

A WORD IN ITS SEASON

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THE WORK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

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DBR This chapter, Genesis 24, is well known to the brethren but I felt there was much in it that would interest us and also that would have a very current bearing, perhaps especially that we might have a greater sensitivity to what the Holy Spirit is securing in the present dispensation. The chapter follows on from chapter 22 where, in figure, Isaac is raised from among the dead and where also, at the end, Rebecca is mentioned, v 23. In chapter 23 Sarah dies and I think that, in type, is the end of Israel's part in the testimony for the time being, making way for the assembly, a product of the Spirit's work. To complete what I have said, in chapter 25 Abraham marries Keturah which would suggest that God is going to resume His relations with Israel.

But in the meantime, beloved brethren, I feel there is much in this chapter that we can draw from. One is relying on the brethren that they may draw from it. There is the concern of Abraham for his son that there might be a bride secured suitable for him. The father's thoughts are involved in that, and it is not hard to see that there is type in that of our God and Father also, and His concern that there may be a bride secured for His Son. I think someone has spoken of the assembly as the Father's love gift to the Son. Then there is the servant, and I trust that we get some impression of his unswerving devotion to what is committed to him. What marks him in the way of committal brings in, we may say, his own desires entering into it, in which he expresses what he is looking for. It says in verse 11, "And he made the camels kneel down outside the city by a well of water". That is not said for nothing. He is looking for the bride for Abraham's son and he is marked by great dependence, not only looking for her to be of the right kindred, but looking for certain qualities to come to light in her.

I read in chapter 16 of John because I think we need to understand something of the glory of Christ exalted before we can understand anything about the assembly. As we have an impression of Christ where He is, then we begin to get impressions of the glory of the assembly as His bride. The Spirit is conducting the bride here to Christ, not to heaven. At the rapture the Lord will come Himself for His bride, but now the Spirit is conducting the bride to Christ, that is, Christ as the

heavenly Man in testimony down here.

RJC We think of the breakdown at the present time. It might tend to overcome us, but the Spirit is serving, and we should be assured that there will be an answer to the heavenly Man. I wonder whether we should be assured about that, that divine things are not going to fall to the ground, the Spirit's service is going to be completed and there is going to be a suitable bride for Christ where He is, do you think?

DBR That is very much in my own mind, that we need to take character, not only from Christ, but from the Spirit, and the Spirit's committal to this commission. He is not giving it up. He is going on with it and He is determined to secure it, and nothing is going to divert Him. I think we are in days when there is a possibility of the enemy trying to divert us. That is why I think this has a prophetic bearing. There is no diverting of the Holy Spirit in His mission to secure the bride. Is that what you had in mind?

RJC Yes. I just thought we should be absolutely certain that divine thoughts are going through, that the Father has desired that there might be a suitable vessel for Christ, that heavenly Man. Under the influence of the Spirit that will come to pass. We want to be in the way of the Spirit's operations in relation to what He is doing in the assembly, do we?

DBR These are the Father's thoughts in purpose going back before sin came into the world. I would say this for the brethren's help, it has helped me greatly and I have noticed it once or twice, but Mr James Taylor said that Rebecca is not a figure of the Pentecostal assembly; she is a type of the full thought of the assembly, vol 99 p 7. It involves Paul's ministry, and she is secured in the full light of the glory of a Man up there, but that heavenly Man is in testimony now and there is a vessel suited to Him that is being secured for Him.

JSp I had not thought about it too much before, but reading it over you can see the suggestion that in each of the Persons of the Godhead there is a tremendous sense of anticipation of the concluding of their exercise.

DBR That is very good. In type, the Father, and then the Spirit in His operations; then, at the end of the chapter we have read, Christ is there by the well too. He is seen as relating Himself to the Spirit, relating Himself to the Spirit in view of what the Spirit is securing for Him in the

bride, do you think?

NJH Can you bring in the thought of the Father's Spirit into this chapter? He speaks about "my master" which would be Abraham, and then he refers to "thy servant Isaac". I just wondered if there is some suggestion of the Father's Spirit there, "that the Christ may dwell, through faith, in your hearts" and "to know the love of the Christ", Eph 3: 17, 19. It is a slightly different line, but it is still the Father's Spirit.

DBR I think that is good. What does it say in Ephesians 3: "that he may give you according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with power by his Spirit in the inner man; that the Christ may dwell, through faith, in your hearts ...", v 16-17? I think that is right; it is "according to the riches of his glory", the Father's Spirit taking that wealth on in view of securing what is completely according to the Father's thoughts. Is that what you thought?

NJH Yes.

CKR It is really a statement of majestic significance, the Lord saying, "But when *he* is come". Are we not seeing that there is a mediatorial arrangement of divine Persons for this dispensation to secure a glorious answer to the heart of Christ and for the service of God eternally?

DBR "But when *he* is come, the Spirit of truth, he shall guide you into all the truth".; I think that is why Mr Taylor said Rebecca was a full type of the assembly. "All the truth" brings us on to Paul's ministry; that is really what it is, it is the glory of the whole divine economy in its operations opening up and Rebecca is secured in the light of that, do you think? Have you more to say?

CKR I just want to get the significance of it that this is the dispensation of the Spirit. It is an essential theme through it all, the securing of the assembly in every way to complement the glorious Man above.

DBR I think what you say is good. What you touch as to majesty is fine, because if you read this chapter it is most interesting. You get a sense of the dependent yet majestic movements of the Spirit, subject to the Father and subject to Christ, because He calls both of them "master", but nevertheless there is a dignity throughout of the movements of the servant.

JDG It says, "guide you into all the truth"; can we see that beginning

in the servant's approach to Rebecca here, suggesting the Spirit's activities? He is going to get her into the truth, and he is going to approach her and attract her in. He comes to the well and he comes as a dependent person, we might say, and he asks for guidance as to what he shall say.

DBR Just so. That struck me. I trust that the brethren are free to bring in touches throughout the whole chapter because even making the camel kneel down, there is significance in that. It is the dependent approach, and yet the glory of the Person. I think the Spirit is typified *in the man, the servant*, and there is also *the well*, and there are also *the camels*; so it is a very full bringing out of the practical working of the economy and the great end being secured in that there is a vessel that is completely compatible to Christ as Man. Is that what you had in mind?

JDG Where you read is the filling out of what you read in John 16. Each one of those remarks you made, and what you said of the Spirit, is filled out in this chapter.

DBR That is exactly what I thought, that these two verses we read in chapter 16 involve the working out of it, as brought out typically in this wonderful chapter.

JTB It says He "goes forth from with the Father", John 15: 26. Does that bring out something of the blessedness of the relationship between the Father and His Spirit, so that He goes out from that area freighted with the Father's thoughts for the Son.

DBR Yes; the Spirit is filled with the Father's thoughts about the Son, and He fully understands the concern of the Father that there should be a bride secured for Him. Think of that, the One who represents deity in the economy, that is the Father, and yet He is concerned that there might be a suitable bride for the heavenly Man in testimony. It is not exactly the assembly taken to heaven here. It is the assembly taken into Sarah's tent in the place of testimony, and filling out the testimony that Sarah never filled out, a full testimony, a heavenly one.

GAB There is an interesting remark Mr Raven made that struck me at the time. He said that the Spirit could not come until He was able to bring a report of Christ exalted, vol 1 p 5. The assembly could not be formed, the dispensation could not really proceed, until such a great matter was established, Christ exalted by the Father.

DBR That is excellent. You see, there is the life of Christ down here, there is the working out of the moral issue, there is the glory of redemption accomplished, but I think the practical working of the economy depended on Christ exalted and the Spirit could not come until then. I think we see that what has been secured here is a wonderful vessel that is completely compatible with the heavenly Man, and able to take her place in testimony.

GCMcK One of the things the servant says, which is very similar to John 16, is in verse 36, "And Sarah, my master's wife, bore a son to my master after she had grown old; and unto him has he given all that he has"; so there is the glory of Christ, Christ being glorified. The Lord says, "All things that the Father has are mine".

DBR What do you understand by that?

GCMcK I was just trying to enquire as to the wealth that is in the Spirit's mind as to the Father's thoughts of Christ and all that belongs to Him, but perhaps you could help us.

DBR Yes, "All things that the Father has are mine" would include, I think, the Father's counsels. John's gospel opens up the Father's counsels in a wonderful way; all that is committed into the hands of Christ as exalted, and then the Father's thoughts about Christ Himself. Then the Father's Spirit, and all "according to the riches of his glory". A tremendous dignity attaches to the whole thing, wonderful dignity. I like that verse; it is all given into the hands of Christ. Earlier in John's gospel it says, "The Father loves the Son, and has given all things to be in his hand", John 3: 35. I suppose that is the administration in the economy.

JSp It is quite interesting that the first reference to love is in Genesis 22, and we have the reference here in chapter 24, "And Isaac led her into his mother Sarah's tent; ... and he loved her". I do not know if this is the second reference but it shows that there is a close link.

DBR That is very good. You can see this is a great love chapter, suggesting the Father's love for the Son. There is a reference in the Scriptures to "the love of the Spirit", Rom 15: 30. That is a fine reference too, but I think you can see that the whole chapter is permeated by the spirit of love and underlying it all is divine love, divine love in purpose. It is divine love working out these great thoughts, and divine love secured at the end we might say, in Christ's love for the

assembly.

RG-y Would you allow that these things we are speaking about are worked out within the scope of the kingdom? Abraham said at one point, "Beware that thou bring not my son thither again". There are certain areas that God is not working in, but Matthew teaches us that the kingdom leads on to the full thought of the assembly.

DBR I think what you say is good, and it is a good reference to bring us back to that, "And Abraham said to him, Beware that thou bring not my son thither again". I think, without being critical at all, what has happened in Christendom is they have tried to bring the Son back, and they have really adopted a kind of Judaistic teaching going back to law, but the matter is a heavenly one that Christ is exalted, and everything must be worked out from that standpoint. I do not think we get very far in the truth until we learn that everything must be worked out from Christ exalted. As was pointed out, the Spirit did not come and operate until Christ had been exalted.

RG-y So the scripture you have referred to, "And he made the camels kneel down", would suggest that there are subject persons under the control of the Spirit in which these thoughts can be worked out.

DBR Well, that is good. I think that is needed for the working out of the truth, and that is where the kingdom comes in. It brings us into subjection so that we are able to function under the leadership of the Spirit in relation to what God is securing by the Spirit.

NMcK I wonder if the exercise began with Abraham a good bit before this in regard to the fact that he was childless. He had all the promises, but how were they to be passed on; and how were these matters to be worked out? Divine Persons had in mind that there would be what was entirely suitable in all the blessings that God had in mind, and all that was in mind for man should be able to flow out in Christ and the assembly.

DBR Say more.

NMcK I was just impressed with what has been said about anticipation, and how divine Persons anticipate what is entirely suitable. It went away back in God's thoughts. The matter is worked out in Abraham in the exercise when he says, "I go childless" (Gen 15: 2), and asks who would inherit from him. He had the whole thing in mind, did he not, that Isaac would inherit and that there would be a

suitable bride for him?

DBR I think that. It goes away back into eternity. That is the wonder of the thing. We are touching something that really belongs to the realm of eternity, and it leads on to eternity as well, because the bride will be the bride eternally. It is not exactly the Rebecca side there, that is more Eve, I think, but the bride will be the bride eternally, and she will satisfy the heart of Christ eternally. That is a wonderful thing, is it not?

DTP It is interesting to note that from Genesis 22 we do not hear anything of Isaac until this chapter, and it comes in at the very end, "For he was dwelling in the south country", typically the ascended Man, but there is the glory of what has been worked out. In Luke 24 the Lord goes over the whole history, but He must ascend into His glory before the joy of what was really of assembly character would come to light.

DBR I think that is right, and it is a good word, 'assembly character', because I think we need to take it on. That is part of the teaching that the Holy Spirit would set on amongst us, that we might be characterised by the assembly, and the features belonging to it.

DTP One of the hymn-writers speaks of bringing the treasure all to light, hymn 109. That is the servant. He is doing it here.

DBR That is very good, bringing the treasure to light. He has treasures too. He gives Rebecca treasures and clothes her in suitability. He gives others treasures as well, but it is a chapter of richness, is it not, "according to the riches of his glory"?

GCMcK The servant is taking on this commission. The point you raise is as to whether the woman would be willing, "Perhaps the woman will not be willing to follow me to this land". You are speaking of assembly features. Would that be the first critical matter, amenability to the Spirit? Do you think that would be the test to us?

DBR I am sure it is, that we are subject to the Spirit and amenable to Him. I think the bride would be marked by certain qualities. I think perhaps affection is the first one, and then sensibility, and then intelligence, and I think if you look at this chapter you will see that Rebecca meets all that is required. She is marked by affection, she is marked by sensibilities, she knows what to do with the water, and she is marked by intelligence. She knows her lineage, the importance of it, and she also knows what to do at the right time. It is really remarkable that there are features that the Spirit is longing to find, and He finds

them. Rebecca comes forth, and the servant lets her go past to the well, and does not speak to her, and he does not approach her until her vessel is filled. There is something for us in that too, the Spirit is securing filled vessels. The enemy would denude the whole position, that is what he is at, to rob what Christ longs for, what the Spirit is securing, but the great end in the Spirit's service is that we might be filled full. The servant lets her fill her vessel, then he approaches her, then he asks for a drink. It appears to me that she never allows the vessel to get out of her hand; she lowers it and he takes a drink, as it says subsequently in verse 46, "And she hastened and let down her pitcher from her shoulder, and said, Drink, and I will give thy camels drink also. And I drank". I think that is beautiful, "And I drank". I think it speaks, if I could speak reverently, of some inward satisfaction, some inward enjoyment in the Spirit's heart. He was drinking into the suitability of the vessel that was coming to light, I think. Beloved brethren, could we, at the end of this dispensation, get into that spirit, and see what marks the Spirit in the way of joy and pleasure in what He is securing? One great exercise I think we need to be marked by is that we might help to facilitate the service of the Holy Spirit, not to hinder it. That is Laban; he would hinder it. Laban and her mother would hinder it. He said, "Do not hinder me".

TJC Could you say something about that because the beginning of the chapter suggests the Spirit is very patient? You referred to making the camels kneel down, but then when the moral features are secured and come to light there is urgency in His service, "Do not hinder me". Could you say something about that?

DBR Well, I think we need to feel - perhaps more as the dispensation comes to a close - that there is certain urgency in the matter. It has to be completed. For instance, he says, "send me away". I think there is a note of urgency in that, then too, in verse 33, "there was set meat before him to eat; but he said, I will not eat until I have made known my business". You see the urgent feelings, you may say, that are in the heart of the Spirit, and He is not going to be diverted from His service, not at all.

PAG Would the fact that the Spirit's service in this chapter involves adornment and the power for movement suggest that He is recognising what is already formed and, in a sense, setting His seal on it?

DBR You mean what had already been formed in Rebecca? Well,

that brings out a very interesting point. Eve was a creational formation, she had nothing at all to do with it, it was God's matter; but I think Rebecca is a family formation and that is a most important thing. Your father said the kingdom is important, but then the family is also important, the features that are formed in the family of God are important. I think we need to learn family manners. That brings in suitability too. She belonged to the right family, and she learned and is formed in a certain way, and the Spirit can take that on. There was something there that the servant could adorn in that way. That is your point; there is something to be formed. I think it opens up quite an important point. Have you more to say?

PAG I wondered if you could help us in the matter of adornment in verse 53, why silver articles are brought out first. We normally think of silver as speaking of redemption, but we know that the assembly is purchased, and I was enquiring as to why this matter of silver is brought in here.

DBR You are thinking about Acts 20, "purchased", v 28. Yes, I think that is good. I do not know what more I could say about that. It is very fine. It says in verse 22, "And it came to pass when the camels had drunk enough, that the man took a gold ring, of half a shekel weight, and two bracelets for her hands, ten shekels weight of gold", and so on. What do you think about that?

JDG I was looking at Proverbs 31, "Who can find a woman of worth? for her price is far above rubies", v 10. What you are speaking about, family features, come out in that woman. She is willing to work with her hands in service in relation to the Lord's interests here.

DBR That is good because it says, "two bracelets for her hands", as if the Spirit typically had been affected by the work of this woman and, you might say, He was touching her hands now, giving her something for her hands. Labour is involved at present in the economy, and while it is the Father and the Son and the Spirit, the working out of it involves the brethren too.

JDG Her energy expended in serving the servant springs from her love.

DBR You mean Rebecca? That is good, her energy is based on her love, and I think that is the secret of what is communicated to her by the servant.

JDG It is an indication of how she will serve Christ as seen in Isaac when she meets Him.

DBR Just so. It is all preparing her for that. Really the whole chapter is the Spirit conducting the bride to Christ, and that is what He has been doing the whole dispensation, He has been conducting the saints to the true Isaac, the heavenly Man in testimony. Now, Christendom at large has missed it. Through divine grace we know a little about it, and I think we need to cling to it. Do you not think that?

JDG It is a moral journey that He is taking us here.

DBR That is just what it is.

NJH Would you bring the thought of the camels down to the local assembly?

DBR You would need to help us there.

NJH I was just thinking of men of discernment, and the Spirit would only provide power in a local meeting providing the relationships are right between persons and the Spirit. Is that right?

DBR That is good. I would like you to say more about that.

NJH I was thinking what you said at the beginning of the reading as to what the servant did. "And he made the camels kneel down outside the city."

DBR There are the men and the ten camels. These men would be subservient to the servant, and I think that is important in our local meetings, that we learn to move subserviently. The Lord took the place of being the sent One in John's gospel; the Spirit is sent of the Father and of the Son. I think that is to be taken on by ourselves in the working out of things and that is how power is arrived at, if I have grasped your thought. The camels are representative of the power that carries us, and the power that carries us, if we are to get the gain of it, must be that we are subservient persons, do you think?

NJH Yes, and if we are going to give any right influence in our localities you must lay hold of the whole divine concept that is in the mind of the Spirit at the moment.

DBR Just so, I think that is right. That is why I say one of the great features of Rebecca was that she was sensitive; she had sensibilities. I

think we need to be more sensitive. I think we need to be exercised to be sensitive to the present movements of the Spirit.

CKR There must be some significance and parallel with Paul coming to Philippi and being outside the city. It was not camels there, but we have women who had assembled there, and then a sensitive person in Lydia. She says, "If ye have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house and abide there", Acts 16: 13-15. Then you have the converted jailor (v 34), and you begin to see that the Spirit is operating and forming these features as the testimony goes westward, and the Pauline truth is embraced, do you think?

DBR That is good, and the women assembled by the river. I think that is important. I think that the river is deepening at Philippi. It is flowing out, but it is deepening there. The work of God was deepening and that is another sound feature that is seen here. There are qualities about Rebecca. It is not only the right lineage, but there are these qualities about her that the Spirit can take on, do you think? That was seen in Lydia and these other persons.

CKR Then we see it in the house of Chloe at Corinth, 1 Cor 1: 11. Would there have been something of these features which Paul must have discerned in every locality that he visited as the economy of local assemblies opened out?

DBR Yes, I think that is right, and therefore we need to learn to respect the work of God in one another because the work of God in a person produces qualities that no other work could produce. Do you agree with that?

CKR Paul has espoused them unto one Man, 2 Cor 11: 2.

DBR I was thinking that.

JAB So these qualities are listed by Paul in Galatians 5 as the fruit of the Spirit, "love, joy, peace ...", the qualities that you have been speaking of that Paul could take account of and which the Spirit would produce. Paul describes them as "the fruit of the Spirit", Gal 5: 22. These things have to be seen. We might think that what we are speaking about is very exalted, and so it is, but it is also very simple. It is the character of joy or patience. These things are attractive and that is what the Spirit is doing in one and another to form what you are speaking about; is that right?

DBR Read them to us.

JAB "Love, joy, peace, long-suffering, kindness, goodness, fidelity" - or faithfulness - "meekness", and then the last one, "self-control". Apart from that last one which would apply especially to ourselves, we see all of these features in the Spirit Himself.

DBR Very good, in the Spirit Himself; so in a certain sense we can take on the features of the Spirit, not only the features of Christ but the features of the Spirit that are here in display in this chapter typically in a very beautiful way. I think it is a most outstanding and beautiful chapter in Scripture. I say this dependently, but I think there is something in it for us today.

GCMcK Just to go back to the camels we were speaking about, the first intimation that Isaac has that Rebecca is coming is that he saw the camels coming. That must be something that is a very attractive feature in movement. Does that raise questions with us as to whether we are in movement in accord with the Spirit. Is there some assembly feature seen in movement towards Christ?

DBR Well, I have the impression the Lord Jesus is taking account of the power that is moving us. Isaac sees that first, he sees the camels, before he sees Rebecca. I think he is taking account of the power that is bringing her, and I think at the present moment - I do not say it in any hard way - but the Lord Jesus is looking to see what kind of power is carrying us on. Is it merely natural power? That will not take you the full distance. It will take you a certain distance but it will not take you the full distance. The only power is the power of the Spirit. That is the power of the camel. There is no other power for us, no other power for right movement apart from the power of the Holy Spirit. Would you agree with that?

GCMcK I was just thinking of how the thing applies to ourselves in our localities. Is there a sense of that in our meetings, and does the Lord take account of it, that we are following the Spirit and we are moving in His power; therefore, I suppose, true assembly features are appearing?

DBR Just so. That is the camel, but what do you say about the well? That is another fine type of the Spirit, the well. Moses sat by the well (Ex 2: 15), did he not? What do you say about the well?

GCMcK The well seems to speak of a powerful source of supply. It is

not exactly a fountain here, of course, but a well, providing resource in a quiet and definite way.

DBR That is good, and it does not run dry. Rebecca drew for the man and then she drew for the ten camels which would be a significant amount of water, to draw for a man, and then to draw for ten camels, but there is still water in the well.

JTB Isaac all this time is dwelling in Beer-lahai-roi, 'Well of the Living ... who reveals himself', Gen 16: 14, note. What would you say about that?

DBR It says, "And Isaac had just returned from Beer-lahai-roi". The note says, 'came from coming'. What do you think about that?

JTB It seemed to be his custom to go into that area where the well of living water could be enjoyed; related to 'the Living who reveals himself'.

DBR Do you not think that the Lord Jesus is in touch with the Spirit about things? I think divine Persons talk about what is proceeding. The suggestion has been made, and I think it is right, that He was in close touch with the operations of the Spirit. It is not a dead thing; the economy is a living matter, and there are living relationships and living communications between divine Persons. We come into the secret of that.

RJC Would the well suggest that, that there is something living, there is a movement of what is living. The Spirit's service would involve that, would it not, bringing us into a living order of things in view of Christ having His own portion in the assembly where He is?

DBR I think that, an endless resource. The assembly is a place where we get these living communications. We just want to be simple. We are persons here today, and we know something about the temple. We know how the temple functions. It is the living God's temple, and I think it is a wonderful thing; we need to be maintained in exercise in our comings together, however large or small the gathering, that we may get some sense of living communication from divine Persons.

FR In verse 64 we have as to Rebecca, "and she sprang off the camel". Up until now it is the camels' movements, but now it is Rebecca. It is as if she is full of the Spirit, and the energy of the Spirit is now in Rebecca.

DBR I think that is good. There is the energy of love there. "And Rebecca lifted up her eyes and saw Isaac, and she sprang off the camel. And she had said to the servant, Who is the man...?". Who else could it be, beloved brethren, but the Lord Jesus? That is the Man! That is the Man that absorbs the assembly's affections, and His glory absorbs the assembly with His beauty. He is the Man, and Rebecca responds and springs off the camel, do you think?

FR It is as if Rebecca is full of the Spirit. It is the movements of the Spirit bringing Rebecca but now it is Rebecca, full of the Spirit herself. It is not only the Spirit in Rebecca, it is the Holy Spirit.

DBR Well, that is good, and Rebecca, I think we might say, suggests a person who is marked by spiritual energy. Rebecca is really answering to what corresponds to Christ in every way.

GAB Going back to the matter of the well, is there not something settled, serene. A fountain, of course, is another thought and has its own place in Scripture, but it seems to me the well is something you can draw on. There is infinite resource there, but we need to be in a settled condition to do that.

DBR Well, I think it is helpful to see that. That involves good relationships with one another, you are settled. I think this matter of the well is important, because I think you will always get water where Isaac is. That is Christ; He is the Giver of living water. Later on in chapter 26 Isaac is securing wells again. He goes to one and it is opposed and he calls it "Ezek", quarrel, v 20. Isaac does not remain there. He goes to dig another well and it is called "Sitnah", opposition, v 21. He does not have any part in that either. He goes and digs another well, "Rehoboth", broadways, "For now Jehovah has made room for us", v 22. That is Isaac, beloved brethren, no quarrelling, no contention, settled conditions. You might say that something is to be met. The power of quarrel will not meet it, and the power of contention will not meet it, but I think it needs the well, a deep, settled, satisfied state of things.

GAB Do you think it is something that exists down here which is in complete consonance with what is in heaven? We began with that, Christ in the Father's presence, the Spirit coming down here, and does that not bring us back to John 16, "for he shall not speak from himself; but whatsoever he shall hear he shall speak". He is in direct contact with what is current in heaven and conveys that now to the assembly.

DBR I think that is excellent, because you have a Man in a new place, and you have a power that is equal to that in the Holy Spirit down here. That is the well.

NJH Is this well at the end more interesting than the one at the beginning of the chapter?

DBR Well, I would value what you think about that.

NJH At the beginning of the journey I suppose it would be the Spirit known in Romans, the moral side, the transportation where required; but at the end it is a bit like John 14, 15, 16 and 17, He 'came from coming to'. It is amazing how the Spirit comes into this chapter.

DBR That is very fine, and it links on with what was said, that there is a certain kingdom exercise. That is Romans, "righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit" (Rom 14: 17), but this is an advance on that. There is a link with John 14 where it says, "In that day" - that is the Spirit's day - "ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you", John 14: 20. That is like that well, I think. You are coming into these wonderful areas of satisfied relationships. It is a wonderful thing that we are brought in to share in what the Father and the Son enjoy in each other.

JSp The moral thing has been worked out. There is a great widening out of things. Eternal life is involved in that, do you think?

DBR Yes, I do. We are touching an ocean of divine love. It is more than a well now! You have taken us on to more than a well, it is a great ocean of divine love. One of the hymn says that, "Filled in the ocean of that love", Hymn 400. I think it is a great love chapter.

JAB Do we have to come to it in our experience that from one point of view we cannot live without this? What the well speaks of is not just something that would be nice to have as believers. These places Nahor and Beer-lahai-roi mean these people had to live beside wells. There was not any running water. They would have died if they did not have them. Do you think what you have been bringing before us is not an optional extra for Christians? This is our life. We must have it.

DBR We must have it. That is a good note to end on. We must have it. I think it really involves the fulness of divine thoughts. I think that is what Mr Taylor had in mind when he said that Rebecca was not a type of the Pentecostal assembly. If I get the thought rightly, the Pentecostal

assembly would be Peter's ministry, but the full thought of the assembly is Paul's ministry, and what is presented there is that Christ is there in His body, which is the assembly. That is the full thought, and I think that is what is presented in this chapter, and while it does not take us to heaven, the Lord Himself will. The Lord Himself will come and take His bride to heaven, but the Spirit's great service is to conduct the bride to Christ now in Sarah's tent, the area of testimony, and there is a testimony being rendered that Israel could never render, and that is a testimony of Christ and His heavenly bride. So Paul says, "but I speak as to Christ, and as to the assembly", Eph 5: 32.

RJC He is comforted. He has what He desires in the assembly and that is what He is looking for at the present time, is that not so? We put ourselves in this direction, do you think?

DBR That is very good. That is far beyond what is for you and me, it is what is for the heart of Christ, "And Isaac was comforted after the death of his mother".

GAB So Rebecca is not permanently lodged in Sarah's tent. It has been pointed out that she would have her own tent. Does that really look on to Paul's ministry being opened up in contrast to the Pentecostal assembly?

DBR Yes, and local assemblies being set up, and every local assembly governed by the universal thought. I think that is the fullness of what is in mind in securing the bride for Christ.

Glasgow

27th February 2010

List of initials:-

GABrown, Edinburgh; JABrown, Grangemouth;
JT Brown, Grangemouth; RJ Campbell, Glasgow;
TJ Campbell, Glasgow; JD Gray, Edinburgh; PA Gray, Grangemouth;
R Gray, Grangemouth; NJ Henry, Glasgow; GC McKay, Glasgow;
DB Robertson, Cumnock; CK Robinson, Glasgow; F Roe, Glasgow;
J Spinks, Grangemouth

WAITING FOR THE LORD

Jimmy Drummond

Daniel 2: 31-45

Exodus 21: 1-6

Acts 16: 14, 15

1 Corinthians 15: 51, 52

I thought in this occasion we could speak of waiting for the Lord to come. It is a wonderful matter to wait for Him. You will never be disappointed if you wait for the Lord, but it is something that would challenge our hearts, as to what we are waiting for. I know in my own life sometimes I have waited on certain things happening, and perhaps you have too. You may be waiting for certain things to take place and then perhaps you will commit yourself a little more. Maybe it is in relation to the breaking of bread, or in relation to your household, or whatever it may be; you are waiting for certain things to change. Certain things are right to be waited upon, but sometimes you find too that in your life you may wait for other things. How sobering this is, and I speak feelingly. Beloved brother or sister you may be waiting for something that is never going to happen. I have done that too. For example, you might think there is some other way to find happiness. I have read scriptures which relate to the Lord coming, and I have also read scriptures as to the bondman, because one thing the bondman does above all else is that he waits on his Lord to come. How wonderful that is. Perhaps we will get help to speak about that. You may be waiting for things. You younger ones, how I would encourage you to think about what you may be waiting for; waiting for certain things that may contribute to your happiness, things that may never actually happen. Sometimes when we are young we think that happiness is out there somewhere, and the propensity of our hearts is then to start to try other things, almost as if happiness was like a pot of gold at the end of a rainbow. That pot of gold that the story-tellers may speak of does not exist. Happiness away from Christ, and happiness apart from Jesus, happiness apart from waiting for Him and on Him, does not exist, dear brother or sister. There is nothing greater, there is nothing more pleasurable, than waiting for the Lord Jesus, and you will never be let down. Think of that, that is wonderful, is it not?

It says in John's gospel, "I am coming to you"; "I will not leave you orphans, I am coming to you", chap 14: 18. It is characteristic of Jesus

to come to His own. How blessed that is. He is the coming One. That is characteristic. He would come to us. That is blessed is it not, to know that, to have some little experience of the Lord Jesus coming to us. There are various aspects of His coming. At present He will come to us, but then He is going to come for us. That is the rapture and then He is going to come with us that is the appearing. How blessed that is. It has been said that the rapture and the appearing are two parts of the one event, the coming of Jesus. I would encourage our hearts then as to this matter of waiting for the Lord to come. That is a test, is it not? The waiting time is usually a test; many people wait for many different things, but think of this matter, this much more important matter, profound matter, of waiting for the Lord, waiting for Him to come. It says of old in Exodus 32 that they were waiting for Moses to come back down the mountain (v 1) but they lost sight of him, did they not? Mr Coates in his last word in *The Believer Established* (vol 15) describes the situation as 'The Lost Hope'. To the public profession the coming of the Lord Jesus is a lost hope. It may be that in our own affections we sometimes lose hope in the Lord coming. They did in Exodus 32: they said "for this Moses ... we do not know what is become of him!", and they started to do all sorts of things. They made a molten image, a golden calf. Think of it, think of the contrast. It was molten which means they must have had a mould, and they poured it in and there it was, it was something to idolise, something to worship. That is not what God is going on with. Whilst we wait there is something happening. There is this wonderful vessel, the assembly: it is not made from a mould. Assembly features are being formed out of the exercises that the beloved saints are passing through, and that is why it has an intrinsic beauty that no other object for your affections could compare with. How wonderful that is. So, as waiting for the Lord, we can make much of Christ and much of the assembly.

So I read in Daniel: I do not mean to go into the details of the verses that I have read but just to show how the verses read would bring in stability. We have thought of waiting for the Lord, and how those in Exodus 32 did not know what had become of Moses. We have been waiting and the dispensation has gone on for a long time. From where we have read in Daniel chapter 2, and the setting up of these Gentile monarchs, it was about 600 years until Christ came, and then we have had more than 2000 years, the longest dispensation recorded. That brings out again the magnitude of what divine Persons are securing in this dispensation, that there is what is being secured in this

dispensation that is unrivalled. No other dispensation will yield to God what this dispensation is yielding in the personnel of the assembly being secured for Christ. We may wonder at things in the world, and think this is the way things have always been and they always will be. Dear brother or sister, it is not the case. We find here, before where we read, in Daniel chapter 2 v 20, 21, "Blessed be the name of God for ever and ever; For wisdom and might are his. And it is he that changeth times and seasons; He deposeth kings, and setteth up kings". God's hand is behind everything: it is behind government. This is what the section we have read refers to. At present God's government is known indirectly through magisterial government and known directly in this wonderful vessel, the assembly. I read those verses to bring out just where we are because we have these different phases of rule referred to. First we have this image; it says in verse 32, "This image's head was of fine gold". That is what was set on by God. Nebuchadnezzar was eventually converted: God's power was manifest in him and it was set on by God. In many respects publicly the situation has changed but for the believer it has never changed. Authority is of God: that remains. Indeed, it is not just for the believer, it remains absolutely that authority is of God. It has become less and less recognised by government. We read of that in verse 39, "And after thee shall arise another kingdom inferior to thee", and the situation has become more and more inferior. Paul reminds us in Romans chapter 13, "Let every soul be subject to the authorities that are above him. For there is no authority except from God; and those that exist are set up by God", v 1. So the believer, as part of his enlightenment in relation to all creation (Rom 8: 22), is enlightened in relation to government, and he recognises the authority that is of God that is in government. It is remarkable to consider the Lord Himself in John's gospel, "Pilate therefore says to him, Speakest thou not to *me*? Dost thou not know that I have authority to release thee and have authority to crucify thee? Jesus answered, Thou hadst no authority whatever against me if it were not given to thee from above", chap 19: 10, 11. Think of the wonderful illustration of Christ in dependent manhood recognising what had been set on by God. Publicly this head of fine gold has broken down and deteriorated, but for the believer, for the bondman who waits on his Lord, we find the head of fine gold is seen in Christ Himself. As Christ is your Lord, that is where the authority sits. How blessed that is.

Then it goes on to speak about other phases of government. It speaks of "its breast and its arms of silver". I think that, as the brethren

will know, the teaching refers to that as the time of the Medes and Persians, and the silver as representing something favourable. And there has been something favourable in government. We have been thankful for that. Others will remember there was a time when government made allowance for such things as conscientious objectors: they made allowance for those who were seeking to be faithful to the Lord. That would be an element of the silver that has come in to government. Then it says, "its belly and its thighs of brass", showing that what is disciplinary enters in to government, and we have seen that too. You can think of the two World Wars, and other matters that have taken place, as allowed by God, having come in through government. It says "its belly and its thighs of brass"; then it adds, "its legs of iron, its feet part of iron and part of clay", and that brings us to our day. I suppose what we know now in government is what we have here in the iron and the clay. The western world has been blessed by an element of constitutional government that has brought in stability. I am not sure if we could say so now, but for many years this country was known as a Christian country, and God's goodness was in that, to be recognised. But still the thing has deteriorated, and so we have this matter. It says in verse 42, "And as the toes of the feet were part of iron and part of clay, the kingdom shall be partly strong and partly fragile. And whereas thou sawest the iron mixed with miry clay, they shall mingle themselves with the seed of men; but they shall not cleave one to another, even as iron doth not mingle with clay". We may say in some respects that this is the day we are in, and so the believer, although recognising government and what we may call the institution of government, would not vote. I was taken aback by the strength of a remark about the base principle of democracy, and we can see that now being acted out before the country in relation to the political world, and the believer has no part in that. In John's gospel chapter 18 the Lord says to Pilate, "My kingdom is not of this world; if my kingdom were of this world, my servants had fought that I might not be delivered up to the Jews; but now my kingdom is not from hence", v 36. Beloved brother and sister, we belong to another kingdom: how blessed it is, a wonderful kingdom. We would not vote because of that. It is a wonderful reason, because we belong to another kingdom, the kingdom of God. What we also find where we read is that these other kingdoms are going to disappear. I trust there is some stability to be gained from these things; it says, "Then was the iron, the clay, the brass, the silver, and the gold broken in pieces together, and they

became like the chaff of the summer threshing-floors; and the wind carried them away, and no place was found for them", v 35. Think of that; this world is passing. It is going to be blown away. These things are going to be blown away in the wind, and God is going to introduce a world in the millennium - how blessed it is - where righteousness is going to reign, and then we come to the eternal day when there will be a new heavens and a new earth, "wherein dwells righteousness", 2 Pet 3: 13. What a blessed prospect the believer has: what an assurance we have.

Then we come to this matter in verse 34, "Thou sawest till a stone was cut out without hands". We can depend upon God to accomplish His own ends. The One whom we believe in, the Lord Jesus Christ, is God. He has deity; full deity belongs to Him. It says, "a stone was cut out without hands; and it smote the image upon its feet of iron and clay, and broke them to pieces". What a One we have, what a One we are waiting for, our Lord Jesus Christ, who is going to affect all these things. Later on in chapter 7 it says "I saw in the night visions, and behold, there came with the clouds of heaven one like a son of man, and he came up even to the Ancient of days", v 13. How blessed that is: the Lord Jesus Christ who is God as to His Person, and yet a blessed Man, the One that we wait for, the One that we are going to see face to face; He is going to accomplish all these things. It says of the Ancient of days, "his raiment was white as snow, and the hair of his head like pure wool", v 9. Think of the maturity, if we can say that reverently, of the judgment of Christ upon all that has gone before. It says "his throne was flames of fire, and its wheels burning fire." These are the wheels of government; everything will come under the influence of Christ. We see that opening up in Revelation: all these things are going to be taken care of. There is stability in that: things are not going to be lost on the way; they have gone on for ever: they are going to come to a conclusion at the end of this wonderful dispensation. And yet we wait, and how do we wait?

That is the test, and that is why I read in Exodus as to the bondman. We have a reference here to the Lord Himself and, of course, there is what is unique to Christ, but there is also what we can draw upon as an example of bondmanship. I would encourage us in this matter of being a bondman. It is a blessed matter. There are various references in scripture to bondmen. In Galatians it says, "So thou art no longer bondman, but son" (chap 4: 7), but we have to take scripture in its context, and there it is in relation to the legality and being

in kindergarten. We need be under a tutor no longer, but come into the joy of sonship. The Lord Himself also says in John's gospel, "I call you no longer bondmen ... but I have called you friends", chap 15: 15. What this brings out, dear brother or sister, is that this matter of bondmanship underlies everything. I would suggest that everything we enjoy, everything that we are, is connected with this matter of being a bondman. The bondman of course refers to brothers and sisters; you may be a bondmaid or a bondwoman: it is gathered up in the same thought. Bondmanship includes what we are when the brethren are not looking at us. This is how you lead your life. How wonderful that is. I trust you have been compelled into this type of life. Being a bondman, it is not optional. Someone else has said that we are all pressed men. I know scripture speaks, especially in the Old Testament, as to what is voluntary, but what underlies a voluntary offering to God is that we have been compelled into the way by divine love and grace. How blessed that is; so what a privilege it is to be a bondman, one of God's bondmen, if we can say that. We have this wonderful example here in the Lord Himself, for it says, "If thou buy a Hebrew bondman". I think the word Hebrew would draw our attention to this being a love matter, "if thou buy a Hebrew bondman". It has been said that Hebrews is the language of the heart, and Greek is the language of the mind; and here it is a Hebrew bondman. "If thou buy a Hebrew bondman, six years shall he serve and in the seventh he shall go out free." So the thought of a bondman here introduces excess. Is that not wonderful? I think we can say so, that even at the end of the dispensation there is excess. God will provide the excess, dear brother or sister; if we need more grace, if you need more love or more faith, God is going to provide it. It is all to do with the seventh year, and you can think also of the seventh month, and link it with Paul's ministry too, and how it was given to him to complete the word of God, Col 1: 25. He could speak of the "word of the Lord" to Lydia. There is this excess that is attached to the thought of a bondman. When Christ came into manhood - and we would be careful in the language that we use - He did not only become a Man: He took a bondman's form, Phil 2: 7. He went further than that, and so you can read in Luke 10 of the good Samaritan, and what it says of the good Samaritan is that he "came up to him", v 34. The Lord Jesus can do that: bondmen can do that. I wonder if I can do that? Can I come up to persons, come up to my brethren, in the humility of one who is self judged, and one who has some little resources perhaps? This Samaritan was able to pour in oil and wine. What a blessed matter that

is. Does it not say elsewhere, "A bruised reed shall he not break", Isa 42: 3? That was the man in Luke 10; the bondman does not break the reed: he is able to mend the reed, and to help or testify to these things. Another thing that the bondman does, he is able to go further: that is what happened at the end of Luke's gospel. In Luke 24, with the two who were on the way to Emmaus the Lord "drawing nigh, went with them" and then "*he* made as though he would go farther", v 13. That is the excess that the bondman brings in, the excess of love. It is wonderful. I do not mean to go into each of the verses in their detail, they are well known.

It says, "If he came in alone", and there is a reference in the footnote to his body. Bondmanship would involve our bodies. We can think of Romans 12: although it is the beginning of priesthood, it involves our bodies, how we hold them here whilst we wait for the Lord coming, how we live here. I was thinking of that, becoming a bondman, seeking to be here for the Lord, and who of us can say much about it. It is not like choosing a pastime, it is not like choosing some other interest or theme, it is something that divine grace would compel us into. How blessed it is: it is a much greater and deeper matter to be attracted, and to be attached, and to be committed to the Lord Jesus than simply thinking of it as another interest, because it is your life: it becomes everything. Men speak about '24/7': the bondman lives for Christ. You may say it is all he does, and it is everything he does. Think of that: think of every second of every minute, and every minute of every hour, every hour of every day, every day of every week, every week of every month, every month of every year being here for the Lord. What a privilege! How wonderful: if that is all we can do, it is everything we can do. I feel more and more impressed by this: this is how we lead our lives. Standing here is a wonderful privilege, but it is not bondman service exactly. It is a bigger privilege to live your life for Jesus. It is a bigger privilege to live every minute of your life for Him. I am not pretending I do this all the time, but I desire to do it, and I trust that you, dear brother and sister, would also desire that whilst we wait for the Lord to come you should live here for Him. Think of that: what is it going to mean? It is going to mean suffering. The apostle John - I do not know if John ever refers to himself as an apostle, but he certainly refers to himself as a bondman, and if you look at the beginning of Revelation it speaks there of him being in the Isle of Patmos, and it says he "was in the Island called Patmos, for the word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus", chap 1: 9. (I think John is a model bondman and he is a model

friend he is both those things.) These are two things the bondman is concerned about: he is concerned about maintaining the word of God, he is concerned about maintaining what is in the scriptures, and what is in the ministry. We have spoken of Exodus 32, and the wonderful pattern of the tabernacle, and how after, despite the glorious pattern that was shown, they made the molten calf, and that causes me to question my own heart.

We have had wonderful ministry in the recovery, and if I may say so, the distinctive ministry of Mr James Taylor, and that was given in the past. We are still waiting; we are waiting for the Lord to come. Am I going to be a bondman who is going to maintain in faithfulness the word of God, and what comes out in the word of God, and in the ministry, and am I going to display something of the testimony of Jesus? That is not always going to be easy. You find that in the simple affairs of life; perhaps someone says something to you or, in these days you get an email, and you think, well I need to respond to that, and I think this and that should be the case, and so on. Take time to think how your response is going to affect the testimony. How am I going to respond, if someone read it would they think. 'Oh! there is a person establishing his rights'? I am never too keen when I hear believers speaking about their rights. I do not really consider myself to have any rights except being able to boast in Christ, but I am concerned about my testimony. Think about that: you might reply, but does it show anything of the fragrance of Christ? How far are you going to go with this? Is it going to mean that you are going to lose out here: it may well mean that. Paul says at the end of Romans 8, "we have been reckoned as sheep for slaughter", v 36. We might be that: you say, 'Well, people are going to walk all over you'. Perhaps they will: the one thing for sure, when you put your head on the pillow at night, you will be able to say to your heavenly Father. 'I am sure I have not done everything quite the way I could have done it, but I did it desiring to be faithful to the testimony of Jesus'. How blessed that is: it is an expression of the new man. How blessed that is: think of what has been reconciled. The old man is not reconciled, it is crucified and the new man is not reconciled, it does not need to be, but it says, "you ... has it reconciled", Col 1: 21. And that reconciled person becomes part of the demonstration here in his pathway of the new man. How wonderful this matter of bondmanship is: I commend it to you, dear brother and sister.

It says at the end of the section we read, "and shall bring him to the door, or to the door-post; and his master shall bore his ear through

with an awl". That is another thing that the bondman does, he waits on his Lord, and he has an ear to hear. We know that scripture where it speaks about "morning by morning, he wakeneth mine ear to hear as the instructed", Isa 50: 4. The bondman can hear, and Simeon in Luke 2 is an example. I did not realise until recently that Simeon's name means 'hearing'. That is one thing the bondman does, perhaps he does more hearing than speaking. It is lovely what it says about Simeon: it says he "was just and pious, and awaiting ...", v 25. I would like to encourage us just to be these things: just and pious and waiting, and then you have a wonderful service to fulfil. Look at the examples of bondmanship you can find in scripture.

The little maid in 2 Kings 5 was a true bondmaid. If you look at the teaching you will see that the previous chapter brings out the truth of Romans, Colossians and Ephesians and brings us to in this person, and she is just a little maid. She is 'below the radar', as people say, but she is prepared to be there, and she is prepared to be faithful. She says "Oh, would that my lord were before the prophet that is in Samaria! then he would cure him of his leprosy", v 3. That is a bondman, that is the features and the feelings of a bondman coming out. You find it elsewhere too. It is of note that in Luke 15 the father says to his bondmen, "Bring out the best robe", v 22. Can I do that? Can I contribute to clothing the saints in the worth of Christ? It is the bondmen who are given to bring out the best robe. How blessed these things are. May our hearts be encouraged in them.

So I read of Lydia. It speaks of "a certain woman, by name Lydia, a seller of purple". I have perhaps touched on what I really had in mind in relation to this scripture, but she was a seller of purple. It is an imperial colour, but it also speaks of suffering. She went about her daily business, and she was prepared for the suffering. I challenge my own heart as to how much of an appetite or capacity I have for that. You can see more and more from scripture that it is a suffering pathway we have been called to. The privilege is that we are not only called to suffer *for* Him but to suffer *with* Him. How blessed that is to be with the Lord in it. Lydia is a seller of purple, and when she went about her business she was faithful to Christ. There would be suffering involved in that. But then it says that she worshipped God, and she heard. There again is this feature of hearing. She heard and then it says, "whose heart the Lord opened to attend to the things spoken by Paul".

If you take up this matter of bondmanship in its simplicity, the Lord

is going to help you. How often I become complicated, but it is wonderful to consider what the Lord says in the gospels. The Jews in John's gospel were seeking to be complicated about doctrine and about the truth and the Lord simply says to them, "If anyone desire to practice his will, he shall know concerning the doctrine", chap 7: 17. So you can take the first step by seeking to follow the Lord's will for you, and these other things will follow. He will provide the doctrine, He will provide the teaching, He will give you the scope of things. How I long for that! Here it says of Lydia, "whose heart the Lord opened to attend to the things spoken by Paul". I would love to have my heart opened to attend to the things spoken by Paul, and not be like Miriam in the Old Testament who died on the way, Num 20: 1. She started off well, she had the song and a tambour (Ex 15: 20), but she died on the way. She was not maintained in the matter. Here the Lord opens the heart of Lydia, and she attends to the things spoken by Paul; so she not only hears, she attends. There is a doing involved in that also. She had been baptised and her house, and "she besought us, saying. If ye have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house and abide there", v 15. How blessed a situation this is. Think of Lydia's house. The devil desires to get into our homes, and I am thinking of the internet. The devil is making an attempt to get into our homes and we need wisdom and care as to how we carry on being faithful. Lydia says "If ye have judged me to be faithful to the Lord", think of that, faithful to the Lord, "come into my house and abide there". Think of Lydia standing at the door of her house; and think of the doorway of her house. You may say, the blood was on the lintel and the doorposts, but then there is this threshold and on that threshold, you may say, was written this matter of being faithful to Paul's ministry. I wonder then if I am holding my house in such high regard for the Lord's things, and I can say it is protected by the blood of Christ. Anybody coming in to it will see, on that threshold, a threshold that is not only between me and my house and unbelievers, but, when it needs to be, a threshold between me and other believers, in being faithful to Paul's ministry. Is it evident as someone comes into my house?

Well, I would encourage our hearts in relation to these things. And lastly I have read in 1 Corinthians 15, and there I just wanted to touch upon this wonderful matter of the change. Has change taken place now? It says here "Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all fall asleep, but we shall all be changed, in an instant, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet; for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead

shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed". Paul in this chapter is combating the matter of certain persons denying the resurrection, the truth of which underlies the Lord coming for us. As we wait for the Lord, and as He comes for us, what underlies that mighty power is that Christ is risen. That is another thing to carry in our hearts, the Lord coming and the truth and the power of His resurrection. That was something that Paul knew and, as seeking to know "the power of his resurrection" (Phil 3: 10), he can then speak about one thing, one thing was before him and that was "the calling on high of God in Christ Jesus", v 14. It is a wonderful matter that the Lord is coming for us as One who is risen from the dead. We should be encouraged by that. He has the power to bring about change, something that can go on now in our hearts. How the bondman would be open to that. The Lord had to say to the Sadducees, "Ye err, not knowing the scriptures nor the power of God", Matt 22: 29. Think of that, the power that would sustain us. I would like to draw attention to this wonderful matter of resurrection. It is wonderful; the One who is coming for us is the One who has been raised from amongst the dead, the One who now lives in glory. Is it not wonderful? What a life He had. The Lord Jesus lived an un-forfeited life. Think of that: our lives are forfeited because we are marked by what is fallen. We are subject to death within ourselves. That never was so of Christ. He was of His own order. Do these not things thrill your heart, and give you some sense of the power that Christ has to bring in this change? May your faith be strengthened that this change is going to take place because of who Christ is. We read in Genesis of what was after its kind, "seed after its kind" Gen 1: 12. The Lord Jesus did not come in on that principle; He was of His own order, and life is inherent in Christ. That is why He could not be held by death and its power, that is why He could not see corruption, that is why the Father raised Him. Think of this blessed One who is coming for us. Dear brother and sister, be encouraged: He has this wonderful power to effect change. It says here, "We shall not all fall asleep, but we shall all be changed, in an instant". How quickly this is going to happen! How urgent then it makes the exercise of taking up bondmanship, to be faithful to Him whilst we wait for Him to come. Well may our hearts be encouraged.

It goes on to say, "and we shall be changed". How we can encourage our hearts. Paul does not say that at the end of his account in 1 Thessalonians. He says, "For if we believe that Jesus has died and has risen again, so also God will bring with him those who have fallen

asleep through Jesus. (For this we say to you in the word of the Lord, that we, the living, who remain to the coming of the Lord, are in no way to anticipate those who have fallen asleep; for the Lord Himself, with an assembling shout, with archangel's voice and with trump of God, shall descend from heaven; and the dead in Christ shall rise first" - an old sister once said, 'That is their privilege' - "the dead in Christ shall rise first; then we, the living who remain, shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air; and thus we shall be always with the Lord.) So encourage one another with these words", chap 4: 14-18. Well, may it be so for His Name's sake.

Glasgow

24th April 2010

CHRIST AS THE STONE

Jim T Brown (Edinburgh)

Isaiah 28: 16

1 Peter 2: 4-5

We had a reference on Lord's day to this scripture in Isaiah. It is attractive to think of the Lord Jesus, as the foundation Stone. What stability and what permanence attach to Him! No doubt the stone has some allusion to His deity, "Before Abraham was, I am" (John 8: 58), "Jesus Christ ... the same yesterday, and to-day, and to the ages to come", Heb 13: 8. It is interesting to compare the stone and the rock. The rock, of course, also implies what is durable, but, as we know, the rock was smitten. Our brother's reference to Numbers brings to mind that the Lord Jesus was the smitten Rock. He was smitten in order that the Holy Spirit might be made available to us. But, so far as one can see, there is no reference in scripture to the 'stone' being smitten. It emphasises what is everlasting and permanent. Yet it is "a tried stone" as well, a very affecting reference, no doubt, to the humanity of our Lord Jesus. The Lord Jesus, as Man, was tried to the uttermost, but He emerged superior to everything that was brought against Him. Psalm 105 says, "the word of Jehovah tried him", v 19. How affecting to ponder the Lord Jesus in Gethsemane as Satan sought to deter Him from fulfilling the pathway of His God and Father's will. In that sense "the word of Jehovah tried him", but He could say, "but then, not my will, but thine be done", Luke 22: 42. What unspeakable pressure was brought to bear upon Him there. Satan was pressing on Him the thought of death as the judgment of God. Not only did he face anticipatively the wrath of God on account of sin, but there was also before His holy soul the particular wrath on Israel on account of a broken law. He was to be made a curse! Mr Darby, in his pamphlet on the Sufferings of Christ says, 'No simple fact of death, dreadful as it was to the Prince of life ... could be put on a level with divine wrath', Collected Writings, vol 7 p 178. How deeply affecting that He, who was "holy, harmless, undefiled, separated from sinners" (Heb 7: 26), should actually be made a curse before God. All this entered into His being "a tried stone". The oblation brings out how He was tried. The oblation was baken in the oven, or on the pan, or prepared in the cauldron, Lev 2: 4 - 7. The greater the intensity of the heat the greater the intensity of the fragrance to His God and Father.

But then he was also "a precious corner-stone". The hymn

speaks about “the rejected Corner-stone”, Hymn 322. Of course, He is that, as our brother has brought before us, but Isaiah, the great evangelical prophet, describes Him as “a precious corner-stone”, that is to say, He is the Foundation of everything that is for God and which will be for the pleasure of God eternally. Everything truly built upon Him will be precious, and, as taking its character from Him, will result in praise to God. Ephesians gives that to us, as it says there, “increases to a holy temple in the Lord”, Eph 2: 21. The great millennial scene in all its bliss, in all its glory, will be founded on what Christ has accomplished in His life here and in His dying and death. Then, too He is “a sure foundation”. What assurance and stability that gives to the soul. In the blessings in Genesis there is the reference, “From thence is the shepherd, the stone of Israel”, Gen 49: 24. How fine to think of the Lord Jesus in that sense as the Stone of Israel. Paul, too, alludes to it, “For other foundation can no man lay besides that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ”, 1 Cor 3: 11. What a sure foundation we have as we put our faith and confidence in such an One. So that, “he that trusteth shall not make haste”. The footnote says 'shall not hasten with fear'. We can rely on Him with perfect assurance. He is the Stone, Jesus Christ, the First and the Last, the Alpha and the Omega.

In Peter's epistle, we have not only “a tried stone” but “a living stone”. Life is found in Jesus. He that looked on the serpent of brass lived, Num 21: 9. As coming to the Lord Jesus, we can enjoy a new kind of life, “according to promise of life, the life which is in Christ Jesus”, 2 Tim 1: 1. The Lord Jesus lives in “power of indissoluble life” (Heb 7: 16), and the believer is able to live in the life which emanates from Him. We may be “saved in the power of his life”, Rom 5: 10. We are able to “walk in newness of life” (Rom 6: 4) and Romans 8 tells us that “God, having sent his own Son, in likeness of flesh of sin, and for sin, has condemned sin in the flesh, in order that the righteous requirement of the law should be fulfilled in us, who do not walk according to flesh but according to Spirit”, v 3-4. So that, as living in the life which Christ can give, and drawing on the power of the Holy Spirit we can be here as living stones, able to provide that enthusiastic answer to what the Lord Jesus so desires. The key is, “To whom coming, a living stone”. It is to be characteristic. It is open to each one of us. “To whom coming, a living stone, ... yourselves also, as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house”, that is to say, we are, speaking reverently, of the same material as Christ. We are of His order, He a living Stone; His own are living stones, “built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual

sacrifices acceptable to God by Jesus Christ". The whole structure must be Christ; first personally, then as formed in the saints. So the stone, the work of God in the believer, that character of development in the believer, cannot be eroded, cannot be undermined. It will go through to eternity. The work of God is incorruptible. Thus Nehemiah in days of recovery sought a letter to the keeper of the king's forest for timber for the gates of the palace and for the wall of the city, Neh 2:8. It was necessary to renew the timber but it was not at all necessary to renew the stones. Although the walls were in ruins, it seems the stones were still there. They simply needed to be restored to their place. Similarly, in Ezra, the instruction is for "a row of new timber" to help build the house, chap 6: 4. But there is no suggestion of the need for new stones. The reference is only to great stones being used in the construction of the house; but new timber was needed as if the key to revival and spiritual vitality is in our links with Christ Himself and in seeking fresh impressions of His perfect humanity and His glory. So "the keeper of the king's forest" is a very touching reference. You think of the variety of trees in the king's forest, all producing timber for the restored house and for the walls and for the gates, all expressive of the Lord Jesus Himself. But as far as the stones were concerned, there was no need to add to what was there already. How fine that is. The work of God proceeds unimpaired. It will go on to completion since "he who has begun in you a good work will complete it unto Jesus Christ's day", Phil 1: 6.

Well, it is affecting to think of our Lord Jesus, our precious Saviour, as the Stone, the tried Stone, able for every testing and exigency which He faced in His pathway. Everything was approached in the perfection of a manhood which could never be equalled, in a way which was always entirely pleasurable to His God and Father. We thank God we find our foundation in Him, a "sure foundation", and that foundation can never be swept away. Things are precarious, fragile and shaky in this world but, as we place our trust increasingly on the "sure foundation", we shall be preserved safely and securely for that great but quickly coming day.

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