the Lord, but their personality as formed after Christ.

M.G.W. Does not the apostle, talk about his ways in Christ, "according as I teach" (1 Cor. 4: 17), so that what he actually taught was the way that he lived?

J.D.G. We have a line of protection to help us at the present time in relation to ministry and in relation to the understanding of ministry, in relation to teaching. It is in persons, it is not just in a person, it is in *persons*. The early part of chapter 2 shows that – "many witnesses", they are persons. They are existing at the present time.

J.S. Do you think this is very important for us, especially when he says, "But *thou*, abide in those things which thou hast learned, and

of which thou has been fully persuaded, knowing of whom thou hast learned them”? We have a great privilege of being brought into touch with these things that have come down from the beginning and there is a real need for abiding in those things at the present time.

J.D.G. I think so. We should treasure the teaching that we have come into the understanding of, in the light of what we call the light of the assembly. It is a very precious thought.

J.S. I think of what you said about the saints being witnesses, we have not only had the ministry, we have had living expressions of what it means in the saints. We should value what has come down to us in that way, “knowing of whom thou hast learned them”.

J.D.G. In Acts 1 it says, “Jesus began both to do and to teach, until that day in which, having by the Holy Spirit charged the apostles whom he had chosen he was taken up; to whom also he presented himself living, after he had suffered, with many proofs; being seen by them during forty days” (vv 1-3). The “many proofs” by extension is what is seen in the saints – proof of Christ’s reality, of His work, of the Spirit’s work, of the Spirit’s presence. There is a real and living work going on here by the Holy Spirit in the persons of the saints, men, women and children here in this room. We are just a small amount of them.

C.K.R. They would be among those who become “wise unto salvation”, would they not? The salvation would be the practical effect of all that, would it not?

J.D.G. It is good to refer to that, “and that from a child thou hast known the sacred letters, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation, through faith which is in Christ Jesus”, *teach* the children the scriptures. That is implicit. He was taught the scriptures, it was the Old Testament scriptures he was taught, but they were able to make him “wise unto salvation” when the Spirit came. Then he would also come into the gain and understanding of New Testament scriptures because they were extant in Timothy’s day. Peter refers to that, referring to persons who wrest the scriptures (see 2 Peter 3: 16), referring to Paul’s writing. So, *teach* the children the scriptures,

teach them to pray and something will be formed. God links on with our exercises.

D.T.P. There is teaching, but we need the purpose and the conduct too. These are important features because it shows that you are in accord with what is being taught. Children see these things in parents.

J.D.G. “Every scripture is divinely inspired, and profitable for teaching, for conviction, for correction, for instruction in righteousness; that the man of God may be complete, fully fitted to every good work”. That will continue in exercised persons until the Lord comes.

R.G. “These entrust to faithful men, such as shall be competent to instruct others also”, 2 Tim. 2: 2. We have been privileged to sit under faithful men who have brought the truth to us, able to instruct others also, but now the responsibility is on us to continue that line until the Lord comes?

J.D.G. Yes, you would take into account ministry accredited of God, faithful men, men who have gone before who have taught the truth and have obviously been approved of God as workmen, worthy of being paid attention to. The ministry is there. We would seek to link on with that ministry so that what is living is still here because the Spirit is here, but it is not diverse from that which was from the beginning.

J.M. Would that, “which was from the beginning” help to keep us stable?

J.D.G. That is exactly what we intended to say.

**Kirkcaldy**

**12<sup>th</sup> March 2005**

**Key to Initials:**

T.D.Beveridge, Kirkcaldy; G.ABrown, Edinburgh; D.C.Brown, Edinburgh; J.T.Brown, Edinburgh; R.C.Campbell, Glasgow; R.Gardiner, Kirkcaldy; J.D.Gray, Edinburgh; J.Gray, Grangemouth; J.Marshall, Edinburgh; D.T.Pye, Kirkcaldy; J.Strachan, Dundee; C.K.Robinson, Glasgow; R.Taylor, Kirkcaldy; M.G.Wood, Dundee

## **THE MANNA AND THE TREE OF LIFE**

**J.D.Gray**

**Genesis 2: 8, 9, 15-17; 3: 20-24; Revelation 2: 1, 7, 12, 17, 22: 1, 2**

I would like to share with you some fragmentary thoughts about these scriptures, about the tree of life in the Genesis setting, the hidden manna in Revelation, the tree of life in the paradise of God and the tree of life in the holy city.

God made man. He was not made like the animals. Chapter 1 of Genesis tells us, "God said, Let the earth bring forth living souls after their kind, cattle, and creeping things, and beast of the earth" (v 24), but man was not made like that. Man was made of the "dust of the ground" (2: 7), he has the distinction of God breathing into his nostrils the breath of life, "and Man became a living soul" (v 7).

There is no other creature who went before like Adam. Young people may hear things at school about men that lived before, a long time ago, fifty thousand years ago, whatever they were, they were not Adam. The Adamic creation is the present one we live in and it is very recent, a few thousand years ago: God is very considerate for His creature Adam, He calls him, Man. What a joy to the Creator to see a being standing on his two feet with his face looking upward.

There is no other creature that looks up as far as I can recall, they all look down to food that is on the ground. Man looks up and looks up to God.

God planted a garden in Eden, which means pleasure, or as has been referred to in ministry, paradise. Just note what it says here, "out of the ground Jehovah Elohim made every tree grow that is pleasant to the sight, and good for food"; there is a semi-colon there. I think it was to sustain man in his natural body. Then it says, "and the tree of life, in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil". There was no prohibition on the tree of life. Man was put under responsibility to obey God and he was not to take of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. When he took of it he received a conscience, he became conscious of good and

evil, he did not know that before. He never had a conscience before, there was no need for it.

God offered man the tree of life. What is the tree of life? I suppose here in the garden it was a tree, but it speaks of God's Christ, it speaks of a life that God had in mind for man in purpose, that was going to come out in His Christ. He offered it to man in innocence. God held nothing back, He offered man the very best.

Man in innocence was free to eat of the tree of life. Do you understand that? The man was more interested in the other tree, "the tree of the knowledge of good and evil". For younger people here I will say what has often been said – Mr Darby goes along with it – the tree of the knowledge of good and evil is thought to be the apple tree. There is nothing wrong with the apple tree, but God said, Do not eat of it. To eat of the apple tree they disobeyed God, that was lawlessness, sin came in. I would like to say to you, do you not think that, if man had taken the opportunity to eat of the tree of life he would never have sinned? He did not take the opportunity.

Man sinned and he is driven out of the garden, out of paradise. Some have referred to it as the paradise of God, others to the paradise of man, in the sense that man was given responsibility in it to till it and to guard it.

There is a way back. It says, "he drove out Man; and he set the Cherubim, and the flame of the flashing sword, toward the east of the garden of Eden, to guard the way to the tree of life". God protected it. There was a possibility that sinful man might stretch out his hand to eat of it, but God intervened.

I read the two verses as to Adam calling his wife's name Eve, "because she is the mother of all living. And Jehovah Elohim made Adam and his wife coats of skin, and clothed them". Adam, as I understand it, grasped something of the way that God is going to work things out. It says in verse 15 in regard to Satan, "I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; he shall crush thy head". Adam grasped something of that, "because she is the mother of all living". It is a prophetic statement

because at the time she was not the mother of any person. Christ was going to come, “come of woman, come under law, that he might redeem those under law”, Gal 4: 5. What an outlook! Adam grasped something of that. God recognised that there was faith in Adam and he clothed them with skins. Redemption had to come in on our side. What a long arduous road before you come to Revelation, for man, maybe, but for God. It says in the scriptures, “thou hast made me to toil with thy sins”, Isa 43: 24. He was prepared to toil with our sins to make the way back for us to the tree of life. There is no change in the tree of life.

In Revelation I wanted to say a word as to the manna. In Revelation the tree of life is in the paradise of God. What a place

Sin-soiled have never trod (Hymn 206)

It has been said that the cherubim guarded the tree of life until Christ was ascended and glorified, then that tree of life was in the paradise of God. Wonderful matters! God came into our circumstances in the arduous way that things are worked out in the scriptures in the manna. Have you ever thought of that? The manna sets out God incarnate, come down as the bread out of heaven to sustain the life of the believer in the wilderness. The manna is in the wilderness.

Persons who get the gain of the manna have had a certain history with God, they have been converted, they have eaten of the Passover lamb in Egypt. They have done more than that, they have put the blood on the lintel and the doorpost, they are sheltered by the blood of Christ from judgment. They are helped through the Red Sea, a way of escape for them from the life of Egypt with all its pleasures for human kind, You come into the wilderness, others may live in the same block, in the same street and go to the same place where you work, but you are different. Have you ever found out that you are different? Have you ever had a sense, dear younger brethren, of the time when you came to it – maybe just a flash – that you do not belong to this world? There is another world in view. You have to go through this world and He provides food for you in the manna, Christ in lowly circumstances. Pick up the scriptures in the morning and read a little bit, wherever it is He will minister to your

soul, put you in touch with eternal things, put you in touch with the God who is going to sustain you through the day. God was there in Jesus of Nazareth, the Nazarean, a heavenly stranger who dwelt amongst men, touching everything you and I have to touch, (sin apart). That is the manna. Suffering Jesus! Are you a companion of the suffering Jesus? I trust you are. He says, "Reproach hath broken my heart", Ps 69: 20. Have you ever tasted that? Been alongside Christ in reproach?

He is not here any more but He can still sympathise with us in all our sorrows, Christ understands them because He was once here in the circumstances in which we are, that is the stranger of Galilee.

In Acts 8 it says, "who shall declare his generation? for his life is taken from the earth" (v 33). That is His generation in flesh and blood condition. As a young man I was taught that the One who did that was the Father, the Father took His life from the earth, "who shall declare his generation? for his life is taken from the earth", (it is a quote from the Septuagint, the Greek translation of the scriptures). The Father has translated that precious humble Jesus into His own presence and glory and that is the hidden manna. The memory exists of a once humble Jesus – the overcomer in Pergamos is promised to be given of the hidden manna, the Father's treasured memories of a once humbled Christ.

Dear younger brethren, if you have not shared in the reproaches of the Christ here below, how can you share in the hidden manna? The hidden manna is given, it is a gift, "to him that overcomes, to him will I give of the hidden manna". God treasures the memory of Christ's life. These all have future bearings, the addresses to the overcomers, but the Spirit of God would make them real to us at the present time, in some measure. We share with God the memories of Christ. Then he is given a "white stone, and on the stone a new name written, which no one knows but he that receives it". That is a stone which is an expression of divine favour to the believer who receives it. It has been pointed out for us that there are personal joys as well as collective joys. There are personal joys now in my links with my Saviour, with my God, which I have for myself,

which you have for yourself. The white stone is peculiar to the individual, it is given to the overcomer. Oh to be among the overcomers in the times of the breakdown of the church publicly in Christendom, to be a recipient of the white stone, "on the stone a new name written". We will have that as individuals eternally if we are overcomers. You will have a joy with divine Persons individually which no other person will enter into. I will have joy and you will have a joy as an individual that not another soul will enter into. Nobody will be able to meddle with your joy. How blessed to be a Christian! How blessed to be an overcomer!

The manna is not Christ as the tree of life. I have spoken about Him in that way to show how precious He was as the manna, but it is not the tree of life. You do not find the tree of life in the gospels, you do not find it in the wilderness, you may taste of it by the Spirit's power in the wilderness, but it is not there in the wilderness, it is in paradise, in the paradise of God. The Lord Jesus as presented in this scripture, "like the Son of man, clothed with a garment reaching to the feet" (Rev 1: 13), He is overseeing everything. That is the One who will give the overcomer, "to eat of the tree of life which is in the paradise of God".

Sin-soiled feet have never trod;  
Free, our peaceful feet may venture  
In the paradise of God. (Hymn 206)

It is personal. What a hope in reality of feeding on Christ in the paradise of God. There is food for the believer in every circumstance. This is the food of an area of privilege. How it has been kept! God has worked out good and evil, He has worked that out in men and women, He has worked it to the divine triumph by the work of God in your soul and mine. We await bodies of glory conformed to His own body of glory (see 3 Phil. 20,21). We may taste by the Spirit's power something of the tree of life in the paradise of God, but it does not come to us, we have to go there. It is not attainment, it is gift. What a thing to come in for a gift from Christ, to be given to eat "of the tree of life which is in the paradise of God". It came into that hymn we sung: 'Giver',

Object of eternal pleasure.

He is the Giver – how blessed to receive from Christ fruits of that tree. Mr Darby says, holiness, love and joy are the fruits of that land and that tree, to feed on Christ in heavenly circumstances.

I just say something in passing – the old corn of the land is also indigenous to heaven but it is eaten in an area where you have to stand for the truth, but this is not, it is past conflict:

Safety – where no foe approaches;

Rest – where toil shall be no more;

Joy – whereon no grief encroaches;

Peace – where strife shall all be o'er:

What an atmosphere to taste of it, to taste of the heavenly atmosphere but to be actually in it. God holds the treasure there, eternal food, food for eternity in a sphere which is vibrant with life.

The paradise of God will be vibrant with life and that is to be our portion, but I say, you can taste it as an overcomer in some measure at the present time. I think it is experienced in the sphere of privilege. I do not say that exclusively, but I think you are sustained there by that tree. Christ is more than the tree of life, you have to understand that, but I am speaking about Him as presented as the tree of life. The creature has not immortality, God alone has immortality, the creature is sustained eternally by the food of the tree of life.

In Revelation 22 you get the setting of it in the millennium, it is in the holy city. Never seen where sin is, always in its own environment. The tree of life was never lost, man was lost, the tree of life is for persons who are holy and blameless before him in love – “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenlies in Christ; according as he has chosen us in him before the world’s foundation, that we should be holy and blameless before him in love; having marked us out before hand for adoption through Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, to the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he has taken us into favour in the

Beloved”, Eph 1: 3-6. Sin is not mentioned. That is the atmosphere, the fruits of the paradise of God, the tree of life is there for persons “holy and blameless before him in love”. (It has been pointed out that the tree of life is not the fruit of redemption). The tree of life has never altered, never needed to be altered. God presented it in the garden in Genesis 2, presented it in the paradise of God in Revelation 2, unchanged and unchangeable. In the passage in Ephesians, persons “holy and blameless before him in love”; there was no thought of that in the garden, there was no person admitted into that position in the life of Christ here below, not until Christ was in glory and established there, way was made for the tree of life.

Revelation 22 is millennial – there is a very interesting thing here which has puzzled me for a long time, is grace operative in the millennium? You get asked many a time; righteousness reigns, yes it does, but is grace operative? “The leaves of the tree for healing of the nations”, that is grace functioning through the saints of the city.

Only the saints of the holy city, as far as I can see and as far as I understand the teaching, eat of the tree of life. That is food for the holy city. The twelve fruits it has been suggested are in view of administration that we will come into, we will need to be sustained in regard to it by the fruits of the tree of life. And then, “each month yielding its fruit”, but there will be no twelve fruits in eternity. Time will have ceased then, we will eat of the tree of life in the paradise of God according to Revelation 2 verse 7. But here it is a millennial scene, but there is no thought of sin in the area where the tree of life is, it cannot come. “And no curse shall be any more; and the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it; and his servants shall serve him, and they shall see his face; and his name is on their foreheads. And night shall not be any more, and no need of a lamp, and light of the sun; for the Lord God shall shine upon them, and they shall reign to the ages of ages” (vv 3-5).

I have shared some fragmentary thoughts with you, and I trust it has been of help and interest.

For His Name’s sake.

**Kirkcaldy**

**12 March 2005**