

A WORD IN ITS SEASON

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THE LAST ADAM

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AM While considering this occasion, dear brethren, my mind has been increasingly focused on the expression in 1 Corinthians 15 as to the Lord Jesus, "the last Adam a quickening spirit". I wonder whether we might feed our souls by taking account of the Lord Jesus in this light. It is a very full designation that applies to the Lord. Each word seems significant; "the last Adam a quickening spirit". You think of the Lord Jesus in the greatness of who He is, able to give life. Quickenng means life giving: it could read, 'the last Adam a life-giving Spirit'. That is why I read John 20 because He breathed into the disciples. In a sense He was anticipating what was going to happen in Acts 2; it was a question of life. He was giving them a new basis of life altogether.

The title 'the last Adam' might make you think of the first Adam. Once man was created, we find as the history proceeds that there could hardly be a greater contrast between the first Adam and the last. Nevertheless, when God created man, He created him with certain thoughts in mind. He created Him that he should be the head of the creation, that he should have dominion over everything. Man was given great wisdom; for example, he was given wisdom to name all the animals. Adam was a wonderful person and yet he failed grievously. That failure affects us even today; we feel the effects of Adam's failure. The last Adam is One who can never fail. He will never break down, and He has established an order of life which will never fail. It is an order of life to which sin could never attach, nor breakdown; it is centred in the Lord Himself. It is enjoyed by the Holy Spirit amongst saints who are here below. I had not thought we would necessarily take the scriptures in order, but just draw from them as we speak together and share impressions and trust that the Holy Spirit may be pleased to impart some fresh sense of the glory of Christ.

DAB It is remarkable that someone who was to be in the image of God was made of dust. I wondered if we see in that that he was never in any full sense the man that God had in His heart. When we come to Christ, there can be no one after Him. He is the last, there is to be no other.

AM Who could supersede our Lord Jesus? Who could take His

place? It is important that we have that firmly in our souls. There is a movement in the world that is anti-Christian, that claims that someone else has superseded the Lord Jesus. That is of the devil; it is a lie of Satan: no one can take His place. Even Job could take account of the Redeemer being the Last: "I know that my Redeemer liveth, and the Last, he shall stand upon the earth", Job 19: 25. He could take account of that. The One who has redeemed us from our sins, redeemed us from the present evil world, He is the Last and none can supersede Him.

DAB I believe Mr Coates made an analogy between the last Adam and Jesus Christ. I understand about that title that He stands alone and apart from every other man. I remember Mr A J Gardiner once said, 'There is only one Christ: Jesus Christ is the Man whom God is pleased to distinguish'. All these other men that you are speaking about were made of dust.

AM How could God find eternal pleasure in what is made of dust? It had to be that man returns to dust. What you say as to the Lord Jesus is very choice. Many of us have enjoyed a remark made by a brother, that the word 'unique' is not sufficient for Him: He stands alone. Every one of us is unique; it is not sufficient to say that about Christ: He stands alone.

DCW Would you also say something about "the second man"? The Lord is in heaven.

AM That is the character of our Lord. He is heavenly. He is from heaven; He is not of the earth. It says, "the first man out of the earth, made of dust" - the first man is earthly - "the second man out of heaven": that is the character of what He is and it is the character of the life which is imparted to a believer.

RHB As you mention what Job said, the Lord Himself speaks of Himself as "the first and the last, and the living one", Rev 1: 17. That last title, "the living one", is distinctive to Christ. "Why seek ye the living one among the dead?", Luke 24: 5. Does this connect with the thought of "a quickening spirit"?

AM The Lord Jesus lived here in flesh and blood condition, but that order had to end; it ended in death. In John 20 we see Him in resurrection and 1 Corinthians 15 is the great resurrection chapter. He lives now beyond the sphere of death. In Hebrews it says, "according to power of indissoluble life" (chap 7: 16), a life that will never end. It is

what characterises Him. He is “the living one” and therefore He can impart life.

RHB I was just struck with that. This chapter goes on to speak of the saints; “this corruptible must needs put on incorruptibility, and this mortal put on immortality”, v 53. It could never be unless it was imparted to us by “the living one”.

AM Yes. We have to face it that we are mortal. As we become older, we become more aware of that; we are marked by mortality. If the Lord does not come then we will have to go the way of all flesh. There is a life that has been imparted that never succumbs to weakness or anything like that. It is a life which has come from the One who lives, “the living one”.

PJW Peter quotes, “thou wilt not leave my soul in hades, nor wilt thou give thy gracious one to see corruption”, Acts 2: 27. Then he says, “Thou hast made known to me the paths of life”, v 28. Do you think He is the only one who would never see corruption if He died?

AM That is right. The Lord did not see corruption. It is significant that He was placed in a new tomb. Even in death He was placed in circumstances where there was no corruption; God oversaw that. As to Himself He was incorruptible, even in manhood. We know that is a word which applies to God - the incorruptible God (Rom 1: 23); it applies also to Jesus in manhood. That “holy thing” (Luke 1: 35) was incorruptible.

RJF Can you help me about this verse: “the first man Adam became a living soul”? That was the action of God but “the last Adam a quickening spirit”, was that His own action in breathing into the disciples? Is that your thought?

AM In chapter 2 of Genesis it says, “Jehovah Elohim formed Man, dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and Man became a living soul”, v 7. Man naturally does not have life in himself; it is God-given. That was an action of God. “A quickening spirit”, a life-giving Spirit is what He is in Himself. We see in John 20 that He is able of Himself to impart that: “he breathed into them, and says to them, Receive the Holy Spirit”. The life that is imparted is the life that by the gift of the Holy Spirit we have part in, the life that He has.

RJF It magnifies the power that there was with the Lord in a most distinctive way.

AM Yes and the word “spirit” being used is significant. He is more than a mere man. You think of all that is resident in Him: “For in him dwells all the fulness of the Godhead bodily”, Col 2: 9. He is able to impart life.

JRW I would like you to say a little more as to that. It says, “The first man Adam became a living soul”. It does not say 'became' in relation to the last Adam - “the last Adam a quickening spirit”. It almost seems like an absolute statement.

AM I think so. John's gospel opens “In him was life”, 1: 4. He did not acquire it: it was something that was in Him and yet He became Man. He came into manhood's form in order that He should impart life to men.

DAB This matter of life is something over which God has taken the utmost care. He did not just give man an existence like a cow has, for example. He is a living soul with a spirit which connects him with God. How careful God is after the fall lest fallen man should live forever, Gen 3: 24. If nothing had been done, and Adam's seed had lived forever, he would have produced a line of endless sinners and that cannot be. If someone is to be a life-giving Spirit then that Person must be entirely in accord with the thought of God.

AM That is right and also He must first meet everything that the first Adam brought in. What did Adam contribute to the human race? God gave to Adam life and what did Adam give to the human race? Sin, condemnation, and death. That is what Adam gave us. We have sinful flesh in ourselves; that is what we have inherited. The Lord Jesus has come in. The last Adam must first remove all that the first Adam brought in. That is why it comes in in the setting of resurrection. He dealt with the whole matter of sin. Go back to Job: “I know that my Redeemer liveth”, chap 19: 25. He is the one who has taken up the whole matter of what has come in through Adam.

DAB There would not be a need for quickening if those who were quickened were already alive. I only say that to illustrate what you have said. Everything that Adam has brought in has been met in the last Adam.

AM Yes, He has taken up the matter of sin, before God. He has taken up the whole question of judgment; He has borne the judgment. He has even gone into death. We started this occasion with the words:

To win Thy bride what depths of woe were Thine. (H y m n

99)

Think of what He went into. May we become increasingly sensitive to what the Lord Jesus went through in order that we should have life.

STE Is it important to have a heavenly view of the heavenly Man? Is that what we should be having now? If we are occupied with this earth we will be occupied with the old Adam. We need a heavenly view; that is where life is coming from.

AM “If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are the most miserable of all men”, 1 Cor 15: 19. We do not want to be the most miserable of all men. The Holy Spirit would give us a view from the heavenly side: “he shall receive of mine” (John 16: 14), that is, what the Lord Jesus is dispensing now, “and shall announce it to you”. You think of the Holy Spirit here with a view to a heavenly testimony going out.

RHB Does what the Lord says Himself in John 5, “For even as the Father has life in himself, so he has given to the Son also to have life in himself” (v 26), bear upon it? Man becoming a living soul was dependence; a quickening spirit is a life source.

AM Yes, and so in chapter 4 He can offer the woman what is living. In fact, that goes right through John's gospel. I was impressed as thinking about this that you can trace it through John's gospel. In John 4 we have living water, in John 5 there is the voice of the Son of God which brings life, in John 6 the living bread which comes down to give life to the world. In John 11 there is a man actually raised up out of death. It goes right through the gospel. John had that high level view that has been spoken of and he could take account of the greatness of Christ as One who has been given to have life in Himself. I take it that as Man He has been given to have life in Himself.

RHB It is as “marked out Son of God in power, according to the Spirit of holiness, by resurrection of the dead”, Rom 1: 4. It is not only His own resurrection, but the resurrection of the dead marked Him out as a life source.

AM In John 11, how clear that was. There was not only death, but corruption. Yet He demonstrates His own superiority over death as the One who gives life.

JRW In John 10 He says of His life, “I have authority to lay it down and I have authority to take it again”, v 18. Does that support what you are saying as to the thought of life going through John's gospel? He also

says in John 10, “I am come that they might have life, and might have it abundantly”, v 10.

AM Yes, it does. The One in whom was life actually laid down the life that He had as Man. He says, “I have authority”: He had the right to do it. No human being has that; no human being has the ability to do it by himself. You cannot just lay down your life. The Lord Jesus had that power and He had the right to do it. You think of the One who has the power over life. He imparts life to His own.

DAB It is very interesting that the Lord speaks of having the authority to take His life again although in John 11, and in chapter 5 too, He acknowledges that the prerogative to raise the dead lies with the Father. The Father has exercised that prerogative to raise selectively the One in whom He had delight. I was thinking that all those references you make to what He gives are preceded by the reference in chapter 3 that “The Father loves the Son, and has given all things to be in his hand”, v 35. That would include the authority to give life.

AM Yes, according to this chapter the day is soon coming when He will give resurrection life to myriads. You used the word 'selective'. When the Lord comes, that will be a selective resurrection, although there will be thousands. I never go into a graveyard without being impressed with the thought of how great that harvest will be. There will be thousands, myriads raised, but there will also be those who are not raised.

DAB We need to bear in mind that cemeteries, which have seen so much sorrow, will one day be a scene of joy.

AM That is very touching. How wonderful it is that we will hear the voice of the Son of God, but actually we hear it now. That is the point in John 5. The voice of the Son of God will be heard on that resurrection day when all the dead will hear it, but before that the Lord says, “an hour is coming, **and now is**, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God”, v 25.

DAB That is why we have been so exercised to have meetings such as this again because they are not only occasions of fellowship; they are occasions to hear the voice of the Son of God.

AM That is right and it is a great exercise, that we should hear His voice.

DCW It says, “they that have heard shall live”. This is the hearing

time.

AM That is good. Do we all understand that? I would just say it is good to go back to your beginnings when you first came to know the Lord Jesus. Maybe you were sitting in a preaching and something came to you, and you knew it was just for you. That was the voice of the Son of God. It was not just a brother preaching: no, it was the voice of the Son of God coming into your soul, and that voice continues to speak. It speaks day after day. It is our responsibility to hear and to answer to that voice.

HTF It seems that what Peter said when the Lord asked the question in Matthew 16, "*Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God*" (v 16), was particularly endorsed. The Lord appreciated that. That grew with Peter when he says, "To whom coming, a living stone, cast away indeed as worthless by men, but with God chosen, precious, yourselves also, as living stones", 1 Pet 2: 4, 5. We are brought in on the same basis.

AM Yes, so the whole structure there is a living structure. That shows how our natural minds are so limited. We cannot think of a building as a living thing, but that is what has been secured at the present time. It is as coming to the Lord, One who is a living Stone. You mentioned how the Lord appreciated that confession from Peter. He had spent so long down here and there had been such little response, but there was a man who had a revelation from the Father that the One he was following was the Son of the living God.

RMB What more would you say about what is involved in the Lord quickening us? We not only should be made to live in the first place, but we need to be kept alive.

AM Quickening is not just a one-off thing. Every time we get a touch from the Lord, it would have that character. You go to the Supper; you always get something as to the Lord when you are there. The Lord is faithful. I believe over the last two years that there has been far more exercise in relation to the Supper than perhaps we have had before, and there was far more confirmation. We have had living impressions, living touches from the Lord, and may the exercise not wane. May we continue with that exercise that as we come to the Supper that we should be conscious of the Lord coming in and hear His voice, hear what He would impart and that would surely cause our affections to be stirred in response to Him. The service of God is not a routine; the service of God is a spontaneous response of hearts that have been

touched by divine love.

PJW Would you say that quickening involves affection?

AM Yes, I think so. Our hearts are quickened. I remember Mr Norman Meek speaking once of someone whose pulse did not change all the way through a sermon, and he said, 'What sort of sermon was that?'. Quickenings should have an inward effect in our hearts. It should have the effect of making us seek to be more firmly attached to the One who is the quickening Spirit.

PJW I was wondering about the affections of the One who quickens. He breathed into them and God breathed into Adam. That was not a cold thing; I wonder if it involved the affections of the blessed God and the affections of the Lord Jesus as He breathed into them.

AM I think so, and do you not think that is borne out in Acts 2 also? They were in the house and "there came suddenly a sound out of heaven as of a violent impetuous blowing", v 2. The footnote says it is like 'hard breathing'. The affections were involved.

PJW That has been linked with a further thought as to the Gentiles in Acts 10, which has been linked to the younger son: the Father's embrace as the Spirit fell upon the Gentiles. Is that a similar thought?

AM Yes, that is right. Think of divine Persons and their feelings in relation to men, but specially the saints. By the saints I mean the saints everywhere.

RMB There are many things that could be said about quickening, but do you think it is something that we should look for in our reading meetings?

AM Yes, I do. I think as the Holy Spirit is free there will be a quickening touch imparted in every occasion. Even when you hear a brother pray it should stir your affections. Particularly the Supper and the service of God; that is the great occasion where our hearts are just engaged with divine Persons, and that is unique. Where would you go and find persons who are only engaged with divine Persons, not need or circumstance, but just divine Persons? But then the touch should come into all our occasions.

RMB Psalm 119 says, "quicken me according to thy word", v 25. I have often thought that we should be exercised about that in our reading meetings. It is one thing to speak over the Scriptures together; there is great value in that, but to be able to detect that point where we

get some sense of the Lord quickening us according to His own word.

AM I think so. If anyone just airs their knowledge, it would be dead. You are looking for a touch from divine Persons that will stir your affections.

DAB Paul says, “they who live should no longer live to themselves, but to him who died for them and has been raised”, 2 Cor 5: 15. It is one thing to recognise that I am dependent on the One from whom I receive life; to reciprocate requires affections. Man was made to praise; he was made to be here for God and to gratify the heart of God. If I may just touch on a reading, it is one thing to say I learned a bit or I fitted another piece of the jigsaw in, but do I come away with any kind of feeling of praise to God in my spirit - not just gratitude because He showed me something, but because I had some insight into what is due to Him?

AM Generally when we come to the end of a reading we stand up and give thanks. How much do we really in our souls feel that we have had a touch and a response is due to divine Persons for that?

DAB I remember a brother quoting a scripture as to the preaching: “whom I serve in my spirit in the glad tidings”, Rom 1: 9. You may say you are thinking about the sinner, but the object of the preacher is to glorify God.

AM It is so that God should be known. That is why Adam was created, that man should know God. The last Adam has brought to us all the light of God.

DAB The whole creation should know God.

GW Does, “The living, the living, he shall praise thee, as I this day” (Isa 38: 19) link with your thought that there must be not just what is living, but what returns to God?

AM That is good. You can regard Hezekiah as typically on resurrection ground. He had been told that he was about to die. Then God says, 'I am going to give you life'. In Hezekiah's case it was just fifteen years, but he had a new start, a fresh beginning having had to do with God. He says it is the living that will praise God.

GW It is helpful what you bring in as to that moment, that we can take it that he was on resurrection ground because it is one thing to marvel at what God is doing with His testimony at the present time, I feel increasingly the exercise that am I part of it? Am I part of the answer

that there is from His people at this very moment?

AM God will secure an answer, and if I am not part of that He will secure it in someone else and that will be to my shame.

AAC Life is all in view of responsiveness to God. I was wondering if you could say a little more as to God's purpose in it. You have drawn from the very beginning of Scripture and God creating man in His image, but it is all in relation to an answer for Himself which brings in the affections and also the praise that we have been speaking of.

AM We have to bear in mind the nature of God. God is love. Love requires an answer; it requires an object, and it looks for an answer. That is why God has created man, that there should be an answer from an intelligent being who should understand Him, and should be able to communicate with Him. I once read the remark that God created man upright so that he could look up to the face of God. Man is to know God and have a link with Him and be able to answer to Him. That was in God's heart before time was. That is God's purpose, that He should have an answer to His own heart. The Lord Jesus having come in has made it possible that man should be secured. You leave all that came in from Adam, you are given the gift of the Holy Spirit, given a new life by which you are able to respond to God.

AAC What you say leads me to think this is an essential thing for God. It is not just something He would love to have; it is vital. We have been taught that God is sufficient for all things in Himself except in His love. This is essential in God's being that there should be this response to His love because He is love.

AM That is absolutely right, because He is love.

DAS I think it has been said that life is the enjoyment of relationships. Would that bear on what you say? The Lord said, "I am come that they might have life, and might have it abundantly". That involves that He had to go into death, that the Holy Spirit should be available that this blessed relationship should be enjoyed. I think we have experienced that in a particular way at the Supper in recent times, and probably in our private communion.

AM I think so. It is a great day in our spiritual history when we come to the conclusion that God wants our company. He wants to hear what we have to say about Jesus, and He wants to tell us about what He has to say about Him. He wants that communion; it is because of His love that He wants that communion. Adam and Eve hid amongst the trees;

that was no life. Life involves communion and communication.

STE Do you think the journey back from Emmaüs to Jerusalem was quicker than the one going the other way? The Lord had come in; they were invigorated; they wanted to impart what they had seen and heard. They became invigorated as to resurrection, the Lord Himself. That is what we need, the power of attraction to Christ.

AM Yes, that journey was about seven miles. I would imagine it took them two hours to get to Emmaüs, possibly more. The return journey was different, “the same hour”, Luke 24: 33. You can imagine they could not get back quickly enough. They came back and heard what others had to say: “The Lord is indeed risen”, v 34. There was a living Man out of death and He had appeared to another disciple. What a link they would have had, those two having come back from Emmaüs, and Peter. What impressions they could have shared of One who was out of death, living in a new order of life altogether, and He had appeared to them.

RMB This scripture in 1 Corinthians 15 seems to suggest that one of the consequences of the Lord Jesus being a quickening Spirit is that He has introduced a new race, a heavenly race. Is that an important thing to lay hold of?

AM Yes, so it goes on to speak about “the second man”. It is a race of a different order. It is the same personnel. When we are raised, you will still be you, and I will still be me, but all our natural characteristics will have gone and it is only the work of God that will go through. That is the life of another order altogether.

RMB Do you think crucially it is a heavenly race? It brings out here that even if Adam had never sinned - let us say that he had remained in innocence - he would still have been “out of the earth”. He would still have been earthly, but as a consequence of what the Lord Jesus is and what He does as a quickening Spirit, He has introduced a heavenly race. He speaks of “the heavenly one, such also the heavenly ones”.

AM Yes; so you can understand when the Lord Jesus was here men did not understand Him: “we know not whence he is”, John 9: 29. They could not understand. For the first time in the history of the world there had been a perfect heavenly life displayed on earth. In Jesus that was always true. In a sense there was nothing that He had to leave behind apart from the condition in which He was, flesh and blood. He went through unchanged. The wonder is that the life that He imparts to us is

a heavenly life.

RMB It is perhaps not too difficult to think of the Lord Jesus as the heavenly One, but do we properly consider what we are as heavenly ones? Has it really laid hold of us that believers are a heavenly people?

AM We do not belong here. It is possible to read Hebrews 11 and think that Abel, and Enoch, and Noah, and Abraham were wonderful people, but they are set there as examples for us. They did not belong here; they looked for “the city which has foundations, of which God is the artificer and constructor”, Hebrews 11: 10. We know that city. Abraham looked for the heavenly Jerusalem. He did not find it on earth; there is nothing on earth that we can find that we can attach to Christ apart from the work of God in His own.

DAB The fact that the Lord Jesus has gone before and has been acclaimed in the Father's favour is the assurance to us that whatever might be imparted to us will be for the pleasure of God. It helps us to mark Him out in our spirits as the One who God has accepted and glorified. God is not placing His glory on the flesh. There is everything in Christ that gratifies the Father's heart.

AM How great is the Father's pleasure in Him! We often think of that resurrection morning and His ascension too, and we quote that hymn -

Received in glory bright up there (Hymn 350).

What it must have meant to the Father to have His Son who had glorified Him on the earth and undertaken the work which would secure men for His glory, now exalted on high.

DAB It is very touching the way the Lord Jesus speaks about them in John 17. “I am glorified in them”, v 10. We need to get away from any idea that we are our own objects; we have been taken up to glorify Christ. All that we are speaking about as to the heavenly order into which we have been introduced is to His glory and through that to God the Father's glory.

AM It just shows the greatness and the wisdom and skill of the great divine plan that everything ultimately redounds to the glory of God, to each divine Person.

JRW How far can we enjoy what we are speaking of today? It says here we shall bear also the image of the heavenly One; that is a future thought. How far can we enjoy this quickening today? The Lord breathed into the disciples, John 20: 22. They were still here on the

earth; they had to fulfil the rest of their lives here until the Lord took them.

AM Yes, but they had the Holy Spirit. I think it is crucial how much room we make for the Holy Spirit. I am sure many have observed the way that the Lord Jesus speaks about the Holy Spirit in John 14, 15, and 16; when He refers to Himself sending the Holy Spirit, the context is the testimony. When it is the Father sending the Holy Spirit it is in view of our comfort and consolation here. When it is the Lord sending the Holy Spirit it is the testimony and that really is the key. Romans helps us as to this. As having the Holy Spirit in our hearts, making way for Him and ministering to Him, what will come out in testimony is another order of life.

JRW Yes, and I think it is wonderful to think that there are persons secured here in a scene of death. The fear and the consequences and all that death means rest more heavily on men than ever before. There are persons here that can, in that scene, know what life is; they can be alive. “In the Christ all shall be made alive”, 1 Cor 15: 22. Through the Holy Spirit's power that can be evidenced and enjoyed.

AM We touch it; we touch it in our spirits. You can just speak to the Lord and touch these things in your spirit. That is nothing to do with our need or anything like that; it is just about Himself. It is quickening; it gives you a stir; we touch it in our gatherings. It particularly comes out in the great occasion on Lord's day.

DAB-w John says, “believing ye might have life in his name”, John 20: 31. That is accessible to anyone who will believe: “life in his name” - there does not seem to be a limit to that. Life in His name seems to be quite full.

AM The Lord is not here physically. When He was here, access to Him was limited simply because of geography. Life in His Name is available all the time. We are often reminded He is available to us at all times wherever we are, whatever we are doing; He is available. We draw on Him as the source of our life.

RHB The idea of “such as the heavenly one, such also the heavenly ones” is present. Bearing the image of the heavenly One, is future; it is what we await. Those persons you described in Hebrews 11 were heavenly. That came out in the way they led their lives and acted differently from those around them. The reason for that was that they were heavenly.

AM That is right, and they will be caught up at the rapture. The rapture is going to be a tremendous thing. Everyone who has had faith, in whom there has been a work of God from Abel onwards, will be caught up in that great company. What a wonderful thing, and we have the light of that. Not only that, we have the power within us in the Holy Spirit, and Christ on high, that carries us beyond the sphere of death that we will be taken out of.

RHB The extraordinary thing is that they are not going to be made perfect before us. They are waiting for us; the scripture says in Hebrews 11: 40. That is an extraordinary thing to think of persons who lived lives of such distinctive faith and holiness and heavenliness that for their final portion, they are waiting for us. That is presented as an incentive. For us the great cloud of witnesses surrounds us.

AM What a privilege we have because we will not have to wait for any others. There will be those who are martyred after the church has gone and their souls are told to rest. I take it that is because they have gone through death; so, will they be a heavenly company?

RHB I would think so.

AM Will they not experience resurrection? We will not have to wait for them. Our portion, once the church is complete, is to go. We do not wait for any other family. Abraham has had to wait for us. Those martyrs will be raised in their time. I think that gives a peculiar sense of the greatness of the present dispensation and what we have part in.

PJW When the Lord says, "Blessed and holy he who has part in the first resurrection" (Rev 20: 6), am I right in thinking that the beginning of that was the resurrection of Christ and the end of that is when the last saved soul die is raised, whoever that might be. Then there is the second resurrection which is the resurrection of the dead.

AM I do not think the first resurrection has reference to a point in time. I think it is the character of the resurrection; so "the first-fruits, Christ", 1 Cor 15: 23. He is already raised, "then those that are the Christ's at his coming".

RHB We do not get much as to the spiritual body. We get what is heavenly and earthly; there is also what is spiritual and what is natural. I wonder if you have some thought about the spiritual body.

AM We know so little about it. We will be glad to get rid of these natural bodies. Increasingly these natural bodies can be such a

hindrance to us. We will have another body, like unto His own body of glory. What a body it will be: “we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens”, 2 Cor 5: 1. It is capable of housing the great work of God and displaying it in its glory.

RHB On the face of it, it is a difficult expression; the thought of a body almost seems to stand in contrast to what is of the spirit. Is it right to think that we will be given a body in which what has been effected by God in us can be expressed?

AM That was what I was thinking in relation to 2 Corinthians 5, “we have a building”, “For we know that if our earthly tabernacle house be destroyed, we have a building from God, not made with hands, eternal in the heavens”. That will be capable of displaying the work of God as a glorious thing. In these bodies that we now have, the work of God may assert itself in conditions of limitation, but then we will have a body that will display that work in its glory as God values it and sees it. What a wonderful thing; it is immediately before us.

DAB We have been speaking about the way Adam was in effect earth bound by his condition. Mankind is well adapted to the environment in which he has been set. There is no reason to think that a condition that is well adapted to life on earth has any place in heaven. We know that we shall be like Him. We know that He is completely at home in that heavenly place. I like what you say that the spiritual body is transparent as to the work of God. It is a lovely surprise to discover previously unknown manifestations of the work of God in another soul. In a sense, there will be no surprises then because all will be on display.

AM I think that is right. We will be like Him. Nothing can take Him by surprise. There will be absolute consistency. There will be variety, but all consistent. What a thing to look forward to! That is what is immediately before us.

Norwood, London

20th November 2021

List of initials:-

D A Barlow, Sunbury; R H Brown, Maidstone; R M Brown, Strood;
D A Burr, West Norwood; A A Croot, Sidcup; S T Eagle, Dorking;
R J Flowerdew, Sunbury; H T Franklin, Grimsby; A Martin, Buckhurst Hill;
D A Smith, Sidcup; J R Walkinshaw, Maidstone; P J Walkinshaw, Strood;
G Wallace, Sidcup; D C White, Sidcup

WHAT IS THE ASSEMBLY?

Andrew Martin

Acts 8: 33

1 Timothy 3: 14, 15

Ephesians 1: 22, 23

I seek the Lord's help to speak of a question that has sometimes been asked: *what is the assembly?* We have been speaking about the Lord Jesus; but what is the assembly? It is a most important question. In the day in which we live, believers might take account of one another, might take account of Christendom and the church generally, and ask, "What is the assembly?". The hymnwriter wrote about it:

Tho' with a scornful wonder
The world sees her oppressed,
By schisms rent asunder,
By heresies distressed,

Samuel J Stone (1866)

That is the outward view of the assembly. Why is it like that? Because it is precious to Christ, and therefore Satan will not fail to attack it; that is why. But you can never get a true understanding of the assembly by looking at what you find in Christendom - I might say by what you find in any company. In order to get a view of what the assembly is, you have to go right back to God's thoughts in the beginning.

We were speaking in the reading of a time when God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness", Gen 1: 26. He had in mind that He should be expressed, that there should be One to be the expression of God to the whole creation; that is what God had in mind. How quickly man failed, and for four thousand years there was almost nothing but failure recorded in the history of man; but then God intervened. We were saying in the reading that, when God made man, what He had in His heart was another Man, a Man of another order; that is what God had in His heart, and God intervened in the course of the history of man in the Person of Jesus. There was One who fully expressed God; He was Himself the expression of God, "in him all the fulness of the Godhead was pleased to dwell" (Col 1: 19), and He displayed all that God is to man. Think of the wonderful moment it was when Jesus came into manhood. What a day for the earth! There had never been a day like that before. The most momentous happening

occurred in obscurity, in a small city that was of no account to men; it occurred in obscurity there; men were totally unaware of who was there, but *God* had come in. Think of the greatness of that, that God had come into His creation - not that creation could contain God, far from it, but He had come into it in the Person of Jesus, Jehovah the Saviour. We know Him in that way, do we not? I look around and I see the brethren's faces, and I think to myself that every one has had a time when they have had to do with God, and they have had to realise that God has come out in Him, Jehovah the Saviour, a Saviour God. How precious that is, beloved, to know that we have a Saviour God! We were reading locally, "our Saviour God, who desires that all men should be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth", 1 Tim 2: 3, 4. Think of a God like that; and He actually came into the creation, and for the first time there was One upon the earth who expressed all that God is. Men could take account of Him; generally, they took account of Him as a Man and they wondered at Him. They wondered that a Man could do such things as He did. That light as to who He was was disclosed to a few: God was there; He found His expression in one Man.

What you find is that every divine thought has been expressed in the Lord Jesus Himself. Take another thought: God expressed the desire that He would dwell with men, that He wanted to have His dwelling place, among men. He told Moses that: he said to Moses "Speak unto the children of Israel ... And they shall make me a sanctuary, that I may dwell among them", Exod 25: 2, 8. Think of a God like that who wants to dwell, have His actual dwelling place among men! He was there among the people. They did not appreciate the greatness of what was there in type as they went through that wilderness; they continued in their idolatry. But God was there. They came to the Jordan and Joshua said to the people, "Hereby shall ye know that the living God is in your midst", Josh 3: 10. You think of that: "the living God", He was there. They were confronted by the waters of Jordan and they had to pass through that; the living God was there. Those waters of Jordan went back. I love to think of the references in scripture where death stood in the way of God's purpose. It says that the waters rose up in a heap (Josh 3: 16); think of that word - a heap! It shows that the power of death was in total disarray, there is no order in a heap. The waters "rose up in a heap" right back to the city Adam - how wonderful. And the ark was just a figure of what was going to come in Jesus, that God was going to dwell. It was not only that He was going to be seen, but He was going to dwell among men: "became flesh, and

dwelt among us (and we have contemplated his glory ...)", John 1: 14.

Think of the greatness of what it was that God should dwell among His people, and not only should He dwell among His people but His very feelings should be known by His people and expressed in His people. I would struggle to find a type of the feelings of God being expressed in the same way as we have a type of the dwelling place of God. But the feelings of God were there all the time, and they were known by some. Moses, for instance, says to the people, "Not because ye were more in number than all the peoples, hath Jehovah been attached to you and chosen you ... but because Jehovah loved you", Deut 7: 7, 8. The feelings of God were expressed to His people; but when Jesus came - oh, how fully those feelings were expressed! They were fully expressed in that blessed Man. You think of how He served in lowly grace in order that they should be brought round to God's thoughts for them. He humbled Himself in His love for His people; there were those who recognised it. Take John 11: "Jesus loved Martha, and her sister, and Lazarus" (v: 5); He loved them all; His feelings were known, they were expressed there. His feelings were known when He came to that grave; it says, "Jesus wept", v 35. First He groaned (v 33), and then it says He wept; He wept as seeing all the damage that sin had done to the human race, and the ultimate effect of sin upon the race. "Jesus wept": you think of the feelings there, divine feelings expressed in a Man, there in a scene of death. The heart of God was being expressed. The heart of God was told out fully at the cross, when Jesus made atonement for sins and went into death, and His precious blood was shed. It gave God a basis on which His heart could be fully expressed. All these are things that found their fulfilment in Jesus.

Adam was set up as the head of the universe; he was to be the great administrator, I suppose; but administration failed in man's hands. But you think of Jesus: "The Father loves the Son, and has given all things to be in his hand", John 3: 35. All that is yet to come, the administration of the world to come, is all going to be in His hand.

God intended that there should be an answer from men, that there should be glory to Him from men. We spoke about that in the reading, that there should be an answer in glory. How far short of that men fell, but you think of Jesus coming in. That time when He was alone and all His works of power appeared to be of no effect, He said, "I praise thee, Father, Lord of the heaven and of the earth" (Matt 11: 25); how His heart went out to God. So, at the end, He could say, "I have

glorified *thee* on the earth”, John 17: 4. All this was what God was looking for from man, and it was all fulfilled in Jesus.

Now we come to what the eunuch was reading. It says, “his life is taken from the earth”, the One who was the embodiment of every divine thought. You might say that God had secured it all in a Man, but His life is taken from the earth. Does that mean, then, that there was nothing left on the earth for God? Does it mean that the earth was empty for God; that what was for Him had been seen once and then lost? That could not be; that would have been a victory for Satan. No: God has the final word - the life of Jesus was taken from the earth, but if you go to the previous chapter in the Acts, you will find that there was one man who saw Him in a new condition, standing in heaven. Stephen says, “I behold the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing at the right hand of God”, Acts 7: 56. That life was treasured up in heaven, and we know that that beloved One was taken up to heaven. What glory there was associated with that, for the first time a Man was in heaven; there had never been a man there before. Not only did He go up to heaven, He passed through all the heavens. How fitting that was:-

Up through the heavens, their hosts bowed and worshipping,
Enters the One who had stooped down to die!

G H Stuart Price (1941), A Selection of Poems

You think of the place that Jesus was given there above all the heavens;
how worthy He is of it.

So, what is left upon earth; what does God have upon the earth? Does He have a dwelling here now? It was not long after Jesus went up into heaven when the Holy Spirit came. What happened when the Holy Spirit came? Is that just a text in the Bible? *God came down!* The Holy Spirit is a divine Person, and again it was God who came down in the Holy Spirit. The Lord Jesus had said, “I will beg the Father, and he will give you another Comforter, that he may be with you for ever” (John 4: 16); in other words, that *He* would find a dwelling place. God would find a dwelling place on earth in the presence of the Holy Spirit here. The presence of the Holy Spirit here shows that God has a dwelling place on earth.

Now, that is not just a number of persons. Someone might read the beginning of Acts and say that was just a hundred and twenty people. That is not true - the fact is that the Holy Spirit came upon each

one of them. Read that passage carefully; it says, “And there appeared to them parted tongues, as of fire, and **it** sat upon each one of them” - “it” sat upon each one of them, Acts 2: 3. It came down from one source, parted tongues as of fire, and “it sat upon each one of them”, every one. And today, every believer who has the Holy Spirit is united, not only to Christ - he is united to Christ - but he has that unbreakable link with every other believer who has the Holy Spirit. What an amazing thing that is that God should be found in that way! And if God is dwelling here, what does that mean the assembly is? We read in Timothy: “God’s house, which is the assembly of the living God”. If God is dwelling here, then He has a house, and that is what the assembly is, it is the house of God. This is a house that is like no other house that has ever been made. You remember that Solomon made a house, and it was an extraordinary construction; it was glorious. I do not suppose there has been a building like it before or since. And yet, when Solomon came to dedicate that house, he said of God, “the heaven of heavens, cannot contain thee”, 1 Kings 8: 27. What is this house? Solomon had an impression that what he had built was a material structure, and God cannot be contained in what is material. He dwells by the Spirit in the hearts of believers, believers everywhere. Think of the wonder of that!

There were impressions of it in the Old Testament. The prophet Isaiah was given a word: it was God speaking of Himself - “the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, and whose name is Holy: I dwell in the high and holy place” - that word came to His people of old; they could recognise that God was in heaven. And then He says, “and with him that is of a contrite and humble spirit”, Isa 57: 15. What is the connection between “the high and holy place” and “him that is of a contrite and humble spirit”? It is suitable conditions in which God can dwell; the Holy Spirit is free where there is a contrite and humble spirit. We can speak of the Lord Jesus as being humble; He was always humble. He says, “I am meek and lowly in heart”, Matt 11: 29. We are not meek and lowly in heart; we do not have lowly hearts naturally; we have hearts that may tend to assert themselves and look for their own ends. The Lord Jesus was “meek and lowly in heart”. We are told to take on lowliness of mind (Phil 2: 3); that is something we are exhorted to take on, but naturally our hearts are not lowly. It is an exercise we have to go through, a constant exercise to be maintained in lowliness of mind.

So, the assembly is a place where God dwells; but not only that.

If a person has a house, if you go to that house you find that their will prevails in it; the house is arranged according to the will of the head. It is a sphere where the will of the head pervades. And that is what the assembly is, where the *will* of God is known. You take account of what took place in those early days, and you find that the disciples were maintained in life, in energy, in freshness, and they were here for the will of God, as Jesus was here for the will of God. In fact, He said, "I come to do thy will", Heb 10: 9. That is why He came: He came to do the will of God. And in the assembly, the will of God is made known, and it is there it is maintained. And you see in the early chapters of the Acts it was in keeping with God's will that those early disciples should go out and preach (the assembly does not preach but those who form it do), that they should preach the gospel, and be subject to whatever the will of God allows. Paul and Silas were put into prison in Philippi; the will of God allowed it. You might say that they should be out preaching, getting converts - why did He allow them to get into prison? It was of His will that material should be secured another way. God never operates according to man's ways; He has His own way of operating. The assembly is really a sphere in which he is to be free to operate according to His will.

But then it is not only His will. God is supreme, and His will *will* assert itself soon; it will become clear. A day is coming soon when His will be the only will that will operate in the whole universe; what a wonderful day that will be! But not only is the assembly a place where His will can operate, but where His *heart* can be known - I have spoken about His heart; and where His affection can be seen to be working. And so in Ephesians it is "according to" His will that Christ should be exalted, and He "has put all things under his feet, and gave him to be head over all things to the assembly, which is his body"; and that is a wonderful thing, to think of His body here upon earth. Where is His body? It is the same persons; every person who is alive today who has the Holy Spirit is part of the body of Christ; they form part of it. They may not be in the good of it, but they form part of it. It is a blessed thing that the feelings of Christ should be known and should be operating here upon the earth: "if one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; and if one member be glorified, all the members rejoice with it", 1 Cor 12: 26. That is the way the body works, considering for one another, bearing with one another. And it is all for "its self-building up in love" (Eph 4: 16); how wonderful the thing is. And how easily it is proved - a brother has problems, difficulties, and the phone starts ringing because the

brethren are sympathetic. They do not just say, 'Oh, that is a shame'; brethren are sympathetic with one another, and their feelings come out and they try to help. All these things that come out, beloved, are expressions of the heart of God being made known here. And it is tangible - many of us have experienced it; there is something here that is operating, and the body is a substantial thing. These things are not just theories, they are substantial things, and they will go through to the end. How wonderful that is, to know that there is something here and it is in the assembly; that is what is to be known.

Another thing about the assembly is that the *mind* of God can be known, and His word for us at any time. That was known by Jesus; we often remember those words in Isaiah, "He wakeneth morning by morning, he wakeneth mine ear to hear as the instructed", chap 50: 4. God had one Man upon earth to whom He could communicate His mind; but He is gone, "his life is taken from the earth". He now has the assembly in which He communicates His word today, to the saints. Is that not wonderful? We speak of light; it is really what God is bringing to His people at any time. There is a man in the Psalms who said,

One thing have I asked of Jehovah, that will I seek after: that I may dwell in the house of Jehovah all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of Jehovah, and to inquire of him in his temple, Ps 27:4.

That is another thing: the brethren speak of the temple and that is another view in which we can see the assembly. Now that is not exactly proved universally; in divine wisdom; God has set His people together in localities. No local gathering can claim to be the assembly; it cannot even claim to be the assembly in the place because that would mean that everybody else who lives in the place is an unbeliever. But we can seek to represent it, seek to walk in the light of it; and as we do so, we come together. We can also come together in larger companies and read the Scriptures as we did earlier today, and you find that things are coming in that you had not thought about; you are getting fresh impressions; you are in the temple -

... to behold the beauty of Jehovah, and to inquire of him in his temple

The whole assembly can never come together in one place at the present time; it will do so when we hear that cry, when we hear that call from above. The whole assembly will be together, a wonderful thing;

what a great and glorious moment that will be! But, in the meantime, in divine wisdom, we are set in localities; and God has given the wisdom that things should be worked out in manageable numbers. That is divine wisdom; and there we can find that the truth as to the Lord Jesus, and the truth as to the revelation of God, can be worked out in our companies.

There is also the question of a *response* to God. We get that in chapter 3 of Ephesians. There was always a response from the Lord Jesus; He never failed in His life here to lift up His heart to God, but there is a response in the assembly. Assembly response is a wonderful thing; it is a thing we experience on Lord's day morning and at other times, a thing we will experience eternally. The end of Ephesians 3 says, "to him that is able to do far exceedingly above all which we ask or think, according to the power which works in us, to him be glory in the assembly in Christ Jesus unto all generations of the age of ages. Amen", v 20, 21. Beloved, eternally the assembly will be a vessel of response to God.

Now, you may say to me that this is all very well, but how does it work out in practice, because we are here - maybe ninety here today: how does it work out in practice? Everything was set up at the beginning in power; the apostles were here and generally through the time of the apostles, things were maintained in power. The apostle Paul could see that breakdown was coming; he wrote to Timothy about it: breakdown was going to come into the church. He told the elders in Ephesus that "after my departure ... from among your own selves" - think of that, that there should be "men speaking perverted things to draw away the disciples after them", Acts 20: 29, 30. How quickly that came in, as history tells us; the church fathers as they are called, quickly assumed official positions; how quickly they were elevated into places and given honour that belonged only to the Lord! How quickly this happened; men drew away people after themselves, and failure came in for years and years and years. And that was a dark, dark story, because it was relying on the responsibility of men. But all the way through there must have been believers, and the Holy Spirit remained. Eventually the time came that reminds me of when the ark was in the land of the Philistines, and the psalmist says -

Then the Lord awoke ...

Ps 78: 65

There was a time, maybe five hundred years ago when a man came to the conclusion that he could be justified, not by the church, not by the

clergy, not by those who were lining their own pockets at the expense of the poor: he was justified by faith in Christ, and there was no other basis for being justified but by having faith in Christ. He made this light public, and it caused a stir; and souls were secured. And there were many times after that when souls tried to assert the truth, but one aspect of the truth that was needed all along was the assertion of the fact that the Holy Spirit is here; and that every believer who has the Holy Spirit is united to Christ in glory, and on that account every believer has a direct link with a glorious Man in heaven. No other is to come between a soul and Him. Two hundred years ago, that light dawned in all its brightness. I do not say that light dawned with only one man; that light came to many; there was a distinct movement of the Holy Spirit as souls in many places in different countries came to it at about the same time, that Christ is our Head in heaven, and the Holy Spirit links us to Him. And if I am linked to Him in heaven, then every believer who has the Holy Spirit is linked to Him there, and that forms the body - the one body. What light that was! It was not just an offshoot of what was going on before; that was light from heaven that stirred souls to come apart. What should they do then if that was the truth and the church publicly was sinking deeper and deeper into corruption? What could they do but come apart from it? That was the principle that was followed: "come out from the midst of them, and be separated" (2 Cor 6: 17), and that is what took place. I say that not to eulogise anybody - I have not named any names, but that was a distinct movement of the Holy Spirit, and there were souls that gathered together out of love for the Lord Jesus and a desire to be pleasing to Him, and to be here according to the truth, that the church should not be a human organisation but according to how it is set out in the Scriptures, the house of God, the body, the temple.

I have spoken of things that are set out in the Scriptures. Somebody said to me once, "Yes, the church does not work like that now", as much as to say that it cannot. Well, beloved, if you pursue the truth, and every divine principle, you will find that that is exactly what God is requiring of believers today, that we pursue the truth: pursue the truth as it has been set out, to make way for the Holy Spirit, to make way for Him to have His place with us; so that there should be a pure testimony, a pure response in the service of God. And those believers who came out in the eighteen hundreds, were they the assembly? No, but they were part of it, and we may all be part of it as I have shown. We are part of something which may be outwardly in ruins - the church is

publicly in ruins - but there is that which is of the assembly that will go through. And our exercise must be to hold ourselves in relation to that because that is what the Lord finds His pleasure in. That is what He commits Himself to; that is what the Holy Spirit commits Himself to; and we will find our place in that as we commit ourselves to it.

I have mentioned certain aspects of the assembly but there is one other aspect that I would like to mention; we mentioned it in our hymn; and it is to be found in the end of Revelation - the bride. That is what answers to the heart of Christ Himself. We do not exactly get the bride as a type in the Old Testament. I know we get references to her by analogy, but none of the great types of the assembly are referred to as a bride. Eve is not referred to as a bride; Rebecca is not called a bride - she is described in many ways but not as the bride; Leah was not; Asnath, no. In the types of the assembly, they are seen as the wife rather than the bride. That is something that is reserved for the assembly herself; she has a heart for Christ, she is waiting for Him, she has kept herself for Him - pure and holy, undefiled, she has kept herself for Him through her pathway here; and she is looking for Him to come. And He *is* going to come: "he that comes will come, and will not delay", Heb 10: 37. What will He find? What will He find in my heart? Will He find features of the bride, looking for her Bridegroom; or will He find me settling down in this materialistic western world, and not thinking too much about Him and what answers to His heart? Let us be thinking of the Bridegroom; He is soon to appear, soon to take us to be with Himself. We look for His appearing; we look for Him to come. May we be more expectant, for His Name's sake.

London

20th November 2021

PREPARATION

John S Speirs

John 14: 1-3

Psalm 23: 5

John 21: 5, 9, 12

I felt confirmed in what our brothers have said as to the matter of preparation. There is much of it amongst the brethren; we are thankful for it; it is an evidence of kindness and love, that there are those who are willing to prepare for others. I thought of this matter of divine preparation, you might say God's preparation. If preparing something good for someone is an evidence of your love for them, then there is no greater love than God's love: the things "which God has prepared for them that love Him", are things that have not entered into man's heart (1 Cor 2: 9); they are things that are better than any of the things of this world. Expenditure is involved in preparation, and consideration, consideration for the person for whom you are preparing; and how God has considered for each one of us! God has considered for you, and what an expenditure He has made!

I read first of all in John's gospel about the Lord Jesus; He says, "I go to prepare you a place". Think of that, the preparation that the Lord Jesus has made personally for us. Think of the cost that there has been so that there should be a place for us in heaven in the Father's presence with Christ forever! It required that Jesus must first suffer and die. But because of that perfect work, and His resurrection and ascension, that place is secured; as believers in the Lord Jesus it is yours and it is mine to enjoy. When? In the future yes, but the joy of it known now also, by the Holy Spirit's power. Think of the consideration of the Father in giving His own Spirit that we might enjoy what place is now; I think we enjoy it on Lord's day. I think we enjoy that as we gather together with fellow believers, an experience of being in heaven, in that place that has been prepared for us.

I was impressed that it is a personal preparation, "I go to prepare you a place". The Lord Jesus does it Himself! I suppose there will be a royal banquet at this time of year which the Queen will be providing; however I do not think she will be preparing it all herself; she will have staff to do that, she will have servants; but it is another evidence of divine love, the personal consideration and preparation of the Lord Jesus as going and preparing the place that is there in heaven

for you. In preparing for someone you consider what is suitable for them, you consider what is best for them. The Lord Jesus knows what is best for each one of us, better than we do ourselves, and He has prepared the place accordingly. There is no better place than the place that Jesus has prepared for those that love Him.

I read in Psalm 23 because those that love our Lord Jesus often suffer. Those that love Him are faced by His enemies and they suffer as a result of it. How many times I feel limited in this because the fact that I do not suffer much is perhaps because I do not love Him as much as I should. If you suffer in any measure for the Lord Jesus, He would reassure you with what He prepares for you even "in the presence of mine enemies". A brother prayed last night about what God has 'laid on' for us. It says, "Thou preparest a table before me". Think of the consideration of God in preparing a table that is "in the presence of mine enemies". Your mind goes to Acts 16, does it not? Think of Paul and Silas there in the prison, in the presence of enemies; their cup was full and running over with suffering but they were conscious of the divine presence; and then of course the jailor actually did prepare a table for them! Think of the consideration of God that He would prepare something for us in the way of reassurance. We spend a week in this wilderness world which hates Christ and if you are a believer who is like Him in any measure it will hate you too. May we never find anything attractive in this world. Let us not be pursuing anything in this world, contributing to it, or taking from it. Remember Abram when the king of Sodom came out to him, he would have nothing from him, Gen 14: 17-24. He would have nothing from that king, but at the same time there was another king. Did not God prepare a table for Abram in the presence of his enemies? Melchisedec came out; it was really like Christ Himself. God would give you an impression of Christ even in the midst of your most difficult week at work; God comes in and by the Spirit He gives you a taste of Christ, maybe in a meeting like this, or in a reading, or maybe another believer tells you something that they have enjoyed in their experience with Jesus and you are reassured and you are refreshed. It might even be in the presence of your enemies, but God can reassure you even there.

Those that love the Lord Jesus often fail, and we can often be critical of Peter, but I have failed more often than Peter did. We have a responsibility to prepare; preparation will have gone into this occasion by way of prayer, sacrifice and exercise. Sometimes though, I may

begin to think that I can do things in my own strength and pursue my own will like Peter did here in John 21, but it ends in failure. Think of the grace of the Lord Jesus in how He deals with them! He gently asked them, "have ye anything to eat"? He already knows that they have nothing because they had left Him out! If we leave the Lord Jesus out we will have nothing. But that does not prevent Him preparing something; He prepares something in grace that we might be restored and revived. "When therefore they went out on the land, they see a fire"; they would have seen that first. They would have been cold, they would have been soaking wet, in the sea at night; it would be cold, and they were hungry because they had caught nothing themselves; what would be more welcoming than the glow of that fire? The personal consideration of the Lord Jesus had come into it; He had prepared it. Coals take some time before they are ready to cook on; the Lord Jesus had been thinking ahead in consideration. And He has been like that for me, when I have gone and pursued my own will; you find that when you acknowledge your nothingness, and the lack of success of anything that you can do yourself, you realise He has prepared something for you that will revive you. It will warm you again in your affection for Him, and not only that, He gives you something to eat, spiritually, like the fish laid on. I do not think there would be any other meal like this; the Lord Jesus's hand was personally involved in the preparation of it; there is nothing better than what Christ prepares, and He has prepared for each one of us. He does not reprimand Peter, He is not harsh with him, He does not wait until Peter has been corrected and is repentant; He gives him the meal *first*, He gives him this wonderful invitation to "Come and dine". A meal has been prepared! Well, these are the kind of ways in which God prepares; He has prepared a place in heaven for us, Christ has secured it through the way that He has gone personally, in His dying and the shedding of His precious blood. He has been raised again out of the grave and He has gone into heaven before us where we will soon be with Him. He is the Forerunner, which means that He has prepared a place for us, those of us who are following; that place is ours. Let that be a reassurance to us, not only that we are going to be there soon with Him, but we can go there in the Spirit's power even *now*. The Lord would assure us even if we come up against opposition; He would give us the character of a table prepared, even in the presence of our enemies.

What a privilege to be at the king's table; it would be a good study to look at references to the king's table in scripture. Solomon had

one; David had one; you can learn about a poor lame man who sat there, 2 Sam 9: 13. There is the best on the King's table; it is prepared by Him, and it is prepared for us, even such as us and those who often wander; He would even prepare what is needed to revive and maintain us in affection for Him.

Peter had failed three times, and the Lord Jesus gave him three opportunities to confess his love for Him. How gracious He is; what great things God has prepared for us, now what is my appreciation of them? If someone goes to a lot of effort and makes a great preparation for you and you ignore it, or you do not value it, how would the one who has prepared it feel? I feel the need to value more what God has prepared for those that love Him.

May the Lord bless the word.

Word in meeting for ministry in Aberdeen

24th December 2019

'COME NOW'

PAUL MARTIN

Rev 22: 16, 17

2 Thess 2: 1, 2

This verse in Revelation has come to me as our brothers have been speaking, the One who is “the root and offspring of David”. Think of all that was formed by the knowledge of God in David that looked on to Jesus. How wonderful! - “the root”, bringing out who He is in His Person, His divinity. David derived everything that answered to God's purpose from Him; and “the offspring”, the perfection of the manhood in Jesus, in which moral features that God loved in David were a pre-figuring of what was going to come out in its fulness in Jesus. As our brother has quoted, “a man after my heart, who shall do all my will”, Acts 13: 22.

This word of the Lord's is very affecting, coming right at the close of this book: “I am the root and offspring of David”; and immediately it says, “And the Spirit and the bride say, Come”. I understand that that reference, “Come”, means 'come now'. That is the desire of the bride; she does not want to wait any more: she longs to see Him. Her soul is so moved in relation to this glorious Person, so that all that she longs for is to see His face. She says, 'Come now'; she is in unison with the Holy Spirit, entirely formed by the Spirit's work that has preceded, in view of this one expression, 'Come now'. What it will be when this vessel will come out in its glory, and when the glory of God will enlighten it! How wonderful! - formed by the operation of the Holy Spirit.

But in the present moment, while that formative work is proceeding, the assembly's cry, and her whole outlook, is that He might come. We often speak of this in relation to ourselves, and say, 'Well, we would want everything to be right for Him', and that is a right desire, but the bride *is* right for Him - everything in the bride is right; she has been formed by the Holy Spirit's service. She lacks nothing as she stands before the King. All that the Spirit has done in relation to this glorious vessel lacks nothing because it is a divine workmanship. How wonderful it is! And her whole longing is that He might come now.

I read in Thessalonians because, when Paul is writing to this young company, he uses the coming of the Lord Jesus as it were as a lever in their souls. He says, “we beg you, brethren, by the coming of

our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to him". There could be no greater power to draw our hearts than the prospect of seeing Him: "the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and our gathering together to him". We were talking to somebody today about the power of the sea; man cannot harness it or control it. But think of the powerful effect of this great prospect that is immediately before us: "the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ". It has its own drawing power. Paul says that he does not want them to be drawn away by false teaching: he would say, 'Just keep your eye on the One that is coming, the power of that coming'. It is not merely an event: it is a Person. And Paul, as it were, says to these young believers, 'Keep your eye upon Him'. We are going to be gathered together to Him; how wonderful that every believer is going to be gathered together to Him. He will be the Object of all. He will be the Object of every believer: all those who have died in faith, right back to the beginning of Genesis; they will be gathered together to Him; there will be one Object for the universe. And that One who is the Object of the universe then is the One who is able to control our souls and our hearts and our spirits in the waiting time.

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

Word in a meeting for ministry in St Ives, Cornwall

23rd November 2021