

A
WORD
IN ITS
SEASON

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CONTENTS

[GOD'S WAY IN THE TIME OF THE SPIRIT \(1\)](#)

[GOD'S WAY IN THE TIME OF THE SPIRIT \(2\)](#)

[JESUS](#)

[POEM](#)

[THE CHILDREN'S SALVATION](#)

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GOD'S WAY IN THE TIME OF THE SPIRIT (1)

Revelation 21: 1-5,9, 10; 22: 1-5, 10-15

A.J.E.W. We should consider this city, so skilfully presented to us in two settings. The external, presented first and briefly, is a remarkable disclosure of the Spirit as to what the ultimate in mind is; the outstanding point is that "the tabernacle of God is with men, and he shall tabernacle with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, their God". The Spirit seems to bring a remarkable sense of divine complacency as we read these verses.

He loves to give us a sense of complacent, divine rest. The judgments are viewed as complete, with all the seeming complexities of the ways of divine government carried through, and nothing left undone. A vessel is now introduced which relates, as we have often been instructed, to the eternal order, presented as "a bride adorned for her husband". That is, what she is in relation to Christ and for His heart is set out there. But the Spirit is very skilful in the way the truth is brought to bear in what is prophetic. So that there is a return to this great subject of the city, which is seen in the second setting, "coming down out of the heaven from God, having the glory of God", and described by the angel as "the bride, the Lamb's wife". In this setting the detail of the city is expanded; the throne is found in the midst of it, the river of water of life is disclosed. The tree of life and the fruits of the tree, The Spirit of God is not just engaging us with the blessedness of what shall abide, glorious as it is, but He is engaging us with the realities of city character in such a way that an effect in ourselves is immediately yielded. I wonder if we realise sufficiently what it is for the pleasure of God as the truth permeates so that there is an immediate and fruitful answer, even in our current circumstances, with the moral side necessarily proceeding and evil in many respects very close, but the divine glory asserting itself.

God loves to assert Himself in the midst of such conditions to give an immediate bearing to what this remarkable divine pleasure is.

The Scripture speaks in another place of "the habitable world which is to come, of which we speak", Heb 2: 5. That is, it is not just a

future matter, but the speaking of it brings forward, as Mr Raven would have pressed, the reality of the moral elements of that world as having force and expression among the saints at the present time.

D.F. The city would be an ordered system. I was thinking of order. It is referred to in the Colossian epistle; is not this the result of the Spirit's operations in the assembly? An ordered system in relation to Christ comes into view.

A.J.E.W. I think it is good to grasp that, because God is a God of order, and He is the God of measure. So that the principle of measurement is included in this chapter in the golden reed. It is a golden reed. That is, the measurement is from the divine standpoint. Then there is, as you say, the order; the city is so substantial in its dimensions, and yet everything about it is set out in due order, so that there is an orderly maintaining of what is of God. Things have a place to which they belong, and the Spirit would help us to keep things in the place to which they belong.

J.T.M. Why does the eternal character come before the second one you referred to?

A.J.E.W. To afford a great impulse to our affectionate devotion. We are still in the realm of working out things. The Spirit of God is working out things, and the application of the truth to ourselves belongs to that realm. When the city is actual and present, there will be no need for the workings of the truth as we rightly would experience them today. The truth, in that sense, will not be needful in its application to strengthen what is contrary and to meet the subtlety of the foe. But the Spirit of God is arranging things as to the truth; to bring out the point that the truth does bear upon us in the most definite and forceful and positive way in the present relationships in which we are. Therefore, the city is come back to in regard to the world to come, where everything is ordered and suitable to God. I remember Mr Taylor sen referring to the "world to come" as the best that God can reach in respect of the present order of things.

S.McC. It is very interesting that in connection with the first the tabernacle of God should be referred to; in connection with the second it is the temple. It is very affecting that in the eternal condition of things the facility for mediatorial service and God dwelling with men should be referred to as the tabernacle; it is not the external splendour of display but the simple conditions of love dwelling and moving.

A.J.E.W. It helps to make that distinction, so that the first presentation is of one "prepared as a bride, adorned for her husband". That is for Christ, is it not? It is not exactly for display with Christ, it is for Him. And, as you say, the tabernacling will be an intimate thought, peculiarly in relation to God Himself. He dwells complacently, and in the extendedness of His own pleasure, in that which He Himself has wrought with that pleasure in mind.

S.McC. And the personality of God is very affecting in this section; "God shall be with them, their God". It is to bring out His personality mediatorially in His relations with men; He is their God, not the God of angels, although Mr Taylor once said you cannot exclude angels. The point would be what men are to Him.

A.J.E.W. I wonder if we think enough about that side. I have been impressed with the wonderful character of men as created by God. What a wonderful creature man is! We should not lose sight of that - the way the faculties are established in man, the way the affections are normal to man, and the measure of intelligence that is possible in man. We have the infinite setting out of this in the One who uniquely came into manhood, Jesus. How much that involves - that one of the Godhead should come into and abide in manhood. This means a great deal as to the way in which in the assembly, the whole idea of man is to be appraised by us in contrast to the awful corruption of man in every relationship found around us and very close to us.

A.B.P. In that connection, is it important to have in mind that God created man after sin had come in? God waited until sin existed before man was created.

A.J.E.W. You mean that "by one man sin entered into the world", Rom 5: 12.

A.B.P. It appears that man was in His mind as the area for working out of the question of good and evil.

A.J.E.W. That is a very fine point to present because, in this company, man is the area in which God is working out matters of good and evil. It is a wonderful thing to be in the assembly. I speak simply as to that because of what God is able to work out for the satisfaction of His own heart in man in the assembly. I am impressed with the immense potentiality of the assembly, even as here in testimony, in men moving, acting, speaking, responding, in the Spirit. The gift of the Spirit and the presence of the Spirit in the assembly are wonderful things in view of the immediate bringing out, for the pleasure of God and for the working out of the testimony, of what man is according to the divine pleasure.

A.B.P. I wondered if the reference to "their God" did not include the fact that God is known by them, that the declaration, the manifestation, has not been for nought; there is an answer now in keeping with all that.

A.J.E.W. It is a glimpse of blissful, restful conditions where no evil can come, all evil having been dealt with, and dealt with in absolute accord with the majesty of God Himself and with all that He is in His own nature; as we have often been told, judgment is a necessity on account of what His nature in love is.

S.McC. Would not the tabernacle of God bring out the uniqueness of assembly formation? No other family is included in the thought of the tabernacle of God. Other families are included in the thought of "God himself shall be with them, their God", but the tabernacle brings out the uniqueness of formation in the assembly.

A.J.E.W. And what a comfort it is to realise that, if we are rightly here now, it is *that* formation which is going on in the Spirit. It is not to be put at a distance. It is a question of something that is working amongst us in the sense of a divine formation. That is a very great comfort in the midst of the rigorous processing of the present time,

which most here know about in experience which really has in mind the full end that God will reach, the full correspondence to Himself which He has absolute right, being God, to insist upon. Nothing is to be allowed to drop below what the requirements of His own love are. It is most comforting, in the midst of testing, to realise that God is working out something, in the infiniteness of His own wisdom, which is to be seen in this glimpse we have here of what goes through into eternity.

J.J. The first man was put into the best of circumstances and failed in them, but the Son of Man was put into the most adverse circumstances and triumphed in them; "the life which is in Christ Jesus" (2 Tim 1: 1) would help us to experience something of that at the moment.

A.J.E.W. That is just, especially the link back with what we had yesterday as to the "life which is in Christ Jesus", because there is life up there in that sense which is inviolate, and that is immediate, It is not something we wait for. The life which is in Christ Jesus is something which is inviolate, and which the Spirit gives us part in.

J.A.P. Although it does not quite reach the level of what you are suggesting in Revelation, it says, "Behold, there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon", Luke 2: 25). What a fine man he was, "just and pious ... and the Holy Spirit was upon him. And it was divinely communicated to him by the Holy Spirit, that he should not see death before he should see the Lord's Christ". He is really a typical man for this heavenly city, is he not? God could speak to him and trust him.

A.J.E.W. "A man in Jerusalem" is very suggestive. It is the sensitive priestly touch of that beloved writer who was so much with Paul, to present the refinement of character which God delights to have under His eye. Think of the refined side in man! What is so crude and so corrupted in man is constantly thrust upon our gaze, but we are to realise the refinement that God has in view now in the assembly. So that, let our relationships be refined, and according to divine standards. How do we get along together in our several

localities? Those relationships are to be refined and to have the heavenly colour about them. That is what is pro per to man in the sight of God. Man, even as a creature, is created in view of what is collective in relation with other men. So that the idea of personality would be in mind. Think of the personalities in this company - not in a human sense, not from the viewpoint of human peculiarity, but from the viewpoint of divine refinements in sonship, which love would have us to appreciate.

It is good to think of these things on the extended scale, to regard the glory of God in His ways, especially the formative side that has been referred to, the delicate and dignified character of what He delights to form in men to answer to His own heart. So that the assembly is really a sphere of divine refinements, having the pleasure of God in mind. The way in which the word 'adorned' is used here, "a bride adorned for her husband" is noticeable. The adornment is there. The specific consideration for the feelings and affections of the spouse, in view here, is very attractive.

S.McC. So we need to see that there is a formation within a formation. The status of any family in the universe of God is according to the measure of its formation in the particular light in which God has been revealed. So you have men - what a formation is reached in men - but then there is a greater formation in the tabernacle of God, indicating what the assembly is as formed mediatorially to be God's tabernacle in relation to men.

A.J.E.W. That helps very much, giving us the extended thought of what is here. It is not just in one man. There was, of course, and is, the pleasure and delight of the Father's heart in one glorious Man, and in the taking on of His features by any one of us. But this is men. It is the glory of what God reaches in the myriads, the holy myriads, that He claims for himself.

D.F. Is it the same thought that we have in the beginning of Luke, "good pleasure in men", Luke 2:14? This would be an extended view, involving peace on earth. It would look beyond the current

conditions, the Roman world, and would give us heaven's view of the incoming of Christ.

A.J.E.W. That was evidently a moment of rejoicing, they were "praising God". It is wonderful to think of that, because the matter now was imminent; It was not just a prophetic reference to something future and distant, but it was imminent. That is, the glorious Person was being ushered in in whom all this would be carried through, and it becomes an occasion of the responsive expressions of a host of the angels.

J.H. Will you please say something about this word 'new'? There are quite a few references to that word in this passage.

A.J.E.W. That is a very fine word to bring up because it means that you have something here which is unmodified by anything that has gone before. It is a carrying through of something, but it is presented in circumstances that allow no modifying element which could come through to defile or hinder or spoil I think it relates to what Mr McCallum mentioned, that it is a formation within a formation. That is, the whole scene of glory is just touched upon, but in the midst of the scene of glory is what is distinctively and specially formed of God in view of the prime answer to Himself and His own affections.

J.H. After that we get "I am the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and he end". Then, later on, we get the same expression, but it also says "the first and the last". There is nothing new there, is there?

A.J.E.W. Would that not mean that God can work things through, could I say reverently, item by item, in due order. The reference is to the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet, as you know. That is, he starts, but He finishes, and He has His own way from the start through to the finish. But it is not a disordered way, it is not a disturbed way. At no point is the enemy determining the course of things. God is determining the course of things. He retains, in the most absolute sense, the complete initiative that carries through what answers to Himself according to purpose.

A.B.P. Would there be an identification with Ephesus in the Alpha and with Philadelphia in the Omega? The speaking is by the same Person. It is of the same character. It is a different letter, but it is the same Person, the same alphabet.

A.J.E.W. So that there is something in character which runs right through. That is, God is not allowing anything that relates to Himself to be subject to modification by anything that is adverse to Him. To take the extended view into our scale in that sense and keep it before us is going to keep us steady in the midst of the buffetings that come.

J.G.H. Is every phase of divine thought spelled out in the One who is "the Alpha and the Omega"?

A.J.E.W. Every phase is spelled out. That corresponds with the point in mind in entering upon this subject, that God would have us intelligent about these things so that we are not caught unawares.

S.McC. The word for 'new' is important; It is '*kainos*', that is new in the sense of what never existed before. I remember the readings in Detroit on Jerusalem. When we came to this part, brethren would refer back to types or to the Psalms in relation to Jerusalem, but Mr Taylor sen always said that that word did not quite apply, because what is seen in the new Jerusalem never existed before.

A.J.E.W. It is fine to make that distinction, because it is intended that we grasp the full distinctiveness of the assembly in relation to God and His own satisfaction, His own complacent dwelling. It is the point we began with - the glorious distinctions that God makes in the disclosure of Himself and His own thoughts, marking off this time of the Spirit in its own uniqueness. So that let none of us fail to grasp the distinctively heavenly character which is the feature of this moment, and let not the enemy get in by that which defiles and spoils what is so precious to Christ.

J.G.H. Is there a link between what you are speaking of now and what was before us earlier in regard to an area to which failure does not attach? It is in this context that we get the expression "the former things have passed away". The more they pass away from

our awareness the more we will be capacitated, do you think, to enter into the area of the Spirit's power?

A.J.E.W. This helps us to be free of what would spoil the service Godward or rob it of its wealth. The full light of the matter, just as far as is necessary to give us reassurance and intelligence as to what God has in view, is disclosed to those who have the Spirit that they may apprehend it. How steady it would keep us to realise that God has made known these things! They are to be taken on by us in an intelligent and definite way.

J.I.M. I like what you said, that God is determining the present course of things. That bears repeating at this juncture. We are so prone to be affected by the ups and downs of assembly matters, and we are affected in the service of God. If we get into our souls that God is determining this matter, would it not liberate us?

A.J.E.W. It would, and that is the intent; yet in the balance of this chapter, we are brought back to our responsible part in respect of things. God presents things from His side. He has a right to do it. He has a right to do it in this meeting, as if He would say, Take my viewpoint about this. He loves to say that to us. The Spirit helps us to take it on, but at the same time we realise that we are in the scene of education and formation, a scene involving the maintenance of the testimony which He began and will complete. Therefore we are brought back to the moral side, what is suited to the same God in all His glory in the expression of Himself down here.

J.T.M. That would encourage us as to matters that rest on us in our localities, pressure and the like and sicknesses.

S.H. You used the word 'balance'; I do not hear it very often these days, but it is a necessary word. I was thinking of our side. With God everything is in balance. He balances the clouds.

A.J.E.W. "Dost thou know about the balancings of the clouds"? , Job 37: 16. God is giving us that the balancing of the clouds. The clouds are there, but He is giving us the balancing of the clouds, showing us the city.

S.McC. It is interesting that when the kingdom was divided under Jeroboam and Rehoboam, God sent the prophet. But He did not say through the prophet, This thing is from Satan, He said "this thing is from me", 1 Kings 12: 24. That is very remarkable; then the moral challenge comes through in relation to every king, whether he goes according to the first principles of David.

A.J.E.W. That is of the greatest import, because it challenges our thought in approaching any matter. A fresh element of testing or crisis may present itself to me, and I might be just thrown into confusion and uncertainty about it. But if we see what you are bringing out, it changes the whole focus of concern on our side. We say, This is something which is coming into the ordering of God in respect of His formative operations, and I want to arrange myself in relation to that. We are to get the gain of the matter, to see the principles that bear upon it, to see where the Lord is in it and to see where the Spirit is acting. It gives such a definiteness of focus to the exercises which are rightly ours in going through matters with God.

J.G.H. It is very affecting that in Thessalonians we are told, "In everything give thanks", 1 Thess 5: 17. Then when we come to Ephesians the apostle goes even farther and says, "giving thanks at all times for all things", Eph 5: 20.

T.K. Would it help to steady us to see what the Proverb says, that "Jehovah hath wrought everything on his own account", Prov 16: 4?

A.J.E.W. It is fine to take that view, and you feel some sense of comfort flowing into the souls of the brethren, even at the present time, by realising that God is carrying things through with His own glorious ends in mind. Yet, there is my side. Will I stand faithful? Will I be diverted? Will I become a tool of the foe? Will I become beclouded, so that I may hinder the brethren in arriving at what the Spirit of God is at? That is our side of things, which relates more to what belongs to the world to come, where the throne is seen in the midst of the city, "the throne of God and of the Lamb". We have to take account of that.

H.J.G. In connection with what was said about "new Jerusalem" as not having existed before, is there a connection in that, though, with "Jerusalem above which is our mother". Gal 4: 26?

A.J.E.W. I think so, because that is something which is to be operative amongst us now "Jerusalem above, which is our mother". The side of motherhood is brought in there particularly in regard of all that enters into this great work of formation. I think to crystallize our thoughts more as to the work of formation that is going on is a very necessary thing. We realise that God is taking a long time to work through to this great end. Why is He taking such a long time? Why is this time of the Spirit so lengthy? It is that God is carrying forward, in the skill which uniquely is His, the work of formation which is so precious and so delicate in its full character. God is not, if I can use the expression with reverence, allowing any haste about it. He is doing it as He pleases and in His own wise way for "all things", Eph 5: 20.

J.J. In Isaiah 43: 7 it says, "every one that is called by my name, and whom I have created for my glory: I have formed him, Yea, I have made him" Is that what we are to take account of?

A.J.E.W. That is a very appropriate quotation.

J G.H. What you are saying really carries us back to God's original thoughts in relation to man as it says in Genesis, He "formed man, dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and Man became a living soul", chap 2: 7.

A.J.E.W. And as we regard that section we are reminded, too: of what is said as to the assembly in type, He "built the rib that he had taken from Man into a woman", chap 2: 22. All this relates to this great work of formation and the divine thought in it.

A.B.P. In the days of Gideon, when numbers were being greatly reduced, the test applied to those whom Jehovah chose. It was at a moment that they were not aware of. It seemed to be the result of what they were in formation. Some constitutional matter in them showed itself when they were not aware of being tested. Should we

not be greatly concerned that, in present conditions, something of the work of God is finding expression in us characteristically?

A.J.E.W. I like your word 'constitutionally', because what is before us is the moral fibre of God's own work shining out. How He loves to see that. It is very affecting to think of what God secures for His own heart, when those He loves react rightly even to an adverse situation. He says "This thing is from me", as already quoted.

A.B.P. I was very much impressed, in one or two localities that I was aware of, by persons who did not have much in the way of knowledge of principles or Scripture but had spiritual instincts. They knew what was right and stood by it.

A.J.E.W. That brings us back to the Spirit, especially in the character of unction, which is a matter of the greatest value to us.

TORONTO

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GOD'S WAY IN THE TIME OF THE SPIRIT (2)

John 14: 1-4; 17: 1-26

A.J.E.W. We can see the distinctive special provision of this gospel for these last days. It has been thought to have been the last book of the canon of Scripture to be written under the Spirit's inspiring. It opens up to us the divine arrangements in love which guarantee all that is of God going through. It comes as a precious touch of divine loving assurance, we might say superimposed upon and added to every other part of Scripture, to bring out in the glory of the Godhead, and in the glory of the Persons of the Godhead severally, that holy arrangement which is to carry through all that that same love has purposed for itself. The whole bent of the book is to extend the assembly's appreciation of what is entered upon by God Himself to secure the great ends that have been before us. We see the unparalleled skill in which the Lord affects persons, the unhurried way that love takes, and the entire provision that that same love has made that its own ends may be assured. This, therefore, is the gospel of the blood and water, involving full provision in Christ's death for guilt, but also the immediate provision for cleansing, that there is that from God's side which meets every question. The Lord's distinctive and special place, as in manhood, is wonderfully touched upon, and we have the great statement which runs through in the gospel, "The Father loves the Son and has given all things to be in his hand", chap 3: 35. I believe that statement is, in a sense, referred back to by the Lord's word here in chapter 1: 4, "Ye believe on God, believe also on me". That is, faith apprehends the Son and what is committed to Him, the Father having, as it says, "given all things to be in his hand." It brings out the Son's peculiar greatness as having the immediate charge of these glorious, fruitful, active operations which "his hand" would speak of, carrying everything through in persons looked forward to in purpose - "marked us out beforehand for adoption through Jesus Christ to Himself", Eph 1: 15 - persons who are in mind to fill out a great extent of the divine pleasure.

J.G.H. Do you think this should have a very stabilising effect on us at the present time, particularly as it stands in relation to the dark background of the closing verses of the previous chapter? We have the element of betrayal in Judas, the breakdown of leadership in Peter, and then the actual absence of Christ foretold. These things find their parallel in our own time but the Lord would draw us over in relation to Himself so that our hearts should not be troubled.

A.J.E.W. How much there was to disturb His spirit! But does He, as He goes forward in this chapter, disclose that disturbance of spirit?

That is a test when the saints are burdened. Can we carry the burdens and yet find how the spirit is able to bring us into the best?

There is no element of disturbance of the spirit of this glorious Man as He opens up things related to Himself and to God. He refers to the many abodes, and singles out the place that love has determined, the choicest and richest, for those whom the Lord is carrying in His heart at this moment.

E.T. Does the Lord bring this out in Matthew 11: 25, where it speaks about the cities that had not repented? He says "I praise thee, Father, Lord of the heaven and of the earth", the consolation being that He controls in both heaven and earth.

A.J.E.W. There is an added touch to that in Luke 10: 21, the parallel passage, where it speaks of Him rejoicing in Spirit, "Jesus rejoiced in spirit" . All that was around Him did not disturb His holy relations, speaking reverently, with the Father, "I praise thee, Father, Lord of the heaven and of the earth".

R.A. Is that why John does not bring in the garden of Gethsemane?

A.J.E.W. That is a very interesting point; He is seen in the most absolute composure in this gospel.

J.G.H. There is a serenity and a certainty that mark Him which really represent a challenge to us in the area of testimony.

A.J.E.W. That is carried forward, even in detail, into His addressing the Father in chapter 17, where the real facts of the situation are introduced. It is a wonderful chapter because the Lord is before us

in the glory of manhood in His relations as Son with His Father. Of course, from one viewpoint, He knew all that He was speaking of, and the Father did too, but He goes over it. There is that in His place in manhood that involves a great scope of things which He is contemplating, addressing the Father about it in view of its being carried through. We have often turned to this chapter, and the Lord has often helped us about it, but I am just impressed today with the profound way in which the Son speaks to the Father about those so dear to His heart.

A.B.P. Would it be right to say that, in a sense, we get in John the golden reed that is used in the Revelation for measurement? In the reed used in Ezekiel 43: 13 the cubit is a cubit and a span, the arm and the hand. You have both referred to in John, the arm of the Lord being revealed in relation to the mighty works that Jesus did, then the things that are committed into His hand. I wondered if the golden reed therefore, of Revelation may be seen here.

A.J.E.W. That is, the divine standard of measurement as to man is perfectly before us here. Your reference to Ezekiel is meaningful in another sense too, because that enlarged cubit means that six handbreadths become seven. What is characteristically falling short reaches perfection.

A.B.P. I have the sense that this kind of thing is intended to be tremendously encouraging to us in a day of uncertainty; through the experiences and the pressures, we get an increased measure of things and the appreciation of what God is doing.

S.McC. In relation to what Mr Parker says, the Lord asserts His deity in chapter 18: 5-7 as the opposers advance on Him. "Whom seek ye?" He says; they went away backward and fell to the ground". This helps all the more our understanding of John 17. The Lord saw that it was a moment for the assertion of His deity, "I am he".

A.J.E.W. You mean that the Lord has full rights, as in deity, to assert Himself?

S.McC. That is right. They came with lanterns and torches and weapons, but the Lord asserts His deity; He is the creator of all things. In the light of the counsels of John 17 you can understand why the Lord did that.

A.J.E.W. You can indeed, and what a sense of support it gives us to think of that, how the Lord is perfectly able to assert Himself, being who He is. What a touch of comfort for our spirits!

J.G.H. Do we get a similar thought in chapter 8, where on the one hand He refers to Himself as "a man who has spoken the truth to you", (v 40) and on the other hand He says, "before Abraham was I am" (v 58).

A.J.E.W. The Lord meets those men not just by the assertion you refer to, but He meets them in detail too; He goes over the whole ground and He exposes them. It is a wonderful thing that the Lord renders testimony to those men of a kind which lays bare their whole character and position. He also, as you say, makes that assertion which relates to the glory of His Person; but it is a marvellous thing that really He meets them on their own ground and confounds them in the course of His speaking. The way that John treats things would remind us that the time in which the Lord's manhood was filled out was precious time. But He spends time on certain things. He spends time on those men in the testimony of divine grace, to lay bare the whole legal system, to present the true character of it; point by point in detail. It was full testimony to those men, testimony that was rejected but He rendered it.

J.G.H. Do you not think, if we are spiritually sensitive, we may see the Lord operating on similar lines in our own times?

A.J.E.W. We covet the help of the Spirit to the point where that can be. We have seen it, in a sense; Mr Darby took up persons on their own ground. Think of that book, that long writing, 'The Irrationalism of Infidelity', (Collected Writings, Vol 6), which as we are told was composed in night hours so that he should not give of his best in energy to the compiling of it. He gave of his best to that which was of greatest moment in the course of the truth itself, and used the

hours of lesser energy and capacity to present that which took up men on their own ground and confounded them absolutely on it. This is all to comfort us in what the Lord is able to do when the saints, and especially the young people, are beset on every hand with the enemy's subtle activities; this gospel seems specially to meet that.

J.A.P. I was noticing this morning in Revelation 5 that one said, "Do not weep" (v 5) and then he spoke in four ways of the Lord. He says "the lion which is of the tribe of Judah, the root of David, has overcome", (v 5). It is wonderful to think of that; He was a man and yet deity was there. Yet as a man He died for us. He overcame, and He is with us to help us through now. We need to be encouraged because our families, our local meetings, exercise us all. How are we going to get through? The Lord is prepared for that, is He not, if we only have faith for it?

A.J.E.W. That is it, and in that section the whole principle of sacrifice is touched in "a Lamb standing, as slain". He went even to death - and what a death - and this gospel presents peculiarly the way He went into death Himself. He had authority, as chapter 10 18 records, "I have authority to lay it down and I have authority to take it again", and He bore His own cross. These things all remind us of what love has taken on, carried through, and completed to the uttermost.

A.B.P. In the sense and in the presence of these flashes of deity glory, is it not touching that He should assure the believers, the disciples, that the place to which He will take them is being prepared by a Man? We hear of the things that God has prepared for those who love Him, but there seems to be a certain touching intimacy in that He Himself is going to prepare that place, as in manhood.

A.J.E.W. And what is the special mark of that place?

A.B.P. That He is there.

A.J.E.W. He is there. That is the point I was anxious that we bring out, that He is there. It is not exactly the sumptuousness of the environment, (the place will befit the glory of the One who prepared it, whatever it is), but the point for the heart that loves Christ is that

He will be there. And the point that quickens and lends depth to the expectancy of His coming is that, as He says, "I am coming again and shall receive you to my self". That word 'receive' is very affecting. It adds the touch of holy expectant affection in Jesus to this moment that is so soon to come.

A.B.P. Would it be right to add that His own reception up there as man would be in His mind, too, in relation to it? He was received in glory.

A.J.E.W. "Received up in glory", 1 Tim 3: 16. I well remember beloved Mr Taylor sen referring to the reception He had up there, the way that heaven received Him. And he went on, when he spoke of that, to speak of the Lord's supper. How shall we receive Him?

J.J. What is the difference between Christ receiving us and Christ presenting us to Himself?

A.J.E.W. The presenting us to Himself would perhaps involve the satisfaction of His own heart in completing fruitful labour in love. He presents it. He receives it. The presenting is the climax, the outcome of that service that has gone on all down this dispensation, the washing of water by the word. The Lord has faithfully maintained that, and then He presents to Himself the settled result, no longer within range of any hindering or contaminating thing. The receiving would be more related to the Father's thoughts and the way the Lord Jesus was carrying them through.

D.F. Does not John give us unique touches as to the Lord's manhood? Whilst the glory of His Person is ever before us, the reality of His manhood is also brought out uniquely in John's gospel. So that we read of Him being weary, and we read of Him weeping.

A.J.E.W. We were speaking of the way He spent His time. How long he spent over those He loved in Bethany, according to chapter 11; what time entered into that, and what use of time entered into it! He did not go at once, He waited until the moment was in His mind to move into the matter which He was setting afoot. All that is to keep us in the sense of the composure that fills the great centre of things up there. There is no uncertainty there. There is no

disturbance there, and as having that as the centre we may proceed and find help to go through without disturbance here. When I say 'here', I have the assembly especially in mind; there is a realm of composure where we can be in affectionate intelligent relation with the Father, the Son, and the Spirit, in the realisation to the root of our experience, that everything is in hand, in the hand of One who is going to carry everything through.

D.F. The first thing He speaks of is the place up there, as if that is assured. We can rest on that, that love will provide all that is needed on the way in the path of the testimony.

A.J.E.W. Chapter 17 therefore fills out what is before us here, because He is looking up there as to the final place. But then, as He speaks to the Father in chapter 17, He is looking down into the scene of things here, and in love making every provision for what transpires. What calculations of holy affection we get in this gospel!

C.F.D. That is really food for your soul. You think of the beginning of this in chapter 13, where this section begins. The Lord seems to be so complacent as to all that is before Him. It says "that he should depart out of this world to the Father, having loved His own", then "he came out from God and was going to God". You can see all that fills His holy mind. Immediately He is thinking of those that will remain and their part in testimony with Him, and their part in what is heavenly with Him. Then he proceeds along this line of glory in which, as you are suggesting, He is preparing persons to fill out that which is to be for the pleasure of God.

A.J.E.W. We should seize on that last point and follow it, because the Lord is indeed preparing persons for what befits God in His glory. He is doing it as being Himself at close quarters with them; the love service of feet washing would present that side, that He is not speaking to them from any measure of distance. He is speaking to them as in the simplest intimacy with them, just at close quarters, labouring with these men. Of course, there was one that did not respond at all, the son of perdition. There was such an one, and now how close the enemy's attack has come to the very centre of

things. Beloved Mr Taylor sen referred to Judas thus. How close he came to the very centre of everything that was proceeding! We realise in recent sorrows how that has, in a certain sense, taken place again. How close to the centre of things the enemy came!

J.J. And you would say it can happen again.

A.J.E.W. That is to keep us dependent.

J.T.M. John must have been very close to have noted Jesus lifting His eyes to heaven. He cherishes, I suppose in his memory, just what the Lord did.

A.J.E.W. It is very interesting to think of the aged apostle, as he must have been when he wrote this, going back to experiences which were his relatively young manhood. He was in the bosom of Jesus, if we understand things aright, as a young man. Though I will say it with reverence, the Lord was a young man, too. I just say that to quicken the interest and longings and intelligence of younger persons to realise the peculiar moment that we have come to, but the divine guarantees that attach to every moment, and this moment among them.

A.B.P. Just before they went out, just before Gethsemane's garden, just before the cross, with all that preceded it and followed it, the Lord covers that whole matter in one short expression, "And I come to thee". Does that not show how possible it is, if we are with God, to be completely superior to the terrible strain and pressure of things that may surround us?

A.J.E.W. That is a very fine point. Of course, there is another side, and that is that the course of things is to go on in responsible hands. So that Peter uses John's nearness to Jesus to establish the facts as to His betrayal. The situation immediately requires that the point of attack be localised in the company, and that there be with some, at least, intelligence as to what is happening.

S.McC. It is very affecting in that way that, despite the weakness that actually was seen through the chapters in the disciples, he credits them in this chapter with ability to receive things. "The words

which thou hast given me I have given them", "the glory which thou hast given me I have given them", and "that the love with which thou hast loved me may be in them and I in them".

A.J.E.W. It is a wonderful contemplation, because it is the Lord foreseeing the magnificence according to God of this time of the Spirit. He is really bringing out what a time it is in relation to the divine counsels. Can we not just fit affectionately and intelligently into this time of the Spirit, as that which the Lord, in His own speaking with the Father, has perfectly foreseen?

S.McC. The Lord thus contemplated an area in them (not just with them, but in them) where divine thoughts would be effective.

A.J.E.W. That involves the way the Spirit is spoken of as in them - with them and in them, John 14: 17. The touches we have had as to the Person of the Spirit are all endorsed by what we find in these chapters.

C.F.D. Is that borne out in chapter 20 when the Lord comes in? First of all He gives that glorious message referring to "my Father and your Father, and my God and your God", which He had looked forward to in chapter 17, But then, immediately after He comes in and speaks to them, the first thing that seems to be in His mind is the question of the impartation of the Spirit. It was not the coming of the Spirit as in Acts 2, but it was the inward side. You can see how the Lord's mind and affections were operating so that as soon as He comes in and assures their own hearts, saying "Peace" to them, He is immediately thinking about the matter of the Spirit.

A.J.E.W. The breathing in is a matter of such intimacy. It is as if the Lord is not, at that point, proposing to wait for Pentecost. He wants to give them by impartation from Himself, by way of pattern, the realisation of what the Spirit is, the same Spirit in the power of which He had moved.

J.G.H. He immediately goes on to what is administrative, "whosoever sins ye remit", and so on. Is there some indication for us that we really have no qualification to take up administrative matters unless it is in the power and in the spirit of the risen Christ?

A.J.E.W. That is a point for us to attend to, and I believe we need to carry that impression, so that administration, where administration is needed of that character, is feelingly carried on.

J.G.H. John puts the matter of remission first, as though the desire of the heart of Christ would be in that direction.

A.J.E.W. We see something of that, going right back to chapter 4, in the way the Lord dealt with that woman. He spent time on her, and He covered the whole situation: but from a certain viewpoint, namely that the Father seeks worshippers, and "they who worship him must worship him in spirit and truth" (v 24). That is, the Lord is looking right on to the kind of yield which His own heart seeks from the labours His love sustained; even the complexity of this woman's history in sin is not to stand in the way of that being reached.

J.G.H. Would all administration, of whatever sort, really be with a view to the enhancement of the service of God?

A.J.E.W. Indeed, and the glory of the God who is served in that service. The remarkable emphasis in the ministry of Mr Taylor set on the service of God in the assembly is to be taken to heart by us.

Is the positive, responsive note really sufficiently in our calculations and movements together? There is the prime time of the Lord's supper - and what an occasion it is, and how much it leads into! But is there not room for greater fruitful buoyancy of spirit amongst us in all our relations in the assembly, so that the spontaneity of doxology is more richly and fruitfully for God found amongst us? I often wonder whether even the prayer meetings might be marked more with the responsive note of thanksgiving and praise.

J.A.P. When the apostles addressed God it says they "lifted up their voice with one accord to God, and said, Lord, thou art the God who made the heaven and the earth and the sea, and all that is in them", Acts 4: 24. The note to that refers to 'Elohim, the One who is God'.

Does that support your thoughts about the prayer meeting? Perhaps we should reach these things more.

A.J.E.W. There was power there and "the place in which they were assembled shook", it says. We would love to have some such

experience as that. It would be a matter of spiritual knowledge and appreciation, but we should get some sense of power coming in. Mr Taylor spoke of Monday night as the "power house".

D.F. Did he not speak of the shake as a 'friendly shake'?

J.J. Could something be said about the various aspects of glory in chapter 17?

A.J.E.W. Well, we have "the glory which thou hast given me I have given them". The Lord touches certain things lightly. He introduces them, but He touches them lightly and does not enlarge on them. We need to know how to touch things lightly, to bring them into the structure of the truth but to see what the Spirit would give emphasis to at any particular time. So the Lord touches that matter, in a sense, lightly. It may be, in the magnificent wisdom of the divine ordering, that this side was to be brought out fully in Paul; that is, sonship in the saints, which is in view here. But the Lord introduces it among the glories of this section, speaking to the Father about it.

S.McC. It is very affecting and interesting that the Lord should speak of glory that is beyond our range, and glory that has come within our range. Perhaps we need to be helped to understand that. The glory of verse 5 is really beyond our range, although spoken of within our range; but then the glory of verse 22 is what we have part in. Then there is the glory that we do not have part in, but we behold (v 14).

A.J.E.W. Then we have in verse 1, "Glorify thy Son, that thy Son may glorify thee". Does not that refer to the whole course of this time of the Spirit? The Lord having gone to the Father and the Spirit having come affords a great setting for the Lord to glorify God in the course of what He is doing.

S.McC. I think that is right, and there is a pre-millennial touch here, so that things are condensed in this dispensation of the time of the Spirit.

A.J.E.W. Then we have "And now glorify me, thou Father, along with thyself, with the glory which I had along with thee before the

world was". The 'along with', referring as the note tells us to presence and place, is a lovely expression of the distinctiveness of the Persons before us. And yet they are in this glorious matter together.

E.T. I was thinking about John the apostle. The Lord says "If I will that He abide until I come, what is that to thee? " John 21: 22. Does that have a bearing on us? Are we to be representative of John's ministry?

A.J.E.W. It shows the perfect competence of the Lord to retain His hand upon the whole detail of the situation. It is a reference back again to chapter 3, at least in inference, the Father "has given all things to be in his hand". Peter is tending to intrude a little on that.

The Lord has His hand on matters all the time. If I may use the word, He is organising the whole dispensation personally. He is not delegating things to any in that sense, although the Spirit has much in His hand, too. The Lord comes in as the great operator from God's side, with full rights and, I need not say, with absolute intelligence as to the whole carrying forward of every thing. I love the thought that the detail of the working of everything is in the hand of the Son.

A.B.P. Is there possibly a suggestion of the "I am" in that? We are controlled by time to a great extent, but He is not. "Before Abraham was, I am", John 8: 58. So that physically He could have preserved John through to the end of the dispensation, until He comes. As the I AM, He could have done that.

A.J.E.W. Indeed and that title affects us too, because it touches what is immediate and present always.

D.F. Does it make us think of reserves the Lord may have? John is a sort of reserve, and there are persons in his gospel that he introduces as a kind of reserve. We would not otherwise have known of Nicodemus, perhaps, but he is brought in in John.

A.J.E.W. That is so. Then we have this wonderful reference to the men: "the men whom thou gavest me out of the world. They were thine, and thou gavest them me, and they have kept thy word". The

Lord is delighted in having such, indeed He refers to them in verse 13, "These things I speak in the world, that they may have joy fulfilled in them". What a wonderful reference - "my joy fulfilled in them". I suppose it is the joy of being in the flow of the Father's counsels going through to their glorious fruition. That should be our joy, to know something of the Lord's feelings as He carries things through to their completion.

J.J. Is there any link between "That they may behold my glory" and Colossians 2: 9, "in him dwells all the fulness of the Godhead bodily"? The footnote says 'The fulness or completeness of the Godhead is in Christ, as towards us; and we, as towards God, are complete in Him'.

S.McC. Mr Taylor sen referred to that verse in Colossians as involving what is mediatorial.

A.J.E.W. It is important to see that this glory in verse 24 is expressed in the person of Christ. There is a bringing out of the glory of that Person in His own rights and distinctive place.

S.McC. He said it in the presence of the disciples, and while they could not comprehend it, they could be affected by it, and we should be affected by it.

A.J.E.W. Quite so. That is perhaps a note to conclude on, because this chapter indicates the remarkable way in which the Lord proceeds with this great work of formation in the saints. It is what He imparts to us, what He carries forward in us by the Spirit in the immediateness of His own presence and activity. We have it again at the end, that "He shewed to them his hands and his side", John 20: 20. He says so little, but He shows them so much as if the development of holy affections and intelligence in view of our eternal part and service is really something the Lord carries on in the personal intimacy of His own nearness and activity.

TORONTO

8 April 1972

JESUS

A.J.E.Welch

Matthew 1: 19; Mark 13: 33 - 37; Luke 24: 50-53; John 20: 16-17

I am impressed with these four gospel records and how they bear upon us, relating as they do to Jesus in the days of His flesh, and engaging us constantly with Him. This was referred to today - the four writers and their writings about Jesus. All were attracted to Jesus as He was here in the days of His flesh, as one in whom glory, whatever the facet of glory might be, was seen at every point. What records of men could compare with these four gospel writings, referring to the same Person and bringing into focus the glories that were His in particular connections, to afford us rich instruction? I say rich instruction because the gospels are superlative in what they present. The assembly is rightly a realm of appreciation of superlative things, not just of the dead objects of the creation, but of superlative things in a glorious Man, and superlative things in what He effected for men and in men. Let us lift our gaze, dear brethren, to the levels of engagement in revealed truth which properly belong to us in the assembly! Let us see the divine ideals! The title Son, as we have often said, is itself to present to us the divine ideal. All is there in Jesus. But I am thinking of the divine ideals of action, and conduct, and labour, and suffering which we see in Jesus. Can we reach into these things, dear brethren, not just as regarding them (as any true heart must) worshipfully, but as being fully receptive of all that God would secure in us and among us from every presentation of Jesus?

Occupation with Christ - restful, sustained occupation with His Person - is something of which I am assured He would give us to know much more. Yea, I would bring this round to our own side of the matter to say that we, on our part, need to set our selves so in relation to Christ that opportunity is given for Him to affect us in what is brought out in Himself. That would involve Himself as He is, and its relation to Himself as He was in that fragrant, fruitful pathway full

of details of glory, full of the details of moral excellence in manhood. The detail which expresses perfection in man, in every relationship in which man stands, is to govern us in every relationship in which we stand. Formation in the mind of God therefore becomes not just a subject of inquiry or conversation, but something which is distinctively brought out in every one of us, and in local assemblies, where all the variety which these gospel records embody is to find its result in the persons who are there. What variety there is in these gospels, variety of presentation, yet absolute consistency of presentation, no one incident being at variance with another, and no one gospel writer being at variance with another. All present, from their own different viewpoints and by the same Spirit, the same Person, and yet in the endless variety in glory, the endless variety in moral excellence in expression that we have in Jesus. What a study for hearts that love Him, hearts that will love Him more as the study itself proceeds! "Thou art worthy" (Rev 5: 9) is the exclamation that we read this morning in regard to the Lamb standing, as slain. Let us see that side of worthiness in the Person of Christ, brought out in all the moral qualities, gloriously balanced, and shining out in that Person as He was down here.

So in Matthew, the Spirit comments upon a "righteous man", not referring to Jesus but to Joseph. It says in a very interesting way, "Joseph, her husband, being a righteous man". Righteousness in Joseph is leading to a certain course of action, which the situation requires to safeguard what God is doing with His own ends in mind.

The point I have in mind, and it is a very simple and basic point, is not just the subject of righteousness but the need of a *man* who is righteous and whose course in these chapters only serves to verify that he is righteous; he is a man who feels things but is righteous in feeling them. What a basis that is for God to go forward! It protects the bringing in of that which is most glorious, in kingship, in Christ.

The contrast in Luke is something for us to study, where the point is not so much a righteous man as spiritual womanhood, delightful in its utterances and in the way it comports itself; the feature of hiding is there, priestly concern as to what is taking place,

things not being disclosed to the common gaze but held in hands and in hearts that know how to hold precious things. Here, it is a righteous man and attention is called to the absolute legitimacy of all that God is doing; it is absolutely right at every point, and it can be proved that it is right. That is the point I would like to make. Being of God, it must be just and righteous. God is doing things, and whatever attack may come, the proof can be adduced that what is happening is right. We can well understand that it is in this same gospel, which we often speak of as to the assembly gospel, where the Lord addresses Himself in a way so comforting to two or three, visualizing two or three, as He says, "gathered together unto my name", Matt 18: 20. He is carrying forward there what is right. It is right in God's sight that that situation should be contemplated. It is right in God's sight that that situation should be divinely supported. What a comfort that is, dear brethren, in our twos and threes! What God is doing is right. It is not brought forward in the words of the Lord by presentation of a particular necessity. He is setting it out from His own side as something which, from His side, is absolutely right, that two or three should be gathered together unto His name, and He says "there am I in the midst of them". The Lord takes up kingdom teaching in chapters 5, 6 and 7. He goes forward to prophetic teaching, much of it unique to this gospel, in chapters 24 and 25. But the teaching is right at every point, whatever men may say. In 2 Timothy 2: 22 we are exhorted to pursue *righteousness*, faith, love, peace. These thoughts have their own voice to us, and I would just ask myself and my brethren here whether the Lord has this element by which He can protect His greatest thoughts in the places from which we come - "a righteous man". It is a wonderful thing to be able to speak now of a man who is *right*. He has received the glad tidings and submitted to the Lord. He is not a righteous man unless he has done that. He has received the Spirit as an obedient believer. He is moving in the Spirit's power and support as a righteous man. Joseph, of course, was not in the time of the Spirit in this chapter, but we are and the point is now that we walk in righteousness. This is the great subject of chapter 8 of Romans. You dear young people, read that chapter 8 of Romans,

and on the way to it read the seven chapters that precede it. Read them all, and re-read them all, and find what it is to walk in righteousness in the power of the Spirit - it is the great basis for your deliverance, the great basis above all for God to reach His end in each of us severally. Then we can assemble, as persons who prove themselves. "Let a man prove himself, and thus eat of the bread, and drink of the cup", 1 Cor 11: 28. Do we find ourselves, in that proving process, to be righteous men? What a wonderful thing it is just to lay everything bare in the presence of God in that proving process and find, thank God, that through the efficacy of the work of Christ, I can take my place before God as a righteous man! It is the great subject of Matthew's gospel, that God has a basis in righteousness for everything He does.

In Mark, the servant's gospel, it is a question of the work we have to do. Are we ready, dear brethren, to work? This point has come back to me several times in the course of the last two or three weeks. Are we ready to work, ready to labour, ready for toil? Are we ready to lay down our lives for the brethren? All these thoughts are in Scripture; is it our intent to express them? Time is passing; the end is near, and the Lord is very soon coming. If you had, and knew you had, another week to spend, how would you spend it? It may be that you and I have not another week to spend, but if so be that in the divine ordering you have another week to spend, how would you spend it in the interests of Christ? Suppose it were the last week left to you, how would you spend it? Toil? Labour? The Lord says in another setting, "My yoke is easy and my burden is light", Matt 11: 30. That would mean that all that is engaged in is in the sweetness of communing with Himself. So that although the burdens in some sense physically be real, the burdensomeness of spirit is lifted by your relations with Christ. You see that in these men that have gone before us, how they laboured; there was restful contentedness in their labour. Need we be frenziedly active, dear brethren? No, but dependently active. The word here is of one who gave "to his bondmen the authority, and to each one his work". I bring this passage into view just to highlight what is in this gospel in

devoted labour and service. The word 'straightway' is characteristic of this gospel of Mark; this involves that we are not delaying things but doing things - doing things because the course of this wonderful dispensation requires persons who bring out into action what is divinely determined upon. God is able to work without us. Often He does, but He loves to use those whom He has under His hand in rightly regulated service. It has been a very deep challenge in recent time that we are not just taking on service in any loose or promiscuous way, but that the Lord has His hand in what we do. The challenge of that is very real, but I believe the Lord would raise it. Wherever I go, near or far; whenever I go, near or far; whatever I may seek to do, near or far, *is the Lord in it?* "To each one his work". Each one of what? - bondmen, committed persons, not persons who are proceeding merely in a certain outward course, but committed persons.

Oh for committal, full committal, sustained committal, steady committal in local assemblies to the interests of Christ so glorious, involving readiness to do things! Dear brethren, how much there is to be done! What feeding is to be done; what building up is to be done; what shepherding is to be done. What a need there is of shepherds and teachers in view of the saints being built up, rightly held, rightly kept and rightly nourished, to find their full part in these interests so precious to Christ and to us. Still it is under the Lord. It is under an absent Lord according to the way the Lord presents the matter. "It is' as a man gone out of the country, having left his house and given to his bondmen the authority, and to each one his work, and commanded the doorkeeper that he should watch". That is to say, the Lord has left certain things in our hands. This comes back to what we spoke of as the responsible side of things, and the deposit entrusted (2 Tim 1: 14). So our part here in the assembly is a matter of a responsible place under the Lord, and how we fill out that place in an active, positive sense. I am not to be a passive person, far less according to what is said later here, a sleeping person. Will the Lord coming suddenly find us sleeping? Are we alert, expectant, watching for Him? Is that watchfulness extending

into the care of His interests? Are we alert to the character of the moment, dear brethren, and the subtleties of the enemy's thrusts? Is there watchfulness amongst us? Am I a watchful person, or shall I through lack of that sensitiveness that the Spirit would promote be caught unawares by the character of whatever wicked thrust the enemy might bring next? The Lord in this sense is absent. Yet what resource there is as under Him to pursue what is needful to be done in His absence, in the expectancy of His coming. Therefore let us look in this gospel for the way that Jesus served, the manner of His service, the way He depended as here in manhood upon divine supply and resource. It is a most interesting study through this gospel, helping us to come into service in the widest sense. I am not speaking of giving addresses, nor necessarily of preaching the word, but of being a person in divinely regulated activity in the course of interests here which are so precious in the sight of heaven. None of us is to be outside of that, and each of us is to be in it in full relation to Christ who assigns to each one his work. I have to ask myself first, 'Am I a bondman? Do I expect to mix my will with His? Do I expect to get advantage to myself while seeking advantage to Him? Is there any mixture of my motives? In one sense there is great richness in moving among the brethren, but am I thinking of myself or am I thinking of Him? Is all in simple dependence, and acceptance of what the Lord would assign to us in view of His interests being prospered? Oh for that prosperity! It is to be seen in our localities that the work of the Lord is proceeding, that the brethren are taking on from the Lord Jesus what relates to Himself - the features in all their variety which mark Him, and marked Him in the time of His flesh.

The ending of Luke follows a remarkable sequence of events in which the Lord was making things clear. This priestly writer would cause things to be clear and certain to us. It says at the beginning, "That thou mightest know the certainty of those things in which thou hast been instructed," Luke 1: 4. That word "instructed" is to be noted, for how much instruction there is available to us! What instruction there is in the assembly! What instruction there is in

what the Lord has entrusted to us, in the Scriptures and then in that which the Spirit has given based upon the Scriptures. Are we ready to learn? I remember one time when beloved Mr Taylor sen came to England and, at almost every point he went, he spoke of our being slow learners. Have we learned the lesson? Has our pace of learning become quickened, dear brethren? Teaching is such a vital thing, that we take it on. Divine teaching is that which God has set out often in an extended way for us, so that we may be brought into the gain of instruction that governs us in what we do and what we say. Teaching is a remarkable thing because it equips persons to do things in a way which marks off the quality of the teaching they receive. Are we ready to be taught? Do we think we know what to say and what to do? Or are we sensitive to the skill of the teacher, under the Spirit's touch, to impart instruction to us so that what is imparted becomes characteristic of us? Luke comments in a most affecting way on the manner in detail in which the Lord Jesus did everything; Luke tells us of the way He stood up in the synagogue and unrolled the book, and rolled it up again and gave it back to the attendant (chapter 4). That is the mark of the anointing, that every detail fits the case, fits the glory of what God is proceeding with. What teaching there has been, and what teaching, thank God, there is still to instruct us - to instruct us about what? - Jesus.

Repentance, a very special subject in Luke's gospel, is the way in which we come into things, become established in things, and enter into the richest of privilege. Repenting sinners are persons who characteristically are repentant. The Lord brings out the force of repentance so distinctly in this gospel. Some of us who are very responsible persons, especially, but all of us, have things to repent of. The repentance in Luke's gospel is resultful - repentance. It has a divine answer in blessing. We tend to be marked by shallowness, by what is superficial; but, as we get to the bottom of things in repentance, what happens? God delights to come in and to bless us. What a God He is, as He brings in the blessing! In the chapter read, things for some are a little cloudy. Why did those two go off to Emmaus? No reason is given. Why do we do things? Why do we

do things, practically, in our homes and families and business affairs? Maybe there is something which just reflects our own will or our own scheming. We do not know what these two that went to Emmaus had in mind in going there, but they were going away from the centre at which God was bringing out His best. The Lord in grace brings them back. How does He bring them back? Does He take them by the hand and lead them back? No, He disappears from them, having brought certain matters to bear upon them relating to Himself, and they find that there is only one thing that they can do, and that is to go back and find those from whom their departure had parted them. They find that in that company the Lord comes in in the most clarifying and assuring way, imparting to them some realisation of what He has in view, that in which He would set them forward into His own interests with their outlook clear. So He leads them, as it says, "as far as Bethany". It is the glory of the Lord's personal leadership into what we may speak of as the most glorious dispensation of all. It is to bring out the way that divine operations, divine movement, are marked by this feature of what is superlative. He led them as far as Bethany. He could not lead them farther, for He was to be carried up into heaven. It was not the time yet for the disciples to go. It is very nearly time, dear brethren, for us who love Him to go. How close it is! But at this time, of which Luke writes, He leads them as far as Bethany. That is a divinely selected place, a secluded place, a place which was a retreat that the Lord Jesus Himself had known and enjoyed in His own experience and links with the Father. He is intimating that that is to go on. However long the testimony remains here, that is to go on. We are to know something about Bethany. It says, "Having lifted up his hands, he blessed them". I pause on these touches of blessing, dear brethren, because Christianity is a system of blessing, a system of supply, a system of support, a system of holy sympathy in the infirmities of the time and the pressures that come upon us. He blessed them. I covet that we may go from this day with a sense of blessing from God something coming in from His side under the hand of Christ. It is not only that we have spoken of things together, but that we have a sense of something flowing in in divine supply for the developing of

what is after Christ in the saints. For blessing means that. It is not merely circumstantial benefits, but blessing from God known in the soul to be what it is, tasted in our experience as being from God in the directness of His own giving. "And it came to pass as he was blessing them, he was separated from them and was carried up into heaven". It does not say how He was carried, but He was carried up. He belongs there; as of necessity He must go there. That is the place from which He conducts, and that through the Spirit, the glorious operations which I trust in His grace we are having part in even as we are together in this city today. "And they, having done him homage, returned to Jerusalem with great joy, and were continually in the temple praising and blessing God". Notice that word "continually". This is no spasmodic matter, no sudden experience to come to an end as suddenly as it began. They were continually in the temple. They are learning now a new order of things. Soon they would move in another sense when the Spirit came, but for this provisional moment, not for long, they are found in the temple continually praising and blessing God. What is our continual occupation, in that sense? Are we buoyant persons, responsive persons, persons composing doxologies, however simply? I come back to that. How much there is to praise God for, not in human sentiment but in the reality of receiving blessing, knowing the One whose blessing it is and delighting to answer to Him in praise. Let the spirit of praise mark us more, dear brethren, as we taste the fulness of divine supply, that which comes down to us in such wealth from God.

Now in John, it is the height of things. It is again teaching that is in view. Mary says to Him in Hebrew, "Rabboni, which means Teacher". We know from what preceded (I do not say it to reflect upon this beloved soul) that Mary had a good deal to learn. How many of us have almost everything to learn about the divine glory and what enters according to that glory, into the time in which we now are! Do we go to Christ to learn? "Rabboni", she says. Whatever may yet be unclear to her, she knows from whom she will get the clarity. She knows from whom the word, the manifestation,

will come that will fill the gap in her knowledge. Are we ready, dear brethren, for spiritual enlargement? How much there is we need to learn! Are we ready to learn? Do we know how to learn, to go to Jesus, to find what a teacher He is? The gospels present some sitting at His feet, listening to His word - but it is not His word alone, it is Himself. It is the sweetness of being in His presence, the sweetness of apprehending Him as He is, in His own Person. What do we know of that? The Spirit delights to enlarge that to us. There is the distinctiveness of what, if He will, is before ourselves very soon, in what He says, "I am coming to you", John 14: 18. Is there a moment, an experience like that? How are we affected by it? How much can we retain of impression, powerful impression as the Lord comes in? Are we really developing spiritually, developing in capacity to take on heavenly thoughts and heavenly things from the One who above all is able to set them forth to us? Do we sufficiently know the One who above all is able to sustain heavenly things in us, that is the Spirit? It is not merely the knowledge of things in words and teaching - that has had its place in what we have been saying - but the reality of wealthy, productive, spiritual impression coming right into us. It is to grip our hearts as to Christ, to affect our inwards as to the glory of this Person, risen from the dead, and saying "I ascend to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God". It is the highest point that is in view here. The Lord speaks of ascending - "I ascend". He goes back in His own personal right to the Father, securing all His thoughts; He goes back in view of this wonderful time of the Spirit yielding what it is divinely designed to yield in the choicest fruits in persons, lovers of Jesus, for the delight of His own heart. Are we yet intelligent in all that this dispensation means? Are these things being brought out amongst us? Is there a tangible expression of that which the gospels present as to Jesus, of that which delights the heart of God and enters into His service responsively to Himself?

May he enlarge us in these things, for His Name's sake.

TORONTO

8 April 1972

POEM

God is righteous: God is holy,
We were far from Him indeed.
Jesus came in grace and lowly,
Touched us in our sin and need.

God proclaims His love in Jesus,
Gave Him that we might be His,
Now in His perfection sees us
He alone our covering is.

From the place of light and glory,
To this scene of darkness came
Jesus - all the wondrous story
To lost sinners to proclaim.

Here He trod this earth in meekness
Bore the sorrow, faced the foe,
Felt our every pain and weakness,
On to death at length to go.

Passing through in firm devotion
To His Father's will above;
Meeting only scorn and hatred
From the ones He told of love

Nothing changed Him from His purpose,
Though the cross awaited Him:
There He died for sin and suffered
For the foes who hated Him.

Death and sin were vanquished by Him -
Jesus sits at God's right hand -
Soon shall every eye descry Him,
Round Him all His ransomed stand.

Keep us - Saviour - we await Thee -
Faithful here, till Thou dost come,
Following the path Thou'st trodden,

Till we reach the Father's home.

H.F.Harding (with Christ)

THE CHILDREN'S SALVATION

Noah's grandchildren would have been the first young people to see the rainbow and know that it was a sign of mercy in judgment. God said that He, too, would look upon it and remember His promise made to every creature. He does not show mercy grudgingly, but in a way that is full of varied beauties, blended like the colours of the rainbow.

Later, God said that he would also look upon the blood put, in faith, over the doors by His people in Egypt. This represented the precious blood of Christ and the most anxious children could know that there was perfect safety from judgment. But safety is not full salvation. They would have to go out of sight between high walls of water to be out of reach of Pharaoh and then come into the land of God's purpose for them.

In crossing the Red Sea, Moses was urgent that all the children should go with their parents. Similarly, in Christianity, believing parents have baptised their children, in faith, to the name of the Lord Jesus in view of salvation by God's work in them.

Also, in baptism, the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit has been used in the same sentence as each child's name. This means that everything that God has made known about Himself is for us to enjoy as we grow up, and it can never be taken from us.

One who knows God will worship Him. Josiah, who became king when eight years old, learned to do what was pleasing to Jehovah. When only twice that age he was able to show others what true worship was. Will you, with your greater privileges, let yourself be put to shame by this young person?

J.C.Evershed

London

