

A
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Contents

ASSEMBLY-MINDEDNESS

OVERCOMING

ASSEMBLY-MINDEDNESS

Nehemiah 2: 11–15, 18; 3: 1, 13–15, 32; 8: 9–17; 12: 31, 37–40, 43

J.T.B. My exercise in reading these scriptures is that we might speak of assembly-mindedness. I think at the present time the Lord is looking for assembly-minded persons. That is an expression, which possibly used to be in our vocabulary more than it is today, but I think the Lord is looking for persons who are formed in the truth of Christ and the assembly and come out as assembly-minded. I suppose as we think of assembly-mindedness, we think of persons like Peter who in Matthew 16 got an insight from the Lord Himself as to what the assembly was. When the Lord said to Peter, “*thou* art Peter, and on this rock I will build my assembly, and hades’ gates shall not prevail against it”, v 18, He gave Peter some light as to the truth of what He had in His mind and what God had in mind; Peter, of course, as we know, saw the assembly set up in her pristine freshness and glory in the beginning of the Acts. We also think of Paul who saw the assembly sufferingly. When he heard those words from the Lord Jesus, “why dost thou persecute me?” (Acts 9: 4) I think he came to some sense of what the assembly was sufferingly, and to him was vouchsafed the truth of the mystery, the truth of Christ and the assembly, and he developed the truth in its local setting.

But I have referred to these scriptures in Nehemiah because I think Nehemiah was in type characteristically an assembly-minded person in a day of public departure and breakdown, but also in a day of recovery, similar to the days in which we are. Where we began to read, it says of him that he “came to Jerusalem, and was there three days.” I wonder if perhaps that would give us the sense that he was not immediately affected by the breakdown which had taken place, but spending three days in Jerusalem would give him some sense of what the assembly was as in the presence of God, and he goes out from that area and views the breakdown. My impression is that in the presence of God we come to a true appreciation of the awfulness of the breakdown where we get His view of it, but where we also get

His view of what the assembly is. So Nehemiah takes this journey and views “the walls of Jerusalem, which were in ruins”, and immediately sets himself to build by way of recovery, beginning at the sheep-gate and going by way of the valley-gate and the dung-gate and the fountain-gate and coming back to the sheep-gate.

In chapter 8 I think he gets some sense of what it is for “brethren to dwell together in unity”, Ps 133: 1. I think an assembly-minded person would have a view of what it is to the Lord to have the brethren dwelling together in unity. And then in chapter 12, when the work is complete, what is in mind is the service of God. So these two choirs go round the wall in opposite directions, but they both end up in the house of God. I wondered if we might see that an assembly-minded person has in mind God’s desire to secure an answer to His own heart of love collectively where He Himself could dwell.

P.L.J. Nehemiah is an advance on Ezra.

J.T.B. The predominant thought in Ezra was the building of the house. I think we have been helped to see that Ezra represents the sovereignty of God whereas Nehemiah represents the faithfulness of man.

P.L.J. I was thinking that this was an advance in one sense because we have things more developed in the service of God. This really adds on to Ezra; it links on.

J.T.B. Yes, the house had been set up but it was not exactly a functioning system, but do you think it becomes such in Nehemiah and has to be protected; hence the reason for the gates in the wall?

P.L.J. Yes, I have thought of these two many times in regard to the recovery, that there was not only an initial recovery but then there was further development, do you not think? That is what I had in mind: Nehemiah is really a development further than Ezra.

J.T.B. Yes, he builds upon what Ezra had established.

P.L.J. But he enlarges. He brings in, as you say, the service of God. He brings in things that fill out what in a sense Ezra started.

J.T.B. I think that is good: so it is interesting that Ezra is directed to do this under the hand of Cyrus the king of Persia.

P.L.J. I mention that because there are those with whom we were once associated who felt that everything terminated with Mr Darby. But I have often felt that these two books show that it is not a setting aside of what Ezra did; it is a developing and going on and adding, do you think?

J.T.B. Yes, it is complementary to what Ezra has established.

P.L.J. And that is the way God has worked in the recovery: it is not setting aside so much as it is adding to.

J.T.B. So you think of the further ministries of the recovery, which really built upon the foundation, which was laid in Mr Darby's ministry.

P.L.J. I think I see also in regard to Ezra and Nehemiah that never is one vessel sufficient for the whole thing. This does not take away anything from Ezra when God brings in a man like Nehemiah, because each was a useful vessel.

J.T.B. And in fact later in the book we have Ezra and Nehemiah brought in together so they are working at the same thing.

D.M.W. Do you see some suggestion in Ezra of the outward power of the Spirit in activity similar to that which characterised Peter in the beginning of the church period? But then we have Paul and John and you get a further development, the filling out as to the light of the assembly in Paul and the inward side especially seen in John. I wondered if Nehemiah did not perhaps more correspond with Paul and John's side of things and Ezra with Peter's side of things. What do you think?

J.T.B. I had not thought of that, and perhaps we could get help to expand it.

D.M.W. Well, here was a man in Nehemiah, one man, and his feelings are brought into it. It says in the opening scriptures that we read, "but I told no man what my God had put in my heart to do for Jerusalem". I wondered if it was the inward activity of the Spirit,

which would especially correspond to our day and the development of the service of God at the end of the book. Nehemiah is not necessarily prominent in the service of God. It says he followed the choir. What do you say about that?

J.T.B. I think that is good. In the closing days of the dispensation Paul and John must go on together. Was it not Mr Darby who said, in following Paul, do not forget John? So the thought with which we finished in relation to the house of God as being where God dwells would bring Paul and John together.

D.M.W. And feelingly so: because, while Peter was told that he would be martyred, Paul and John, in the scriptures anyway, are not seen to be told that by the Lord. But Paul ends his days as far as the scripture is concerned in prison and John on the Isle of Patmos, so that as you were saying, when we get over to God's side of things and we have a sense of the breakdown and ruin, then we will become assembly-minded, not looking for anything outward – that belonged to Peter and perhaps more Ezra – but a real depth of feeling as to what had happened to the walls of Jerusalem and Jerusalem itself. Do you think that helps us in developing assembly-mindedness?

J.T.B. Yes, I think it does. It is a healthy exercise on the part of every one of us to go into the presence of God and find out how He feels about the awfulness of the breakdown which has taken place.

P.L.J. I think the way that God has used different vessels in regard to the assembly, not only initially establishing it here but then in recovery, brings out the greatness of the assembly, that no one servant or vessel is equal to bringing everything out. What do you think?

J.T.B. I think that is right.

P.L.J. We were speaking of Peter and then Paul and John and, great a man as Paul was, he did not have the whole thing, did he? John had an aspect of it. It just brings out the greatness of the assembly, it seems to me.

J.T.B. So Peter's and John's ministry lay the basis for Paul's ministry. We know that it was given to Paul to complete the word of God so that we would keep these three great ministries in our affections.

P.Z. Do you think that the man in Acts 3, as he was standing with Peter and John, is one who became assembly-minded?

J.T.B. That is a very interesting suggestion. He held on to Peter and John. He held on to these two men. By way of application to ourselves, it would involve that he held on to the ministry of Peter, held on to the ministry of the kingdom and on to the ministry of the family, which we get in John. He held on tenaciously to those two ministries. I think Peter and John together would lead us to Paul and that would give us some sense of what the assembly is so really he became an assembly person in principle.

D.M.W. I like that suggestion as well. He held on to the principles of the kingdom: that would be Peter's side of things. The keys, of course, were given to Peter; that outward power in the establishment of the body and the bride really on the earth. Peter had that experience. But John in the family side of things shows that in order for the highest truth, the light of Christ and the assembly, which was given to Paul, to be sustained rightly required someone who was able to stand on his own feet in the light of that kind of ministry and become an assembly-minded person and link on with Paul. That is what you had in mind in what has been suggested.

J.T.B. Yes, indeed. If we hold on to Peter and the ministry of Peter, if we are true to the truth of the kingdom and come into the enjoyment of the truth of the family, we must necessarily, I think, find ourselves in the assembly as a vital component part of that wondrous vessel.

D.M.W. It seems to make us strong. It says that "he stood"; he was able to stand; "his feet and ankle bones were made strong" (v 8), and he was an assembly-minded person ready for fellowship. They extended him the right hand of fellowship. He was made strong. I wonder if this is needed for us in the way of reviving us as

to what assembly-mindedness is, what assembly material is. I think we see that in Nehemiah.

J.T.B. I think so.

P.L.J. So it is not just ecclesiasticism, if you know what I mean. I think bringing in Peter and John would ensure that it is not just an ecclesiastical position.

J.T.B. It is a moral position. It is a spiritual position but it is also a moral position and we come into it by a moral route. I think that reference to Acts 3 helps me greatly in the understanding of what we are trying to get at.

P.L.J. There has been a tendency, I think, speaking of assembly-mindedness, to link it to an ecclesiastical position.

T.R.V. Do you think the way this begins, "And I came to Jerusalem, and was there three days" and rising in the night and his heart being engaged, is the basis by which we would become assembly-minded in a real sense of the ruin and what is needed in recovery?

J.T.B. Yes, I think that is good: "And I came to Jerusalem, and was there three days". I wondered if there was a suggestion there of going into the presence of God, spending time there and getting God's view of what the assembly was, but getting God's feelings too in relation to the breakdown, I think he reflects something of the feelings of God in the way that he goes. Is that your thought?

T.R.V. I think that is helpful. Three days seems very significant. It is a set amount of time, not seven but three, but it is still a very adequate time to have the full testimony of what was before him in a sense, being in God's presence.

J.T.B. Would the three days perhaps relate in some sense to the death of Christ?

D.M.W. I think it would. A man would lay hold of this and then the acceptance of the suffering position as identified with Christ who is rejected. He says, "And I arose in the night". Do you think there is

something in that, as appropriating the death of Christ, in him rising in the night?

J.T.B. Yes. I wondered if it would bear the interpretation that he had come to some sense of the suffering, which would be involved in the securing of assembly material for Christ.

T.R.V. It is not something that could be done in a hurry. He could not just have come in on one day and surveyed the scene and gone. He needed to be there three days.

J.T.B. Well, I feel that. He took time in the presence of God. I do not think I am reading too much into the scripture. I think he took time in the presence of God to come to a true assessment of God's feelings in relation to the whole system.

P.Z. Do you think that as he spent time before God, he would have been impressed with the need of rebuilding and recovery? I was wondering 'if in the night' would indicate that he would not only be occupied in the daytime when there would be the light of the world or the light of men, but he could go on in the night time as having a sense of what is God's viewpoint. And then there were a few men with him. Do you think that means that as they were exercised they would be able to link on with men who were likewise exercised. They would be mature.

J.T.B. Yes, I think so. It says "some few men". I think that while the feature of assembly-mindedness may have been seen in Nehemiah himself, he was able to identify others who were like-minded, who had similar feelings in relation to the awfulness of the breakdown and was prepared to identify himself with them. So these persons were persons with like feelings and had some sense of the suffering which would be entailed in securing an answer to the heart of God in such conditions.

P.Z. So he was not preoccupied as to what would be seen outwardly.

S.S. I was thinking of the three days. Would that refer to the setting aside of self in order to be brought into the things of God? I

was thinking of Saul and how “he was three days without seeing, and neither ate nor drank”, Acts 9: 9. That was in order that he might come into the mind of God. What do you think?

J.T.B. I think that is right. I think that reinforces in my mind that the three days would refer in some sense to his identification with the death of Christ.

D.M.W. Do you think that he and these few men would be similar to what the Spirit of God has in mind in the addresses to the seven churches, that is it is necessary that the moral condition is maintained through overcoming, overcoming especially as we were speaking in the house, religiously.

J.T.B. I think his identification with the death of Christ would help him to overcome anything in himself or even in the public position, which would militate against the progress of this work.

P.L.J. I notice it is a reference to one person at a time throughout this section. Would that bring out too that the exercise must be individual? “I”: it was what he was exercised about.

D.M.W. It links with the overcomer: the overcomer is individual.

P.L.J. Yes, and it is an individual exercise. We know that it leads to the collective but it is taken up, do you not think, individually?

J.T.B. Yes, that is how we come into the assembly. That is how we would have right feelings in relation to the breakdown which has taken place. In a sense the way which you dear brethren have come has been different from the way which I have come, but you have come personally and individually to some appreciation of what God has secured, what Christ has secured, in the assembly.

P.L.J. I was thinking that, like 2 Timothy 2, it is individual.

S.S. I was wondering about that in relation to what we have in chapter 3. There are many references to the thought of repairing and that thought is not limited to Nehemiah. There are other persons who are engaged with it. Does that link with what has been said in view of what is to be taken up in the recovery by individuals?

J.T.B. I think it is incumbent upon us that each one of us identifies himself with the breakdown and accepts responsibility for it and our part in it. There are several references in these books and in the book of Daniel to one who stood and confessed his sins and the sins of his people. Do you think that might relate to what Nehemiah would feel in the three days and the way in which every one of us has to go in order that we may have our part in the great recovery, which is going on at the present time?

S.S. Could you say a little bit more as to repairing? I think it is important for myself as understanding the principles of the recovery and the need to recognise the part that I have had in the breakdown, but the thought of repairing goes beyond that.

J.T.B. He has not started again, has He? He has not started with something new. The Lord has taken what was there. The assembly has been here since Pentecost. Publicly it has broken down, but He has not started with something new. He has taken up what was there with a view to rebuilding it and repairing it by recovery in order that it may have the same features as it had at the beginning.

S.S. So it is not enough simply to recognise the part that we have had in the breakdown, but there is to be exercise on our part to be engaged with this work of repairing what God has already established amongst His people.

J.T.B. I think that is good so the exercise is not only negative; it is very positive. Do you think the divine intention is that we, each one of us, should be able to identify ourselves with what there is positively? The beginning of Revelation has been referred to. There is a reference there to "strengthen the things that remain, which are about to die", chap 3: 2, which may link with this. There is that which remains. It may be broken down. It may be fragmented. Nevertheless I think it is important that we identify what there is in a positive way and link on with it and as we do so, we will have our part in the work in relation to the wall and the gates.

D.M.W. It is interesting how this is brought in because Nehemiah does not say, 'what my God had put in my heart to do for Him'; it is "what my God had put in my heart to do for Jerusalem". I think what you are saying is helpful on the line that S.S. enquired into as to repairing. We cannot leave this to anyone. If the assembly is precious to the heart of Christ, it is what God has had in mind as, we might say, what the highlight or the highest aspect of the revelation of God pertains to. What can I do for the assembly? What can I do as one man for the assembly? We know that in doing it we will be pleasurable to God, but it is taking it on. Is that the thought that you had in mind?

J.T.B. Yes. I think it is incumbent on each of us to seize the value of having a part in this great work of recovery. Did Mr Darby's father not tell him to make the world better by one man? That is the way we all have to come.

P.Z. I was interested in what was said about "what my God had put in my heart". Does that not bring forward your first thoughts as to the importance of having those three days before God because it is "what my God had put in my heart", but those things that in my relationship with God have gained as being before Him are really in relation to one thing, that is the assembly. So that would be the way we would find our part in the repairing, into the building of this vessel. It would be as we are before God and have an impression of what He puts into our hearts.

J.T.B. I think that is good. God acts sovereignly. God would put such feelings into our hearts and I think if we were to take time to go into the presence of God and get His valuation of what the assembly is, He would put into our hearts desires in relation to that vessel.

D.M.W. I read the scripture earlier today, "the assembly of God, which he has purchased with the blood of his own", Acts 20: 28. We see the value that God places on the assembly and I think it is an exercising thing what you are suggesting that while it may take very little time to get things in our mind, it requires some restfulness in the presence of God to get things clear and to be willing, therefore, to

take on the position of suffering and to do something for the assembly, something that God puts into your heart in view of entrance.

T.R.V. Was it not Nehemiah that said, “I am doing a great work, and I cannot come down”? (Neh 6: 3) My thought in connecting that is that if we had a real sense of the greatness of the work, we would not be dissuaded from it in any way.

J.T.B. I think that is right.

S.S. It is interesting in this chapter too, along the line of what our brother was referring to, it says more than once, “after him”. It is an ongoing matter.

J.T.B. And in a sense it becomes a collective matter. You could see others working with whom you could identify yourself and link on so it becomes one work.

S.S. So you see what is being done and you link on with that and continue with it.

J.T.B. That is right, until it becomes one whole. We find that later in the book. They completed it in something like fifty-two days. It was a remarkable work, so many engaged in it, some engaged in it militarily.

P.L.J. What would you say in regard to these gates: “And I went out by night by the valley-gate”?

J.T.B. Well, he takes this journey. He comes out from the presence of God really and takes this journey. This would be a moral journey, would it not?

P.L.J. Yes. That is a good place to begin, the valley-gate.

J.T.B. That is right. You begin at the death of Christ. I have often linked these three gates, the valley-gate, the dung-gate and the fountain-gate with the epistle to the Philippians. You get the valley-gate in chapter 2. Think of the way in which Christ has gone, that lowly way! Then the apostle says, “For let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus” (v 5) so as identifying ourselves with the

death of Christ, I think we come into a position of strength. And then the dung-gate I think is chapter 3 where Paul goes over his credentials, all that he was as man after the flesh, and then he says, "I ... count them to be filth, that I may gain Christ", (v 8) (or 'have Christ for my gain'). And then the fountain-gate is, I think, perhaps chapter 4 where it says, "Rejoice in the Lord always: again I will say, Rejoice" (v 1). But he also says, "But my God shall abundantly supply all your need according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus" (v 19). I think that is something of the fountain-gate.

P.L.J. What flows out?

D.M.W. All these gates were necessary in view of the repairing of the wall. There were links, vital links, in order for the wall to be established, for there to be stability in relation to Jerusalem. Would you say something about the wall?

J.T.B. I suppose there are two thoughts in the wall: one is the exclusion of evil. 2 Timothy 2 has been referred to. That is something of the character of the wall, an area where evil is excluded, completely excluded. But it also involves retention of what is good and I think it is vital that we get a view of what is precious to the heart of God and Christ, and our activities are in relation to the retention of what is so pleasurable to the heart of One so great.

P.L.J. So the wall would be exclusive and it would be what would preserve.

D.M.W. The thought of protection is there too, protecting the vital things inside the wall, pertaining to Jerusalem.

J.T.B. So the assembly has a position of strength.

P.Z. Is there a link with what we see in Revelation 21?

J.T.B. It is "a great and high wall" there (v 12).

P.Z. But it has the glory of God.

J.T.B. That is right. Do you think that if we have some sense of the greatness of what the assembly is, not only as a vessel for the

heart of Christ, but as a vessel in which the residence of divine glory can be known, we can see that it is something worth protecting?

P.Z. In other words, the more you are impressed with what the assembly is for divine Persons, the more you would seek to be part of those walls which would reject what is evil, that would maintain what is inward and blessed.

J.T.B. If we give way on the principles of separation, we introduce an element of weakness, which makes the assembly position vulnerable.

P.L.J. The assembly is one place on earth where evil is excluded and where the truth and what is right is preserved.

J.T.B. That is right.

P.L.J. It is the only place.

J.T.B. One side of the truth is that the assembly will go through inviolate: “hades’ gates shall not prevail against it”, Matt 16: 18, but the enemy will attack it and there is a responsibility on individuals like ourselves to maintain the truth of the assembly. Hence the importance of the wall and the gates.

D.M.W. In the address to Philadelphia, mention is made of “a little power”: “thou hast a little power” (v 8). Do you think that would be more in relation to “I and some few men with me”, but we should never think of the assembly as something that is weak, should we? It is inviolate, as you say, and it will go through inviolate, and “hades’ gates shall not prevail against it.” I think we need more to be in the presence of God and get the help and feelings of the Spirit for what the assembly is. While it may be “a little power” and it may be that is all that is available as to what is external – “I and some few men with me” – yet the assembly is a glorious vessel where the word of God is protected.

J.T.B. It is a vessel that cannot break down. You take account of the public position and you mourn over it and weep over it; nevertheless I think it is vital that we get established in our souls the fact that it will indeed go through inviolate.

D.M.W. I liked what you brought in in Philipians 2, 3 and 4 as corresponding with the valley-gate and the dung-gate and the fountain-gate because it is this individual who gets there first. For us to be assembly-minded persons and to add to the repairing of the wall and the maintenance of the truth and the exclusion of evil, I have to go that way myself.

J.T.B. That is right. So we begin with the sheep-gate and that brings everyone of us in, does it not?

P.Z. Verse 17 says, "Ye see the distress that we are in, that Jerusalem lies waste, and its gates are burned with fire. Come, and let us build up the wall of Jerusalem, that we be no more a reproach." He becomes occupied with what is positive. I think this comment, "Come, and let us build up the wall of Jerusalem, that we be no more a reproach", indicates that he wants us to build the wall first so that the gate may stand. What would you say?

J.T.B. Well, I think we begin with the wall. We begin with that area of strength. "Jerusalem lies waste, and its gates are burned with fire. Come, and let us build up the wall ..."

D.M.W. I was just going to enquire as to "that we be no more a reproach": that is to God; it is not to man. The more we build the wall, the more a reproach we will be to man, but the fact is that all that has come in through the mind of man pertaining to Christ and the assembly has been a reproach to God. I think we have to feel things the way He has felt them.

J.T.B. You get the sense that any feelings towards God and any feelings towards the assembly would have the sense of divine approval.

P.L.J. Do you not think there are some who have undertaken to take up the truth of the assembly without building the wall? I think there is quite a bit of that going on, that they take up the truth of the assembly but no wall. The wall has to come first.

J.T.B. It is futile, is it not, to try to build up the truth of the assembly without a wall?

S.S. I was wondering about that. Jerusalem would in a sense represent the divine centre, which is to be seen in the assembly. That is really the divine centre of all of God's operations in the day that we live. We often think of the wall as being protective, but it would also be definitive. I was wondering if the wall would represent the truth of the assembly. It is what defines the assembly. It is what is to be seen in relation to the truth that is attached to the assembly. Would that be a right? So the repairing has to begin with an understanding as to what the truth of the assembly brings before us and it is especially seen in what Paul brought out.

J.T.B. Yes, I think that is right. It takes us back to where we began, as to Nehemiah spending that period of three days in Jerusalem.

P.Z. Would you say a bit more as to the reproach, that it is not the reproach before man, but it is the reproach before God?

J.T.B. Well, we will always be in reproach before men, will we not? As long as the assembly is here, as long as persons are seeking to maintain the truth of the assembly, we will be in reproach before men. But I think this is how God sees us: "Come, and let us build up the wall of Jerusalem, that we be no more a reproach." In rebuilding the wall and repairing the breaches, as it were, the element of reproach before God would be gone. I suppose God could see the whole thing. God is able to see the end of a thing from the beginning. He could see what Nehemiah's objective was. He could see what was really in Nehemiah's heart.

D.M.W. Also, it was God who actually drove them into captivity because of their unfaithfulness and idolatry. The same thing is in the period of the church: the truth of Christ and the assembly was lost very, very early. Literally hundreds of years had elapsed and God was behind that because there was a moral judgment as to what the church had come to in man's hand, but He has graciously put something in a person's heart because the assembly is so valuable to Himself. As we see the reproach that there has been before God, we have right feelings, that is, we have God's feelings about it, and

we want to be in line with His sovereignty and what He has exercised us about “that we be no more a reproach”, that we do not go on having, as it were, “captive’s baggage” although accepting externally all that has come in through the moral judgment of God. But He has effected a recovery and we want to be in line with that.

P.L.J. So that rather than be a reproach to God, we would be a testimony to God.

D.M.W. That is what a testimony is: it is Godward. If we are right Godward, then there will be something manward.

P.L.J. That is right, so it is not what is seen outwardly by man that is a reproach to God; it is something that is a testimony to God.

T.R.V. Is that seen a little in verses 15 and 16 of chapter 6 – you referred to that. “So the wall was finished”? But at the end of that and after all the enemies and the nations saw it, it says, “and they perceived that this work was wrought by our God.” There was a testimony even to those who were not in any way believers in type. What would you say about that?

P.L.J. That removed the reproach.

J.T.B. That is right, so they could recognise the greatness of the work of God. Even persons outside could recognise the greatness of God’s work.

T.R.V. Is that what we would anticipate? Not that we have it today, but we would anticipate it. If we would build the wall, be recovered to the truth and have that desire to maintain it in our souls, we would anticipate that there will be that day when even those who are not believers would recognise that it is a work of God.

J.T.B. I think so. I think that comes out in the address to Philadelphia to which reference has already been made: “I will cause that they shall come and shall do homage before thy feet, and shall know that I have loved thee”, Rev 3: 9. There will be an abundant testimony that there were persons who were faithful in the time of Christ’s rejection.

P.L.J. Yes, “and shall know that / have loved thee” because they were really in the light of the assembly which Christ loved.

D.M.W. That reference to Philadelphia is not a future thing necessarily: “and shall know that / have loved thee”. It is a present experience, I believe, for us. We are reminded of what God is doing in the recovery and have the feelings of God because we have His judgment of things too.

P.L.J. You would not say that that would apply to some little company, but His love for the assembly and walking in the light of the assembly, you would be in the good of that, that Christ loved the assembly.

D.M.W. You could help us, but I understand that that is what this scripture means. Of course, we need to be preserved from presumption and relegating things to what God is doing among some special company. The fact is that the truth of the assembly is what it is and if God has worked to give us an exercise, we want to come in line with that so that we can experience His commendation, few as they are in those addresses to the churches in Revelation. Do you think that is right?

J.T.B. Yes, I think so. There will in a future day be a testimony to the fact that God has loved us, has loved the assembly.

D.M.W. That is what is in mind, the assembly, not a special company, but the assembly.

J.T.B. That is right, so the whole collective entity is involved in that remark: “and shall know that / have loved thee.” There may be only a few expressing it at any one time in the history of the assembly, but do you think, as has been said, God will attribute to all what He has found in the few?

P.Z. Nehemiah’s heart was towards Jerusalem, that is the entire position. It is not any kind of special group or special privilege. It is not a sectarian thought: it is Jerusalem.

J.T.B. His whole thought is in relation to the assembly. I think it is vital when we come to the Supper and enter into the service of

praise on a Lord's Day morning that it is the whole assembly that is before us. We see it represented in the loaf and I think it is absolutely vital that we keep the whole thought as to the assembly in our minds and in our affections.

D.M.W. The ministry of the recovery has pointed us in that direction. The deviation from it is what has caused us the trouble. The whole thought is necessary. It does not say, again referring to that verse, that 'I told no man what my God had put in my heart to do for these few men', but it is "for Jerusalem".

J.T.B. So the truth that we have is held on behalf of all, is it not? The truth of the Lord's supper, the service of God, which is the greatest privilege that anyone can enjoy, we hold in relation to the whole church.

D.M.W. It is an exercise, really, if there is an individual here and there, to make some sort of link although they are not in this kind of state as an assembly-minded person. A great deal of care and dependence is needed when someone shows a little exercise. It might be just one thing so that you want to help that person with that one thing so that eventually perhaps, if we gave them a little more, they might develop into assembly-minded persons.

J.T.B. That is good.

S.S. I was thinking about what we were speaking about. Even with Nehemiah's exercises at the beginning it was in relation to the city of his fathers. The king asked him, "Why is thy face sad?" chap 2: 2. So it began with an individual, Nehemiah, but it was in relation to "the city of my fathers". I was thinking of what you were saying in relation to the assembly.

J.T.B. So really what he had in his heart and in his mind was what was from the beginning. He was clearly affected by what it had become, but what he had in his heart was what it was from the beginning. Now we realise that the pristine days of the church will never be re-established here on earth again, nevertheless what God will secure in a moral way at the end of the dispensation will be as great as it was at the beginning.

S.S. So even though we have 2 Timothy, that does not set aside 1 Timothy.

J.T.B. “The assembly of the living God, the pillar and base of the truth”, 1 Tim 3: 15: that is right.

S.S. We may not have 1 Timothy in an official way, but still in a moral sense we would take up what has been presented to us in 1 Timothy. I was just thinking how we have had this thought before us before, that 2 Timothy in a sense really gives us our right and responsibility to take up what is in 1 Timothy.

J.T.B. That is right. 1 Timothy is really the assembly at its height because in writing to Timothy in the first epistle, he has the truth of Ephesians in his heart.

D.M.W. He was brought back to the door of the house. In Ezekiel 47 we have what you are suggesting. He was brought back to that. A clergyman in Ireland was brought back to that.

J.T.B. I think that is right. Well, he got the light of the Head in heaven and the body here, wonderful concept as to Christ and the assembly.

P.L.J. We have the ones mentioned who are engaged in this building in the next chapter.

J.T.B. It is remarkable that “Eliashib the high priest rose up with his brethren”: it puts the work of building and the work of recovery at a very high level, does it not? It is a priestly activity and it is a family activity.

P.L.J. Yes, and they built the sheep-gate. What about that?

J.T.B. I think the sheep-gate would really bear on John’s sheep. One of the features of John’s sheep is that they do not go astray. Another feature of them is that He calls them by name and He knows them and they know Him. They do not follow strangers because they know not the voice of strangers, but they know the voice of the Shepherd and they can go in and they can go out and they can find pasture. “They hallowed it, and set up its doors; and they hallowed it even to the tower of Meah, to the tower of Hananeel”. It has been

pointed out that there is no reference in the sheep-gate to locks and bars, that is, they can go in and they can go out and they can find pasture. We can go in and we can go out whenever we please, can we not?

P.L.J. There is liberty.

D.M.W. I was wondering again if 2 Timothy would not link with the family side. There is one man there who was to do the work of an evangelist. The sheep in John's gospel are not seen with any defect, but they need care and help if there is to be the answer to what God had in mind for the sheep. So, in doing the work of an evangelist, Timothy was doing it in the midst of the public profession and everyone of us has been recovered. Some of us at least have come in a little late into the main line of the truth – we had been converted years before, but as to the enjoyment of abundant life and to go in and to go out and find pasture in an area of liberty, maybe we were not just in the good of that, but someone somewhere - some of us can name individuals that have helped us we were brought into that area of things. Do you think there is something to that?

J.T.B. Yes, I think so. It is a wonderful experience to find ourselves in the family of God and enjoy that wonderful liberty.

P.Z. Before we close, in the introduction you spoke of what we have in chapter 12, I believe, as to the unity. You referred to that verse in Psalm 133. Maybe you could say something as to what was in your mind as to that. Do you mean that we must first come into an appreciation as before God of what has taken place in Jerusalem, then we must be exercised to be part of the re-building and then once the truth is set up and established in our hearts, we can truly enjoy unity amongst those that are lovers of Christ.

J.T.B. Well, there is a moral road to unity, is there not? There is a moral road to oneness. In one sense we all come the same moral road, come by way of the death of Christ, come by way of the valley-gate, come to a judgment of what we are in ourselves, come to an appreciation of the completeness of the work of Christ, and do you

think as we do so, as we come that moral road, we find a point of unity? We have a point of contact so that brethren can indeed dwell together in unity. That is really chapter 8 where we have the feast of tabernacles. Were you thinking of verse 40 of chapter 12: “And both choirs stood in the house of God”?

T.V.R. So that it has been said that our bond is the truth. S.S. mentioned that the wall of the city may be an allusion to the truth. Do you think as we are exercised to maintain those walls, that is separation and preservation of what is inside, speaking of the glory of God, then we would be dwelling in unity. Can you help us?

J.T.B. Well, I think that is right. If I walk in the path of separation and in that way protect the work of God in myself, I find a point of contact with you so that we can indeed dwell together in unity.

D.M.W. In chapter 8, what you have in your mind as to the unity of the Spirit is very important. Psalm 133 has been referred to. “Go your way, eat the fat, and drink the sweet, and send portions to them for whom nothing is prepared; for the day is holy to our Lord”, and so on. The feast of tabernacles is very interesting in relation to the unity of the Spirit. Would you say something more about that?

J.T.B. I would like you to say something.

D.M.W. Well, it is the direct thought of dwelling in booths at the feast of tabernacles. Is that right? But still there is activity. It is like Numbers, I believe, they pull together in one direction; they were not diverse in that way. There may be diverse personalities, which there are, but it says, Nehemiah the Tirshatha – I suppose government would come into that thought – and Ezra the priest the scribe, one who was near to God and has the intelligence that God gives, all these moral features are to be found as we are together. That we can dwell together in unity is the main thing that we arrive at as to our individual exercise, that we dwell together in unity, enjoy eternal life.

J.T.B. Yes, I think these exercises of separation are all working towards this, but without the moral side of the truth we will never arrive at it.

D.M.W. That is right. You will never arrive at restfulness. I suppose the feast of tabernacles, dwelling in booths, is the idea of restfulness, and being conscious of the approval of God.

J.T.B. Yes, because really it is all for God. This would, I think, refer to the Deuteronomy side of the truth, what we enjoy collectively. There was instruction by Moses in relation to the feast of booths in the wilderness, but in Deuteronomy the feast of tabernacles is related to the place that "Jehovah will choose" (chap 16: 15), which would involve the assembly and what we enjoy in a collective way. And do you think an assembly-minded person would have that before him?

D.M.W. Quite so. This great matter of the service of God is self-sustaining. You can see that, unless there are these exercises on assembly-mindedness, it would become routine and formal. This is what the enemy would desire, to get us on the line of what is routine and orthodox.

J.T.B. So do you think that without these exercises that we have been speaking of, we would merely degenerate into what is formal, what is merely religious, whereas what God has in mind for assembly-minded persons is that we should be maintained in the vitality of the truth.

P.L.J. So these two choirs come in as a result of what we have been speaking about: you could not have this without what has preceded.

J.T.B. I think that is right, so there is an outflow of praise from the heart as a result of the way that God has taken us.

T.V.R. Would you say that this is almost the highest point that we can come into? I was thinking back to chapter 9 when they stood up and blessed "Jehovah your God from eternity to eternity", (v 5). It is really a very, very elevated place of praise and worship. "Thou art the Same" is spoken of twice there in verses 6 and 7. That would have been carried on by these two choirs, that song of praise and worship.

J.T.B. Yes, I think that is a good verse to call attention to, that they really become affected by the greatness of who God is: “Thou art the Same, thou alone, Jehovah, who hast made the heaven of heavens, and all their host, the earth and all that is therein, the seas and all that is therein. And thou quickenest them all; and the host of heaven worshippeth thee”, chap 9: 6. It brings out what God has done. “Thou quickenest them all” would, I suppose, relate to the way He has given us the indwelling Spirit in order that we might be sustained in the spirit of worship.

D.M.W. I think what has been referred to in relation to these two choirs is good. The revelation of God known elicits a response and it comes out, I think, in the sustaining of the service of God in these two choirs.

T.V.R. And here in type I think we see how they could rise up to the highest thing, that God has revealed Himself as it says, “from eternity to eternity”. That is what I was struck by, the revelation of God now that we have. They would even have a sense of it here, of who He is, and yet how much more we have!

J.T.B. That is good.

P.L.J. In a practical way would you say that we should have these things in our experience continuously so that we can form that choir? It is not just something that we know to be truth as objective truth. I think that what we have in Nehemiah and all that we have speaking about should be something that is ongoing so that there can be these choirs.

D.M.W. This reference to being quickened and your allusion to the Spirit is an important matter of revelation. Without the Spirit we really could not have the knowledge of God, but then the Spirit would lead us to a response so that there is the result we have mentioned and we know we have enjoyed the thought that the response *is equal* to the revelation especially as these two choirs are upon the wall. Their movement is in response really, is it not?

J.T.B. So they are sustained in the moral exercises of separation with a view to arriving at the house of God, which would be the area

where God dwells, an area where love divine can be at rest.

D.M.W. It is a great matter. I have enjoyed that verse 38 of chapter 12, Nehemiah speaking, “and I after them”. We are all equal, in that sense, in the service of God. There may be different measures but we are all equal. We do not ask who should give thanks for the emblems. It was whoever is free because how important it is, in giving thanks for the emblems, that there would be some touch as to the manifestation of Christ as we proceed in the Supper, do you think?

J.T.B. Yes, I think that is good. While the brother who gives thanks for the emblems does not exactly bring the Lord in, we would await Him at that time. While it is not the Supper itself, “He was made known in the breaking of bread” according to Luke 24: 35. It says, “And that day they offered great sacrifices, and rejoiced: for God had made them rejoice with great joy”. God has done it. David could say, of Thine own have we given thee (see 1 Chron 29: 14). What God has done He has done for Himself in view of the satisfaction of His own affections!

S.S. At the end of verse 43 it says, “And the joy of Jerusalem was heard even afar off.” We have assembly expressions in our hymns as to glory to God in the assembly. I wondered if there might be a link with that thought.

J.T.B. What do you understand by it being “heard even afar off”?

D.M.W. In Mr Darby’s hymn there is an expression that might help:

Praise the Lamb! – the chorus waking,
All in heav’n together throng;
Loud and far, each tongue partaking,
Rolls around the endless song.

Hark still louder swells the singing,
As the notes are heard again;
Through creation’s vault is ringing
Joy’s response, Amen! Amen!

(Hymn 14)

'Vault' is what came to mind.

J.T.B. So do you think the whole of creation, the whole system, is going to be affected by the assembly's response to God?

D.M.W. That is almost too high for me, but that is the truth, is it not?

J.T.B. It would enhance to us the greatness of what we arrive at in the service of God.

S.S. So that every family will be blessed through the assembly. I was thinking of that expression, "the joy of Jerusalem". In type, the joy of Jerusalem will be heard. We have thought of each family coming into blessing as a result of what the assembly has been brought into in nearness.

J.T.B. That is good. There is a reference in Psalm 22 to "and all the families of the nations shall worship before thee" (v 27). The assembly comes into that.

D.M.W. It shows you the greatness and the glory of the vessel itself. As we have spoken about over the last few days the assembly has what all these families have and more.

J.T.B. And has it now. So I if we had a sense of that it would encourage us and stimulate us to be here more as assembly-minded persons.

DENTON

4 March 2000

Key to Initials

J.T.Brown, Grangemouth; P.L.Johnson, Denton; S.Selman, Denton; T.VanderHoek, Denton; D.M.Welch, Denton; P.Zaklama, Denton

OVERCOMING

J. T. Brown

2 Samuel 23: 8-17; Revelation 3: 12, 21; 21: 1-7

I would like to say a little about overcoming. The thought of overcoming came into our reading and encouraged me to read these scriptures and I desire, by the Spirit, to say a word as to that great, vital and important feature. I believe God is looking for persons and the Lord Jesus is looking for persons, who are able to overcome in this the closing phase of the dispensation. I believe that the end of the dispensation is a special time for overcoming. There is much to be overcome. Initially we have to overcome what is within us in order that we may come into the liberty which God would have in mind for us to enjoy. There is much to overcome in our household experiences. Every one of us would know that. We each have our own individual exercises. We each have our own household exercises, but I believe that God would have in mind that in every circumstance, in every position in which we find ourselves, we are found here as overcomers.

We live in a world from which Christ has been cast out and rejected. There is a responsibility upon us to find a way through such a scene. We are in the world but we are not of the world. The Lord Jesus says that in John 17: "They are not of the world, as I am not of the world" (v 16). We, beloved brethren, are not of the world, nevertheless we have to find our way through the world from which Christ has been cast out and rejected, and I believe this necessitates our being found here as overcomers.

The blessed Lord Jesus Himself is One who has overcome. We read of that in Revelation chapter 3 in His appeal to the overcomer in Laodicea: "He that overcomes, to him will I give to sit with me in my throne; as I also have overcome ..." (v 31). I would like to ponder that point for a moment that the Lord Jesus has had to overcome. How much He has overcome! He could say to His disciples in John's gospel, "In the world ye have tribulation; but be of good courage: I have overcome the world", chap 16: 33. Every feature of

the world has been overcome by Christ. Because of the power which He had in Himself inherently, but also because of what He was as a glorious, obedient and subject Man, He has overcome every feature of this world. He has overcome the religious world. He has overcome the political world. The Lord Jesus could find no place in this world's system which He overcame and overcame with power: "as I also have overcome".

Not only has He overcome the world; He has overcome death, and has annulled "him who has the might of death, that is, the devil; and might set free all those who through fear of death through the whole of their life were subject to bondage", Heb 2: 14,15. Christ has overcome in order that we might be set free, set free from the bondage of corruption and brought into the liberty of the glory of the children of God. Christ has overcome in order that that might be so. He has overcome death. He has "annulled death, and brought to light life and incorruptibility by the glad tidings", 2 Tim 1: 10. How wonderful has been the work, the finished work, of our Lord Jesus Christ! How much He has overcome and that, beloved, in order that we might go free!

Well, there were persons in this chapter in 2 Samuel 23 who, in principle, were overcomers. This comes in immediately after the last words of David. "Now these are the last words of David: David the son of Jesse saith, And the man who was raised up on high, The anointed of the God of Jacob, And the sweet psalmist of Israel saith" (v 1). It is interesting that before we get the last words of David, we get what is said, no doubt by the Spirit of God, about David personally. He is the son of Jesse, the man who was raised up on high, the sweet psalmist of Israel. What a Man He is, beloved brethren! What a Man Christ is! What a Man is that One who has overcome in order that there might be a great system of praise established for God. Oh, how wonderful it is to think of the finished work of our Lord Jesus Christ, to think too of who He is in the greatness and glory of His humanity. It is interesting too that we also have recorded for us the last prayer of David: Psalm 72 for Solomon. It suggests that when Christ comes on to the scene, David's

exercises are completed. When he gets an impression of Solomon, when he gets an impression of Christ in glory, when he gets an impression of the great King, the majesty and glory of Christ as ascended on high, it is as though there is no longer any need: "The prayers of David the son of Jesse are ended", v 20.

Well, here it is his last words and immediately after we have the last words of David, we have this list of mighty men. I believe, beloved brethren, that this would have a bearing upon us at the end of this present dispensation. At the close of the dispensation, God is looking for persons who are here characteristically as overcomers.

So it says, "These are the names of the mighty men whom David had". That is a very attractive suggestion, that David had them. I wonder, beloved, if David has you and if David has me among his mighty men. "These are the names of the mighty men whom David had". You belong to Christ. If Christ has suffered and died for us, if we have put our trust and faith in the finished work of Jesus, we are His and it is incumbent upon us, I believe, to be found here as overcomers. The Lord said to Paul in relation to Corinth, "I have much people in this city", Acts 18: 10. Christ has many at the present time. Perhaps very few are fully available, but He has many. Let us, beloved brethren, be those who are available to Christ, in the closing days of the dispensation in which we are!

So "These are the names of the mighty men whom David had: Joseb-Bassebeth, Tachkemonite the chief of the captains: he was Adino the Eznite; he fought against eight hundred, slain by him at one time". This was a tremendous military activity. In this particular case the character of the enemy is not exactly defined for us. In the others we have read of the Philistine force was against the testimony of our Lord Jesus Christ, but here it just says, "he fought against eight hundred, slain by him at one time". Think of the character of the opposition which is against the saints at the present time, beloved. At the close of the dispensation you feel that Satan's power is strengthening. It is being reinforced constantly. I believe there are influences at work at the present time which have never been seen before. They are being reinforced and they are all

opposed to Christ and to the testimony of our Lord Jesus Christ in the closing days of the assembly's sojourn here. But, beloved, this was a man who was able, I believe he was able in the Spirit's power, to overcome and overcome completely "eight hundred, slain by him at one time." Every influence which stood out against him he was able to overcome and to subdue. May each one of us avail ourselves of the power which has been made available to us in the blessed Holy Spirit of God to overcome in view of securing an answer to the heart of our David.

"And after him," it says, "Eleazar the son of Dodo the son of an Ahohite". This man was a son. If Christ has taken us up, He has taken us up for sonship. We are sons in privilege, but we are sons in responsibility and, as sons, God would give us the power to overcome in circumstances here in order that we may be for the heart of Christ. "He was one of the three mighty men with David, when they had defied the Philistines that were there gathered together to battle, and the men of Israel were gone up." This is like an entrenched position, but this man is able to stand and he is able to fight, he is able to overcome. It says, "He arose and smote the Philistines until his hand was weary". He never gave up. Oh, beloved brethren, there is a call for tenacity and a great need for continuance at the present time, to be here for the testimony of our Lord Jesus Christ. We do not know how much longer we have left, but let us be prepared to smite this Philistine element until our hands are weary. The Philistine element is the mind of man, which would seek to intrude into the things of God. Let us come to a sober judgment of everything which is of Philistine character and smite it until our hands are weary.

It says, "and his hand clave to the sword". I believe the power which he had to overcome the enemy was in the light which God would provide. "His hand clave to the sword". "The sword of the Spirit ... is God's word", Eph 6: 17. We have a wonderful resource in the Holy Scriptures, this Book which is so precious which we have in our hands. Let us read it and re-read it so that when opposition comes, we can use the scriptures, in the power of the blessed Holy Spirit, so

that we can discomfit the enemy and overcome him. “He arose and smote the Philistines until his hand was weary, and his hand clave to the sword; and Jehovah wrought a great deliverance that day; and the people returned after him only to spoil.” The scriptures are the word of God, the scriptures are the power of God: “For the word of God is living and operative, and sharper than any two-edged sword”, Heb 4: 12. Beloved brethren, persons who know the scriptures and understand them are able to use them in the power of the blessed Holy Spirit with a view to overcoming this awful force, which is opposed to Christ, to His service and to His testimony at the present time. Therefore, let us each one imbibe the truth which is contained in the blessed holy writings!

“And after him,” it says, “Shammah the son of Agee the Hararite: the Philistines were gathered into a troop, and there was there a plot of ground full of lentils, and the people had fled before the Philistines; and he stood in the midst of the plot and delivered it, and smote the Philistines, and Jehovah wrought a great deliverance.” This is a man who stood for the truth, I think, in his own place. We each have a responsibility, given to us by God, to stand for the truth in our local places. This man stood for the truth there in “a plot of ground full of lentils”; he stood for the truth in order that the food supply might be maintained for the saints. How vital it is that the saints are fed, fed with that which would satisfy their souls. Now we know that the only thing that is able to satisfy our souls is Christ. This man, I believe, stood there in order that the saints might be fed with Christ and thus be able to overcome the Philistine power.

Then we have these three, so often spoken of, who broke through the ranks of the Philistines in order that they might secure that which could answer to the heart of David. These others we have read of overcame the might of military power but this exercise to secure something for the heart of David was probably the greatest feature of overcoming. It says, “when the troop of the Philistines was encamped in the valley of Rephaim. And David was then in the stronghold; and the Philistines’ garrison was then at Bethlehem.” This was an entrenched position. What was dear and precious to

the heart of David was in the hands of the Philistines. The church publicly at the present time is in the hands of the Philistines. The Philistines, you may say, have overrun Christendom at the present time. The mind of man is everywhere evident. So much has been given up: the basic truths of the gospel have been given up in Christendom as a system because of the intrusion of the mind of man. There is so little there that would answer to the heart of Christ. There is a responsibility, therefore, beloved, on the part of each one of us to break through the ranks of the Philistines, in spite of their military power, in order that we may secure that which would answer to the heart of our Lord Jesus Christ, and God has given us the power to do so.

“And David longed”: I wonder if we are near enough to David to know the longings of His heart. “Oh that one would give me to drink of the water of the well of Bethlehem, which is in the gate!” that which was so precious to his heart. I believe, as we are near to Christ, He would unfold to us what is precious to His heart. Let us therefore, beloved, be prepared to break through every feature of opposition in order that we may secure an answer to the desires and longings of His affections!

It says “he would not drink of it”. Was that a lack of gratitude on the part of David? Beloved, if we break through and give to Christ that which would satisfy His heart, He would use it in the service of God; He would use it to gratify and satisfy the heart of God Himself. We have been brought into wonderful things. God has wonderful things in mind. The greatest thing that we can have, the greatest experience that we can have is liberty in the service of praise: “If therefore the Son shall set you free, ye shall be really free”, John 8: 36. The Lord wants us to be free, free for Himself, but free to minister to the heart of God. Therefore, beloved, let us be prepared to overcome and to break through in order that we may secure that which can gratify the heart of the One we love.

In Revelation chapter 3 where we read initially we have the Lord’s address to Philadelphia. We may say, where can we find Philadelphia at the present time? Beloved, we cannot find

Philadelphia publicly, but let us never give up the truth of what Philadelphia stands for, this precious feature of brotherly love which is so dear to the heart of Christ. Conditions in Philadelphia were such that the Lord Jesus was able to present Himself as “the holy, the true”, which I believe means that persons were maintaining the ground in holiness for Christ. The truth was being maintained at its very highest level. How wonderful! In this sphere where brotherly love was flowing freely, the truth was being maintained. You may say then, why was there a need for a word to an overcomer in such a local assembly? I believe that we need to overcome in order that such conditions might be maintained amongst the saints of God. “He that overcomes, him will I make a pillar in the temple of my God”. As I say, conditions here were wonderful: brotherly love was flowing freely; an open door had been set before them; I believe the service of God was proceeding. The open door would, I believe, involve access into the presence of the Father because you have the key of David. It says: “These things saith the holy, the true; he that has the key of David, he who opens and no one shall shut, and shuts and no one shall open”. The key of David would involve, I think, that that door had been opened up to the service of praise. The service of God had been established and I believe as we overcome in our local companies it will be continued in its fulness and in its preciousness to God.

So it says, “He that overcomes, him will I make a pillar in the temple of my God”. Think of the possibility of having a place in the very presence of God, being a pillar, being able to adorn that area where God Himself dwells. “And he shall go no more at all out; and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, the new Jerusalem, which comes down out of heaven, from my God, and my new name.” I scarcely know what I can say about these precious things, but I think the greatness of having such a name written upon you relates to the stamp of divine authority, and divine ownership. God owns you, beloved, and owns you for Himself. Is that not therefore an incentive to be found here as overcomers in the closing days of the dispensation? We know that

these last four churches go on to the end. Philadelphia can be found somewhere at the present time. Let us be exercised to find it, to identify ourselves with it and to hold tenaciously to the truth in order that we might maintain it for the pleasure of the heart of Christ.

But then we come to Laodicea. The Lord presents Himself to Laodicea as “the Amen, the faithful and true witness”. I believe in presenting Himself in that way to Laodicea He is seeking to induce the feature of faithfulness at the end of the dispensation. The church publicly, as we know, has failed. The church publicly is Laodicea. It may be that there are Laodicean features with me in my heart. Beloved Mr Stoney said, a Laodicean is a person with Philadelphian light but without Philadelphian power. I believe, beloved brethren, and I say this carefully, that we are in a position where there is indeed the greatest light and, where there is the greatest light, there is the greatest responsibility to answer to the light. The Laodicean assembly had the light but they were not prepared to answer to it. They had become lackadaisical. They were content with the light that they had. “Because thou sayest, I am rich, and am grown rich, and have need of nothing”. They were content with what they had without realising that they had lost their power, they had lost their light. Another has said Laodicea was colourless, it was odourless, it was tasteless and it was heartless. That is Christendom at the present time and it could be your heart and it could be mine if we do not allow ourselves to be found here as overcomers in view of securing an answer to the heart of Christ.

Well, to this assembly He says, “He that overcomes, to him will I give to sit with me in my throne; as I also have overcome, and have sat down with my Father in his throne.” There is a wonderful reward, beloved, to those who overcome. Think of sitting with Christ in His throne as He also has overcome and has sat down with His Father in His throne. That is where He is at the present time, beloved, seated and crowned at the Father’s right hand in glory. Soon He will take His own throne. What a time that will be when He takes His own throne! At the moment He is on the Father’s throne. He has overcome. And you and I, beloved, can sit with Him in His throne. I

scarcely know what to say about it, nevertheless I can see that the reward for overcoming is great; it is immense. What a wonderful incentive Christ has given to us!

Now, in Revelation 21 we have the great, the final, the eternal day, the day of eternity. What a day it is! What a wonderful system of things will be displayed in that day, "the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of the heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband." That is the assembly in her final conditions, no longer as an administrative entity, no longer administering for Christ. She is doing that at the present time in His absence. She will do so with Him as He comes out with the reins of government in the day of His public glory. She will reign with Him. What a day that will be! But at the end of that day, she comes out as a bride adorned for her husband and she will be maintained in bridal freshness and in her bridal glory and beauty throughout the countless ages of eternity.

And it says, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men". I think we will touch something of this as we come together to the Supper and enter into the service of God. We touch the day of eternity; we touch the life of eternity. "Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he shall tabernacle with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, their God." What a wonderful time that will be, beloved. As I say, we can touch it now for He comes on to the personal greatness of who He is: "And he said to me, It is done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give to him that thirsts of the fountain of the water of life freely. He that overcomes shall inherit these things". That is now. We will not need to overcome in that day. There will be nothing to overcome in that day. When the tabernacle of God is with men, there will be nothing to overcome. We will be there like Christ. We will be in final conditions. We will be in conditions of glory. The time to overcome is now: "He that overcomes shall inherit these things," that is, we can come into the good and gain of our eternal blessings now. How wonderful these things are! Beloved, are these things not an incentive to be found here as overcomers? "He that overcomes shall

inherit these things, and I will be to him God, and he shall be to me son.” That is presently; that is the current enjoyment of our relations with God, easy relations with God. If we come into the presence of One so great, we must ever remember who He is in the greatness and glory and majesty of His Person and yet in the infinitude of His grace and in the wonder of His love, He would bring us into this wonderful relationship of sons of God in order that we may be in His own presence for His own heart’s pleasure and delight.

Let us be found here, beloved brethren, as overcomers in order that we may indeed inherit at the present time what will be our eternal portion and that for God’s glory. For His Name’s sake.

DENTON

4 March 2000