

A
WORD
IN ITS
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Contents

THE CITY OF DAVID

THE LORD SPEAKING OF HIMSELF

THE CITY OF DAVID

2 Samuel 5: 1-10; 6: 12-16; 15: 25-29, 37

W.McK. We spoke the other night about the thought of the city; today we might consider the idea of the city as linked especially with David. 2 Samuel 5 brings out this thought; David called it "the city of David". It was literally Jerusalem, but he called it "the city of David". We generally think of the Lord's links with the assembly as involving His body and His bride, but perhaps we need to think about the fact that the assembly is His administratively as well. The city of David would indicate that the Lord views the assembly as an area of habitation and administration. David would set out the thought of the headship of Christ; he is called king, yet for us the thought is that the Lord is head. There are certain elements that are against this thought - which we need to consider briefly, not at length - that is the Jebusites who are against David having full possession of the city of David; and then in chapter 6 Michal who is the secret despiser of David, she despised him in her heart. Unlike the Jebusites, she did not say, at this point, anything, although she did subsequently what is secret in the way of despising comes to light and it is accompanied by certain governmental consequences. 2 Samuel 15 would bear especially on the current position of the testimony. The Lord is in rejection and the thought of Jerusalem has been taken over by the spirit of antichrist, but it is interesting that the king does not here call it the city of David or Jerusalem, but "the city", as though the Lord would remind us that in spite of what has happened to Jerusalem, that is the assembly publicly, this thought of "the city" is found in persons. This affords Him a means of meeting through the priests, Zadok and his sons and then Hushai his friend, the opposition that come to light in Absalom.

L.McF. The supremacy of Christ, as we had in our hymn (hymn 313), would be involved as we think of David who has met the enemy, broken his power, and then all Israel acknowledge his rights.

W.McK. The power of the enemy has been met. David slew Goliath and took his head to Jerusalem; the Lord has led captivity captive.

We should always keep in mind that the Lord has dealt with whatever is against the testimony in the sense of evil headship. So these persons come to David and they say, "Behold, we are thy bone and thy flesh". Typically it would allude to the fact that we are conscious that we are the brethren of Christ. I think the sense of that in our souls underlies our understanding intelligently and sympathetically the thought of the city of David. It is not just an abstract thought, the city of David, but it appears concretely in persons who are morally in His own order.

L.McF. These persons had previously come to David in his rejection in the cave. That is where we rightly begin, do you think?

W.McK. Yes, in the acceptance of the reproach of Christ. As we deepen in our acceptance of that, what will deepen in our souls is the consciousness that we are His kindred, we are of His bone and of His flesh. Even though Saul had dominion over us at one time, there was the recognition of who was leading out and bringing in Israel. Despite all that has transpired in the assembly's history and especially in the recovery of the truth, one' thing that has always come through is that the Lord is the One who has led out and brought in those that are of His kindred.

J.A.P. Another place, Hebron, is employed but immediately Jerusalem seems to be in view.

W.McK. Hebron as we know alludes in type to what is before the world. If we can get into our souls that as being Christ's kindred we are related to Him from the standpoint of purpose, I think we will want to move on with Him to the full Ephesian thought of the assembly, which Jerusalem would indicate.

J.A.P. That is very helpful. I was wondering about the connection in Ephesians with "a habitation" (Eph 2: 22) - you said the matter of habitation enters into the city - "a habitation of God in the Spirit".

W.McK. That is an important point for us to retain. Although it might seem that the public position is largely uninhabitable because of the

increasing spirit of apostasy, yet there is an area where the divine thought as to the city can be entered into and enjoyed. This book will show us that in a certain sense there is the thought of a city within a city: there is the city to which Zadok had carried the ark back and where Hushai could go; there is the public position into which Absalom came to Jerusalem. All about us there is the public religious aspect of the city, especially centred in Rome, but there is something within that which is precious to Christ and where His friends are found.

L.McF. So we read in the New Testament about a man in Jerusalem and how he came into the temple, Luke 2: 25. Would that fit in?

W.McK. Yes. He came into the temple by the Spirit and he was a man who had had divine communications. Clearly the thought of a man in Jerusalem would refer to the spiritual thought of Jerusalem, not Jerusalem as under the domination of the Romans and as inhabited largely by unbelieving Jews, but there were persons there, Anna, Simeon and others; he is distinguished in that way, "a man in Jerusalem".

A.S.H. The tribes of Israel came to David at Hebron and they anointed him and made him king over Israel and king David made a covenant with them in Hebron. There is quite a bit about Hebron; would you say something about it?

W.McK. Hebron is said to have been built seven years before Zoan in Egypt (Num 13: 22), meaning that the wisdom of God which antedates the wisdom of this world is available to us in Hebron.

Caleb evidently laid hold of that because all through the wilderness wanderings of the children of Israel, Hebron was in his heart. It is also an elevated position and would put us in touch with out-of-the-world conditions. In that position it begins to fill our minds and hearts that we are really the brethren of Christ and we can begin to appreciate His thoughts as to the assembly as a city. Following this it says, "David took the stronghold of Zion which is the city of David". But then in verse 9 he dwelt in the stronghold, and called it the city of David. Have we all understood really that the Lord has called the

assembly this, the city of David? It is true that the assembly is His counterpart, His bride - those thoughts we enjoy in other connections - but has it really seized our soul and filled our minds that in His view the assembly is the city of David, an area where He can dwell, where His influence pervades everything and where the administration brings out the wisdom of Christ.

K.N.P. Would the reference in verse 6 to "the king and his men went to Jerusalem" link with what you are saying about the administration? It is not all the tribes, but it is the king and his men; they are able to go in and overcome what stands in the way for him to enter into the fulness of what is rightly for him.

W.McK. They are. That is an important feature because I am sure in every local assembly the Lord needs His men - and it is not a question merely of what is male, sisters would be in mind too - but these are persons marked by maturity and they are with the king in his movements. What they are dealing with is this thought of the blind and the lame. That is in us all naturally and has to be overcome. I do not see certain things, so I am inert; then I become lame; I do not see so I do not move and the result is I cannot. That has to be overcome in us and in our localities.

K.N.P. I was thinking that his men would be like the king, would they not? And that is how it would be overcome; David was a great overcomer and his men would be like him.

W.McK. Yes, and it would indicate that these men are at his bidding. It is not exactly that they volunteered for this but that the Lord knows who He can count on in any locality or generally and when He moves His men will move with Him. That is, I think, the thought of the city in its current operation. The movement of the king leads to the movement of his men, so they are moving in concert.

L.D.P. Would David be concerned to get control of the watercourse?

W.McK. Surely. There is need that the flow of the Spirit in every locality should be unhindered by these Jebusite elements. David said, "Whoever smites the Jebusites and gets up to the

watercourse"; that is the means of overcoming lameness and blindness is that the Spirit of God has His way in us inwardly as we come together.

J.A.P. The hymn says:

For us there is provided a city fair and new

Not that there will be, but there is.

W.McK. Exactly. The fulness of the city will come down out of heaven from God and we await that time, but in the meantime spiritually this already exists and we can have part in it.

K.N.P. Why did he reign in Hebron? "In Hebron he reigned over Judah seven years and six months"; before he reigned in Jerusalem. Help us as to that.

W.McK. It shows that we need help and the Lord waits on us patiently to come to the fulness of divine thoughts. I suppose Hebron links with the Colossian position where they were doubtless marked by many good features but they were not fully dominated by the supremacy of Christ. So in the first chapter he brings out the greatness of Christ and then in the second chapter brings it in as bearing on ourselves, showing what is in Christ is available to us. In chapter 2 all the fulness of the Godhead dwells in Him bodily; that is, it is near to us.

K.N.P. I wondered whether that links with the availability of resource he had to go into Jerusalem; they were ready to go with him at that point, were they not?

W.McK. They were. You can see that the time in Hebron would deepen this knowledge in their souls that they were of his bone and of his flesh and would establish them more fully in that feature of the truth. So it is with ourselves, the Lord is very patient in waiting on us in order to bring us into the full heavenly thought.

A.S.H. Would the time that was spent in Hebron, the seven years and six months, be a time of building up formation in the soul?

W.McK. That would be the thought; that as enjoying their links with David in that position as his bone and his flesh, typically they would be growing in an understanding of the purpose of God and the full knowledge of Him as it is referred to in Ephesians 1. They would be ready to move on to the full heavenly thought of the assembly. I suppose the climax of it is at the end of chapter 3, "the assembly which is in Christ Jesus" (v. 21).

D.McF. I wondered about the end of verse 9, "And David built round about from the Millo and inward". Why is that necessary?

W.McK. It would be that what can be taken account of in the stronghold is spiritually substantial; it is a question of what is inward. Corinthians gives us largely what is external, that is we can observe the public side of the assembly. We sit down together as men and women; that is a public view of the assembly. We sit down as ostensibly faithful to the fellowship, which means that we are maintaining the claims of Christ and we are concerned to be together in that. But the inward side as it is formed in us supports that, so we are not just characterised by outward religious observance as is currently in Christendom, but there is something substantial there.

So you get in Colossians, "your love in the Spirit", chapter 1: 8, which would be a great inward thought; and then in Ephesians the Father strengthening us by His Spirit in the inner man (Eph 3: 16).

All that would relate to David building inward. Typically that would especially allude to the ministry of Paul. The twelve had largely to do with the outward side of things, because the twelve foundations of the city have their names on them. Paul is not mentioned in regard to the outward side, but his ministry has to do with the inward and with what is substantial inwardly.

L.McF. So we ought to find in the local assembly that growth is taking place with the brethren. Is that where the inward side comes to light?

W.McK. Yes, it does. And so it is not just the attitude of our minds; he said to the Corinthians, because they were babes in Christ, in your mind be full-grown men, 1 Cor 14: 20. That is, if you are not

really spiritually mature at least have your mind functioning in that direction - in your mind be full-grown men. But when you come to Ephesians you have spiritually mature persons. The ark can be brought into the city of David as we have in chapter 6; that is where it should be. "And David went and brought up the ark of God from the house of Obed-Edom into the city of David with joy". The ark of God is another view of Christ as the wisdom and power of God; David presents Christ in his personal attractiveness and how we are drawn to him in that light and come under his headship. But the ark is Christ acting in power to establish divine thoughts.

P.Z. David is not said to be rejoicing in chapter 5, but in chapter 6 once the ark comes in he rejoices exceedingly? Can you explain that, please?

W.McK. The ark is in its right place in chapter 6. It would be a question of how the Lord is conscious of His place among us in our localities, and that as the ark of God is brought into the city of David the Lord has great joy. If there are things that are contesting His place as the ark of God, that requires overcoming to bring about a state of things that occasions joy.

P.Z. So the lame and the blind are first removed. Do you think that would be the flesh in me, and then there is the enjoyment and the rejoicing?

W.McK. Yes. The lame and the blind show that we are incapable naturally of entering into divine thought. Therefore we are cast upon the Spirit of God, the watercourse, in order to overcome our natural tendency. None of us naturally is thirsting after the truth. That is foreign to what we are naturally; naturally our minds are occupied either with what is worldly or earthly and those things characterise us, they have to be overcome. Then in chapter 6 you have the secret thing which has to be met. She despised him in her heart.

L.McF. I would appreciate it if you would say a word about the ark in our households.

W.McK. It was a great blessing for Obed-Edom to have the ark in his house. It was evidently a suited place for it and it remained there

three months; "and Jehovah blessed Obed-Edom and all his household". But then the ark is not to be confined to a household, the ark of God is to be brought into the city of David - that is where it belongs. Christ is to have His place as Lord in our households, but Christ as we know Him according to the purpose of God is to be enshrined in the assembly; "that the Christ may dwell, through faith, in your hearts", Eph 3: 17.

J.A.P. Then were the disciples glad when they saw the Lord, (see John 20: 20). The Lord was getting His place in the realm of love. Love is really the inside, is it not, and shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit given to us?

W.McK. Yes, it is. As you were speaking, it occurred to me that in a certain sense when the Lord went into the house of the two who went to Emmaus they had the ark in the house of Obed Edom, as it were, and they got blessing; but that was not where it was to stay. And so when He was made known to them in the breaking of bread, rising up the same house they returned to Jerusalem. Now they are beginning to see that blessed as the household is, that is not everything, it is not the final thought. The city is the divine thought in its fulness.

J.A.P. That is very good. Really the Lord's service fully always leads us to the assembly in the full sense of it.

W.McK. Exactly. I recall a brother telling me he spoke to his natural brother about why he did not come out during the week, and he said, Well, I can read Mr Darby at home and get all these things. It is not so. You get certain things at home in your household, but you must not lose sight of the assembly as the city of David, and that is where the fulness of things is understood and enjoyed. I deprive myself a great deal if I confine myself to my house. The Lord may bless me in His patience, but He would urge me to see it is time to rise up and go to Jerusalem like those two did at Emmaus.

K.N.P. It says of them that they found the eleven and those gathered with them. Is that important?

W.McK. It is. And then as they were saying these things Jesus stood in their midst. As they came together and were conversing, the ark of God, so to speak, appears - David appears. That leads, as you were remarking, to great joy. These things are practical, we want them not to be merely items of knowledge. Spiritual knowledge is valuable, but it must become formative else we fall short of the divine thought.

K.N.P. What do you say about these sacrifices they held after six paces?

W.McK. David was concerned that there should not be the kind of unspiritual action that happened before. As has been said, the next pace would be the one that tests, the seventh. To ensure that it proceeds in spiritual safety and joy, he sacrificed an ox and a fatted beast; very substantial offerings to ensure that the movement of the ark into the city of David is done properly. David himself was girded with a linen ephod. So although he danced before Jehovah with all his might, he still was under control; the linen ephod would mean that. That is something that we have to learn, that even in moments of intense spiritual joy I must be under priestly control.

J.A.P. That is very important, because Michal unfairly charged him on that very point later in the chapter, but he was fully in the power of the Spirit in the service of God, was he not?

W.McK. He was. You can see that she despised him in her heart. The unspiritual despised the spiritual and it led, of course, to governmental consequences; she had no child to the day of her death.

A.S.H. I was about to ask about the linen ephod.

W.McK. In the assembly we always want to be girded with the linen ephod, that is, we are always under priestly control, we are never, so-to-speak, just carried away by exuberance or by some impulse of the moment. Everything flows out of love, because underlying priesthood is love. As we were taught long ago, the Hebrew bondman in Exodus 21 underlies the priesthood in Exodus 28. Love of Christ, love for the brethren, governs us, but everything is under

priestly control, showing that by the Spirit, I know how to proceed in the assembly at any time.

P.Z. Do you think we can link on the sixth pace with, may be, the day before the Lord's day?

W.McK. Perhaps two days before, because Saturday is the seventh day. But the principle is that you are moving up to the assembly on the first day of the week here in type. The city of David and the ark of God; then it is called the ark of Jehovah, showing that the thought of nearness is increasing as the ark is brought into the city of David.

It is not only the official thought, the ark of God, but the ark of Jehovah, how the love of God has come out in Christ His beloved Son and this movement is affecting us inwardly in that connection. It is one thing to know that God has made Him both Lord and Christ. It is another thing to understand that the Christ dwelling in our hearts through faith means that He is in a position where He can shed abroad by the Spirit the love of God and where He can open out the full knowledge of God.

G.A. We quote how the woman in John 4 left her waterpot, went into the city, and told the men about the Lord Jesus. Would that show that she had something in her flowing out?

W.McK. Yes. So that the waterpot was no longer adequate for what she had to convey. She herself became a vessel to carry water, so she said to these men, "Is not he the Christ?". It is like saying, I have found the ark of God. So they moved toward Him. It shows what influence spiritually a person can have who is delivered and moving the Spirit's power.

K.N.P. The function of the priesthood here is for God, is it not? He danced before Jehovah. He did not dance for Michal or anyone else around, he danced before Jehovah. Is that the true function of the priesthood?

W.McK. Exactly. So that our priestly service is essentially Godward. The Lord has made us both kings and priests in view of function Godward. We might say everything that the Lord did in His life here was Godward. Paul was formed in that way because he said, "God

... whom I serve in my spirit in the glad tidings of his Son", Rom 1: 9. So even when he was announcing that Jesus is the Son of God he was in relation to God in his spirit.

L.D.P. I was wondering as to Michal - she appears to be concerned about the activity of David whereas the people are concerned about the ark. Is that where our eyes should be focused? On the ark, not on whom the Lord may use?

W.McK. Yes. Our eyes should be fixed on Christ from the standpoint of the purpose of God; external conditions are not to influence us. Michal would typify what is about us religiously and they would despise what we have here. The religious hierarchy would see little of value and think that there was something despicable about it because it is not characterised by all that characterises the religious systems; but it is of great value to heaven. The persons who are together and functioning in the city of David know that they are David's bone and flesh.

Chapter 15 brings up a much more serious matter which is the working of the spirit of antichrist seen in Absalom. The issue is where the ark of God is to be and how divine wisdom will come in to overthrow the wisdom that attaches to the working of Satan. So the king said to Zadok, "Carry back the ark of God into the city". That is the proper place for the ark. Christ must be enshrined in the assembly. All that happens in the way of breakdown and in the rising tide of apostasy must not interfere with this thought. So he says, "the city", that is, there is no other. You might say, Well, it is Jerusalem, but David does not call it that, he says "the city". Then he has persons who are operating in a secret, unknown way: Zadok, the priest (we have thought of priestliness), and then the thought of sonship in the two sons; and then this precious touch as to Hushai, David's friend.

J.A.P. It is a current matter, the last few years brethren saying, I am right, and inaugurating another table. I think what you say is very salutary that none of us can attach the Lord's Supper and all that is represents to ourselves.

W.McK. I would agree with that fully. It belongs properly to the assembly and in the assembly. As we know Paul established that irrefutably in 1 Corinthians 11 when he said, "I received from the Lord, that which I also delivered to you ...", and then he opens up the truth of the Supper. So that the Supper belongs in the assembly.

We were speaking the other day in the house, someone asked about taking the Supper to someone in a hospital. But that is not exactly the assembly. If it is a person who is in a brother's house that is another matter and things would proceed there in consonance with what the brethren are going on with locally, but we must not attach the Lord's Supper to independent movements. Persons who have gone out have set up the breaking of bread: they are not in fellowship with anybody but themselves, and yet they go on in that independent position. What David says here would check that; he says, "Carry back the ark of God into the city".

L.McF. We are in days of reduction and the persons you mentioned comparatively few. We might have that in some localities, just a few brethren, but they would represent the full thought, do you think?

W.McK. They would. So you have here in these few, Zadok, Jonathan the son of Abiathar, and Ahimaaz Zadok's son and then Hushai; they represent the moral and spiritual features in persons that are adequate to carry on in the time when Christ is rejected openly. What marks Christendom largely now is open rejection of Christ and His rights. But there is the priest, and then the sons and then David 's friends.

J.A.P. In a way, this is one of David's finest hours. He made much of Christ and let everything go but Christ.

W.McK. He did. It is noticeable that in verse 30 David went up by the ascent of the Olives; he is moving in relation to the Spirit's realm, and he wept as he went up. That, you might say, is unusual. He was feeling the thing intensely but he still was moving up by the ascent of the Olives. He had inward power to move spiritually upward even though feeling this thing so deeply. The more we feel

the departure and the breakdown, the more we shall seek the Spirit's help to go up by the ascent of the Olives.

D.McF. At the beginning you spoke of habitation and administration. Could you go over that again for us?

W.McK. The city would be a place of habitation. We noted the other night in Psalm 107 that God led them forth by a right way, that they might go to a city of habitation (v 7). It was when they were wandering in the desert that God undertook for them, so they came a city of habitation. The full thought of it would be here in the city of David. It is a place of administration and we should see that it involves the working of divine wisdom in the saints. You might say, What could these four do against Absalom and those that were with him? Zadok and his son, and the son of Ahimaaz, and Hushai, what could they do against what Absalom represents? But it is divine wisdom operating and the opposition is overcome. One of the things we ought to rejoice in, beloved brethren, is that in the Lord's grace we learn how to move in divine wisdom administratively to overcome the opposition of the enemy.

J.A.P. Would it be right to suggest that David's friend is like John's ministry that comes in to support Paul? The Lord says, "Ye are my friends" (John 15: 14); the apostles would be proved to be that too, would they not?

W.McK. Yes. So it is helpful to see that as Hushai comes to David, he is in accord with David. David had his head covered and he went barefoot; this man comes with his coat rent and earth upon his head; he is fully with Christ in the acceptance of the public sorrow, but he is wholly subject to Christ. As you referred to, "Ye are my friends if ye practise whatever I command you". Hushai might have preferred to be with David, but David said if you go back into the city thou mayest for me defeat the counsel of Ahithophel. Hushai, David's friend, came into the city, and then what follows is that Absalom came into Jerusalem; but Hushai was there first. The secret side was there in place according to the king's word before Absalom comes into

Jerusalem. The Lord knows how to forestall the enemy's movement by placing His friends in wisdom where they are needed.

K.N.P. David's friend was not alone either. There was an organisation in place, was there not, that was true to David?

W.McK. Exactly. That is why I said that in a way what you have here is a city within a city because these persons that are true to David represent the spiritual working of the city administratively and in wisdom, although Jerusalem outwardly is dominated by Absalom. But what is there in place is going to overthrow that. So that is what we do spiritually as we are under the Lord's direction, things are overthrown spiritually that otherwise would overwhelm the position.

L.D.P. I was wondering if overcoming spiritually is seen in Mephibosheth? He was not able to go with David but his spirit was with him, he remained in the city.

W.McK. He did. And although he was misunderstood he still was true to David. He accepted being misunderstood in order to manifest his fidelity to David. That is a great matter, especially for those that are young, to be prepared to be misunderstood by others in order to manifest your fidelity to Christ, because you will be misunderstood.

If the Lord was misunderstood, as He was, why should we not be misunderstood? Why should we not get the Spirit's help to persevere and go on with divine thoughts in spite of being misunderstood.

P.Z. Would the last verse really be what you mentioned as to a city within a city? "Hushai David's friend came into the city, and Absalom came into Jerusalem". There may be what is religious that is against David and his friend. Are we to be prepared to face this to the end of time?

W.McK. Yes. That opposition will be there until the Lord comes. In fact it will be there until He appears and overthrows it. But in the meantime it is being overthrown spiritually and morally by priestly persons and those who enjoy sonship and those who are marked by friendship for Christ.

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Key to Initials

(Local unless otherwise given)

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L.D.Phillips; P.Zaklama

THE LORD SPEAKING OF HIMSELF

Robert Taylor

Revelation 1: 17-19; 3: 20; 22: 16,17, 20

In these passages the Lord Jesus is speaking directly of Himself.

Largely, apart from in the gospels, it is others who are speaking about Him, but in these passages He is speaking about Himself.

That would give a peculiar appeal to these verses. He is saying things, too, about Himself that perhaps others could hardly say. For example, Peter speaks about Christ as "the morning star" (2 Pet 1: 19), but when He is speaking about Himself He says He is "the bright and morning star". He adds touches that others could not add. In these passages He is presenting Himself to His saints in the circumstances in which they are in the first passage, circumstances that were almost overwhelming for John. It may be that we pass through circumstances at times that are almost overwhelming and there is comfort in the Scriptures, comfort in the brethren, but the Lord would give His own touch of comfort as He presents Himself.

So He speaks here in the midst of what John sees that overwhelms Him. John says he "fell at his feet as dead", but the Lord gives His own touch. He says "Fear not; I am the first and the last". Whatever the circumstances may be, He was before them and He is after them, "the first and the last, the living one" and, as if to appeal to our

affections, He says, "and I became dead". What a touch of His love He would give us in circumstances that may be overwhelming.

Death could not hold Him. The greatest force that works among men is the power of death. Whatever heights men may rise to or whatever power they may acquire, all are terminated by death; but there is One who "became dead", and He says, "I am living to the ages of ages"; the power of death has been broken. It is as if He would say to us, if I have broken that power, what will I not do for you? The "living one": it means He is active. He lay in death three days and three nights, He became dead. What that meant for Him, no heart could fathom. It was not laid on Him. He went that way, in love, of His own accord. He says elsewhere, "No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have authority to lay it down and I have authority to take it again", John 10: 18. At the beginning of this book I believe He would give that impression that all the happenings that are going to come in - and the book covers a great range of time - whatever they are, He has acquired the power to deal with them all, in that He became dead and He is living to the ages of ages. What comfort for our souls in the exercises that we may face. And what comfort too as we think of what the testimony is going through, what the testimony has gone through and will yet go through in the great forces and powers of evil and darkness that are against the saints. Here is one who is in charge of it all, the Living One, who became dead and is living to the ages of ages.

Then He says He has the keys. That means He has control, control of circumstances, in government, but control, too, dear brethren, of circumstances in our lives. He says "I ... have the keys of death and of hades". He uses them in His own power, and there He holds them. He does not give them to anyone else. He holds them. So He encourages John to lay these things on record for us that whatever the circumstances and whatever the times that we may pass through in His ways, there He is in control of the whole matter. What a comfort it must have been for John in what he was about to see. You think of him reflecting on this verse as he saw these powers that were being unleashed to execute God's

government and judgment on the world, that there was One there who was in perfect control! May it encourage our hearts that He is in control of the circumstances in our lives.

In the next section He says He is knocking. He speaks, earlier in the section I read, of Himself as a counsellor. He is speaking here of the circumstances of indifference and coldness that are in the public profession, but too He is speaking of coldness that may arise in our hearts and He is speaking as a counsellor - "I counsel thee".

He feels the coldness more than we do. He feels when something has come in that hinders the joy that He would have in our hearts and the communion that He would have between us and Himself.

He feels it first. And here He is speaking to a state, to a locality indeed, but He is speaking to a state that marks Christendom but may mark any one of us. None of us, I believe, would have been without some of these experiences, some coldness, some distance that has come in, and the Lord draws near, draws near as a counsellor - a very fine thing to have someone who can not only point to what has come in but can point to the remedy, and He says He has it, not here meeting our sins as He did in the first instance when we were lost, but here exercising our hearts as to the way back, and the way back to the very best things. "I counsel thee to buy of me gold purified by fire, that thou mayest be rich". There were those in Laodicea that thought they were rich, and that is the deceit of the devil when coldness comes into our affections. We become independent. We think we are rich, but here is a way to true riches, a way to be clothed and to have the eyes anointed "that thou mayest see".

If dullness has come in, there is the Lord as a counsellor, but then here He is speaking, knocking at the door. He is outside. Someone has put up a barrier between the Lord and themselves and He says, "I stand at the door". Why should He be outside? It reminds you of those verses in the Canticles when He was outside: He looked through the window. He could not get in. He could not draw near, but it says here that He was knocking at the door, and then it says, "if any one hear my voice and open the door". It is left

on our responsibility. It is left for us to trace the way back, to taste those movements of His love in revival that we may know what it is to open the door. He says, "I will come in unto him and sup with him, and he with me". May we listen to His voice, dear brethren! May our hearts not be attuned to another voice but, as He speaks elsewhere of the sheep, they hear My voice. So He knocks, but He says, "if any one hear my voice" - it may be in the ministry - then there is His own voice, His own way that He has of drawing near.

May there be an answer to His appeal to open the door, to come into normal circumstances and sup with him, and he with me". How blessed and sweet as communion is restored. How much is in these words, that He would be alongside of us in supping. He would listen to what we have to say. As the father heard the younger son going over some of the things that were in his heart, he did not get it all out, but he says so much. That is like the Lord says, "I will sup with him". The father listens so far and then he says, that is enough; now I will tell you something: you sup with me. He then was ready to bring him in to the great joys that were in his house. How ready the Lord is to respond as the door is opened!

Then finally He gives that precious touch, "/ Jesus", His own personal name. I think He uses His voice and He uses His name to appeal to us in a way that is more than the scripture would do.

Scripture is so blessed and ministry too, but the Lord says, "/ Jesus". He sent His angel to testify but He says Himself, "/ am the root and offspring of David, the bright and morning star". He calls to our minds not only who He is in His Deity, but what He is in His manhood, in all His grace, "the bright and morning star" shining there amidst all the darkness that has come into the world, shining there as the great harbinger of another day in all His lustre - undimmed by all that has happened on the earth - the morning star, still shining, and the answer is that "the Spirit and the bride say, Come". These are the persons who have heard His voice, and there is this great host brought into it: "And let him that hears say, Come. And let him that is athirst come; he that will, let him take the water of life freely".

What an answer there is going to be! May it be vibrant in our hearts

today, the answer to the appeal of His own voice, "the root and offspring of David", the One who holds the great matters of God and the service of God in His hand, ready to lead us into it, and the great answer is that there are those who says, "Come".

And then He says in answer to it, "I come quickly". Not only is He coming, but He is already on the way. The fact that He speaks the way He does would show that He is on the way. He says, "I come quickly". "Amen; come Lord Jesus".

KIRKCALDY

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