

A
WORD
IN ITS
SEASON

1st Series

No. 405

December 2006

CONTENTS

[THE STABILITY OF GOD'S PURPOSE](#)

[DIVINE COMPASSION AND PITY](#)

[THE TWO ON THE WAY TO EMMAUS](#)

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THE STABILITY OF GOD'S PURPOSE

Lesley McFarlane

Psalm 87: 1-7; 125: 1, 2; Isaiah 28: 16; 33: 5, 6; Hebrews 12: 22-29

I desire, beloved, to say a few words in relation to these scriptures. What is in mind is to call attention to the stability of God's purpose. Mount Zion represents this, what is in the purpose of God for His people, an order of things that cannot be affected by breakdown and all that the enemy has brought in against the testimony of God.

So, I began at Psalm 87, written by the sons of Korah, 'A Psalm. A Song'. It calls attention to the foundation. "His foundation is in the mountains of holiness". Yes, we are connected with an order of things that is eternal, an order of things that is going through. The thought of mount Zion comes into these passages, the mount Zion which He loved, "Jehovah loveth the gates of Zion more than all the habitations of Jacob". I think Zion represents God's sovereign mercy in intervening in relation to His creature, man, providing a sphere of things that is impregnable, where there can be no breakdown. This Psalm was written by the sons of Korah. We are here this afternoon, beloved, enjoying this line of things like the sons of Korah, subjects of God's sovereign mercy. They are speaking here from the appreciation of the love of God which they had come to prove. This is a beautiful Psalm, "Jehovah loveth the gates of Zion". Zion speaks of sovereign mercy and God has intervened in the human race on this principle, mercy. When "they had nothing to pay, he forgave both of them", Luke 7: 42. That is the state of man away from God, but divine love has intervened in the Person of our Lord Jesus. He came to do the will of His God. He says, "in the roll of the book it is written of me to do, O God, thy will", Heb 10: 7. Man was to be brought back to God, but it involved that the Lord Jesus had to suffer. The sufferings of Christ are a real matter and they ought to be in our thoughts at all times. "Christ died for our sins, according to the scriptures; and ... was buried", and He

was raised again, “the third day”, 1 Cor 15: 3,4. Jesus is now glorified, the work of redemption has been accomplished so that we can know something of the gates of Zion. “Jehovah loveth the gates of Zion more than all the habitations of Jacob”. God has intervened in His sovereign mercy in relation to our blessing. That is God’s disposition in our dispensation, “all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God” (Rom 3: 23), and God has provided in Jesus One who has met every liability that has been brought into the world.

So it says here, “Glorious things are spoken of thee, O city of God. Selah. I will make mention of Rahab and Babylon ... this man was born there”. God in His sovereign mercy has come in in relation to man in his ruined condition so that we can be here this afternoon as persons who have been consciously redeemed, redeemed by precious blood, that of a Lamb foreknown before time began (see 1 Peter 1: 19). It goes on to say, “And of Zion it shall be said, This one and that one was born in her” and “Jehovah will count, when he inscribeth the peoples, This man was born there. Selah”. So we are here this afternoon as persons who have been born in Zion, each one of us.

Now we get to the next Psalm where it says, “They that confide in Jehovah are as mount Zion, which cannot be moved; it abideth for ever”. Mount Zion, as I have said, speaks of the purpose of God, which is impregnable, what is going through despite all the activities of the enemy. It says, “Jerusalem! – mountains are round about her, and Jehovah is round about his people, from henceforth and for evermore”. We belong to this glorious system of things established by our Lord Jesus in His going into death for us and coming out victorious, so that we might have part in the praises. We have had a series of meetings and the Lord would confirm what we have had so that our souls might be established in grace and we might be here as those who are seeking, by the Lord’s help, to continue.

Now in Isaiah it says, “Therefore thus saith the Lord Jehovah: Behold, I lay for foundation in Zion a stone”. The Lord Jesus is prophetically spoken of here by the prophet. Yes, “a tried stone, a

precious corner-stone, a sure foundation". Beloved, we can have confidence in what God has done. Here is this precious corner-stone, this sure foundation, "he that trusteth shall not make haste".

The Lord Jesus came into this scene. He is the stone which the builders rejected but God has made Him head of the corner (see Ps 118: 22). The Psalmist could say, "this is ... wonderful in our eyes" (v 23). "The stone which the builders rejected hath become the head of the corner", we belong to this system of things which is impregnable, it cannot be affected by breakdown. We are in the world and we have had experience as to the breakdown that has come in among believers, but what we have here is eternal, "Behold, I lay for foundation in Zion a stone, a tried stone". The work of our Lord Jesus will last for all eternity, beloved, "a tried stone ... a sure foundation". We know, as far as this world is concerned, that there is no foundation here. Things are frail and there could be a collapse at any time, but God has laid in Zion a sure foundation. You and I can rest on this sure foundation. You think of the Lord Jesus, "a tried stone"! What came out in all the temptations in the wilderness showed how the Lord was able to meet the attack of the wicked one. He is the tried stone and He is also the precious corner-stone. The corner-stone in a building gives character to the building. Here it is, "precious corner-stone". The glad tidings, as it is presented to men, is inviting men to come to the Lord Jesus, the tried stone, the sure foundation, the precious corner-stone. He says in Matthew 16, "on this rock I will build my assembly" (v 18). That relates to Peter's confession, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God" (v 16). What the Lord Jesus builds is going through into eternity, "a sure foundation: he that trusteth shall not make haste".

One trusts that what is being said might encourage us to stand. The intent of these meetings is that the work of God might be strengthened in us. We are thankful for the young people with us and we desire that in the older ones we might see something of the stability of God's work. "He shall be the stability of thy times", Isa 33: 6. Despite the breakdown, there are those who are seeking to walk in the light of the assembly. There is no breakdown there. It is the

only sphere of things in this world where you can find stability. What is being worked out now in the power of the Spirit is going through.

Then in the New Testament where the apostle Paul, no doubt the writer of this epistle to Hebrews, says, “ye have come to mount Zion”, there is some stability, there is some strength. I trust the young people here might have a sense of knowing what it is to come to mount Zion, to come into this sphere of things. This scripture applies to what is present, what we can come into, what we can enjoy through the sovereign mercy of God. We have come “to the city of the living God, heavenly Jerusalem; and to myriads of angels, the universal gathering; and to the assembly of the firstborn who are registered in heaven”. These are very exalted thoughts. There is an “and” seven times in this section. We have come to these things.

The Lord said to His disciples, “in this rejoice not, that the spirits are subjected to you, but rejoice that your names are written in the heavens”, Luke 10: 20. So, beloved, that is the sphere we belong to, the heavenly Jerusalem. Then we come to, “the spirits of just men made perfect; and to Jesus, mediator of a new covenant”. We come to the Person, the One who has made it possible for us to enter into these precious things. How thankful we are for the season we have had together so far, but it all hinges on the fact that our Lord Jesus is the mediator of a new covenant. I understand that the new covenant involves Israel, but we are able to come into the spirit of it even at the present time. “And to the blood of sprinkling, speaking better than Abel”. That is the present speaking; we have had some experience of that already in these meetings, divine speaking, which is intended to move us and to cause a greater sense of committal to the Lord Jesus and to those who would seek to walk in the light of the assembly. So it says, “For if those did not escape who had refused him who uttered the oracles on earth, much more we who turn away from him who does so from heaven”. The speaking currently is from heaven. The Spirit of God is here and He is the One who is bringing these precious things to our hearts. It says, “whose voice then shook the earth; but now he has promised, saying, Yet once will I shake not only the earth, but also the heaven.

But this Yet once, signifies the removing of what is shaken". The work of God in our souls, beloved, cannot be shaken. Thank God for the work of our Lord Jesus, that finished work, and as we put our trust in Him we consciously come into a system of things that cannot be shaken, "Wherefore let us, receiving a kingdom not to be shaken, have grace, by which let us serve God acceptably with reverence and fear. For also our God is a consuming fire". This is a sobering thought that the apostle should bring in here, "also our God is a consuming fire". The fire is to consume the flesh in you and me, beloved. We are to be affected by the finished work of our Lord Jesus and we are to be here as committed to His will. May the Lord bless His word.

TORONTO

27 September 1997

DIVINE COMPASSION AND PITY

Alan McSeveney

**James 5: 11 (last clause); Luke 23: 39-43; Genesis 45: 25-28;
Acts 15: 36-41;
2 Corinthians 5: 1-10**

I wish to say a word about the tender compassion and pity of divine Persons. In James we find the expression, “the Lord is full of tender compassion and pitiful”. The reference to the Lord is in keeping with the distinctively Jewish character of the epistle of James. In the Christian dispensation, we normally refer to Jesus as Lord although the Father and the Spirit can also be referred to in that way.

However, whatever divine Person is being referred to, we need to remember that they are marked in their dealings with us by tender compassion and pity. In this scripture, the Holy Spirit through James refers to the experience of Job as a wonderful example of how God can operate in a man’s life and bring out His work. God can pass us through experience in our health, household, employment or amongst our brethren in order to bring out the quality of His work and to remind us of His tender compassion and pity. As we go through these experiences, there is a danger that we may think that God is austere and against us. However, we must realise that His government is always for us. In His sovereignty, He may allow certain things. He has sovereign rights and is entitled to do as He pleases. However, whatever we pass through, the Lord desires to show to us that in all our circumstance He is marked by tender compassion and pity.

I read in Luke 23, because we all began like the dying thief. If we have a link with the Lord Jesus at all, we began through the confession of our sins and faith in His Person and work. In this chapter, we see the end of the life of the Lord Jesus on earth. The Holy Spirit through Luke presents the Lord Jesus as Man – such a Man! It is wonderful to think of His life from the manger into boyhood and manhood. In all His movements, He brought pleasure to the

heart of God. At about thirty years of age, He came out in public service. He came into service with the glory of God before Him as He went, "through all quarters doing good, and healing all that were under the power of the devil", Acts 10: 38. Such was the life of Jesus. His whole life was dedicated to the service of God and the blessing of man. It did not matter whether the Lord Jesus was weary. Whatever circumstances He was in, He had the blessing of men in view. In Luke 23, He is at the end of His life and what is He doing? He is considering for a poor dying thief who is facing eternity without God and without hope. Is the Lord Jesus going to pass him by? No, He is going to take time, in the last moments of His life on earth, to show pity and compassion to the dying thief. Did the dying thief deserve it? No, he did not deserve it. None of us has deserved mercy. Each one of us has been in the same condition as this poor dying thief. We were sinners bound for judgment and God came into our lives and showed us tender compassion and pity. I wonder, dear brethren, whether we carry that forward in our experience. There is no question that we ought to grow and make progress. There is certainly far more to Christianity than knowing the Lord in this way. However, how often the glory of what He has done for us becomes dim in our souls and we allow other things to come into our lives. How often we forget the purging of our former sins. Are we still tender and soft in our affections towards this Man? Do we realise that we came into the world with nothing, and are going out of the world with nothing, and we deserve nothing? When the Lord Jesus first touched us, we would have done anything for Him. We would have spoken to anybody about Him. We would have gone any distance to hear His word and to visit His people. Alas, sometimes other things come in and the joy of our salvation becomes dim. Other things take the place that only He should have. Oh dear brethren, He would say to us, in a meeting like this, that He longs for our hearts. He has our souls if we are converted but He would say, "My son, give me thy heart", Prov 23: 26. He wants you for Himself and the way that you will be kept near to Christ is by remembering that mercy was shown you. There are many things that may dim our appreciation of the tender compassion and pity of our Lord.

However, in this address, I want to refer to at least three severe exercises we may pass through in our lives. The first is employment, the second is difficulties amongst brethren and the third is discipline in our bodies. In themselves, these things may overwhelm us, but as we face them with the Lord, we can get the benefit of them and rejoice in His tender compassion and pity.

I begin with exercises as to employment. It is well to remember that the pursuit of riches is continually alluded to as a snare to the soul – prosperity of the Christian. The brethren will recall that Paul wrote to Timothy in 1 Timothy 6 and charged him to beware of the love of riches and to lay hold of eternal life (see vv 6-12). In reading these verses you are struck with how plainly Paul expresses his concern for Timothy. Indeed, he touches on something in these verses that each one of us should feel the weight of. It would be right to say that a Christian who has looked after their body and mind is usually the best kind of employee that a business can have. In entering the workplace, because of your general wellbeing and your conscientiousness, you are able to be a model employee. Therefore, if anything comes up that is difficult it is referred to you. The danger in that is that it becomes a snare to you and you begin to focus your life on your business. Paul is very concerned for Timothy that business might not be the first thing in his life. He states very plainly and yet very tenderly the danger of pursuing riches and the things of this world. Paul tells Timothy to, “flee these things” (v 11). Paul does not advise Timothy to try to combat them but to flee them. The apostle wants this young man to judge any thought that the prime thing in life is to make money and look for a place in this world. Paul goes on to show Timothy that there is another kind of life that is better than business life, and that is eternal life. That is something that is not related to natural life at all. Eternal life is on the other side of death and involves the enjoyment of eternal relationships. Dear brethren, no amount of money can be compared with the knowledge of the Father’s love. No amount of success in business can be compared with being among the brethren of Christ. The purpose of God is such that He

would have our hearts satisfied. He wants to satisfy the desire of every living thing. There is no satisfaction in the business world.

There is no satisfaction in any other circle save in the Christian circle in the enjoyment of eternal life. It is for us to lay hold of that. It is not for us to lay hold of every opportunity that comes up in the business world. We are to lay hold of eternal life. Alas, dear brethren, we all would assent to these scriptures but we know that we do not always obey them. Yet our Lord is full of tender compassion and pity and never leaves us. In His grace, He allows exercises to free us from the snare of the pursuit of riches.

I turn to Jacob because this exercise is clearly set out in his history. All the patriarchs were successful businessmen. Abraham prospered in a pastoral way and Isaac prospered in an arable way.

Jacob was no less successful. His skill as a farmer and particularly as a shepherd was unsurpassed. The difficulty in Jacob's history was that the pursuit of these things took the place that only God should have had. I do not want you to think that God acted austere towards Jacob because of that even though the circumstances in Jacob's life were in order that he might be weaned away from having earthly things as the centre of his life. Firstly, Jacob had an unreasonable boss. That often happens. You see, you may be getting on very well at your employment, you may be coping with everything, nothing is too much of a problem for you. Then you get an unreasonable boss and you find you are getting more work to do than anybody else is in your workplace. Why is that? Is it just because you have an unreasonable boss? Or, is it not because of the Lord's tender compassion and pity? He sees that you are becoming engrossed in the workplace and He would wean you away from that and set you in relation to Himself. Think of how unreasonable Laban was. Jacob had his wages changed ten times. He had to suffer the heat by day and the frost by night – dreadful conditions. Jacob had to go through all these things until he came to it that the supreme thing in his life ought to be God and the house of God. It is clear that God allowed things into Jacob's circumstances that freed him from the control of Laban and set him towards Bethel.

Of course, Jacob had a detour. We ought not to be too critical of him for that because we have all had detours and made mistakes. We have all made ourselves the centre, as Jacob did. However, eventually God altered Jacob's circumstances in such a way that he arrived at the house of God and owned the supremacy of God.

Later on, God touched Jacob again. This time, He did it through a famine. You find that each of the patriarchs has to face a famine. With Abraham and Isaac, it seems that God would bring a state to light that needed to be judged. With Jacob, the great matter in the famine is that he might go to live with Joseph. You see, as you read the chapters in Genesis, that Jacob would have been happy to remain at a distance from where Joseph was and to receive everything that Joseph would give him. However, God had other ideas. Do you never think that the Lord is looking for your company? He wants to support you. He will sustain you and see you through but He will allow circumstance in your life, even in the business world, in order that He might have your company. What about the heart of the Lord Jesus? We may ask for things for our own gratification but what about His heart? Does He not want our company? He does. We may say, respectfully, that Christ wants our company. He is a real Man with a real heart. He longs for His own to be near Him. Dear brother, dear sister, He will allow things in your life (I am referring to the business life now, but He can use other things), until you are forced to go to Him. You cannot handle your circumstances any longer. You cannot face it on your own. It is too big for you. You need to go to Christ and having gone to Him, you find He supports you. You experience His embrace and the sweetness of His presence. There is nothing to be compared with the company of Christ. Perhaps, you are finding things difficult. We are all finding that to some extent, although some more than others.

God would allow difficult circumstances to remind us that we are strangers and sojourners here. He would allow things in our histories to show us that there is something better than this world.

Dear brother, dear sister, you are too great for this world. What is in your soul is too great for this world. God has another world. He

wants you to be in the experience of that world *now* and He will allow famine conditions in your life in order that you might go to Christ where He is. He will also grant you the power of the Spirit. In Genesis 45, Jacob saw wagons. He saw there was power to transport Him to the presence of Joseph. How blessed that is!

There are times when things may be so difficult in our lives that we cannot even kneel down and pray. We have known circumstances like that but we have also proved the power in the blessed Holy Spirit to intercede. How thankful we ought to be that when we cannot express ourselves, there is One who can express things for us.

Dear brethren, would you not like to gratify the heart of Christ? Would you not like to bring pleasure to His heart? He will arrange things that are difficult, but it is only so that He can wean you away from this scene and have you dwell in His presence. In all such experiences, He will show that He is full of tender compassion and pity.

I turn now to Acts 15. Here we find how the Lord acts in relation to difficulties among brethren. The brethren may wonder what this scripture has to say about the Lord's tender compassion and pity. Some might say that this incident with Paul and Barnabas was only an argument between two brothers. However, if you seek the Spirit's help you will find that these verses are clear evidence of the tender compassion and pity of the Lord. At this juncture in the history of the testimony, Paul had still a great deal of service to undertake. He had much behind him in the way of history, but there was a lot for him yet to do. In fact, Paul's greatest ministry was still to come. In view of that, it was important for the apostle that he should be entirely free from any influence that would hinder him in his service. It is clear from this scripture that the Lord would not have Paul hindered by one with Jewish tendencies who was governed by natural relationships. I take it that is why Paul passed through such a painful experience losing the active fellowship of Barnabas in service. If you read Galatians 2, you will find the history that underlies what we have in Acts 15. You will remember that there were happy conditions in Antioch until certain came from

James and then the Jews would no longer eat with the Gentiles.

Peter was involved in this and Barnabas was carried away with the dissimulation. In view of this, Paul spoke faithfully to Peter as to his defection. It was a faithful and necessary word. Yet, there is no record that Paul spoke to Barnabas. Of course, Peter was the most prominent person present. Yet Barnabas also had a prominent place in God's testimony. If prominence was the reason that Paul spoke to Peter before all, why did he not speak to Barnabas? Alas, if it is a brother in another country or another continent, we may have a judgment and be prepared to express it. However, if it is someone close to us, we are perhaps prepared to overlook certain things that we would not in others. One is seeking to be careful and respectful in what is said but special friendships are a terrible thing. They come between our soul and Christ and His testimony. Yet if we are honest, we all know how easy it is to make a special friendship. One does not point at anybody else in saying such things but our only link must be in the truth. In saying this, one would be very careful before one said that Paul had a special friendship with Barnabas. Yet it is clear from Barnabas' action in Antioch and his desire to take John Mark in service that he was declining in his communion with Christ.

In view of the service before Paul, it was important that he be weaned away from such an influence. What is clear in all that was happening is that the Lord was working. Of course, it is important not to speak critically of Barnabas. He made a special contribution to the work of God. We find him initially in Acts 4, showing largeness of heart in selling his land and contributing the proceeds to the Christian circle. In Acts 9, Barnabas introduced Saul of Tarsus to the saints in Jerusalem when everyone was afraid of him. In Acts 11, Barnabas is given the wonderful testimony that he was a good man. This manifested itself in the way that he knew his own measure.

Barnabas knew he could take the saints so far and then he went for Saul and served alongside him in the ministry in Antioch. Barnabas is not a small man. Barnabas is a great man and shows how anyone of us can be deflected in this way. Nor did the Lord write him off but acted towards him in tender compassion and pity. In Acts 15, we see that Barnabas took John Mark and went to Crete. In such

isolated circumstances, Barnabas would have time to reflect and it seems that God brought him back into the current of service. It is interesting to see that Paul refers to Barnabas in 1 Corinthians 9 verse 6 and Colossians 4 verse 10. Would Paul have referred to Barnabas if he were not recovered? May we never get to the point where we are glad to get rid of persons. That will never do. We may be in difficult times but if we are with God, we will feel with Him when one of His dear children goes astray. It will not weaken our judgment or stop us considering for God but we will feel for the erring one. Barnabas helps us to see that there is room for recovery. May we never forget that. God never forgets our brightest days. In His grace, he can bring us back.

One would not put a premium on difficulties amongst the saints but it is important to see what the Lord is doing in such matters. Many will know that Mr Darby in 1847 was concerned that some brethren were so occupied with what the devil was doing that they failed to see what the Lord was doing. Dear brethren, we need to lay hold of what the Lord is doing. There is nothing that happens that the Lord does not allow. He is not the author of all, but we know that in what He allows He has an end to reach. We have to allow the Lord to work. Is there anything too hard for Him? In all such exercises, He will show His tender compassion and pity. He will act to preserve the purity of His testimony and save us from links that would spoil it. Do we value the light we have received? Most of the brethren present have had the privilege of being brought up in an area where there has been the greatest light. However, some here have known what it was to be in companies where not everyone was a real Christian. There are persons here who have known what it was to be in fellowship with those who held wrong doctrine as to the Person of Christ. There are brethren here who have felt their conscience and soul tortured as they tried to do what was right themselves while knowing they were in fellowship with persons who were clearly wrong and some of them not even converted. The Lord has come in and delivered them, sometimes through very painful circumstances. His tender compassion and pity has been in that.

Our Lord will surely act to ensure that nothing spoils His testimony and encourage those who desire to do what is right. May we be helped to see what the Lord is doing in all such difficulties and be encouraged as to His tender compassion and pity.

I close with a reference to 2 Corinthians. In chapter 3 of this epistle, you see the greatness of new covenant ministry. We find there is such a thing as the glory of the Lord. If you have been sealed with the Spirit, you have seen that glory. Of course, we need to hold ourselves in the presence of Christ in order that we might be formed after Christ. However, if you have known God's forgiveness in your life and have been sealed by the Holy Spirit, then you have known something of beholding the glory of the Lord. What flows out from that in chapter 4 deals largely with what may be taking place in our outward bodies while God's work is progressing inwardly. It is very precious to see that working out practically. One can remember visiting an older sister who had lost her faculties but whose heart was clearly full of Christ. She was not able to express herself but it was obvious that God had access to her soul. God was forming something in her that was eternal in character and not limited to her present weak condition. In 2 Corinthians 5, the apostle shows us the condition that is able to encase such a wonderful work. You see, we are bound for heaven. That is where we are going. The Lord is coming too. May we never lose sight that His coming is imminent. Before we finish this meeting, He might come and take us all away. That is what we are looking for. We are looking for the One who is going to take us up. We are going to have glorified bodies. At the present time, the Lord is quietly taking down the tabernacle that is our present condition. He is doing that in a very tender way. In the accurate translation of Mr Darby, we have a reference in verse 1 to what is "destroyed". That is an accurate translation but the thought that lies behind that is the loosing of the moorings of a ship when it leaves harbour. There is tenderness in that. There is tenderness in the way each tent peg would be lifted up and the tabernacle would be let down. Dear brother, dear sister, the Lord loves you and cares for you and He is full of tender compassion and pity in His dealings

with you. He will take the tabernacle down and replace it with a house that is, “eternal in the heavens” (v 1). The work of God will no longer be encased in a weak condition, but in something that is fixed and eternal. The fact that you have the Spirit is a guarantee that you are going to have a body like this. “The earnest of the Spirit” is a wonderful expression. It is different from the “earnest of our inheritance”, Eph 1: 14. The Spirit viewed in that way is the pledge that we are going to be associated with Christ in His reign in the world to come. “The earnest of the Spirit” is the guarantee that we are going to have a body of glory. When we have that body we will stand before the judgment seat of Christ and the things that we could not understand here, we will understand then. At that time, He will go through our history from our unconverted days. He will show us everything we have done. He will not judge us but He will show us how His tender compassion and pity entered into our lives. We will look back and see how the Lord truly helped us. He looked after us and cared for us. His dealings with us were never harsh. He was not austere. He was the One who was full of tender compassion and pity. Dear brethren, I leave the scripture with you. The Lord is “full of tender compassion and pitiful”. May He bless the word.

MALVERN

9 July 2005

THE TWO ON THE WAY TO EMMAUS

Jim Hibbert

Luke 24: 13-34, 36-40, 44-48

I want to speak about a Man available on the first day of the week, and this beloved Man has risen from the dead and the work He has accomplished is available for everyone – not just those in the White House (and I speak respectfully in that regard). But here is One who had risen from the dead. Think of the number of dead in the whole scene of human life, and here is One from *among* the dead, “firstborn from among the dead”, Col. 1: 18. You would expect there to be a great cavalcade, a great procession for this Man. He tasted death for everything. He had gone to the bottom of the mountains and He had ascended, it says, “... what is it but that he also descended into the lower parts of the earth?”, Eph 4: 9.

What was He doing in this scripture? What had been prophesied about Him had happened – “smite the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered”, (Zech 13: 7), and now He is gathering the sheep. That is what He was doing on this first day of the week, collecting His own, gathering them around. He kept on gathering until there were about five hundred brethren at once (see 1 Cor 15).

This Stranger on the road to Emmaüs! It is amazing to think that He is interested in you. If you are discouraged and if you are downcast, He is interested in you.

This country we are in proclaims the principle of, ‘Give me your tired, your poor, your huddled masses yearning to breathe free, the wretched refuse of your teeming shore, send these, the homeless, tempest-tossed, and I lift my lamp beside the golden door’. That is the invitation of the Statute of Liberty and that is how this country welcomed people. Now, with terrorism, it is a different story. It is not so easy to become a citizen of this country or Canada. But with the One of whom I am speaking there is no restriction. If anyone wants to come to Him, if any one of you is discouraged, or seeking a better way, seeking a better fellowship, or

seeking a better relationship with Him, He invites you. This Stranger would like to come along with you for a brief time this evening, and encourage you and tell you about Himself. The Bible is about Him.

The whole fabric of Scripture, from the beginning to the end, is about this Wonderful Man. Whether it is the Messiah of the Old Testament, or the Christ of the New Testament; whether it is the Sun of Righteousness of the Old Testament, or the Bright and Morning Star of the New Testament; He is there from the beginning to the end – the Alpha and Omega. If we are despondent He would like to speak with us and encourage us. He would have a word of encouragement for us, because He would like to speak about Himself.

So, the same day that He had risen, these two were going back to their village. They had been in Jerusalem – they had heard the news. Some had gone to the tomb and He was not there. They had an inkling of something happening and they had thought that this wonderful Person was about to redeem Israel. Instead of that He was crucified and put on a cross, and they were really shaken.

So they were going back to their hometown seven English miles away. To walk seven miles might take about two to three hours.

Now we are not going to keep you here two to three hours so we will have to condense our message about this wonderful Man.

As they went along, He asked them questions, that is the kind of Man He is. In another place He said, “Children, have ye anything to eat?”, John 21: 5. He likes to draw you out, so that He can discuss things with you. Even in Laodicea He knocks on the door!

You can picture Him knocking on the door of a family gathered and the family would be saying, ‘you know, we have had a letter from John and he says Jesus is counselling us to buy eye salve that we might see, and linen garments that we might be clothed, and gold purified by fire’ (see Rev 3: 18), then there would be a knock on the door and there He would be! What does He say, “I will come in unto him and sup with him, and he with me”, Rev 3: 20. You can think of Him sitting down and conversing to a discouraged person in Laodicea in times when most are indifferent; He would like to draw

near to rekindle your heart, set it on fire and get the coals burning.

In the day of recovery they had a wood offering. That was a wonderful time of recovery. He would like just to lay on the wood and light it and get a spark going and kindle it so that your heart would be burning within you.

As He goes along, He speaks to them about different things; they discuss what had been happening that day, “And having begun from Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself”. There are many references to Moses in the prophets. Moses means the “rights of God”, and that is how he started. Then in the prophets there are about thirty nine references to Jesus and that includes all of Psalm 22 and all of Isaiah 52 and 53. These are not just scripture verses, these are whole sections of Scripture. In the Psalms there are about twenty three references, and in the New Testament there are hundreds of references that link with the Old Testament, so that the whole fabric of Scripture is that blessed Man. What would He say to these two as they went along on this journey – this walk – probably from about noon time until the early evening.

Possibly as He walks with them He would speak to them about the offerings in Leviticus. I am sure He would, because He began from the time of Moses and might have told them about the burnt-offering, the oblation, the peace-offering, the trespass-offering, and the sin-offering (see Lev 1-4). He would say, ‘This is myself, this represented me’. As they spoke with Him they said, “The things concerning Jesus the Nazarean, who was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people”. What did Moses have to say about this wonderful Man? He would tell them about Deuteronomy 18, where Moses says, “Jehovah thy God will raise up unto thee a prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me; unto him shall ye hearken; according to all that you desiredst of Jehovah thy God” (vv 15,16). What a prophet!

They were talking about a prophet and this One who was walking alongside them would say, Moses the law-giver was pointing to me as the prophet. He might talk about what Jacob would have to

say about Judah, "The sceptre will not depart from Judah ... Until Shiloh come" (Gen. 49: 10), until peace comes. He would probably say many things like that. Then He would go on to the prophets. If you look at 2 Samuel 7 you will see what He says, "I will establish his kingdom. It is he who shall build a house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom for ever. I will be his father, and he shall be my son ... And thy house and thy kingdom shall be made firm for ever" (vv 12-16). He is getting into the prophets, and how He would talk to them about the different prophets and the different things in Isaiah. They had hoped that He would redeem Israel, but He would go over chapters such as Isaiah 32, 42, 50, 52, 53 and 61. Think about what Isaiah 61 says, "The Spirit of the Lord Jehovah is upon me" (v 1). He would go back to the time in Luke 4 when He was in Nazareth and opened up this wonderful scripture, "The Spirit of the Lord Jehovah is upon me, because Jehovah hath anointed me to announce glad tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and opening of the prison to them that are bound; to proclaim the acceptable year of Jehovah" (Isa 61: 1,2). When He read that what He said was, "to send forth the crushed delivered", (Luke 4: 18); that is what He said, which was true of these two on the way to Emmaüs.

Is there anybody here who is feeling crushed or despondent? He has good news for you. He is the One who is the answer for everything, in the law, the prophets, and the Psalms. He might have continued with those two about the Psalms, but He opened that later to the company. When He drew near to their village and He made as if He would go further they said, "Stay with us, for it is toward evening and the day is declining". It was the time of the evening oblation. He was the morning oblation; He was the offering of incense. Think of it! He was the real Offering yet the Jews were still carrying on with their ritual. He was the real morning Lamb and the real evening Lamb that day. What a day it was! It says in Joshua, "And the sun stood still, and the moon remained where it was" (10: 13). There was no day like that day, and for these two there was no

day like the first day of the week – a blessed Man going about in the victory of resurrection, gathering these two and gathering His own.

So, they returned quickly to Jerusalem. That is a fine thing. When you get in touch with this blessed Man, you will want to go to the centre where things are. That is what they did. They quickly returned. It was a slow journey to Emmaüs, a Sabbath days' journey, an easy walk, but then they returned quickly to Jerusalem.

What did they find out? The brethren were saying, "The Lord is indeed risen and has appeared to Simon". What a Priest He was!

What a work He was doing in gathering His own. There is a wonderful reference to that in Ezekiel 34, "Behold I, even I, will both search for my sheep, and tend them. As a shepherd tendeth his flock" (v 11), and then it says, "I will seek the lost, and bring again that which was driven away, and will bind up the broken, and will strengthen that which was sick" (v 16).

That is the kind of Man He is, that is what is going to happen in the re-gathering of God's people in the coming day, and He was doing it already. He was introducing a new day, the day of the "acceptable year of Jehovah", Isa 61: 2. He was introducing the year of Jubilee. When Pentecost was accomplishing He was introducing something new. By His death and by the incoming of the Spirit something that was unprecedented in the annals of scripture. It was a new day, the acceptable year of the Lord. I think it is like the year of release and the fiftieth year, and Pentecost all put together. It continues now so our invitation now is to encourage each of us and to warm our hearts, to rekindle them and to be absorbed with that blessed Man and to extend that wonderful day.

So, they quickly go to Jerusalem and they find those gathered there and then He appeared in the reality of His humanity. He opens up the Scriptures to them so that they might understand. I think that is really wonderful, that He is here to open things up to us so that we become those that understand. He is in a new condition and something new is going to be introduced.

In the millennial day there will be the feast of the New Year, the Passover, Unleavened Bread, and the feast of the Tabernacles (see Ezek 45: 18-25). Possibly the blowing of trumpets and the day of atonement relate to the gospel of the kingdom (see Matt 24: 11).

What was new that was to be introduced for those in Luke 24 was when the day of Pentecost was accomplishing – the Holy Spirit came (Pentecost will not be repeated in the millennium). It was a new day, and there is no day like that new day, the time of the mystery, the time of the glad tidings, and the great opening up of things.

He set the pattern here, speaking about everything concerning Himself. That is what we are to be occupied with. We are to be occupied with that Blessed Man. The world to come will be occupied with Him. In His administration, in the millennium nothing will deteriorate. The response on earth may deteriorate and the nations may deteriorate (see Num. 29), but He and the assembly will never deteriorate, they will always be fresh and living because we will be occupied with Him. It means we have got something that can never be taken away from us.

May this be so, for His Name's sake.

WHEATON IL

25 November 2005