

*A*  
*WORD*  
*IN ITS*  
*SEASON*

1<sup>st</sup> Series

No. 307

October 1998

Contents

CHRIST'S GLORY

FOLLOWING

## **CHRIST'S GLORY**

**John 1: 1-3, 14-18; Hebrews 1: 1-4; Colossians 1: 12-20**

D.J.H. I was much encouraged by the hymn which our brother gave out (Hymn 400) because I felt that we should be occupied together with the glory of the Person of Christ. We are affected by the pathway of Jesus as here in lowly grace, moving amongst men, the kindness and love to man of our Saviour God. But behind it all is glory of His Person. The more we consider the greatness and the glory of who He is in Person, the more we are affected by the place He has taken in lowly manhood. Each of scriptures refers to His glory in creation. I feel we could speak over them together to get a impression of the greatness of His Person.

In the first reference we have, "In the beginning was the Word"; God Himself, as it has been said, becoming His own testimony. God was here. As it says elsewhere, "the mystery of piety is great; God has been manifested in flesh", 1 Tim 3: 16. It is not here the question of sin and sins, but in order to make God known and to make Him know in the ways in which He is to be known in blessed relationships. Then in Hebrews we again have reference to His creatorial power; and it says, "having made by himself the purification of sins". God has not had to rely upon any but Himself in relation to that great matter in order that His eternal purpose might be secured. And then I thought in Colossians to see that of such a Person, it says, "And he is the head of the body". What a place the assembly has as such an One stands in relation to it - "he" emphatic "is the head of the body, the assembly; who is the beginning, firstborn from among the dead". I feel the need of help as much as any in speaking rightly of these things and gaining some further impression of the glory of Christ.

L.McF. We feel our limitations as we approach a section like this. It says, "All things received being through him, and without him not one thing received being which has received being". I was

impressed by the verse, that the whole matter of life is related to the knowledge of that Person.

D.J.H. That is very wonderful. It must include ourselves. I remember being impressed at the birth of a baby that not one thing has received being without Him. As to life, it says here, "In him was life". John speaks of it in his epistle, "the eternal life, which was with the Father", 1 John 1: 2 - "In him was life, and the life was the light of men". That life - we are dependent upon Him, so that in that sense we are all dependent upon this Person. How great He is, you are thinking?

L.McF. Yes: life according to God relates to the Person of Jesus, and having had to do with Him in a personal way. We through grace come into this enjoyment. I think it is an enjoyment of life that you speak of as eternal life. Is that right?

D.J.H. Yes. John has that particularly in mind, does he not? The Lord Jesus introduces it in chapter 3, dependent again upon divine operation in new birth, but then that the light of God might be received and that there might be an answer to it in life; "whosoever believes on him may not perish, but have life eternal", John 3: 16. That is this Person, but it is the Person who has come into manhood and remains in manhood forever - the wonder of it.

J.A.P. The beginning here goes back before Genesis! Would you say something about that?

D.J.H. I was struck with an impression that another gave us, quoting an old brother who said as to the beginning here, that He was in the beginning before the beginning began. It is a remarkable expression, but it is just a simple way of conveying this, is it not? We are finite creatures, and we have to think in terms of beginning; we are creatures of time, but this is outside of time altogether. Genesis 1 to which to which you refer - "In the beginning God created" - is a question of time, and when we read it in the light of this scripture it was this Person in any case who created. But He was there before, before the beginning began in that sense.

H.J.G. He was included in the expression "Let us make man".

D.J.H. Yes. Divine counsel entering into that, but having in mind that He Himself would come into manhood. All that could enter into what is said in Colossians, that all things were created by Him and for Him, which would involve that He Himself would come into manhood, as has been said that God would have a vessel here in which He could express His feelings. That is what it was in Jesus, a vessel here in which God could express His feelings. Think of the compassions of God, think of the tears of Jesus; it is the feelings of God coming into expression in a vessel here. For that reason, among others, He took a body that God's feelings might come into expression. That is not going too far?

J.R.C. I think it is something for us to think about, the simplicity of Scripture, yet the depth is there. Man in his poor mind thinks he can compass what is eternal. For the sake of the young folks with us and all of us let us just accept that matter, "In the beginning was the Word".

D.J.H. Yes. In the beginning He was. And however far back we can go to what we might call a beginning He was, He was there before. As it has been said He was in existence eternal, was He not?

J.R.C. In a day when God's rights are ignored, set aside by man and substituted by man's cleverness, this is what we hold on to. Is that right?

D.J.H. Yes. And that why John particularly as writing for our day, as we speak, brings it in in this way. When all that man is as to his thoughts and cleverness and development, whatever it be, and all that has come in through the mind of man intruding into the things of God, John brings us back to this, to a point where there is One who has never changed.

A.S.H. It says, "In him was life, and the life was the light of men". The thought of life and light they both go together.

D.J.H. Yes. The life of God was here. That expression is used, is it not, as to persons being estranged from the life of God, (see Eph 4: 18). It was what came into expression in Jesus, and men are estranged from it. Apart from the work of God, apart from new birth,

we would be estranged from it, but through infinite grace we have an appreciation of the life of God and what it was as coming into expression in Jesus. What light it is to our souls!

J.A.P. This scripture was much used in the 'eternal sonship' question because it is never said in the Bible that the Lord Jesus is the eternal Son; it says, "In the beginning was the Word". We have to bow to that. It helps us if we do, do you think? What is the difference between "attendants on the Word" in Luke 1 and this scripture? It says they were eye-witnesses of and attendants on the Word (see Luke 1: 2).

D.J.H. It is wonderful that there were persons who attended upon Him. In Luke's gospel we see, for instance in chapter 8, that there were the women who ministered to Him of their substance, persons who attended upon Him. What a privilege it was, these eye-witnesses, so that the matter is established with irrefutable witness as to the Person that was here. John says here, "We have contemplated his glory, a glory as of an only begotten with a father".

The One whom we now know as the Word, the One in whom God has come in to be His own testimony, is the One who is there in eternal existence, in nature divine, in Person distinct, as has been said. What the relationships were we do not know. There is no reference in Scripture to a relationship existing before He came into manhood, but as here in manhood He was taken account of as an onlybegotten with a father.

L.McF. So the Word became flesh; it is really the Creator, the Creator coming into conditions in which He could be near to us. Of course we would have to distinguish that flesh from our flesh would we not?

D.J.H. It has been said He derived nothing morally from the source through which He came as after the flesh; it says, "come of woman, come under law, that he might redeem those under law, that we might receive sonship", Gal 4: 4,5. But He derived nothing morally from the source through which He came and yet how real His

humanity as come of woman, was it not? Is that what you are thinking?

L.McF. Yes. "And dwelt among us". In a coming day it will be God tabernacling with men, but this thought preceded that; the lowliness of Jesus.

D.J.H. Yes, it is wonderful. And yet this Person as you say, in lowliness here - and I believe as said at the beginning, that the more we apprehend the greatness of the Person, the more we shall be drawn out in our affections in relation to the lowliness of Jesus here.

K.N.P. I was wondering if it is very clear, because "the Word was with God, and the Word was God". There can be no confusion, can there?

D.J.H. No. And then, you might say, to make it abundantly clear, "He was in the beginning with God". There is no question at all as to the distinctiveness of His Person and yet as Himself God in the fullest sense, in that it says that the fulness of the Godhead dwelt in Him. I was touched, too, with the reference that was made in the meetings in London two years ago, drawing attention to the fact that it says the Word became flesh; it does not say flesh and blood, that is, that He came into, shall we say, a substantial condition and that condition remains, that is, He is still a Man. If it said He came into flesh and blood that condition has been terminated, it was terminated in His death. But the Word became flesh, that is He came into a condition in which He could be taken account of and seen, and we shall see Him. That is the hope that we have in our hearts that we shall see Him and when we see Him we shall be like Him. He could say as out of death that a spirit has not flesh and bones as ye see Me having (see Luke 24: 39). The Word became flesh, having taken on manhood He retains manhood eternally yet never ceasing to be who He is in the glory of His Person. You would go with that?

L.McF. Fully. So He emptied Himself, according to Philippians, of a condition that we really could not understand, in becoming Man. His manner of life; I am thinking too of the matter of love - God is love - how this came out in full expression in this glorious Person.

D.J.H. So He is in nature divine, is He not, "The Word was God".

J.R.C. What you have been saying answers what I was thinking about. The expression "the Word", where did that come from?

D.J.H. That is an interesting question because He was given the name of Jesus - "thou shalt call his name Jesus" - and He was the Christ in relation to Israel. It seems as though it was a designation that was given to Him by the disciples as recognising that God was coming in as His own testimony. It would relate to what it says in Hebrews, "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". It seems as though the disciples had an impression that in this Person God Himself was speaking. So the writer in Hebrews goes on to say "For this reason we should give heed more abundantly to the things we have heard" because of the nature of the Person through whom they have been heard, who is in fact God Himself (see Heb 2: 1).

J.R.C. I think that helps. Therefore wisdom has been in that matter, "the Word" - even here it has a capital showing appreciation of the fact of who the Person is.

D.J.H. Yes I think so. We might move on to Hebrews. We often contemplate in this chapter the alternation almost between the references to His deity and His humanity. We do not get that in the same way where we have been reading in John where the glory of the Person and His relations with the Father are more in mind. But here we have the places that He has been given or He has taken; He has been established heir of all things, and it speaks of Him "having made by himself the purification of sins". But then who else could set himself down? He has set Himself down as man, but what man could take that place? A place on the right hand of the greatness on high. What can we say as to that? How do you understand that?

J.A.P. I do not know much, but I think the work of purification that the Lord Jesus has accomplished is greater than His work in creation. What would you say?

D.J.H. I am sure that is right. That entered into what He said in relation to the paralytic, "Which is easier: to say, Thy sins are forgiven; or to say, Rise up and walk?", Matt 9: 5. We would not speak of it as being easy, because it could only be God who could do it, who could act creatorially, and say, Rise up and walk; who could speak and it was done, command and it stood fast. But our sins could not be met that way. It involved that this Person should go into death and Himself make purification for sins. Yet because of who it is that has done it it must be to the absolute satisfaction of God Himself.

J.A.P. We had that hymn about Jehovah's Fellow. That is in the prophet (Zech 13: 7), that was the Lord Jesus. The sin question was resolved by God, "He who, yea, has not spared his own Son, but delivered him up for us all", Rom 8: 32. It is beyond us what He has accomplished. I think the illustration you give is very excellent, Which is easier to say? To forgive the man his sins cost the Lord Jesus everything.

D.J.H. That was not an act of creation, was it? We have reference to it again in Colossians, in whom we have redemption". Ephesians is "In whom we have redemption through his blood" (Eph 1: 5), His humanity more being in mind, but it is in this Person. While it was in Him as Man, and while it was as Man that He made purification for sins, it is this Person. It is something that is, in a sense, too great for us to grasp, the reality of His Person. We often quote what Mr Darby said, when questioned as to whether it was God that died, that the Man that died was God. These things are really beyond us to comprehend, but we apprehend them by faith and they give us assurance, as nothing else could, that that question has been settled for God's entire satisfaction.

L.McF. So the character of the speaking at the present time is "in these days has spoken to us in the person of the Son". Is that not an affectionate approach, the speaking is in Son, how God has come near to us and it is to draw out our affections, do you think, for the Father and the Son?

D.J.H. Would you not say that it would connect with what we read in John's gospel, "No one has seen God at any time; the only-begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him". That is really God speaking in Son, but as you say what affection is there, who can say?

L.D.P. I just wonder if "speaking in Son" would be in line with what is seen in Acts 1: 1, "all things which Jesus began both to do and to teach"; it is expressed in words and in deed.

D.J.H. I am sure that would be so - the distinction is made in Hebrews as to the speaking on Sinai and the speaking in Son. As our brother says, it is a point of affection the way in which the Lord has come to us and what has been involved in it, as it says, "And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us". How that would affect us! I think the beginning of the second chapter of the epistle would relate to that. For this reason we ought to give more abundant heed when we think of the One who has come to us and what has been involved, what has been referred to, that He emptied Himself and came into this condition, apart from sin, in order that God might speak to us in this affectionate way.

A.S.H. I was thinking of what the Father said of the Son, 'This is my beloved Son: hear him', Mark 9: 7. Every other man is put out of court – "my beloved Son: hear him".

D.J.H. That is good. At the transfiguration Peter would have put two alongside Him; wonderful that they were talking with Him in glory as to His departure which He was about to accomplish, but the cloud overshadowed them, and then that voice out of the cloud, "This is my beloved Son: hear him". And then when they fully awoke they saw no one but Jesus alone. I am sure that helps, that was God speaking in Son, "hear him". But it was God who was speaking, that is the point, is it not?

L.McF. So we become contemplators. "We have contemplated his glory, a glory as of an onlybegotten with a father, full of grace and truth". That ought to be our occupation, do you think?

D.J.H. Yes indeed; that is beautiful. I felt that while we are affected in our inwards in view of affectionate response towards Him as we take account of His humanity, that that would be increased with us if we had a deeper apprehension of the Person who came that way and who remains a Man and in whom we shall see God. That is the pure in heart, for they shall see God, it says, (see Matt 5: 8). John delights to make references does he not, in his epistle and in the Revelation where it is impossible to separate between God and the Lamb. "The throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it; and his servants shall serve him, and they shall see his face", Rev 22: 3,4. It does not say whether it is God or the Lamb, but it is God and the Lamb, and they shall see His face. A blessed hope before us, is it not? And yet the truth ever remains that no man has seen God at any time; that is as to His essential being. He could not have come nearer.

P.Z. I was looking at verse 24 in John 17, "I desire that where I am they also may be with me, that they may behold my glory which thou hast given me, for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world". It is affecting to see what place we have been given, sinners and strangers we are brought nigh so that we can behold His glory.

D.J.H. Wonderful, is it not? Others may remember what Mr Taylor said as to that. He linked it with the earlier reference to His glory where He says, "the glory which I had along with thee before the world was", John 17: 5. Not that that is the glory that we behold, but he put those two together and in relation to that verse where it speaks of beholding His glory - "that they may behold my glory" - he used the expression which is more than I could explain, but it makes you bow in worship, that we are brought thus "to the edge of abstract deity". That was a remarkable expression, that we are brought "to the edge of abstract deity"; we are brought so near, are we not? There is what is inscrutable. I like to think of it like the horizon when you are at sea, that you never reach it. It is not as if you come up against a brick waif and that is the end, but although you never reach it, yet you can keep going and going and going and reaching into it.

Another said that we can be bold in the sphere of revelation but

never seek to encroach upon what is not revealed. You never seem to get to the end, and yet you know that there is a point beyond which you cannot reach, and it is all in this Person:

God manifest in flesh, O wonder of the His universe!  
O wisdom all divine! That takes such blessed, lowly ways

(Hymn 400).

I felt so much confirmed by that hymn.

K.N.P. The reference here to "the effulgence of his glory" would link with what you are saying, would it not? The footnote refers to 'that which fully presents the glory which is in something else'. God manifest in flesh, there it is in a Person but that is how we come near to it. We cannot enter into anything without Christ.

D.J.H. That is right. That is a good note to draw attention to, 'that which fully presents the glory which is in something else'. Paul speaks of it, "the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ", 2 Cor 4: 6. That is where it is, is it not, in the face of a Man, and yet that Man is who He is as to His own Person. But it is the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ, the glory which is in something else, it is the glory of God Himself. And yet the Person in whom it shines is Himself God, but we see it in the face of a Man.

J.R.C. It is very encouraging, in John's gospel where we read, it speaks of "dwelt among us" - dwelling conditions and yet the Person infinitely beyond us.

D.J.H. Our brother referred to the fact of the tabernacle of God with men. It was really almost anticipated when Jesus was here in these conditions; yet then it will be in conditions absolutely suited, where there is nothing of the mixture which we find with ourselves and which was with those with whom He dwelt at that time. It seemed to look forward to what God had in His mind according to His purpose.

J.A.P. It is a good point our brother brings up about dwelling, because they constrained Him in Luke 24. Two subject people, maybe a husband and a wife, in a low state, but He brought them back to the company. What do you say about that?

D.J.H. You mean that that is what is in mind; it is the company. We have it now of course by the Holy Spirit being here, the Person of the Holy Spirit here in the assembly, but it is really the company that is in mind. We may have impressions ourselves and experiences ourselves as He could say, "We will come to him and make our abode with him" (John 14: 23) - that is to the individual, is it not? But what is in mind is the company. So that while John was alone on Patmos he became in the Spirit on the Lord's day and he immediately relates himself as "your brother and fellow-partaker"; he immediately as it were, in Spirit links himself on with the company.

A.S.H. "The Word became flesh, and dwelt among us" yet He did not derive anything from the flesh. He passed right through as a root out of dry ground.

D.J.H. Yes, He derived nothing. It is wonderful that He should be here thus and drawing everything from above. Nights in prayer, who of us could sustain that? The occasion which was referred to earlier as to the transfiguration, it was as He prayed, was it not? You get the Father's delight. What it must have been to be in communion with such a Man here in this relationship, as our brother said, into which He had come - coming into the relationship of sonship. What it must have meant to the Father to have Him in that relationship.

D.McF. Could you say something as to the thought of setting Himself down at the right hand.

D.J.H. I think it just shows the way in which the work was absolutely completed. There is no more to be done. Even as it speaks later of the High Priest, as the High Priest He has set Himself down; He is not standing to minister in that sense because His work is complete, the sacrifice is complete. And here His work is complete, this great work of making purification of sins by Himself and He has set Himself down on the right hand of the greatness on high. It was to the absolute satisfaction of God, but then He knew that because of who He was Himself and yet it was as Man that it was accomplished.

H.J.G. All that had to be completed first for man to be in liberty in God's presence. So we need to have a very great impression of

Him, of course, not only because He is the One who has done it but because of what has been done too.

D.J.H. Yes. Not that we would be with Him in this place, but the fact that Man is in the presence of God makes ways for us, you are thinking?

H.J.G. It could not be apart from this, "having made by himself the purification of sins".

D.J.H. Absolutely. As I said there is no question as to the perfection of the work because God has done it Himself. It has involved this Person coming into manhood and effecting it by His death and the shedding of His precious blood, but it is by Himself. God has never had to go outside Himself to secure His great end that He should have man for His pleasure eternally in His presence in relationship and in affection.

H.J.G. The hymn says:

To secure Thy plan so holy, (Hymn 141)

D.J.H. Yes. Perhaps we should move on to Colossians. Where we read in John and Hebrews we do not exactly get ourselves brought in in relationship, save, as you say, that in Hebrews the fact that He has gone in as Man makes way for us, and as He said in John 14: "and shall receive you to myself, that where I am ye also may be".

But here we actually have His relationship; as it says, "And he is the head of the body, the assembly". We actually get this emphatic "he" as the One who is in that position in relation to the assembly. It should make us have a greater apprehension of the greatness of the place we have as of His body.

G.A. Would you say a word about Matthew 5. It says, "Think not that I am come to make void the law or the prophets; I am not come to make void, but to fulfil" (v 17). I was thinking of the word "to fulfil"; it is not to make void the law here, but Jesus has come in to fulfil. Would this fit in with what you are saying?

D.J.H. It was as coming into manhood, as we sometimes sing:

All Thou hast e'er desired from man we see In Him (Hymn 119)

The law gave the divine requirement for man. If man could have kept it man would have been for God's pleasure. But man could not keep it. But here was one blessed Man who could fill it out so that God had One in whom everything was secured according to what He required. As it says He magnified the law and made it honourable (Isa 42: 21); God was, in that sense, vindicated in giving the law because it was not impossible, but there was only One who could fill it out and that was Jesus, God Himself in fact come in in that way.

J.A.P. The expression in Colossians that you refer to, He is the beginning; in Colossians that beginning is connected with the resurrection. What would you say about that? That is the beginning for us, Christ raised from among the dead.

D.J.H. Yes. That all involves the way He went, does it not, to close that one order altogether in that condition of flesh and blood in which man had failed, but as out of death He has secured another order in which we can have part. He was of that order, of course, as coming into the world as to the com of wheat, "Except the grain of wheat falling into the ground die, it abides alone", John 12: 24. Our brother stressed the word 'it abides'; what was here in Jesus in blood and flesh was an abiding order of humanity - that order abides. And through the work of God and the work of redemption we have part in that order. Apart from His death that order would abide alone; now there is the much fruit which has been secured through His death. It was an abiding order of humanity, only once here in flesh and blood in Jesus, but now in another condition in glory out of death in resurrection; man has been secured after that order. Is that as you understand it?

J.R.C. How do we understand this very close connection between the body, and he immediately goes on to say the assembly?

D.J.H. That is wonderful, again stressing the reality of His manhood. This could be spoken of as the body; He is the glorious Head, is He not, the assembly is the body. But then not only for Himself, it goes on to say, "He is the head of the body, the assembly". So that it is not only for Himself but it is the assembly of the living God. And as

referred to earlier, the assembly will be the tabernacle of God eternally. The reference to the assembly is wider than the body, is it not? Is that right to say?

J.R.C. I think that is right. The body therefore is a very personal touch in regard to Christ Himself. He is Head of the body. Is it right to say that the body is presently under the guidance and the help of the Holy Spirit.

D.J.H. That is right. So that it speaks of it later - "not holding fast the head" (Col 2: 19), that is the negative side, but it says, "from whom all the body, ministered to and united together by the joints and bands, increases with the increase of God", everything in the body comes from Him, does it not?

J.R.C. Mr Stoney speaks very much of the imperative of finding our place in the body.

D.J.H. How wonderful that is when we take account of this scripture that He is Head of the body. That was what was affecting me, the greatness of the Person, His creatorial glory brought in and yet He is Head of the body. How that increases in our minds the greatness of the body and then magnifies the grace that would give us to have part in it.

J.R.C. Therefore to understand the body, maybe in some little way, it links on with the assembly, which is a very dignified matter.

D.J.H. Yes. Of course the assembly embraces all the saints of the assembly, many or the most of whom are with Christ: but the body is what is here in the unity of the Spirit. So again the assembly is a wider thought in that respect, is it not? The body is a living organism.

L.McF. "In him all the fulness of the Godhead was pleased to dwell". Can you explain that?

D.J.H. No. It is interesting, taking account of what we have been speaking of earlier, that He dwelt among us, but all the Fulness was pleased to dwell in Him and it now dwells in Him bodily. Which again reminds us that He is still there as a Man, all the Fulness dwelling in Him bodily. But here again, as to all that had come in in the way of

distance - as it speaks of "alienated and enemies in mind by wicked works" - it says, "by him to reconcile all things to itself". That is again that God has not had to go outside Himself to meet the whole question that had come in bringing in distance between man and God.

L.McF. You have complacency here; divine Persons are complacent in relation to that great work.

D.J.H. Yes. You are thinking of what often has been said, that where there was distance now there is complacency. That is reconciliation accomplished, is it not, and as we have been reminded that is an objective matter. It has been accomplished, as it says here; "to reconcile all things to itself, having made peace by the blood of his cross". That is, it has been done.

## **NEW YORK**

**9 May 1998**

### **Key to initials**

G.Ashby - New York; J.R.Cumming - Edinburgh; H.J.Glass - Toronto; A.S.Hinckson - New York; D.J.Hutson - London; L.Mcfarlane - New York; J.A.Petersen - Plainfield; K.N.Pye - New York; L.D.Phillips - New York; P.Zaklama - New York.

## **FOLLOWING**

**David Hutson**

**Hebrews 12: 1-3; Joshua 14: 6-15; 16: 13-10; John 21: 19-22**

I want to say a word, beloved, to stimulate us in regard to following.

Think of this word in Hebrews, "looking stedfastly on Jesus the leader and completer of faith". The footnote, the brethren will observe, says, 'It means, looking away from other things and fixing the eye exclusively on one'. One feels the need of that for oneself, but I read the other scriptures with a view to stimulating us in that regard. How wonderful to look at Jesus in that way! We have been speaking of Him as to the glory of His Person, who He is, the Creator - "without him not one thing has received being which has received being" - the One by whom God made the worlds, who upholds all things by the word of His power. But here the writer delights to use that precious Name of Jesus, "looking stedfastly on Jesus", fixing the eye exclusively on Him. How prone we are to look to others! Thank God for others whom we have that we can go on with, but again the writer here says, "Let us" emphatic "also therefore", so he is implying that there would be others going on together. What need there is for each one of us to be looking exclusively on Jesus, the One who has completed the course, the Originator, as it says, "the leader and completer of faith". Again the reference to Himself as the Leader, as the footnote shows if we follow it through, is a word which is used exclusively as to Himself. It is the same word as where it speaks of Him as the Originator of life (see Acts 3: 15), which would relate again to what were speaking of in the reading, "In him was life, and the life was the light of men", John 1: 4. He was the Originator of life, but the light appeared in darkness, and the darkness apprehended it not, and they slew the Originator of life. But here He is as the leader and completer of faith. He has set on the pathway as no other could set it on; there had been men of God before, this great cloud of witnesses, and they have been added to in the time in which we are. These men, you might say, lived in a different day from ourselves, they did not have to face what we have to face, they

were not here literally in the pathway of a rejected Christ, but nevertheless we have had this great crown of witnesses added to.

The martyrs laid down their life for the Name of Jesus: they have all been added to this great cloud of witnesses who have gone before.

How it behoves us to follow as they did; considering not for themselves in any way but looking stedfastly on Jesus, the One who is the "same yesterday, today and to the ages to come" (see Heb 13: 8): the One who is the same for us as He was for them, the Originator, "the leader and completer of faith". He has completed the path, as it says, "who, in view of the joy lying before him, endured the cross". None of us will ever have to go that way. We have been speaking of the way in which He went, the work which He did which was absolutely complete. So again it says, "and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God". That is where He is, the pinnacle of power in the universe, the One on whom we can look stedfastly and count upon the power which comes from Himself. The power which is here in the Holy Spirit, administered by the Spirit, but coming from the power at the right hand of God where Jesus is and where He has gone, as it says elsewhere, as forerunner for (see Heb 6: 20), entering in within the veil. As has been said, God in a sense is behind His providence, the work of His providence. But we are not governed by God's providence; we enter in beyond providence to where Jesus is entered in within the veil and we look stedfastly on Jesus the One who is the leader and the completer of faith.

"Consider well him", that is what we have been doing in the reading, beloved, we have considered well Him. Think of who He is in the glory of His Person and yet the One who was here as the leader and completer of faith, the One who has set Himself down at the right hand of the throne of God. So we have one to whom we can look and not be deflected, not looking at others. As I say, thank God there are others, but as has been said, we are in the day of the individual. Thank God we can go on together, but each one of us has to look to himself and each of us has to be looking stedfastly on Jesus. The Holy Spirit would keep Him before us, our living and glorified Lord. We would look to Him and follow Him, as we have in the other references that I read. Peter was apt to be looking at

someone else, but the Lord Jesus could say to him, "If I will that he abide until I come, what is that to thee? Follow thou me". I believe, dear brethren, that the Lord would say that to us today. Thank God, as I say, there are others who are going on in this course and who are following, but what of them? That is not the point, the point for each one of us is that the Lord would say to us freshly today, "What is that to thee". We would say, What about him? But the Lord would say, "What is that to thee? Follow thou me". It speaks of the way that John had special relations with Jesus, the way he could speak of himself as the disciple whom Jesus loved, the one who leaned on His breast, the one who was in His bosom at a time of crisis. "What of this man?" But no, that is not the point; "Follow thou me". That is the Lord's matter as to any other one and it is up to every one of us as to our own personal relations with the Lord. But the word is, "Follow thou me". We have been led astray enough and enough sorrow has been caused by following men, but the word is "Follow thou me".

That was how Caleb was. That is why I read of him. It shows the results, the far-reaching results, of a man setting himself to follow Jehovah. He had to endure. The word in Hebrews was to "consider well him who endured". Think of what Caleb had to endure, but he followed, he followed all the way, followed through all this time in the wilderness. What it must have meant to him! You read the book of Numbers and you find the murmurings and the disasters that happened to the people, plagues that came in because of their unbelief and the murmuring, the brazen serpent and all that kind of thing and Caleb went through it all. What it must have meant to him, but there was the land in his heart. How he must have longed to have his part in it, to have that portion that he had been promised, the one that he had set his foot upon. But with the erring people he had to go through all that time in the wilderness and yet he kept his eye on Jehovah, he followed Jehovah. He says, "I wholly followed Jehovah my God". That was it; he had his personal relations with God. That is what kept him all the way through. He was not among the murmurers, he was not among those who lightly esteemed the

man, he was not among those whom Moses illadvisedly had to term rebels, he wholly followed Jehovah. He says, "I wholly followed Jehovah my God". He would be one in our day who was looking stedfastly on Jesus. He wholly followed, not looking to others, looking away from all others and keeping his eye wholly on Jehovah; "I wholly followed Jehovah my God". His personal relations with God are what held him and he followed. All the murmurings and all the wanderings he refers to here, "when Israel wandered in the wilderness", nevertheless God was leading them and Caleb was following, "wholly followed Jehovah my God". And he could remind Joshua of it and what Moses had said, "thou hast wholly followed Jehovah my God", and he said, "Jehovah has kept me alive". That would be in it for us that if we are set to follow we shall be kept alive, kept alive by the Spirit of God, kept alive in this pathway of following as He would keep Jesus before us that we might be looking stedfastly on Jesus the leader and completer of faith. And he says, "Jehovah spoke this word to Moses, when Israel wandered in the wilderness; and behold I am this day eighty-five years old. I am still this day strong, as in the day that Moses sent me: as my strength was then, even so is my strength now, for war". This was Ephesian conflict, this was conflict in the land. He had come through the wilderness but he was looking now to conflict in the land and he felt strong for it. He was one who was fitted out with the whole panoply of God and he was waiting upon God; "they that wait upon Jehovah shall renew their strength: they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not tire; they shall walk, and not faint", Isa 40: 31. This is Caleb: he was wholly following and he was waiting on Jehovah and he was here mounting up, as it were, with wings as eagles, walking and not being weary, running and not fainting. He was able to get right through in spite of his increasing years. He said, "as my strength was then, even so is my strength now, for war, both to go out and to come in". He was able to have his part in the testimony, able to go out - we go out in the testimony - but then he was able to come in, come in to enjoy in type the privileges of the assembly. That is what you can do if you are wholly following, keeping the Lord Jesus before you; looking on Jesus, not being

deflected by what others may say or what others may do or how others may fall away. How many had fallen away. A whole generation had fallen away in the wilderness, their carcasses had fallen in the wilderness. But Caleb was going through and his strength was the same all the way because he was waiting upon Jehovah. And he says, "And now give me this mountain". He was not looking for an easy path but he was laying hold of the purpose of God. He wanted to have it for himself; he says, "give me this mountain, of which Jehovah spoke in that day". He realised that the enemy would be against him. We cannot minimise what the enemy would do; one way or another he would seek to hinder us from entering into the present enjoyment of the purpose of God. But there is strength for it, strength for the conflict in the land, against spiritual wickedness in heavenly places. The enemy is set against our entering now, not only for ourselves and our own enjoyment but for the satisfaction of God's heart as we enter into the enjoyment of the inheritance for ourselves. He says, I am well able - "If so be Jehovah shall be with me, than I shall dispossess them, as Jehovah said". What a man this is to have in your local company, dear brethren, what a man it is! I think something has been known of it in this city, a man of this kind in times past - what it is! And it says, "And the land rested from war". What a time it was when our beloved brother served in this city. You might say he laid hold of the purpose of God, and who was wholly following in this way. It says the land rested from war. It was a time when there were no major conflicts, as we say, no major divisions among the people of God who were being recovered to the truth - the land rested from war. Think of the effect of a man who is wholly following, the one who has his eye exclusively on Jesus, the One who is the leader and completer of faith; the One who has gone through and completed it. So that is one result in the local assembly, a man like that who is able for the conflict. It is not only for his own satisfaction, but he is able for these things, and the land rested from war. He brings in peace in the local assembly. A man of influence too. We noticed at the beginning that it says the children of Judah came near to Joshua and Caleb spoke. It seems as though he had influence, so that all the children of Judah

came near. It speaks elsewhere of the tribe of the children of Judah. But here it simply says the children of Judah, it is as it were the family side of things, like we have in the day in which we are, like John would bring us into. Caleb had influence in the family; and they came to Joshua, and Caleb spoke and he spoke no doubt having the family in his heart and the result was they were brought to peace, the land rested from war.

But then he was also a man of influence. He was a man who was concerned as to the continuation of the testimony. And a man like this is concerned as to the continuation of the testimony and so he stimulates the younger brethren. He says, There is still something more to go in for. And as long as we are here, dear brethren, there is always something more to go in for. We never reach the end in that sense, there is always something to go in for and Caleb is one who would stimulate others to go in for what still remains. So it speaks of the way he dispossessed these three sons of Anak and he was able to secure the inheritance for himself. But then he says there is something more and there is a prize for going in for it.

This young man, as we suppose, comes to light, Othniel, and he is stimulated too. No doubt he would be taking his cue, as it were, from Caleb; he would be valuing the inheritance, he would value what the purpose of God was and he would take account of the way Caleb had acted in relation to it: the way in which he was able for war. Othniel would equip himself in the same way so that he also was able to smite this other city. And what comes to light as this young man, as we often speak of him, Othniel the son of Kenaz takes this city, is that there is something more secure, there is something in life again in relation to the local assembly, as we would speak of this. He gave him Achsah his daughter, as wife. He is in type able to have some fresh experience of the assembly as it is vitally, as it is in relation to the Holy Spirit. She herself has clearly an appreciation of the inheritance, she urged him to ask of her father a field. There was something there which she had in mind would bear fruit for God. That is what the inheritance was for, it was in view of

what it would yield for God. It was for the blessing of His people, but, dear brethren, that is what is in view all the time. Although we are brought into great blessing, how wonderful it is to be brought into the light of the purpose of God, the light of the knowledge of God, a wonderful sphere of revelation into which we are brought, yet nevertheless the great object in it all is that there should be fruit for God. So she urged him to ask of her father a field; she wants something which is going to bear fruit to God. And she realises that if there is going to be fruit for God it can only be as the Holy Spirit has His way. And so she comes to Caleb herself - this is not now that she urged Othniel, although we might say, he was persuaded by some impress of the local assembly, he was concerned with her as to the fruitfulness that there should be for God, but then she says: "Give me a blessing; for thou hast given me a southern land; give me also springs of water. Then he gave her the upper springs and the lower springs". He puts it in that order, the upper springs and the lower springs; the upper springs no doubt would be in view of what would be for God. It would be the Ephesian order of things, what would be flowing, in the upper districts, what would be for the pleasure of God in fruitfulness that would be coming, and she would seek that there might be the liberty and power of the Spirit in view of what would be yielded for God. There would also be, just as Joshua had said, that he would go out and come in, so she is thinking primarily of what there is for God in the upper springs. But then there is to be the power and refreshment of the lower springs in view of what there is to be secured here in testimony at the present time.

And what is to be here in testimony is Christ. I remember the question has been asked at times, What is the testimony? And the best answer to that I think is that the testimony is Christ. It was Christ personally when He was here but now it is Christ characteristically, and in the power of the Spirit there is to be maintained here that which is characteristic of Christ maintained in testimony. As Paul could say as to himself, "that the life also of Jesus may be manifested in our mortal flesh", 2 Cor 4: 1.

Well, these things are very stimulating to us. As I said at the beginning, it is a time of the individual. It is not a time to look and see how anybody else is going on, although that enters into it because you remember that where we read in John it is a time when Peter is given his commission as to shepherding; there is the feeding of the lambs and the shepherding of the sheep and the feeding of the sheep. So that we are not to be unconcerned as to others how they are getting on and how Peter took it on. You read in his epistle how he speaks of "not as lording it over your possessions" in relation to the flock (1 Peter 5: 3). He would not say, as some do, This is my flock, but he would recognise who it belongs to. The time is coming when, as he says, the chief Shepherd is going to be manifest. But here, although concerned in that respect as to the sheep and the lambs feeding and shepherding, nevertheless this matter comes up and Jesus says to him, "follow thou me". He tells him what the end is going to be for himself, the way in which he would glorify God in his death, so that Peter could speak of it. There are not many who knew that they were going to be taken before the Lord comes. Paul could say, "we, the living, who remain to the coming of the Lord" (1 Thess 4: 15), and that blessed event, beloved, is nearer than ever it was. We are looking for the Lord Jesus to come with an assembling shout, with archangel's voice and trump of God. He will gather all to Himself which He has secured by His precious death. But Peter knew he would not be here then; he had been told by which death he would glorify God. But in the meantime he is to be following. We are to be following until the Lord comes. That is all we can say, however long that would be. It may not be a matter of months, it may be a matter of days, indeed it may not even be a matter of days. How wonderful that is, the imminence! May it ever be kept before us as we are following Him, so that our pathway may be completed for His pleasure. The word is to Peter "Follow men; that is, there is something to do in relation to the saints in the shepherding service, but the great thing is, "Follow me". So if we are to be of any use among the saints like Caleb in stimulating others and bringing others into the gain of the purpose of God, the great point is as with Caleb, "Follow thou me". He wholly followed Jehovah - looking away from

others and fixing the eye exclusively on One, looking unto Jesus the leader and completer of faith.

Peter again, what a lesson book he is for us! Not that we speak disparagingly of Peter: as a brother once said, "when we get to heaven we will feel pretty small alongside him, but what a lesson book he is for us, and here he says, "And what of this man? ". Well, the great point is, as I say, it is the day of the individual. Thank God we are set together. Our brother Mr A.J.Gardiner used to say to us that 2 Timothy 2 is the guarantee of Christian fellowship until the Lord comes; "pursue righteousness faith, love, peace, with those that call upon the Lord out of a pure heart", 2 Tim 2: 22. And we are not exhorted to impossibilities, it is the guarantee that there will always be some with whom we can walk and walk so as to please God. But Peter is looking at others, "Lord, and what of this man? Jesus says to him, If I will that he abide until I come, what is that to thee?". Well, dear brethren, the prospect is that we shall abide until He comes. Are we going to abide with His followers? "When the Son of man comes, shall he indeed find faith on the earth?", Luke 18: 8. Have we faith in the Son of God? Get the victory over the world; it says, he that gets the victory over the world is he that believes that Jesus is the Son of God (see 1 John 5: 5). So we are in the position of victory and we can have our eye on Jesus, exclusively following Him.

Thank God others will be following with us but that is not our matter; that is His matter. We have responsibility in relation to them, but the great point is to fix our eyes exclusively on Him, the leader and completer. He has suffered for us, giving us a Model that we should follow in His steps, perhaps a form of the sufferings of Christ that we do not speak of much; it says, He has suffered for us, giving us a model (see 1 Peter 2: 21). He has given us a Model but He suffered for us, giving us a Model that we should follow in His steps.

May the Lord help us to follow. For His Name's sake.

**NEW YORK**

**9 May 1998**