

A
WORD
IN ITS
SEASON

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"TASTE AND SEE"

H.C.MacGregor (*with Christ 25 June 1975*)

Psalm 34: 8; 1 Peter 2: 1-3

One has thought recently of the matter of taste. We are exhorted to "Taste and see that Jehovah is good: blessed is the man that trusteth in him!" With the help of the Lord and of the Spirit I trust that we may have a greater taste for Him. May our taste be for Him. He is good, and "blessed is the man that trusteth in him". There are many things around us for which we may be inclined to develop a taste other than to taste that the Lord is good. We need to keep Him continually before us. We should test things out as to whether our endeavours relate to school, education, business; all these things may be what our tastes prefer. We may be putting second to these things the taste that Jehovah is good.

Think of the Lord Jesus doing good continually! That is what He did when He was here in this scene. Peter said that He "went through all quarters doing good", Acts 10: 38. He came to do good; and not only did He do good but He is good: "Taste and see that Jehovah is good". Think of the reference in Luke 10 to the man who went down from Jerusalem to Jericho. There was one who came to him and succoured him; it speaks of Christ; that was an occasion of His doing good. There were those who looked on the man but passed by on the other side. If we have a taste for the One who did good we also will do what is good. It is a matter of knowing this blessed Person, having love for our Lord Jesus Christ. How precious He is to us! It is no doubt the desire of the brethren that we have increased taste for Him. We sometimes sing 'Lord in Thee we taste the sweetness' (hymn 50). Think of the preciousness of the Saviour, our Lord Jesus Christ.

Peter refers to newborn babes. We are to be as newborn babes and, as he says, to "desire earnestly the pure mental milk of the word, that by it ye may grow up to salvation, if indeed ye have tasted that the Lord is good". Here again it is a matter of taste.

Peter refers to it, and David refers to it, and we are to refer to it and say that we have tasted that the Lord is good. I believe every one of us here has tasted that the Lord is good, but we need to be stirred up, beloved brethren, as to this. Think of how precious a Person He is! Yet He was "cast away indeed as worthless by men, but with God chosen, precious". We are to come into this as "living stones"; we are being "built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God" by Jesus Christ" Then there is the prophetic word, "Behold, I lay in Zion a corner stone, elect, precious; and he that believes on him shall not be put to shame. To you therefore who believe is the preciousness; but to the disobedient, the stone which the builders cast away as worthless, this is become the head of the corner". He has the first place, He is the Head of the corner; He beautifies the entire building; He beautifies the assembly. Think of that precious, holy Person, our Lord Jesus Christ!

It was just these few simple thoughts, beloved brethren, that came to mind, that we distinguish in our course here as to our tastes, and that we "taste and see that Jehovah is good". May it be so for His name's sake.

BROOKLYN NY

10 June 1975

AT A BURIAL

(i) "RACHEL DIED BY ME"

B.Taylor

Genesis 48: 7

This verse comes in a section which is rich in thoughts of the land and the inheritance, and of personalities who are in relation to the testimony and the truth, and in the midst of this, as it were, is inserted the words of Jacob, "and as for me, when I came from Padan, Rachel died by me". Up to that point she had been with him in the testimony and in the truth, a support and a help, but at this point she died by him. Our brother physically and literally came over and sat down by his wife and died by her. That is what brought this

scripture to mind. Of course the Lord took him, he fell asleep through Jesus, and that involves the Lord's own work, and the completion of the work, in the testimony, of our brother here. Our brother was one who was by us, he was by the truth. It speaks in Zechariah of those who stand by (see chap 3: 7). Our brother was one such; he stood by the truth, he stood by the principles - he was a warrior for the principles - what a support he was in that way! The Lord would give us a witness in taking one and another, as He is doing, of those that are by us, and we would get the gain of what He is saying in doing so. What a witness our brother was in relation to standing for things, and what a balance he was, what a support he was! He never doubted and never flinched in relation to his stand in the testimony, and thus supported others. When the Lord takes one through whom He has spoken to us it gives the matter added force.

All that a brother or sister may have said to us by way of encouragement, comfort, and perhaps rebuke, is given an added touch once he is with the Lord. There is, of course, a certain voice in sickness; this chapter begins with one telling Joseph, "Behold, thy father is sick". There is a voice in that, but there is a further touch in death when Jacob speaks about dying.

We want to get the gain of all this. We want to be careful in using the word and saying that he died by us, because the scripture is, "Rachel died by me". We have changed some of Mr Darby's hymns from 'me' to 'us' so that we can sing them collectively, but how wonderful it is to the soul to say 'I' as Mr Darby did in his hymns: 'This world is a wilderness wide; I have nothing to seek nor to choose'; 'Blest Lord, Thou spakest! 'twas Thy voice that led my heart to Thee'. So the scripture here is best left as it is: "Rachel died by me". Can you say that? Our sister can say that. I can say that. We realise that some of us were closer to him than others, but I am sure that there is no one here today that would want to say 'he did not die by me', because you are here today and, if you have never had this experience before, the Lord would give you an opportunity to have some sense now that one who represented the assembly, dying by you, is a witness of something to you. Would you elect yourself out

of it? Jacob was speaking to his family, speaking for the benefit of those who were listening; and this today is the word of God to us.

Jacob's sons at one time did not care for his feelings but they were very feeling in this verse.

We all want to get the gain of this. Jacob said that Rachel died by him on the way. How important that would make the rest of the way, the certain way that remains to be trodden before we, too, are taken to be with Christ. May those of us who are of the way be encouraged in relation to these things.

(ii) "LET NOT YOUR HEART BE TROUBLED"

A.B.Parker

John 14: 1-3, 27

This scripture came before us in our city reading this week, not by mere coincidence I am sure. At such a time as this we are particularly concerned that we hear the Lord's voice. What better could we do than to read a passage in which the Lord Himself is speaking personally to His disciples in the very presence of death.

The Lord knew it would be only a matter of hours before He was apprehended and taken to be judged and crucified. So He is speaking here in the proximity of death, to those who were to remain.

He Himself was about to leave them and in all the effectiveness and the feeling of His last words to His own He tells them that He was going to prepare a place for them and that He was coming again to receive them to Himself, that where He is they may be also. What words of comfort these were - and are!

Reference was made in prayer to the unique family at Bethany. They had the experience of the Lord speaking to them personally.

Martha had said "I know that he will rise again in the resurrection in the last day", John 11: 24. The Lord Jesus answered "I am the resurrection and the life". On that occasion the Lord brought what was yet future into the present in the expression of that wonderful word, "I am the resurrection and the life". They had Him, and

because they had Him the power of death was broken for them. He raised Lazarus from the dead. We look forward to the resurrection but in the meantime we have the One who is the resurrection and the life. This was said to that unique family, two sisters and one brother. There is a striking similarity, in that sense, to the household that is now bereaved. We currently would cherish the thought that the Lord will speak to us in the presence of existing conditions. If we should feel that we must await the future, and what will actually transpire, the Lord would say to us "I am the resurrection and the life". It is what the Lord Himself can be to us, currently, in the greatness of His Person, and the power that is His, for He is God over all, blessed for ever.

In John 14, in the presence of death and the need for continuity in adverse and testing circumstances, the Lord Jesus tells His disciples what is going to take place in the future, to establish them in a living hope: "I am coming again and shall receive you to myself, that where I am ye also may be". The Lord has received our brother, but not in the sense that He is speaking of here. Here He is speaking of His coming again to receive us collectively. It is to fill our hearts anticipatively; His very words show that the Lord is in His spirit anticipating that day. He does not say, Where I will be but, Where I *am*. He would help us, therefore, to embrace that which is yet future, so that in the power of the blessed Spirit of God we can enjoy the thing currently while we await the literality of it. How great, therefore, is the service of the Spirit! He would make good to us now the comfort of those words "I am coming again and shall receive you to myself, that where I am ye also may be".

Then the Lord Jesus says "I leave peace with you". What peace He enjoyed when here in the presence of the most excruciating conditions! In the presence of the storm that seemed to overwhelm the ship He could sleep. But He is no longer in the sphere of adversity, He no longer needs that peace, but the very peace which He enjoyed is the peace which He leaves with His own. Oh, what a heritage! What a gift, that we should have the peace that He knew in the presence of adversity! He says, I do not give as the

world; He gives His peace in the uniqueness of One who is able to *keep* us in peace in the most distressing circumstances, in the anticipation and the hope of His soon coming to receive us to Himself. In the meantime "Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it fear".

(iii) AN APPEAL FOR COMMITMENT

E.E.Hoyte

Psalm 102: 23-27

I am encouraged to say a word, dear brethren, specially for the help of the young brethren with us. Our brother is now absent from the body - his absence is felt already - but he is present with the Lord. He has finished his course; it is one thing to begin but another thing to finish. He has finished the race, as Paul says (see 2 Tim 4: 7); the race involved all that had to be encountered in his life here in the history of the testimony. Now I just wish to convey to our young brethren that there is a vacancy in this locality. Our brother has served faithfully, as we have been saying, and now there is a vacancy. The appeal is therefore to the younger ones who are left to carry on the testimony. My word to the dear young men is to see that you fill in some degree the vacancy that is in this locality. If you do not belong to this locality, see that you take the matter on in supplying what is needed in the testimony and be committed to it; "Occupy thyself with these things", 1 Tim 4: 15.

I want to say a word as to the time that we each one have. Our brother has filled out his days; but I want to call attention to Christ, the One who is most worthy of being spoken of on this occasion.

The Lord Jesus is speaking in this psalm typically. His days were shortened; His days here were about half the span of our dear brother. The Lord's time here was thirty-three and one half years.

Most of us are beyond that. But the extent of what the Lord accomplished in the three and a half years of His service is what I want to call attention to. I knew a brother who used to say, How much there is to be done and so few available to do it! So I want to solicit our young brethren in the presence of our departed brother that you take your share in suffering, as Paul says, whatever that might involve. As I was saying of the Lord Jesus, His span was thirty three and a half years, and how He served! He said "My food is that I should do the will of him that has sent me, and that I should finish

his work", John 4: 34. How committed He was, unswervingly, to the will of God! Then again John tells us that He said "must work the works of him that has sent me while it is day. The night is coming, when no one can work", chap 9: 4. Our brother has ceased his work. The time will come for that for most of us if the Lord tarries. That is what the Lord says: "I must work... while it is day". That is, the Lord is not missing any opportunity; He says, I must do it, I must work today, the night comes when no one can work: Let the young men take that to heart. If you have not yet begun to work, begin today; the time is passing. What are the dear young brethren doing? In this passage which I read the Lord's days were shortened and He is speaking about it to the Father. Our brother was speaking about the Lord speaking to His own, but here He is speaking of His Father, typically: "He weakened my strength in the way, he shortened my days". The Lord's days were shortened; they did not reach the span that Moses spoke of, threescore years and ten; they were half that, but how condensed! John says at the end of his gospel that if all the things that Jesus did were recorded not even the world itself would be able to contain the books. Think of the majesty of the Man who was here for God, doing His will and who filled out that service in three and a half years. He is saying here, "My God, take me not away in the midst of my days". He felt what it was to be taken away from the work. He did not say, It is time enough, I give up, but "take me not away in the midst of my days!" He had pleasure in doing God's will to the finish. God intervenes, there is a hiatus you will notice, and then He says "Thy years are from generation to generation. Of old hast thou founded the earth, and the heavens are the work of thy hands: They shall perish, but thou continuest... But thou art the Same, and thy years shall have no end". Two divine Persons are speaking, One in manhood and One in deity. God says to Him, Thy days are short but Thou art the Same and Thy years have no end. That is the answer of the Father: "Thou art the Same". So we think of Him now not only in His manhood but in His deity, how great He is! He speaks in manhood but the Father says, Thou are greater than that, Thy years have no end. Wonderful dear brethren! The Lord said, too, "I have completed the work which thou

gavest me that I should do it", John 17: 4. We want to finish our course with joy. May the Lord help us to do this.

Burial of H.C.MacGregor

BROOKLYN NY

28 June 1975

"THE LAMB'S WIFE"

R.Taylor

**Philippians 2: 5-11; 2 Corinthians 4: 16-18; John 9: 35-38;
Revelation 21: 9-14**

We have been speaking already of the assembly as the counterpart of the heavenly Man. I would seek grace that we may get some help at this time as to how she is also the counterpart of the Lamb.

The assembly has its origin in the death of Jesus. You will remember that in Solomon's temple there were certain vessels that were cast in the clay-ground of the Jordan (see 1 Kings 7: 46). You see there divine workmanship in its perfection in these vessels but their origin was in those banks of the Jordan. That is where we have begun dear brethren, that is where things have been worked out. I think that the way the assembly has gone through in suffering will be a feature of admiration of every family; the bride, the Lamb's wife, conveys some impression about that. Israel broke down but the assembly has not broken down, it has gone through in suffering. That is the way by which you can always get through things. So that man in John 9 was cast out, he had not a hope; where was he going? He found a way through because he suffered. That is the way Jesus has gone. Paul says to these Philippians "let this mind be in you", let it be in you. That would refer to our attitude, dear brethren. How are these heavenly features going to be preserved and enjoyed? By suffering outwardly. "Let this mind be in you": not a mind to stand for its rights, not a mind to prove its point, not a mind to be justified today, but a mind to go down. The One who supremely had a right to be obeyed became obedient; the One who had a right to be setting forth His own qualities came into a condition where He expressed this mind: "I am in the midst of you as the one that serves", Luke 22: 27. What an answer to the ambition and aspirations of those around Him! He took water and washed their feet; that was the bent of His mind. So Paul says let that be in you.

He is writing here to a company that was very far on in the light of the assembly, we may say, a very happy company at Philippi. He

says, "If then there be any comfort in Christ, if any consolation of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit", and "Let this mind be in you".

The glory of that heavenly Man and of that heavenly vessel that we have spoken of will be maintained as this mind, this attitude, is in us. Paul says, Let it be in you. The Lord has set it on; the Spirit is here to further it. As Peter says, He has left you a model "that ye should follow in his steps", 1 Pet 2: 21. Think of what Peter says about the Lord: "who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth; who, when reviled, reviled not again; when suffering, threatened not; but gave himself over into the hands of him who judges righteously" (vv 22, 23). That was Peter's impression as he looked back on the pathway of Jesus: "when suffering, threatened not". Beloved, that is how the truth of the assembly is going to be worked out, that is how the joy of the assembly is going to be preserved in our localities, that there are persons who have this attitude mind that would rather suffer than lose the enjoyment of divine things. So "let this mind be in you". The inference is that it is there in measure, but let it be displayed. There may be local exercises and we hardly know how they can be resolved: "Let this mind be in you", let this come to the front. O, you say, it is this or that principle that should come to the front. No, beloved, this is the principle that comes to the front in local difficulties: "Let this mind be in you". I think Mr Taylor sen said that if both go down the matter is settled. Even if one goes down the matter is almost settled; for you it is settled if you are prepared to go this way. It is how Jesus settled the great issue that stood out between God and men; He suffered. Those who addressed God in Acts 4 say twice "thy holy servant Jesus" (vv 27,30). There is an allusion to His sufferings there, the way He has capacity to absorb the sufferings. With us it begins with this mind being in us that was in Jesus. Think how often He could have delivered Himself, how often He could have taken another way, rightly so; but this mind was in Him. "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus".

Maybe as a creature of God you think you have rights to many things; are you prepared to forego them? Many have, beloved. That is how the light of the assembly has come down to be worked out in our day. Many who have gone before have been prepare to

forego certain pleasures they could have rightly had, certain comforts they could even have had, so that the truth may come through at the true level of the glory of the assembly.

So He "emptied himself, taking a bondman's form"; there is a way out, beloved; what a way out, to take a bondman's form! Jesus went through the suffering; the One who was on the cross, as Mr Darby said, the Man who was there was God, but it was a Man that died. Had He asserted His deity then, the matter would never have been resolved, in one sense, but He "emptied himself, taking a bondman's form", He took a condition in which He could die voluntarily. We are in a condition to which death attaches to us that we can never get out of. But there was One who in the love of His soul took a condition so that He could die to resolve the issues that stood out against us; "emptied himself, taking a bondman's form". He upon whom death had no claim submitted Himself in a bondman's form to death, "taking his place in the likeness of men".

So it says that "God highly exalted him". The suffering time, beloved, is limited. God in His infinite wisdom has measured the suffering time. When it will cease I do not know, but the sufferings that anyone passes through are measured. He bore it in the way that no creature shall ever taste it, but the suffering time is going to give way to the glory. It is what happened in Jesus: "Wherefore also God highly exalted him" a fine word that! It is as if He found infinite delight in exalting a Man like that. His own voluntary movements led Him to death, "and that the death of the cross", such a death, suffering in such a way. The answer was "Wherefore also God highly exalted him". Beloved, God is, I may say, bound to honour the sufferings of the saints. He has honoured the sufferings of Jesus like this. What a comfort! He "gave himself over into the hands of him who judges righteously", 1 Pet 2: 23. The answer is that "God highly exalted him". What could that seal of the Roman governor on the stone do? As Jesus lay in death, Satan's power was shown up in tremendous weakness: "Wherefore also God highly exalted him". Beloved, the suffering is passing. It is past for Jesus, He is given a name that is above every name. What a name He has been given,

what a name of excellence attaches to Him, the One who suffered, the One who died, the One who went that way. "Wherefore also God highly exalted him". That is how God is going to answer things. He answers things by His own glory as there is a preparedness to suffer.

Paul would encourage us in that; he says "momentary". What a word! He refers to what is passing in the way of suffering and says it is momentary. We are not now speaking of a divine Person, we are speaking of a man like ourselves. It is seen in its beauty and excellence in Jesus, but here is a man like ourselves speaking at an age that some in this room would be, and he looks back, he has just recounted some sufferings that we have never known, but he says it is momentary. In some of these things Paul must have thought, Will it ever pass? The sky was black at times, the waves restless, the very ship breaking up; he must have thought at times, Will we ever get this resolved, will this exercise ever pass? He says, it was momentary. He says elsewhere that some things took many days; here he says it was "momentary and light affliction". Beloved, this is what we say about things as we get a touch of the glory. Do not things take a different shape as we are together in assembly? Have you never felt the pressure of days, maybe even the pressure of assembly sorrows, and had a different view as we have been in assembly? Have you never had a different impression as the Lord comes in? These things vanish, beloved. Be it in your private exercises, or be it in assembly matters; as the Lord comes in, Mr Stoney says, the issue is settled. Once we have some sense of the Lord in the matter we can say, as Paul says, it is momentary and light affliction, but what it works is eternal. The suffering time will pass, the pressures of the way will soon be gone; what will remain will be an eternal weight of glory. Paul is conveying something that words can hardly define. Who could define an eternal weight of glory? How many pounds was it, how many tons was it? How long would it last? Those sufferings are all measured, beloved. Let us lay hold of that that the suffering time is measured in days, a period of time, but what is worked out through the sufferings is immeasurable,

an eternal weight of glory. "While we look not at the things that are seen, but at the things that are not seen". It is another privilege as in assembly to look at the things that are not seen. Some of us may find it a bit difficult in our private ways to look at things that are not seen. We can all do it in measure, we all have faith, but especially as together we get the benefit, I think, of looking at things that are not seen and they are eternal. These things help us to appreciate the company of the brethren, because in suffering, Peter says, there is a brotherhood (see 1 Pet 5: 9), there is an affinity, you are not alone in your sufferings. You may often have felt that nobody else had these burdens to bear. Not so, beloved, it is in the brotherhood, there are others going through them; at the same time the whole thing is working an eternal weight of glory. The weight of glory each shall bear, but the whole thing will be fused to be seen in a vessel that is described as the Lamb's wife.

Well, Paul would encourage these Corinthians. He says, I have been through all this. As they read it, they must have felt guilty, reigning as kings, and here was somebody suffering. Reigning as kings produced local difficulties, it produced exercises that were displeasing to God, and here was a man who was suffering. Paul, the great vessel of the testimony, the great administrator of the mystery; here he was suffering and they were reigning. What was the result? On the one hand there was a man who was enjoying the light, and the experience of the assembly, while all the time they were struggling with local difficulties.

Beloved, there is a way through in suffering. The assembly, the personnel of the assembly, has been given a capacity to suffer that no other family has. It is commensurate with the glory. These two things are balanced. Peter speaks about "the sufferings which belonged to Christ, and the glories after these" 1 Pet 1: 11. In measure it is true of the assembly, that that family has a capacity to suffer. She does not cry for vengeance on her enemies: "when suffering, threatened not". In the Psalms we see Israelites crying for vengeance on their enemies. It is not now the time for it, it is the time for suffering - and "threatened not". It is the time for suffering

making way for glory. May this attitude of mind lay hold of us more, may the preparedness to take it on in view of the eternal weight of glory attract us more. Paul had a right to speak like this. I feel how little I have a right to speak like this, but he says that it is momentary and light and it is working an eternal weight of glory. May we be helped to look at the things that are not seen; nobody has ever yet compassed them. We have great wealth of ministry but I do not think it has yet compassed the things that are not seen. He says again else where "Things which eye has not seen, and ear not heard, and which have not come into man 's heart, which God has prepared for them that love him", 1 Cor 2: 9. Would you not like to explore those things? Would not that be one of the objects of our assembling together, that we might explore more the things that God has prepared for those that love Him? There is suffering in the outside position, there should not be suffering among the brethren; as we come together it is a time for exploring the things that God has prepared. The more we are prepared for the suffering the quicker we will get into the flow of what the Spirit is saying in the assembly.

I just refer to the man in John 9. Here is a man that found his way into the assembly. It was a broken day, when all the religious profession was against him. It says "Jesus heard that they had cast him out". I think that is an affecting expression - "Jesus heard".

This man, as we speak of it in our language, mentioned assembly principles and, as he walked in the light of the assembly, they started to accuse him, they started to bombard him with questions. He just says, I do not know. He is prepared to suffer in his family and in his circumstances; he says, I do not understand these things. The answer was that "Jesus heard that they had cast him out". Who told the Lord? Beloved, we are connected with a wonderful system. I think the Father told Him that there was a man, a seeking soul, that had affection for Him and that the system had cast him out. The Lord made His way to where he was; it says "having found him". He did not find the Lord, the Lord found him; "Jesus heard that they had cast him out, and having found him". I think this is the way we would come into assembly experience, if we are prepared to take our share

in suffering, if we are prepared to let the light regulate us. We may not understand it all, but let the light come into our hearts; and, beloved, what a wealth there is of the light of the assembly in beloved Mr Taylor sen's ministry. How much do we read it? How much do you give your time to read the ministry that has been given to us so fully, the light of the assembly? It is to be known in experience. If you read these books you get an impression of the light of the assembly and, as you seek to walk in it, Jesus will find you. The man did not have to ask anybody for directions; who was he going to ask? Many of our fathers came into the joy of the assembly this way, that Jesus found them; they were cast out, from their own relatives maybe; we know persons like that, but Jesus found them. Thank God for His activities in His searching love. Jesus found him and He says "Thou, dost thou believe on the Son of God?".

Now there is one other thing I would like to remark on and that is the power of prayer. Suffering and prayer, I think, are two things that go alongside of the light of the assembly. They are two things that marked Jesus pre-eminently. You read Luke's gospel and see Him there time after time in prayer. It says even in that chapter that speaks of His glory that "He went up into a mountain"; to be transfigured? No, "He went up into a mountain to pray", Luke 9: 28. Peter in Acts 10 "went up... to pray" (v 9) and he received the light of the assembly as a heavenly vessel. I think these two things in a pre-eminent way make way for the operations of the Spirit of God to work out in us and to bring us into the joy of the light of the assembly. So assembly features are worked out in this man. You say the assembly was not yet. "He said, I believe, Lord: and he did him homage". If that is not the assembly formally it is the assembly in practice. In the very next chapter the Lord alludes to the assembly but He saw it, you may say, in that man cast out, a man prepared to suffer and to deny himself that he may come into the blessedness of the companionship of the Son of God. That is what these men in suffering in Daniel experienced, was it not? They experienced the companionship of the Son of God.

Finally, in Revelation, it is not only that she is the bride but she is the Lamb's wife, a companion to that holy Sufferer. I think that Israel and every family will look admiringly on the bride, the lamb's wife. The bride is the side of beauty but the moral foundation of that beauty is the Lamb's wife. Glory does not rest on just anything; glory has a substantial background. In the types in Exodus what bore the gold was the acacia wood, that ark in its beauty outwardly, covered with gold within and without and with a border of gold. As you looked on that system you saw a great display of splendour. Beneath the gold was the wood, that capacity to endure. So here it is the Lamb's wife. She is not only the bride, she is the Lamb's wife. What impressed me in this section was that she has certain things. They are not only conferred. Glory in large measure is conferred; the glory that we will enjoy, from one point of view, is a conferred glory. That does not make it any less substantial because the one on whom it is conferred is worthy because she has suffered. So it says "having"; shewed me the holy city, Jerusalem, coming down out of the heaven from God, having the glory of God". It is her own glory worked out here in the suffering time. Then it says "Her shining"; she is shining. O, what an answer to the sufferings! There will be the shining - "her shining". Israel will shine, but here is a vessel that shines having suffered, and it says "Her shining was like a most precious stone", another allusion, I suppose, to the secret, formative work of the Spirit of God. May we be, beloved brethren, more pliable in His hand. As we suffer we will be so. We would like to escape it, but I think Mr Raven said there was something very insipid about a person that had not been through sufferings and discipline. The sufferings form features that are companionable, features that give us affinities in the brotherhood features that take on the glory. Her shining: it is no just the idea of the sun and the moon and reflection - it is her shining, as if the substantiality of this vessel is impressed upon John. Then it says "having a great and high wall". She has these things in the glory and dignity of her own person.

May we be encouraged, beloved, that these things can be worked out today, if we are prepared for the suffering. "The

sufferings which belonged to Christ, and the glories" (plural) "the glories after these". The glory time is just ahead and in spirit it is even now as we are together. May we be watchful that our times of coming together in assembly are times when the Lord is free, when the brethren can be free. May we not be together in bondage, may we not be bringing things with us that would put one another in bondage, but may there be a preparedness for suffering on the outside that as we are together there is a quick, ready upsurge among the saints to answer to the heart of Christ. That is how she is described - "the bride", that is Ephesians; "the Lamb's wife", that is the thing worked out through local exercises. May we be set, dear brethren, that the Lamb's wife may be as precious to us as the idea of the bride. They are both together. John sees them both mentioned in the one sentence at the one time: "the bride the Lamb's wife". Then she has foundations, the wall of the city has foundations. What a history is going to come into display! These sufferings that you are enduring at the moment may be small, in one sense, but they are all going to find their answer in this city. There is nothing in the ways of God haphazard, it is all working out something that is going to find its climax in this city "having the glory of God". May this mind be in us; may we be set in our attitude to go this way so that the glory that is soon to be revealed, the glory that is soon to be substantially seen, is enjoyed in our hearts now. For His Name's sake.

LONDON

19 April 1975

ON MULTIPLICATION

W.E.Ellis

Genesis 1: 28; Hebrews 11: 11, 12

The thought in mind in reading these scriptures is that of multiplication, and in this respect one feels that God delights in numbers. We are hoping to have our numbers increased this week, so that we will be a large number of brethren together compared with what we normally are. It reminds me that we often sing, 'Where the saints in glory thronging' (hymn 206). Somebody said to the Lord, "Are such as are to be saved few in number?", Luke 13: 23. Well, dear brethren, they are not few. The heavens are going to be filled with myriads of blissful beings secured on the ground of redemption through the work of Christ. So we need, one feels, in these days of outward smallness, to have our eyes upon the divine thoughts of addition and multiplication. We are thankful for additions we hear of, and God has in mind multiplication.

At the outset of the passage we read in Genesis God said to the man and the woman when He blessed them, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth". So He has in mind that there should be fruitfulness and multiplication. In these days we are thankful for the brethren meeting in outward smallness but held in relation to the truth. We thank God for this, for we have to be governed by the truth and that may result in reduction in numbers. We keep the full thought before us, however, and the local assembly is adequate to fill out every situation. We are reminded of what Mr Taylor sen ministered, too, on the Lord causing the companies to sit down by fifties. That was one matter which came up in the history of the testimony. We also think of the twelve men at Ephesus, a good number for the working out of the service of God and the testimony, so that there can be the manipulation of love. If we have not the twelve men in any particular gathering, the features appropriate to the twelve need to be maintained there. Then we have the multiple thought in 1 Corinthians 12 where it says to one is given a word of wisdom, to another the word of knowledge, to a different one faith,

and so on. It indicates that there are at least nine persons in the local assembly able to function, which is an interesting point. But then we remember that in remnant days we may be down to two or three. Mr Darby was comforted at the beginning of the recovery with the scripture, "Where two or three are gathered together unto my name, there am I in the midst of them". So that whatever may be the features which properly govern the local assembly these can be maintained in those who walk in the truth even though they may be few.

But we would look, I think, for increase of numbers, not at the expense of increase in power. We do not want quantity at the expense of quality. In these days God would have quality but, nevertheless, I think He delights in numbers. So we get God saying not only to Adam, but to Noah and Jacob, "Be fruitful and multiply". God spoke also to Abraham and He said that his seed should be as the stars of heaven and the sand which is upon the seashore. We know that God will have the answer to this and that His promises, too, will come to pass; but the question is as to whether there is anything on our side which can promote the multiplication which God brings forward. He brings it forward to Abraham in answer to faith and to Isaac consequent upon his making room for the Spirit.

I read this passage in Hebrews 11 because it speaks of faith. It says "By faith also Sarah herself received strength for the conception of seed, and that beyond a seasonable age". In many of the gatherings, even in this city, a good number of the saints are, you might say, beyond seasonable age, so the question may be asked: Is the position hopeless? It is not. It appeared hopeless so far as Abraham and Sarah were concerned, but the matter is not hopeless in relation to God. So we desire the continuance of the testimony in each gathering and this can be arrived at and reached on the same basis as it was reached with Sarah and with Abraham, that is on the principle of faith. It says that "By faith also Sarah herself received strength for the conception of seed". I suggest this is a matter of exercise amongst us that there might be increase. This is on the principle of faith, that we might receive strength so that there might

be fruitfulness in the local assemblies. It says that "she counted him faithful who promised. Wherefore also there have been born of one, and that of one become dead, even as the stars of heaven in multitude". What was brought in in relation to Sarah was Isaac, who is suggestive of Christ. This is the subjective side in Sarah; there is the other side in Abraham which was in accord. Strength is received by faith in order that there might be increase through the bringing in of Christ. As Christ is brought in there must be increase, certainly in quality and in freshness and what is for the pleasure of God. I trust there might also be increase numerically, as it says "of one become dead, even as the stars of heaven in multitude, and as the countless sand which is by the sea-shore".

It was just this thought which was in mind, dear brethren, that there might be fruitfulness, addition and multiplication, as faith is in operation and as there is inward exercise and power by the Spirit.

There is the need of receiving strength by faith on the same principle as Sarah, and this is brought forward objectively so that the saints may take account of it. May the Lord help us thus to appropriate God's thoughts for His people at the present time and work them out, for His Name's sake.

LONDON

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EXTRACT

Now is the time to go in for the reality of the truth of Christianity, whether it be the privilege or the fellowship of the assembly. There are, I fear, a good many in a path of pretension and assumption; they boldly say, *We* are the assembly, we are the church. On the other hand there is the ignoring of the *truth* of the assembly - utter independency! And the only thing that will preserve from either the one or the other is the truth of the assembly. If I find a few people who are in the truth of the assembly, I am glad to have the opportunity of being with them, but we want to stand for the truth in these days.

J.Pellatt

before 1913

(from Closing Ministry of J.Pellatt, vol 1 p.17)

SOME FUNDAMENTALS - THE BURIAL OF CHRIST

The enemies of Christ insisted that His death should be by the most ignominious means possible, that is, that He should be crucified.

This fulfilled what the Lord had Himself said earlier: "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, thus must the Son of man be lifted up", John 3: 14. But when we come to His burial the designs of men were not carried out, for the scripture written over a thousand years before had said prophetically, "Men appointed his grave with the wicked, but he was with the rich in his death", Isa 53: 9. So Joseph of Arimathea, a rich man God had in reserve for this purpose but a secret disciple, emboldened himself and went in to Pilate and begged the body of Jesus. The request was granted and he with Nicodemus (who first came to Jesus by night) bound up the body of Jesus with fine linen and a mixture of myrrh and aloes, and laid it in the new tomb which Joseph had previously hewn in the rock. They then rolled a great stone to the door of the tomb and went away.

Thus was the Son of God buried. The love which lay behind this action was fully appreciated in heaven, as was that of the woman previously who had poured out the alabaster flask of very costly ointment upon the head of Jesus. She had beforehand anointed His precious body for the burial (see Mark 14: 8).

It is not always realised that, like the death of Jesus, His burial was vicarious, that is, for others. No doubt this would have become very clear to Joseph. He would know that it was for him that Jesus died on the cross, but it was for him also that He was buried. Indeed He occupied the very tomb that he had prepared for himself. There was no reason in Himself for Jesus to die - He was the only man who had the right to live. There was no reason in Himself for Jesus to be buried - there could be no corruption with Him - but it was necessary to clear the ground for God, and it was necessary for us.

In the death of Jesus we see the first order of man terminated under the eye of God and in His burial that order of man is put out of God's sight for ever.

The believer concerned about his sinful state and the sin which still works in Him is to realise that not only did Christ die for him but was buried for him. He now apprehends also by faith that he died with Christ and was *buried with Him*. His baptism is a public testimony to this (see Rom 6: 4 and Cor 2: 12). The death and burial of Jesus have severed the believer's links with a world of sin, and he now lives a new kind of life in the light of Christ risen. God is no longer looking for anything from the old order of man which has gone in the death and burial of Christ, but the believer learns to rely on the power of the Holy Spirit within to set him free practically from the power of sin and the flesh and so he now serves God in happy liberty.

W.E.Ellis

THE CHILDREN'S LIFE

The second miracle that the Lord did in Galilee, as told us at the end of chapter four of John's gospel, was to heal the son of a king's servant. The father had taken a long journey to where Jesus was and it must have been a very happy message brought to him the next day as he returned home that "Thy child lives". Actually he knew this already the previous day because Jesus had told him so and he believed the word of the Lord. The message did, however, make his faith stronger and as a result he believed also in the Person of the Lord. A miracle was thus called a "sign" because by it the glory of Jesus shone out.

You will also notice that the whole household of the courtier believed. This would doubtless include the child who was healed, the mother, with any other children in the home, as well as the servants who worked there. After the first sign that Jesus did, his

disciples believed on Him; now, after the second, there was a whole house full of believers - a bright spot in a place where so many rejected Him. Later, salvation came to the house of Zacchaeus, and you will be able to think of other complete households mentioned in the Acts and the Epistles where real life was enjoyed.

This miracle took place when the Lord was some miles away from the home where the child was. Thus it was also a sign that He had power to heal and to give life when not present to ordinary eyesight. The apostle John wrote his gospel so that we might have life in believing in Jesus, in heaven, as the Christ, the Son of God. He also wrote his epistle so that we should know by enjoyment that we have "eternal life". This is quite separate and different from our ordinary life except, of course, that both are Godgiven.

The last chapter of the Bible speaks much about the tree of life and the water of life - earthly words which have a heavenly meaning. The life that the believer has, as born anew, must be fed and refreshed. Every thought we have of Jesus is a fruit of that tree and the Holy Spirit as living water will keep our minds pure and fresh. Do you enjoy what is "really life" in "the land of the living"?

J.C.Evershed