

A
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Contents

THE KINGDOM OF GOD

PROGRESS IN THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOD

THE KINGDOM OF GOD

John 3: 1-21; 2 Samuel 23: 1-5; Isaiah 30: 23-26, 33

J.A.G. I have been impressed this week with the patient and gracious way that the Lord seems to help Nicodemus into the fulness of the truth, especially thinking about the references to the kingdom of God. There are plenty of references to the kingdom of God in the synoptic gospels, but as far as I can see there are only three in John's Gospel and the Lord brings two of them in here. Nicodemus is a ruler of the Jews. He felt that the Lord would take him up, perhaps, and seek to make him a man of influence in the kingdom, as He would every one of us, an influence for good. The kingdom is a great area of blessing. We have often been taught that God rules to dwell and He dwells to bless. What a blessed and wonderful area the kingdom is!

The scripture in 2 Samuel gives us the character of the ruler among men. I think it is so delightful to God and to David to be able to identify these features: then in Isaiah we have the reference to the two great lights – it speaks in Genesis of the great light to rule the day, the small light to rule the night – a great section of blessing as idolatry, a rule that is contrary to the purity of God's house, is judged and set aside, conditions are normal and become fruitful and persons live there in safety and in satisfaction. Where the light of the truth of Christ and the assembly is maintained in local meetings such is the case.

Nicodemus's answer to the Lord Jesus only shows the necessity of the new birth, a completely new source of life and nature if the kingdom is to be entered into and enjoyed. He goes on to open up all that is in the heart of God for man. I think the whole section is very blessed. You can hardly understand somebody being under this kind of teaching, and earnestly concerned to get some help, and yet being completely perplexed as to what is in mind. All that bears very much upon the fact that new birth is essential and that man, as such, must be set aside in the cross and grave of Christ vicariously.

I wondered whether this might help us and bear upon us.

E.C.B. One thing that is clear in Jesus' side of the conversation with Nicodemus is that the kingdom does not come about by the reform of man.

J.A.G. Exactly. It is a completely new and different source, "Except", he says, "any one be born anew he cannot see the kingdom of God". There it is, what is right before him. I think Mr Darby says in the Synopsis that all that he saw was the carpenter's son (which is a remarkable statement), and yet he is the subject of new birth, because he has desired to come and speak with the Lord and the Lord graciously brings out all this blessed teaching to him. Every time he speaks, he manifests the awfulness of natural darkness. We are not to be depressed by that because the Spirit is operating sovereignly, and then "any one born of water and of Spirit", we are able to enter into the kingdom of God.

E.C.B. We, ourselves, do not understand new birth any more than Nicodemus did. I think it is quite important to see that. We know what a lot of people mean when they talk about being 'born again' Christians, but who understands it? Nicodemus's question is almost legitimate. He did not understand that new birth was something new altogether, but then who does? We understand afterwards that we could not have come into the blessing apart from an operation of God.

J.A.G. That is right, and yet it is put upon him as a responsibility, "Except any one be born anew he cannot see the kingdom of God". This had actually happened in Nicodemus because he had gravitated towards the Lord.

E.C.B. I know it is often said that there is a responsibility to be born again, but that raises the question, how am I to fulfil that responsibility? Is it not more that it is a necessity and we are dependent upon God for it?

J.A.G. In actuality you cannot fulfil that responsibility, so you are lost, which is a very solemn situation; unless God, by the Spirit, intervenes sovereignly, you are a lost person.

E.C.B. Hence it is necessary to understand that the kingdom of God is something outside this world, although the benefits and blessing of it are experienced while we are here.

J.A.G. That is exactly what it is. It is in the Spirit. We are told what it is in Romans, "righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit". It is a very blessed situation to be in.

D.A.B. If Nicodemus's gravitating to Jesus was the result of new birth, was that also to be seen as a result of the Spirit's work? Can you say something about the Spirit working in this period of time that we have read of?

J.A.G. It has often been said, and rightly said, that in new birth everything is there in the being in embryo. But if that is to be developed as it is with natural birth, food is needed and drink is needed. Consequently the Lord goes on to speak of being "born of water and of Spirit" so that you have power to enter into the kingdom of God. I think it is very fine to see that how right at the beginning of one's history, sovereignty and responsibility are going together.

D.A.B. I like the allusion to the will of the Spirit; it is an unusual reference. We often speak about the will of God - it is not the will of God, for example, that any one should perish. The Spirit going where He will would be related to that and would raise a question whether His operations are made way for. Is that where the question of responsibility arises?

J.A.G. I think it would. It also shows us the sovereignty of the Spirit as a divine Person and the Father, the Son and the Spirit working together in relation to the accomplishment of divine purpose.

E.C.B. Am I right in thinking that as far as the record in this gospel goes, Nicodemus disappears?

J.A.G. For the moment – he comes out in chapters 8 and 19.

E.C.B. He reappears in chapter 19 at the point where the fundamental issues in the soul are being resolved.

J.A.G. It takes him three to three and a half years to get to this - and us, and may be more. We have to have regard for him because

he is one of the rich; He was with the rich in his death. It is one of God's reserves. Hence it is important that we regard every Christian, every believer, rightly and hold them rightly in our affections. I think the Lord does this here. I was quite impressed when he says; Thou art the teacher of Israel - but where was Israel?

D.J.H. This goes beyond Israel, it is everyone. It says, "Except any one be born anew", and then He goes on to "God so loved the world". John reaches out far beyond Israel.

J.A.G. He does indeed. The heart of God! The Lord is showing Nicodemus what the heart of God is. It must involve His purpose, His thoughts. I was quite impressed with this, where was Israel? They had gone into captivity long ago, there was only Judah and Benjamin, "Thou art the teacher of Israel". I think the Lord maintains the dignity of divine thoughts as He speaks to Nicodemus; He has in mind to get him up to what he really should be as a ruler.

D.A.B. Does the reference in chapter 8 show that he is beginning to manifest some understanding of the kingdom? He refers to "our law": it was not being applied in Nicodemus's mind in the same way as it was with the Jews, but did he see "our law" as something that related to the kingdom of God?

J.A.G. Yes, I think so. He must have read 2 Samuel 23 "the ruler among men must be just". How unjust the ruling was. But, as has often been said, in John 8 he is still in the brackets. You have to get him out of the brackets.

R.W.F. I was wondering in connection with the question raised as to the Spirit and the will of the Spirit whether we are to understand that the Spirit's movements are deliberate. You have referred to purpose; they stem from purpose, do they not? I wondered if we need to rid our minds of any suggestion, if it is there, that the movement of the Spirit blowing as the wind is in any way haphazard or arbitrary. It is deliberately consistent with the rule of the kingdom of God.

J.A.G. I think it very much is, because God is One. The burden in the Lord's prayer in John 17 is "that they may be one, as we are

one” (v 23).

E.C.B. You have some sense in regard to this question about the Spirit, of the Spirit hovering over the face of the waters in a chapter like this, having in view the introduction of a fresh order of things entirely characterised by Himself.

J.A.G. That is going to finalise in the rest of God. Then the other reference to the fact that there was no rain, but a mist came up to moisten the ground, would make it pliable, make it amenable. All this is involved in the Spirit’s operations in the new birth, so that we are amenable and receptive to what the Lord would have to say.

J.R.W. He seems to have discernment; he says “none can do these signs that thou doest unless God be with him”.

J.A.G. The previous section, as the brethren well know, is a natural conclusion, which any natural person would be affected by, but then nobody else came to Christ, but Nicodemus comes and he comes by night, because he is lacking in deliverance from the religious situation in which he finds himself. The Lord very patiently and graciously speaks to him and seeks to liberate him.

J.R.W. Could you say a little more about the signs. If we bring it up to date, does God give signs, but then the question is whether there is discernment with me through the Spirit as to what God is doing.

J.A.G. I am really with God in the kingdom of God, because the Lord was acting in power. John tells us that if everything that He did were written down in books, even the world itself would not contain them. I think it is very blessed to look around a room like this and you can see lots of signs – very remarkable signs - and they are all pointing in one direction.

R.M.B. We know from the teaching that new birth and conversion are distinct matters and that there can possibly be quite a bit of time between the two, but I would like some help as to how we can prove from the scriptures that new birth and conversion are distinct things. How can we show that?

J.A.G. Look at Nicodemus's case. We have just said it took at least three and a half years to come out. I do not think anybody can say when exactly he or she was born anew.

R.H.B. Everything for this man as a Jew depended on his natural birth. We read this, "It is needful that ye", emphatic, "should be born anew". It must have been a strange thing to a godly Jew when his entire blessing depended on being born of that race. It is as true today for us, is it not, as it is for him; it is not sufficient to have been born amongst the brethren or into a believing household, is it?

J.A.G. It means nothing really. It is a blessed environment to be born into, and to be brought up in, but unless you are born anew, you are lost, and you will find that nature loves darkness rather than light. Paul arrived at this very much when he set out what circumcision is in Philippians 3.

J.R.W. I was just linking on with what you said as to "It is needful that ye should be born anew". If conviction enters my soul that if that does not happen then I am lost, what can I do on the basis of responsibility to move forward?

J.A.G. I think you can smite on your breast and say 'Lord be merciful to me, the sinner', because you have conviction, and you cannot have conviction apart from the Spirit.

D.A.B. Is that kind of question that has been referred to evidence that the Spirit is working, because lost people, in whom by and large the Spirit is not working, are not troubled by such questions. It is in fact a matter of deliverance to be able to put yourself in the hands of the Spirit as One who is already working in you and let go all the things that lust against Him that will never bring you into the kingdom.

J.A.G. That is absolutely right. And begin to have a bit of conviction that there is a work of God there. Naturally everybody wants to justify themselves.

H.A.H. I was going to ask, in relation to the question earlier, whether there was an evidence that God was working in Saul of

Tarsus even when He was persecuting the saints in what the Lord says, “it is hard for thee to kick against the goads”. That was evidence that there was something there.

J.A.G. No doubt he would be reflecting, and the Lord would cause him to reflect, on his part in the martyrdom of Stephen. He was on the wrong side.

E.C.B. It would be true that what we may speak of as the conversion process begins with new birth. There comes a point in one’s history when that becomes manifest. Paul says, I was this, then he says, “by the grace of God I am what I am”, and what had begun in new birth has become manifest. Conversion is a term that is widely used amongst believers, and understandably, but it is not of itself describing the work of God in the way that this process implies.

J.A.G. I think it comes to light in “begotten again by the living and abiding word of God”. The word of God brings out what the Spirit has wrought.

E.C.B. What begins in new birth cannot fail.

J.A.G. Oh no! It makes way for itself, irrespective of the circumstances.

E.C.B. That becomes manifest in a person, for instance, confessing the Lord as Saviour and Lord.

J.A.G. It became manifest in Nicodemus when he went with Joseph and took down the body of Jesus and buried it. You can have a conversation with Nicodemus in the day to come about that very blessed matter, caring for the body of a dead Christ.

R.H.B. I have often thought that as he did that, what the Lord said here to him, “thus must the Son of man be lifted up”, would have come back to him. Is there a connection in those two ‘musts’ - you connected with them in your opening remarks - “needful that ye must be born again”, and “thus must the Son of Man be lifted up”.

J.A.G. It is a connection, because I think the Lord Jesus would have loved to take Nicodemus right through to the second numbering. I do not know if he even got to the first. His thinking is

darkened. Imagine saying, “How can a man be born being old? Can he enter a second time into the womb of his mother and be born?” That was nonsense, but it just shows how dark nature is. And as has been said earlier, being brought up in fellowship - all that is a very blessed privilege but the vitality of the thing initially is the work of the Spirit.

D.E.B. Would it appear from this scripture and the way you are presenting it, that entering into the kingdom of God is in a sense a priority over eternal life?

J.A.G. I would have thought so, I think you need to enter into the kingdom of God to enjoy eternal life, because if you enter into the kingdom of God, obviously you are a subject person, you are coming under a different government, a different rule. In that situation you are able to enjoy the fulness of the love of God, and the kingdom.

D.E.B. I speak for myself, and what I learn, but we perhaps have it a bit the other way round – we present eternal life as the objective – but is it approached and enjoyed through the kingdom of God? Nicodemus did not say anything about the kingdom of God; the Lord introduces that as a new thought to him.

J.A.G. I thought it was very gracious and blessed of the Lord. This man is a ruler, a man of influence amongst the Jews, and the Lord starts speaking to him about the kingdom of God, another area of influence and blessing that he should have known something about. It is not a new thing, the teacher of Israel should have known about new birth from Ezekiel 36.

T.J.H. The preacher likes to use verse 16 of John 3, “whosoever believes”. That would be a subject person. Would you say, therefore, that one who has believed, would be one who has had the new birth in him in the first place to believe.

J.A.G. It has got to be, and John was not speaking about historical faith, but active faith.

E.C.B. Is it not part and parcel of what Jesus is saying to Nicodemus, You are looking for the wrong kingdom? Is it like, “Is it

at this time that thou restorest the kingdom to Israel?” That question went on for years after this, but what Jesus is saying is, it is the kingdom of God that is coming in and to enter into that there must be the work of God that sets you in that direction.

J.A.G. There has got to be, because He has heavenly things in mind to speak of. Every Jew would know something about the earthly things. I suppose you might say, the thousand years of Christ’s millennial reign is an earthly thing, and all the prophets speak about that.

E.C.B. In regard to what has been said, is it not of interest that Jesus begins with this man who is looking for another kingdom by speaking about the kingdom of God? When Jesus begins to speak about God, He has in mind eternal life for everyone who believes on the Son.

J.A.G. He has in mind the whole revelation of God, the opening up of God’s heart. Nicodemus is so unresponsive. I ask myself, how appreciative am I of what the Lord is saying here?

P.J.W. Could you help us a little about the kingdom of God and the kingdom of the heavens? Jesus says in Matthew, “unless ye be converted and become as little children, ye shall not at all enter into the kingdom of the heavens”.

J.A.G. I think the kingdom of the heavens is when the King is in heaven, not here, but the influence of heavenly rule is manifest. The kingdom of God is here in the Spirit.

P.J.W. I was thinking of the question as to new birth and conversion, as to what the Lord says as to being converted. It may be a slightly different thought from the way we speak of conversion, but perhaps you can help.

J.A.G. I think the word of God brings out the work of God, “begotten us again to a living hope by the living and abiding word of God”. You hear the gospel, or the Lord may speak to you through anything, but it is the word of God and what answers to that is the work of the Spirit through new birth. This is all very basic and I am

sure the brethren have understood this, because it is a wonderful place to be in the kingdom of God.

D.J.H. We understand that new birth is entirely sovereign outside of ourselves, just the same as natural birth is - we could not cause it or anything - but when you get to conversion it is really where responsibility acts rightly under the Spirit.

J.A.G. That is right because you are convicted. That is why I said, when somebody said what should you do, Smite on your breast and say God be merciful to me, the sinner, because I am a lost cause. I do not know if the seriousness of these things really affects us, as they ought to, because anything that is spiritual in us, from God, from our lives, is derived from the new birth. It is not from nature at all.

R.H.B. I am very thankful for what you are saying, that the wind has blown in our direction and given you the capacity to receive things that are heavenly and spiritual that would otherwise be beyond your range. What you are saying should make us profoundly thankful for that capacity.

J.A.G. It should make hearts go out worshipfully to God, because the fulness of this is that He had you in mind before time was. The Lord here would have all Paul's ministry in mind, although he does not bring it up.

A.McS. Could you say something about the water? Would that be important?

J.A.G. I think that is the word. You need food. Once a baby is born it has to be fed, nourished and cared for, made comfortable, because it has to grow, and as it grows it increases in power. As this happens you are able to enter into the kingdom of God, you come under that rule and influence, because there will be a lot of influences against you. The devil will be against us, seeking to hinder the entrance of believers into the kingdom of God, because he does not want him to be subject to Christ.

E.C.B. Perhaps you would enlarge on what your thought is as to the kingdom of God and its great beneficial area into which we have been brought as a result of this beginning of the work of God in us.

J.A.G. I think the apostle in the epistle to Romans tells us what it is, it is "righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit". That is an entirely blessed situation to be in, a very wealthy situation.

E.C.B. It would be important in that connection to understand that the righteousness there is not a legal righteousness, but it is every relationship enjoyed in its proper perfection.

J.A.G. Absolutely, so as we go on to the city it is pure gold, which is divine righteousness. There is the answer to it. And the ultimate of the new birth is the Spirit and the bride saying Come. The bride is the wife and so she is capable of exercising dominion with Christ, hence the light of the moon is as the light of the sun.

D.E.R. Do you think born of water involves the setting aside of the first order of things, but then born of Spirit involves the bringing in of what is absolutely new, heavenly and spiritual.

J.A.G. I think so. It is the food that is necessary for the development of the new nature and the new life. You are going to live differently. Life in Christ Jesus is a very wonderful consideration. We all know what life is in Adam, all the trials and tribulations that come from it, but life in Christ Jesus is quite a consideration, a different kind of life, a heavenly life, and there was the evidence before Nicodemus's very eyes of the kingdom of God in the King Himself.

E.F.W. Nicodemus coming on to the scene at the end of this gospel, how far had he really appreciated life in the kingdom of God? He obviously distinguished the death of the Lord, brought these spices, was supportive of the special burial, but we do not get anything beyond resurrection, do we, with Nicodemus?

J.A.G. I think he was forced out. The situation was such that he was forced to do what he had to do. Yet, it was under God's hand because he was the rich; hence I would not say too much against

Nicodemus because I have so much difficulty in apprehending the truth and moving in it myself, and coming out plainly on the side of Christ publicly. His big trouble was a place in the religious systems.

L.A.B. Would you connect faith with the new birth?

J.A.G. The new birth is sovereign, and then faith is the gift of God, and in Christianity everything as far as I can see is on the basis of gift, and if we think differently we are going to allow something of the man that has been set aside on the cross of Christ and buried in His grave and put out of sight.

E.C.B. In regard to that I was going to remark that it is significant, therefore, that Nicodemus comes to light again at the burial of Christ. Is that not the point at which we begin to enter into the reality and blessedness of what God is introducing for us, “buried with him in baptism”. But then what is baptism in Colossians – it is to give you a relationship with Christ where He is.

J.A.G. Mr Taylor says it is one of the greatest privileges that the Christian has, to be in the grave of Christ, buried with Him in baptism, unto death, so that what comes out is the new man, “Christ is everything and in all” – renewed into full knowledge according to the same image in, “truth and righteousness and holiness. All these features and evidences of formation are found amongst the brethren; they are here in this room today.

D.A.B. Faith seems to be implied here because Nicodemus had come to have a conversation with the Lord. As the Lord says, he could see Him and see the kingdom in Him and Jesus does the talking, but what seems to be important is the voice of the Spirit whom Nicodemus could not see, as Jesus says, “Thou hearest its voice”. He could have said you are hearing my voice. It is very fine the way divine Persons make way for one another. The Lord is teaching, I suppose in view of our help, that the key thing is to listen to the voice of the Spirit.

J.A.G. That is the salutation of concern in the addresses to the assemblies, “he that has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the assemblies”. I suppose it is well to say, as we often say, that in

the last three He is speaking on the basis of the overcomer, so that there is a moral basis for the Spirit to continue speaking. He has maintained that Himself. I think it is very blessed and gracious of the Lord. This man comes by night: the Lord does not say, It is too late, come home, it is time to go to bed; He receives him and listens to what he has to say. I think it would be a great help if we had more experiences with Christ like this. Just go and talk to Him yourself.

E.C.B. So the closing verse that you read here, “he that practices the truth comes to the light” and that is what Nicodemus has done.

J.A.G. And he is commended for that, and he gets more ministry, but he is completely puzzled by it.

E.C.B. What you are saying about Nicodemus connects in my mind with your earlier remark as to how we regard other believers, whether we can in our own spirits regard them in the light of what Christ has in view for them, as well, so far as we grasp it, as ourselves.

J.A.G. I think it is very beautiful, I was quite impressed that the Lord speaks about Israel, “Thou art the teacher of Israel”. Where is Israel? He could not find Israel. They were in captivity long ago by the Assyrians. It is good to clothe every believer with divine thoughts.

T.J.H. In verse 16 there is an instruction given by the apostle to believe, and that instruction was obeyed. Can you say where new birth and faith fits in to that?

J.A.G. I think it is gift. Everything is on the principle of faith. New birth has taken place, the word of God comes to you and you believe that, because you are convicted through your conscience. That is faith operating and you proceed from it. Faith has to be active all the time. We often say John is making believers out of believers.

R.H.B. In chapter 1 “have been born ... of God” (v 12). Is that something in advance of what is presented here?

J.A.G. That is a mature thought. They receive Him, “who have been born, not of blood, nor of flesh’s will, nor of man’s will, but of God”, that is Hebrew, Roman, Greek. Man’s will would be Roman, flesh’s will is the Greek, and blood is the Jew. The whole race is ruled out of court, “but of God”. They have capacity to receive Him, and how He appreciates that. I link these people with those that the Lord includes in verse 11, “We speak that which we know” are persons who have had a conscious experience and knowledge of God in the kingdom.

D.J.H. I was thinking of the question as to being born of God. It is there really related also to the family side of things, so that everything that you have derives from God.

J.A.G. That is why I think there are so few references to the kingdom of God in this gospel, because the family is what he has in mind.

D.E.B. I wondered if you would say something about the commissioning of Isaiah in chapter 6 where he says, “here am I send me”. We often speak about that, but then what he is told to say is “lest they see with their eyes and hear with their ears and understand and be converted”. That is a scripture that one finds hard to understand.

J.A.G. I suppose that is government. God gives people plenty of time. How quickly the seraphim flew and took the live coal from off the altar and touched his lips, and he says, I am unclean and I live in the midst of an unclean people, I need help about this. It was faith because it was the year of the death of King Uzziah. He saw the Lord high and lifted up; His train filled the temple. That is all these people that have been spoken about who received Him.

D.A.B. There is nothing arbitrary about God having to begin again in a person, is there? There is a moral justification for it in the state of the man that God has refused. If it was otherwise we would have to say that a fallen man in his sin could apprehend God, which could not possibly right.

J.A.G. It could not be right at all, and hence God has never been taken aback. We read in the gospel that Adam was a figure of Him who was to come.

E.C.B. In the verse that you read in Samuel, David is able to look beyond the whole period of God's governmental dealings with Israel to the time when He takes up the blessing of Israel. What has been quoted refers to a period in which God's government comes upon them because of their failure and their turning away, but it has often been said in regard to other scriptures - I think it has been said in regard to Peter - that he skips over the millennium.

J.A.G. And goes on to the day of God. You can see the tremendous buoyancy and spirit of doxology that is in David. He knew all about government and ruling in whatever situations he had to meet, but his heart is full here as he is thinking of this day when the ruler among men shall be just. It will be the manifestation in fulness and perfection of what the kingdom is.

E.C.B. So he later writes Psalm 72 to show you what it is.

J.A.G. Everybody likes a fine morning, but we maybe do not get too many!

A.McS. Could you say something about eternal life being linked with heavenly things in John 3 as opposed to what we are reading in Isaiah and 2 Samuel?

J.A.G. Eternal life is the appreciation of the love of God, and in Christianity that involves the fulness of God's purpose. It has often been said that God moved eternal life on to the view of man to be enjoyed because of the fall. It was in His purpose, but it meets the need in man's heart as sonship will meet the need in God's heart. The Lord has all this in mind in John 3 when He is speaking to Nicodemus.

A.McS. I think of what has been said as to the heavenly aspect of eternal life really in the assembly as further to what we were helped to see in earlier ministry.

J.A.G. I can see that, in the assembly, the Holy Spirit sheds the love of God abroad in your heart. That will not happen to Israel in the day to come; they will enjoy eternal life, but it is an earthly thing.

A.McS. I can see that there is always something peculiar as far as the experience of the assembly is concerned.

J.A.G. In this family, everyone is a firstborn. God knew all about that, but He is trying to get Nicodemus out of the religious mould in which he is. A lot of moulds need to be broken.

J.R.W. Is it a good thing to get into our souls as a starting point, which you have been bringing before us, that we are lost? I have been thinking a lot about Job recently. He seems to me almost like some of us, speaking for myself, who have been brought up in fellowship: the realisation, as you have said, that the starting point is that we are lost is something it can take a long time to grasp. We keep looking to our own righteousness and our own efforts, but do you think if we come to a realisation of that and realise that everything that we have is by way of gift, it would increase our appreciation of what God has done?

J.A.G. I am sure it would and increase our dependence on God and strengthen us in our links with the Lord in the Spirit. I think it is only Job, and may be Abraham, who really come to what they are, and Job says, "I repent in dust and ashes". He was very vociferous and had a lot to say, but it was all justifying Job. There is nothing that nature likes better than to justify itself – maybe I am a bit wrong, but not too much! Very subtle. I have thought lately, how could I cope with all the saints? It is a big thing to think about - love towards all the saints, Paul says. That is why I think that if there are any moulds around they need to be broken. We are related to all the saints. So God gave Solomon great largeness of heart. I would like to have that.

D.A.B. It says, "love does not rejoice with iniquity". Mr Darby says, if you think I am not as bad as him, you are rejoicing with iniquity, but love does not rejoice with iniquity, it rejoices with the truth. I was thinking about what you were saying about Solomon and

the largeness of heart, it links with Philipians about “esteeming one another”? Are these things that mark the kingdom of God and eternal life?

J.A.G. Paul says, “less than the least of all the saints”, and we would say he was the greatest. What expression of divine nature there was in him.

E.C.B. He could talk from hyssop to the cedars.

J.A.G. What coverage he had! God says, because you have asked for wisdom to govern my people, I will add everything else to you because you can be trusted. Persons like that, God can trust them.

D.J.H. Does that connect with Paul’s prayer in Ephesians 1? The basis for it is having heard of their faith in Christ Jesus and the love which they had for all the saints and then he can open up with that prayer with all its richness and power, on the basis that they had love for all the saints.

J.A.G. There is active faith in what the Lord Jesus was doing, and they are not restricted. We must be careful that we do not have any prejudice, or any bias about things. A pure heart is a creation of God and it is a very wonderful creation of God. David has to say to God, “create in me a clean heart, and renew a steadfast spirit in me”.

R.W.F. Solomon also had a tender heart. Do you think that if there is bias, prejudice, there is some evidence that hardness has crept in? But Solomon had a tender heart.

J.A.G. If hardness is there, I have not got rid of the first man. “Solomon my son is young and tender”: you are impressionable, and feeling, you are concerned about the brethren. You look round this room and see the exercises that all these beloved people have gone through, and what they may be bearing on their spirits at the present moment, you do not know. Hence the importance of viewing them as God views them. If anything has to be done, let it be done and get it over with and get on with what is normal. That is Christianity.

J.S.G. Valuation of other believers seems to me to be suggested in Ananias's attitude to Saul when he went to see him. The point you made about prejudice was quite a big one for him, but he refused what his own thoughts were and was obedient to what the Lord had said just as Paul was beginning to be obedient. I wondered if that just sets out what the kingdom is.

J.A.G. I think it does. It is a very beautiful scripture because it shows the confidence that the Lord has in the local meeting. He could have told them everything. I might have been like Ananias, "I have heard from many concerning this man"; the Lord cuts him short, He says "go for this man is an elect vessel to me". This is confirmatory because Saul was a leading man in that system when the Lord took him out of it, sovereignly, and makes him a leading man in the kingdom of God.

J.S.G. The Lord graciously gives us persons with whom we can walk, or persons newly converted through God's mercy and sovereignty, but we need to be ready with subject hearts and spirits to overcome this thought of prejudice.

J.A.G. It says, "he that is of God comes to the light, that his works may be manifested that they have been wrought in God". I think that is the working out of kingdom exercise. So the Lord says in Matthew, "let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify your Father who is in the heavens". You see how influential this kind of people are.

E.F.W. You want a lot more Timothys amongst us, who care with genuine feeling how the saints get on.

J.A.G. I think so. You have affinities with one another at this level. You do not have to wait until you are seventy-odd to come to this.

J.S.G. Why is there a reference to this in the last words of David then? Is that suggesting that he took a long time to come to what he says here?

J.A.G. He must have been coming up for 70, must he not? What he says is very beautiful and we should think - it has often been mentioned - that in the moral side of things as before us in the book of Samuel the mighty men are at the close. In Chronicles they are there at the beginning. We can see that there is evidence of mighty men - that includes sisters of course, and I say that in the proper sense. At the close of the dispensation there will be something characteristically the same as there was at the beginning.

E.C.B. It is remarkable that in the preceding chapter, which goes over so much history and principle, David's only reference to his own sin is that he had been kept from his iniquity, as if he is perfectly in the gain of deliverance.

J.A.G. I think he is. Psalm 51 shows how he had come through the whole thing. Do not let any one of us think we have not got any sin. As John says, if you think that you deceive yourself, that you are going on with sin, or going on sinning, but the capability and capacity is there. Hence the need of keeping the man under chains, under wraps, that God has set aside. It is the maintenance of the death of Christ practically by the believer over the flesh. It is a wonderful thing. Death has been given to us. Death is yours, Paul says. So in Colossians you know how to use it.

J.R.W. Could I get a bit clearer in my own mind your link between these scriptures in Samuel and Isaiah and the scripture you read in John, new birth and the kingdom of God.

J.A.G. I think the ruler among men shall be just, ruling in the fear of God. That is experienced in the kingdom - "he shall be as the light of the morning, like the rising of the sun, A morning without clouds; When from the sunshine, after rain, The green grass springeth from the earth". What freshness and vitality and warmth there is in a situation like that. That is how the Lord rules in the kingdom. He wanted Nicodemus to be brought into this. You never get anything like this in the synagogue.

J.R.W. I think what you are saying helps and what you are suggesting is that this can enter into the experience of each one of

us as we make way for the Spirit of God and allow Him to have His way.

J.A.G. David proves divine faithfulness. He has got to say humbly, "Although my house be not so before God, Yet he hath made with me an everlasting covenant, Ordered in every way and sure; For this is all my salvation, and every desire, Although he make it not to grow", He says my heart is in the right place.

E.C.B. He does not, even in type, dwell on the doctrine of the kingdom. It is the reality of it.

J.A.G. That is why I connected this scripture in John with the one in Isaiah where the reality of it is in the fruitfulness and variety and fragrance of what is proceeding in the local assembly. It is a privilege and blessing that we still have local meetings where the Spirit can be free to bring out features that belong to the bride and the wife.

D.J.H. Would it be right to connect this at all with the Colossian reference, "the kingdom of the Son of His love"? I was thinking of the attractiveness of it. This makes it very attractive to see the nature of the One who is the ruler among men. It has often been said that God has placed authority where it is most attractive. Would it be right to connect it there?

J.A.G. Exactly, where it is least irksome. It is very beautiful that, because the kingdom of the Son of His love is Christ, who is the image of the invisible God. Now I think He would begin to understand how the light of the sun is as the light of seven days. It is the greatness of Christ, the light of the moon as the light of the sun, there is equivalence in the local assembly, the small light to rule the night. Things are being regulated as He would have them, and consequently the Spirit is free to magnify Christ. I think that is a very good reference you make to Colossians.

D.J.H. It was enquiry, but I just thought it adds to the attractiveness of what we have been speaking of. It is not only that we are coming under regulation, but the One in whom the regulation is, is the One in whom the authority is. That is so attractive. Love is

there, He is the image of the invisible God, so that He is the One in whom divine love has been expressed in all its fulness. How attractive this is!

J.A.G. It is extremely attractive. It goes on to show how reconciliation has been effected. Nicodemus did not know it, but there was Jesus there, all the fulness of the Godhead was dwelling in Him bodily. How near He has come to man to bring him into the depth and wealth and fulness of God's love!

P.J.W. Do you think the centurion saw it when he said, "I also am a man under authority"? He could see what was there in the person before him, under authority and yet saying to this one go, and he goes.

J.A.G. That is helpful because the Lord says he has not even found faith like this in Israel. There was a man who had been born again and he had the faith. How he cared for his servants! It was all very helpful. He said to this one go, and to that one come, but to my bondman, he says do this and he does it. You would like to be amongst the bondmen - you can accomplish things, you can do them.

D.A.B. There seems to be a comparison between the Lord's wrestling with Nicodemus and God's wrestling with Jacob. It started at night, but it went on until the dawn arose. Was the Lord going to keep Nicodemus talking until the dawn arose, do you think?

J.A.G. It is interesting that after Nicodemus says, how can these things be, he says no more. If he had held on like Jacob, he might have got somewhere, wrestled with him. He says, "let me go for the dawn arises"; then he says, "how can I let you go, what is your name?" Then he is governmentally hindered, but from that point something of the work of God appears, because He is Israel now.

D.J.H. It is like Job, he came to a point and says he put his hand upon his mouth, but then the point was now, Come on, you say some more. You have to get to the end of these things. I think of what you said at the beginning as to the Lord's gracious work with

Nicodemus, and we know it with each one of us, the way He just goes on gently and graciously until we arrive at the end of the Lord

J.A.G. I think this is all extremely encouraging for all of us, but especially for young persons who may have problems in themselves, and they have to work them out. Stay with it, be like Jacob - it is a good reference - he wrestled with Him. He tried to make an impression. He set out his wealth in the droves to Esau, then Jacob has to remain alone with God. I remember a brother years ago in an address said, you may shadow box with your old father, but you cannot shadow box with God!

E.C.B. The day when He “bindeth up the breach of His people”, is love to all the saints. Miss Ross says,

What will it be when all the strife is over,
And all thy saints now scattered far and wide? (Hymn 421)

Is that binding up the breach of His people?

J.A.G. Yes, I think so. I think it is very beautiful. How will the Lord feel when He comes for all the saints at the rapture? Every single one.

E.C.B. These verses in Isaiah are remarkable, especially when you review them typically or prophetically that there is no suggestion of correcting every failure, putting everything right, and seeing that the law is fulfilled, but it is just the influence of Christ in His own day.

J.A.G. We need help to appreciate the immensity of divine grace and its superiority to anything else.

E.C.B. How much do we read into, “ye are saved by grace, not of yourselves, it is, the gift of God?”

J.A.G. Paul never tires of saying, I can add nothing to it, it has nothing to do with me, it is not of myself, and so forth.

E.C.B. I was struck by the verse in Romans 4 it is of faith that it might be according to grace. It must be like that.

J.A.G. It has got to be like that because it is fatal to try and introduce something of nature into the holy realm of God.

H.A.H. I have often wondered why it is that although they were not to till with the ox and the ass together, in more than one instance, as here, Isaiah has a reference to both. It says in chapter 32, "Blessed are ye that sow beside all waters, that send forth the feet of the ox and the ass" (v 20). Is that a touch of grace, do you think?

J.A.G. I think it is and the fact that the whole situation has been reconciled. It is very wonderful. We are speaking about the day to come when a child will put its hand into an adder's nest, or whatever; there is no evil. That is why I read the last verse, because it is a very comforting thing to think that finally lawlessness and evil are going to be destined to their own place.

R.W.F. In connection with the question, we might understand that through God's grace we are able to walk in step with each other? The ox and the ass would not naturally be able to do that, but we are able to walk in step with each other, do you think, and that really means walking with God.

J.A.G. I think it does, and then there is the capability to do that, and the desire to do that. To keep pace with God is a very wonderful thing. You do not rush people.

R.H.B. The reference in chapter 11 to the wolf dwelling with the lamb and the leopard lying down with the kid, takes us back to what you are saying as to new birth, a new nature, wholly different and livable with.

J.A.G. They are totally different persons, getting on fine together in the assembly in Philippi, because they have an objective and that is Christ.

L.A.B. And an appreciation of what He has done? Is that not the basis of everything?

J.A.G. It is indeed, exactly. Let us never forget it. That beautiful hymn of Mr Darby's, the last sentence; "We should be part through Jesus' blood". Never ever let us forget that. The exhortation in Deuteronomy is when you come into the land and you enjoy it and it is so good, watch that your heart does not get lifted up. Pride is a

very subtle thing, the devil uses it to bring in the difference between brethren, but between the saints and the Lord.

A.McS. Do you think the kingdom of the Son of His love would be the opposite of what we have in verse 33, the kingdom of the Son of His love being an eternal thought?

J.A.G. The great thing here is the moral qualification of Christ to execute the judgment. The breath of the ascending man in John 20 is the breath that ignites the flames of hell. It is a serious consideration, but thank God that lawlessness and evil will be cleared out of the universe of God.

L.A.B. I was touched by what you said in your prayer. The Lord has a right, not only because of what He is, but also because of His moral worth.

J.A.G. He is morally qualified to do it. He could do it officially, but morally it is a marvellous thing - the preaching on the day of Pentecost, as you know, "this same Jesus, God has made both Lord and Christ". He fills every divine office because of His moral qualification and yet He is greater than all the offices, and to the assembly He addresses Himself as Jesus. How precious that is!

LONDON

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Key to initials

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PROGRESS IN THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOD

James Alex Gardiner

Daniel 1: 21; 6: 28; 12: 8-13

On thinking of this meeting I was thinking of how we are getting on in our souls. It is not often that persons ask one another these days as to how you are getting on in your soul. At one time it was quite the normal. Somebody would ask you how you were getting on. It was referred to in the reading, in Timothy, Paul saying he had nobody who would care with genuine feeling how the saints got on. I thought we would look at one or two of these passages in the book of Daniel and see how progress was made, how we grow in our knowledge of God. They are very real and very practical.

The children of Israel were in captivity and the king of Babylon wanted the best to build up his system. I suppose from a natural point of view you could see how there was a certain matter of debilitation with them because Jerusalem had been pretty much starved into surrender and so forth, but now he is taking the best. He wants the best to build up his system, a royal seed, of the nobles, and they have to meet certain standards because Nebuchadnezzar would take them on. He wants them to be conformed to Babylon, or to be conformed to the world, so that there will be no moral evidence of princeliness, or royalty, or nobility according to God in them. They have to make a decision. This is faith. They will be built up in self-confidence and pride, and really manifesting the features of nobility that in themselves may not be evil, but if they are to be governed by them, there is the manifestation of the pride of man, and that is what Babylon consists of. That is the world.

But of Daniel and his three companions - it is very interesting - it says, "he purposed in his heart", I am not going to go in for this stuff, I am not going to feed upon this kind of food, I want to keep and be maintained in the pure heart, I am going to call upon the Lord out of a pure heart. His three companions agreed with him, they take up that exercise and they are going to work it out, they are going to grow in their knowledge of God. The chief of the eunuchs

says you are in danger with the king, you will get me into serious trouble if you do not do this. They make a very reasonable request - let us have a try at this for ten days, see how it goes, we will have pulse and water. The great contrast with the world system and Babylon is the lowly Jesus, very humble fare, as over against the rich and apparently substantial food that Babylon provides, but the pulse and water is far more effective. God is with them in it and power is with them. They find divine support because they look better, they are fairer and fatter in countenance. God gives them intelligence and all that is needed. Let younger persons, but let all of us, think of this. If you commit yourselves like these persons do to what is of God and refuse what is not of God, you will find divine support, you will look differently. It will be evident that God is with you, God is helping you. Without you feel very weak and unable to handle things, but that is good, because it casts you more on God. There is a great need to be dependent upon God. We were speaking in the reading as to walking with God. The man who walked with God before his translation was conscious he had the testimony that he pleased God.

God is going to support this line. It is very remarkable that we have the book of Daniel. The situation is left as they wanted it. It is three or four years and they have to be up to the mark to appear before Nebuchadnezzar. This brings out the superiority of Christianity as it is according to God and the committal of God to such persons to support them and see them through. Where I read, it says, "And Daniel continued unto the first year of king Cyrus". How wonderful that is. He goes right through the captivity as an overcomer. It is very blessed to look around this room and see persons who have continued. They started off like Daniel and his companions, young persons, young brothers and sisters, now they are old brothers and old sisters, but they have continued and the Lord has been with them and helped. So in every local meeting, at least in every area, there are persons whom we can take account of and in some sense they are models for the flock. They are greatly concerned that they do not pollute themselves with the king's

delicate food, they have taste. You might say they are almost connoisseurs of what is right, morally good and excellent. They have ability to prove the things that are more excellent, a very remarkable statement. There is what is excellent and there is what is more excellent and these men are moving on that line, they are judging, assessing things for God, judging and approving what is more excellent, because they are going to be perfect and complete for Jesus Christ's day.

The situation goes on and God is going to bring them forward in a most remarkable way. The king has a dream and he asks the most unreasonable thing - how unreasonable can the world be? He wants to know what this dream means. He is not telling anybody what he dreamt, but you have to find out, or else he says he will exercise his absoluteness and rule and he is going to slay whom he would. These persons, all these wise men, all their lives were at risk, in a very delicate situation. These men seemed to go from crisis to crisis, but God delivers them out of all. They could say with Paul, "if God be for us, who against us?" That is the triumph of Christianity, "He who yea spared not His own Son, how shall He not with Him freely give us all things?" These persons are in power, they are able to stand up before Nebuchadnezzar with all his worldly pomp and glory, because they have the knowledge of God. Daniel says to the chief of the bodyguard, we are going to look to God about this. Then he comes to Nebuchadnezzar and says I have the answer to it, and he opens up what Nebuchadnezzar saw. This great image is the times of the nations, the times of the gentiles, the head of gold, the shoulders and chest of silver, belly of brass, legs of iron and the feet of iron and clay. That is where we are at the present time, the days of the iron and clay.

Then there is going to be a stone cut out of the mountains without hands that is going to smite the image in the feet and the whole thing is going to come down, and will blow away as the chaff of the threshing floor. A stone cut out of the mountain without hands is Christ. He is going to come and take up His rights in government in this very world where we are. Then someone may say at this

point that we need to be aware that the assembly is not the subject of prophecy. This interpretatively will have to do with the Jew and the dealing publicly with the forces of evil that are under the power of the man of sin. That is that exercise. Daniel has that matter cleared up.

Now what is the next thing with the devil's side? Nebuchadnezzar, because of this image and because he is the head of gold, he is everything, he thinks he can do as he pleases in the exercise of his absoluteness, and when that happens it can be very testing for persons who want to call upon the Lord out of a pure heart. But, let us not be discouraged, because Nebuchadnezzar - you would never have thought that he was going to be converted - becomes one of the greatest preachers of all times. So he thinks about this image and his greatness, and he says, We are going to build an image and everybody is to bow down at the time when I say and worship this image. Daniel is not to the fore in that chapter, but his companions are and these men are not going to allow themselves to be influenced by what is idolatrous. This is very critical and serious. There are plenty of persons ready to report that they are not recognising the greatness of Nebuchadnezzar. So in a fury he says we are going to have a fire, heat it up seven times more than normal, tie them up in their clothes and throw them into the midst of the fire. He says, if you do not bow down and acknowledge this great image that I have made, this is what is going to happen to you. They say, we are not prepared to compromise, we want to be true to our God, true to our Lord and what is true to Him. Very well then, you have to face the test, and this is a great test, because we are very good at going along with the matters of the truth until the crux comes, until the climax comes in the crisis, and then if the Lord does not give us grace we are going to wilt. There is nothing like that about these men. They are cast into the midst of the fiery furnace. Just imagine this; this was literally happening to them. This will not happen to anybody here, I do not think, but you think of these men, cast in there, and what happens? They are growing in their knowledge of God. The very thing that was meant to be destructive

to them and annihilate them becomes the means, under God's hands, for deliverance. They could get up and walk about in the midst of the fire. What overcomers they are! Somebody else is there. One says, like the Son of God. Somebody else is here in this room this afternoon, and He is speaking to our hearts because He wants us to be maintained in purity of affection for Himself. They are in no hurry to come out of the fire - we can stay in there, it is not damaging us! Can you imagine it! They are supported in principle by the priestly service of Christ, One like the Son of God. The fire was so hot that the persons who threw them into it were consumed by it. Think about what happens in these men's hearts now! They are walking about in the midst of the fire, perfectly at liberty in the appreciation of this great increased knowledge of God that they have through this experience. Is that not very wonderful?

Nebuchadnezzar is going to walk about in his palace – “is this not the great Babylon that I have built” and so forth - and he has another dream. Daniel explains the dream. He says you are going to be converted by this discipline that is going to come upon you. See the wisdom of God in what He does. This man, Nebuchadnezzar, the whole known world pretty much was under his control. Whom he would he slew and whom he would he kept alive. He could do what he liked, except that he had to recognise that there was a higher than the highest. There is a higher than he. He had to come to it that the heavens rule. That always remains. Mr Darby has a very fine article in the Synopsis on Revelation chapter 1 or 2, ‘God's ways are behind the scenes, and He moves the scenes that He is behind. Man's busy movements only accomplish His will, and when they have finished they all pass away. We have peacefully to do His will, and consequently we prove His support’. You can understand, without my saying too much, how these beloved men are growing in their knowledge of God, being confirmed at every step in the path that they have taken to preserve themselves in purity and maintain their vessels as vessels for God's pleasure and service.

The next thing that Daniel is tested with is his employment. He is one of the top men and probably the best man in the whole of

Babylon who maintains the success of the economy, and of course if you are good at your job and you are a Christian, the devil will not let you alone. They begin to be envious of him, they want to get something against him. They come to it that they cannot get anything against him except in his religion. He does not cheat, or cook the books, he is upright, they can never point a finger at him, but they have something about his religion that they might get him that way, which they try to do. Daniel goes on normally, and as is often referred to among the brethren, his windows were open towards Jerusalem, and he kneeled on his knees three times a day. I do not doubt in his heart he was cherishing God's thoughts of Jerusalem. I think the prophet Jeremiah says, when you are in captivity give it a thought, let it come into your mind, think about it. Think about the city of the great king. How great it is, what is yet to be! That is Daniel's outlook. We have often heard, right it is, that Daniel had an assembly outlook. They had the situation that the laws of the Medes and Persians could not be changed, they think they have him fixed. There may be persons here who have had that character of experience through envy because they are, may be, better at their work than somebody else, and they want to get you. But then, God is for us, who against us? There is nothing for it, Daniel, but the lions' den, and it is going to be authoritative because the king is going to seal it, put his stamp upon it. Then the king himself finds that he is in a real corner; he did not want to do it, but pride in the heart of man made him do it. It is very difficult for somebody like that to humble themselves in case they lose face and so forth, because they are concerned about the promotion of the wrong man. Babylon's food will never help anybody to be humble or teach them how to humble themselves. The Lord expects us to be able to humble ourselves and He is exceedingly gracious and if we are not able to humble ourselves, He comes and gives us a hand to humble ourselves, and that does us a lot of good. Whatever humbles you, as has often been said, does you good.

Here is Daniel in the lions' den, an impossibility, these ferocious animals, king of beasts. God shuts them up. I would say

now he is growing in his knowledge of God. This actually happened to these persons. The devil, the adversary, goes around like a roaring lion, seeking whom he can devour, and as Peter says, resist him. Bring in the name of Christ, hoist the standard, put out the flag. Mr Lyon used to say as to Buckingham Palace, when the sovereign is there the flag is up and it is very nice to see: it flies better when there is a stiff breeze. You know that you are under different authority, under a different government, and there is the Lord coming in for him. All through the night Daniel is in that lions' den. The lions would be getting more ferocious, their appetite would be really sharp, but God shuts their mouths. Who, beloved, can stand against God? Hence, the king in the morning, in a mournful voice, wants them out; he is very thankful that Daniel is there. Those who were against him, and this is government - you have seen things happen almost impossibly, you would not think it could happen, and it does happen - these adversaries are put into the lions' den, and before they hit the bottom of the den they are consumed. We do not want judgment on anybody, but we need to move consciously in the fear of God.

The next point is in chapter 9 – Daniel is exercised about when this captivity is going to be over and in his concern and exercise, he reads books. He read the prophet Jeremiah. How many of us have read Jeremiah and learned about the time of Jacob's trouble, and what is going to happen? I would appeal now to every younger person here, brothers and sisters alike, learn from the books, engage your hearts with the truth as it has been set up interpretatively. Get the interpretation of it. You will get that from Mr Darby's Synopsis. You can apply, in the Spirit's grace, and in other ways, but find out first of all what it means, what is going to happen. When you have that in your soul, then you can steer a straight course and it is important that we read and engage our hearts with what the Lord has given us in the recovery to the truth. As that is so and as we proceed in this line, there is a possibility of gift developing amongst us. Daniel reads these books and finds things out and then he takes it to God in prayer. He is learning, he is going to bear the iniquity of the sanctuary and of the holy things. He is carrying the

burden of it before God. Are you exercised, any young man or woman here exercised, that they should have gift from the Lord Jesus? He would be delighted to give you gift and ability in the truth. He will give you the discipline along with it to keep you in order, He is excellent at these things. He knows His business as nobody else knows his business. But you must have desire of heart so that you will be able, should the testimony stay here another, twenty, thirty, forty years, to maintain things at a level at which they have been carried down to us. This is important. You read the books, you find out, and you go to God in prayer, and take the burden of the thing upon yourself. Bearing the iniquity of the sanctuary, the charge of the sanctuary and the holy things belongs to the priesthood, and that includes sisters as well as brothers, so that the testimony and what is proper to it is maintained, and what is proper and in accord with the Lord's Supper is available to Him every single Lord's Day. You will find divine approbation. That is very beautiful, the reference to the evening oblation - "flying swiftly", Gabriel comes to him at the time of the evening oblation. That is the time we are in now.

Now, it says, "greatly beloved". See how heaven's affections are drawn out to persons who move in this line and are interested genuinely and deeply, interested and concerned about what God is concerned about. They are not marked by frivolity, neither are they bores either. They are ordinary persons who seek to have their lives regulated by what is due to God and how the Lord Jesus has set things up. They are weak, they come short in all these things and they have deficiencies, but nevertheless God supports these persons because they are genuinely committed to Him. Would you like to have the Lord say, Daniel "greatly beloved", draw out the heart of heaven; how delightful that is. Then he is instructed in what is to be. These three and a half years have yet to be fulfilled. He is knowing about that, he is getting instruction about that. Do you know anything about that? Sixty-nine weeks up to the time when the Lord came. He was here three and a half years, half of the last week the Jew is not in faith about, but God has the whole matter under His control and He tells that to Daniel. There are certain things that are

kept secret, other things God tells him, but God can trust this man.

So He says, “you go your way”. We will leave this meeting room, beloved, and we will go our various ways. May we go with the sense of divine approbation and desire that we might be more pleasing to God, more in accord with what He has in mind and what He is working out.

These three and a half years do not belong to the assembly; the time of Jacob’s trouble belongs to Israel. But I say again, it is important that we do not mix up the assembly with what is interpretatively prophetic ministry in the Old Testament, because the assembly is not the subject of prophecy, it is the subject of revelation given to Paul. The Pentecostal situations form the basis of what comes out and it is the same, so beautifully, in the heavenly city.

That is about all I have to say. I think it is very important that the work of God is going to proceed after the assembly is taken. It goes on to say, this will be the end, “many shall be purified and be made white and be refined, but the wicked shall do wickedly and none of the wicked shall understand, but the wise shall understand”. How enlightening it is to read of the persons who will be in the remnant in the day to come. What awful persecutions they are going to sustain. We need to be sympathetic with God and sympathetic with these people because their names are on the gates of the heavenly city, the twelve sons of Jacob are there - that we become increasingly sympathetic with God with all that He is going to do, what He has done and what He is going to do, and the scope of His operations right through until the day when the Lord Jesus gives up the kingdom to Him who is God and Father, that God may be all in all.

Beloved, may we be encouraged and seek help from the Lord that we will grow in our knowledge of divine Persons and divine things.

For His Name’s sake.

LONDON

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