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## **PRIEST AND KING**

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E.C.B. In relation to the rebuilding and repair in Jerusalem it says explicitly that the prophets Haggai and Zechariah helped and that those who built prospered through the prophets (see Ezra 5: 2; 6: 14). We referred to Haggai in the previous reading and I now refer to Zechariah. I have two thoughts that I would like to bring before the brethren which are associated with each other but which are distinguishable. In chapter 4 we have reference to the two olive trees and the golden tubes which pour the gold out of themselves.

The question there is raised, "What are these ...?" I am not sure whether I got the thought from Mr Darby, but what I would like to suggest to the brethren now is that those are two of the anointed services. There are three anointed services in the Old Testament, that is the prophet, priest and king. But I would suggest to the brethren that these olive branches and golden tubes are the two anointed services of the priest and the king, and they empty the gold out of themselves. The prophet says, "What are these two olive branches?" The angel says, "Knowest thou not what these are? ... These are the two sons of oil, that stand before the Lord of the whole earth". My understanding is that these are the priest and the king.

Chapter 6 says, "he shall be a priest upon his throne", and what is more "the counsel of peace shall be between them both". That bears on administration.

I refer to the scripture in Peter because if the counsel of peace is between the priest and the king you have a royal priesthood; "Ye are ... a kingly priesthood". That verse in 1 Peter draws together the thoughts of God in relation to Israel and transfers them to believers who were Jewish, who had come into Christianity. It is a marvellous verse – "a chosen race, a kingly priesthood, a holy nation, a people for a possession". All these things are said about Israel but they are presented to Jewish believers, I would say, to confirm them in what they are now committed to in Christianity. I perhaps need not

develop that thought very much but I just remark that when Peter addresses the people, the Jews, in the Acts, he speaks to them of times of refreshing here (see ch 9: 19), but when he writes his epistle he says an inheritance is reserved for you in the heavens (chap. 1: 4). He has got the people over into Christianity, an inheritance reserved for you in the heavens. But I take up the words in that verse in Peter, ye are a kingly priesthood; that is the counsel of peace is between the priest and the king.

The other thought that I wish to draw attention to, related to the exercise I have sought to bring before the brethren in these meetings, is of the King Himself, "Behold, thy King cometh to thee".

That connects in my mind with 1 Corinthians 14, "he must reign": He destroys every enemy and in the end He can cross-question death: death, where is your sting, death where your victory? He must reign. The consequence of that is that you are steadfast, immovable, abounding always in the work of the Lord. That is the way in which the things that remain will be strengthened. If I go back to the two sons of oil, there is the king and the priest; they find their expression in a man whose name is the Branch, and that is Christ. They find their expression there, they are to find their expression now. And the counsel of peace between the king and the priest is now to be found in assembly administration.

J.A.P. In the first passage, I did not get too clearly your thought about the olive-trees on the right of the lamp-stand and on its left and the two branches and their golden tubes. Just how are you applying that?

E.C.B. I think the two olive-trees represent two of the anointed services and here they represent the king and the priest. It says the golden tubes empty the gold out of the themselves. The expression of what is in the olive-trees comes out as the gold is poured out and the oil maintains it, and there is that manifest in these two anointed services which are brought together in Jesus, the man who is the Branch. As it says, "he shall be a priest upon his throne"; the king is the priest and the priest is the king and the counsel of peace is

between them both; seen perfectly in Jesus but seen in the assembly now.

J.A.G. Does “But thanks be to God, who always leads us in triumph in the Christ, and makes manifest the odour of his knowledge through us in every place ... in the saved and in those that perish”, (2 Cor 2: 14,15), relate to it? I was thinking of what you are saying about royalty and priesthood, and how they lead in triumph in every place must be a royal matter; and then the odour of His knowledge is what is priestly attached to that, surely.

E.C.B. Yes. I think it helps us a lot if we see that the counsel of peace is between the priest and the king. They are not two separate services. Generally in the Old Testament, I think, save for one instance when David sent for the ephod, you find these two offices are separated. Occasionally a king would attempt to be a priest and generally speaking he failed in it; however sometimes a priest might try to be king and he would fail in that. But these services, the anointed services, are united in a man who is called the Branch. He has come out, he has sprung up out of his own place – what kind of good thing can come out of Nazareth? But out of that He springs, the One in whom both these services are to be expressed; the counsel of peace shall be between them and that is in Christ – as you say, “who always leads us in triumph in the Christ”. What do you think about that?

J.A.G. I am still thinking about Paul and Sylvanus and Timotheus, the royal priesthood, manifesting the excellencies of Him who has called us.

E.C.B. Yes. Peter takes that up – called us out of darkness into His wonderful light. The glory of administration under Christ when the authority and the priesthood are united in one Man is something that needs to be learned. I am not saying united in one man here – that has been used amongst us but not to our benefit – but the spiritual characteristic of king and priest is to enter into every administrative service in the assembly.

J.D. Do you think we see that beautifully brought out in Melchisedec, the priest of the most high God; he is king and priest both, and the Lord's priesthood is after the order of Melchisedec.

E.C.B. That is helpful because what is expressed in Melchisedec is what ought to be the principal characteristic of the priest, that he blesses God and he blesses man. When the priesthood is appointed in Numbers God says through Moses to Aaron, "On this wise ye shall bless", Num 6: 23. That is the characteristic of priesthood. We too much associate the idea of priesthood with trying to handle matters that arise among us, but the character of priesthood is blessing and the character of the king is blessing and He establishes dominion, as He will in the world to come, but that is to be in our hearts now; He establishes dominion in which everything will be blessed in Him.

S.D. The selection of Melchisedec is very interesting in connection with the counsel of peace, because in Hebrews 7 it says, "first being interpreted King of righteousness, and then also King of Salem, which is King of peace". I think we are a little too ready for war sometimes. David said, "I am for peace; but when I speak, they are for war", Ps. 120:7.

E.C.B. I think these things should be in our minds. Would that there was among us longer historical experience in administrative matters of royal priesthood; would that there were, and it is all focused in one Man. Sometimes, brethren, when administrative questions arise we need to make room for Christ to come in; sometimes we fill up the foreground of the picture with ourselves.

There is a little saying that 'too many cooks spoil the broth', and they do, and it is well for us to learn administration from what has entered into ministry now for about one hundred and seventy five years, that administration in the assembly is local. I wish we would listen to what we have been taught, that administration in the assembly is local. And there is another remark, if I may quote Mr. Taylor, that you have to be in the place, and if you are one hundred, two hundred, a thousand, two thousand miles away you are not in

the place. The royal priesthood knows how to conduct things so that God is glorified in every matter that has to be handled in priestliness.

H.J.G. I just keep thinking simply as you speak, "This is my beloved Son: hear him", Mark 9:7.

E.C.B. That is right. God has seen everything settled in one Man. How great it is! God needs us to fill out His purposes as to Christ. If we keep that before us I thin our minds generally will be elevated and we shall not pay so much attention to ourselves; we shall have more focus on the Lord Jesus glorified because there is nothing in Christianity apart from that.

J.A.P. Going back to what you said, when the Lord was here it says He came to the house, that is the house where the difficulty was; He came to the house and He found in that house things nobody else had noticed. He did and He took issue with it and then He healed the matter (see Matt 9).

E.C.B. Yes, that is right. Sometimes there are too many flute-players; they clutter up the sickroom and He turned them all out, and then He is going to have things that He Himself will manage. And to see the Man whose name is the Branch taking up administration as king and priest with the two services not separable from each other; they are all in Him. And there they are, everything He does as King is priestly, everything He does as Priest is royal, all the services are merged in Him – just make way for Christ.

A.F. There is quoted the gift of government. Where does that fit into this matter of administration and how extensive is that?

E.C.B. God has set that in the assembly. That is written to a local company and should be seen there: "governments", 1 Cor 12: 28. Who would say, 'I have the gift of government'?

A.F. I think it is a kind of subtle reference rather than an open declaration.

E.C.B. I think that is very well put; it is a subtle reference because if the Holy Spirit is there the power to do everything according to God is there. I am not saying that no one else may have it. One thing

that would help in local difficulties at lot would be if we talked less about them elsewhere; I think we have to be a bit careful about writing letters and that kind of thing. We may say, 'One was just trying to bring in a measure of help', but what that may mean is, 'I thought I had the answer'. That is not quite so, beloved, administration is worked out locally. Now you put us right.

A.P.D. Does this bring the thought of glory into administration? Even if it is necessary to act judicially there is glory in it. Is that right?

E.C.B. Very good. That is very attractive. Sometimes, you might say, we see the glory with tears in our eyes, but the glory is there because the anointed services are three.

A.P.D. I wondered if there was an outshining of judicial glory in the face of Stephen.

E.C.B. Yes, there was. Stephen recites the history of Israel and largely their failure, but I have thought that when Stephen said, You always resist the Holy Spirit, he sounds a bit like a mother who is saying to her children, Why do you have to be like that? There is a tenderness about it; it is not all that condemnatory. He says, Solomon built a house, David built a tabernacle and so on, and he says, but why do you have to be like that? How many times the Lord could say that to us, why do you have to be like that? And they took up stones and stoned him when he said, I see Jesus. I am not trying to give brethren patterns of what they should do and I would not take it up in a meeting if I was asked what I thought about specific problems in a certain locality, but what I would like to see is that administration has the character of a royal priesthood. Those two things are brought together. John sees this in Revelation; a judicial book (to use the word that has been used), "and has made us a kingdom, priests to his God and Father", Rev 1:6. And there you can view the whole of the unfolding of things in Revelation from the point of view of the kingdom of priests.

J.A.G. The dignity of it would be in evidence and would carry the brethren with it.

E.C.B. Yes it would. And I think it would be carried on in quietness. Another aspect of this is – I just refer to things brethren know well – that assembly administration follows the pattern of a care meeting and if necessary later an assembly meeting, but if the sense of royal priesthood is in the care meeting how much better care meetings would be. I am thankful for what has been said about the glory that comes into it. You can see in Zechariah a book in which God speaks about one thing and another, and it is not all uncritical of Israel, but what God is saying in effect is, I have the solution in the king and the priest in one office. How blessed this is!

R.N.H. So John precedes what you referred to with, “To him who loves us”, so we are made conscious of what is behind the administration. Is that right?

E.C.B. I am sure that is right and that would help. “Let all things ye do be done in love” (1 Cor 16: 14), even assembly administration is done in love. Love for whom? Love for the Lord but love for one another. I rather cling to a word that I found of Mr Taylor’s where he said what a terrible thing it is to withdraw from somebody, and we do not feel it enough. I am sorry to go back over history, which is very sad in itself, but some of us retain too much the schooling of a decade when people were withdrawn from peremptorily. Assembly administration is step by step by step, with time and time and time; even Jezebel He gave space to repent. I am very thankful for what has been said, that what these scriptures bring out is that in the day when the Man whose name is the Branch reigns, there is glory about everything that He does. We see it in Jesus, He grows up in his own place and there He was in the manger as a baby, but they even said then, We have come to see the King of the Jews. There He was – royal priesthood. Not yet discernible in actions but everything there cradled in a manger:

Thus cradled in a manger  
We see thee, Jesus, there  
(Hymn 188)

S.D. When the Lord Himself described His coming in Matthew, He says, "But when the Son of man comes in his glory, ... then shall he sit down upon his throne of glory", Matt 25: 31.

E.C.B. Yes, that is right. Well, can I ask you how much experience have you of the glory of administration in the assembly?

We quickly fall to a worldly level, very quickly, and it is easy to fall to a political level, but it is not glory and here are these two services, they are united services. And these two tubes empty gold out of themselves – think of being able to run gold through your fingers – they empty the gold out of themselves, "beside the two golden tubes that empty the gold out of themselves". He says, Do you know what these are? He says, "These are the two sons of oil, that stand before the Lord of the whole earth". That is the king and the priest.

Do you not think that, the king and the priest, the two sons of oil?

J.A.P. I appreciate the application because it comes out from the throne, "and he shall be a priest upon his throne".

E.C.B. Yes that is right. And then it says, "make crowns". But in a sense you can see that although two olive-trees are spoken about, in a way they are already united to each other and you cannot really separate the offices of the Lord Jesus.

J.H. Do these two things come together in Matthew 18 and John 20, these two sections when we have to deal with matters? In Matthew 18 it is binding first and then loosing, but when it comes to the breathing in John 20 it is remit or retain.

E.C.B. Yes. It has often been said, as you know, that Matthew is the royal gospel, it has in view the glory of administration of Israel – if I may make the remark I often wonder why Matthew is spoken of as 'the assembly gospel' when it is virtually entirely Jewish and because the assembly is mentioned in it just twice. But the character of Matthew is Jewish and bears on the Lord's ministry to Israel in which you have everything, and then He says, Go into all the world and preach the gospel, not just to the Jews but go into all the world. We are beyond Israel now. He is raised from the dead, and that cannot be confined just to one nation – you go into all the world and preach

the gospel. I am with you all the days till the end of the world. That is all dispensational and related to the Jews; it does not reach eternity, which Christianity does. But as to John 20 – I do not altogether think of the Lord's service in John's gospel as priestly although it has a priestly character, and certainly John's gospel has the character of pouring the gold out of themselves, does it not? I have no particular desire to engage the brethren with administration, but, brethren, it is needed. We need to learn something about administration. Sometimes priestliness would inhibit your writing anything. Often the only service that you can offer is to pray? Let us get back to these fundamentals, and they will limit confusion amongst us, and they will limit division. Let us be more with the Lord. If we want to arrive at being priestly let us be priestly, let us be more with the Lord. Let us go into the holy place and see how things are worked out there. The blessedness of this chapter where the counsel of peace shall be between the king and the priest is instruction for us. Let us have the approach to administrative matters that bears the character of royalty and priesthood being united together; according to God they are not separable.

C.F.D. The matter of interference in local administration has been a weakness amongst us for as long as I can remember, and you too. I know what you mean. The tendency is to want to interfere. If you cannot speak in the locality because you are not local there, well, you write a letter. All this constitutes interference in local administration and I believe it cuts across the rights of the Lord in the place.

E.C.B. My thoughts run along those lines too. We spoke in Sunbury about Abigail. She is another woman I like. I like Abigail, and as I said before, I like Asnath, but why I like Abigail is that she never falls below the level at which she began, she never comes down to a lower level. Do not be too literal because it does say, she was coming down, but someone came and told Abigail there is trouble on. What did she do? Did she go to the telephone, or write? Oh, no, she went to the kitchen and got out the bread and the wine and sheep ready dressed and the figs (one thing about figs is that

they are good for local eruptions, Hezekiah knew that). Abigail knew what to do. She never said a word to anybody, she went and got supplies of food, she loaded them on an ass and there she had food for that occasion and David never had to lift a finger to deal with the issue. Is that not right? I like that woman.

C.F.D. Yes it is right. She moved not only in a comely way but she really could set on the pattern of things for the young men. As following the pattern of those things and then taking her cue in going down – it says she went down – I think that is a great thing to see in the spirit of the brethren when instead of rising up, telling each other what to do, we are prepared to go down, go down on our knees really.

E.C.B. That is the great thing, go down on our knees. Abigail is the only woman in the Bible who was both beautiful and intelligent.

Perhaps we have said enough on that because really I have sufficient confidence in the brethren to believe that some things only need to be spoken about again for them be revived. I know many other things are said, many quotations are made and books are quoted and so on, which speak otherwise and say, you cannot tell people ‘hands off ... You keep away’. I can understand that, especially if it is said like that, but let us bear in mind, beloved, that the Lord has enough in every place to deal with matters in the place.

A.P.D. You would not say all letters are interference, would you?

E.C.B. No.

A.P.D. Mr Taylor’s letters were never interference as far as I know.

E.C.B. No, but the Lord gave our brother special grace – we have spoken as to the gift of government and our brother had it. But it is scarce. Not all letters, as you say, are interference (as a matter of fact I have not myself used the word ‘interference’) but let us be careful what we do write.

A.P.D. I have seen some letters that I felt were priestly and I think that is what is needed.

E.C.B. Yes it is. Priestly and royal, I think that is what is needed. I was thinking here about the king: "Behold, thy King cometh". We know that this comes out in the gospels, especially in Matthew, "Behold thy King cometh to thee" (Matt 21: 5), and that is the King.

Now He must reign (I do just add going back to the earlier conversation that I think weakness in administration is one thing where strengthening the things that remain is particularly needed lest anything further weakens it). Now, thy king comes and He must reign. It is remarkable that Paul just says that, "He must reign". He says, Well, I have been thinking about Jesus and He must reign.

Who else could reign? Paul would say, He must reign; then he says, "he must reign until he has put all enemies under his feet. The last enemy that is annulled is death". That is the victory of Christ, He must reign and everything is going to be put down. The enemies have almost, as it were, been ticked off one after another, every enemy, this one, that one, the next one and you come to the bottom of the table, death, God's judgment on man. The last enemy to be destroyed is death because the King reigns. Now there is, "Death were is thy sting?" It is interesting to compare the quotation at the end of this chapter with the scripture from which it is quoted, that is in Hosea. In Hosea, death and the grave are called upon as punishment for the iniquity of Israel. If you look at the chapter in Hosea it says, "The iniquity of Ephraim is bound up; his sin is laid by in store. The pangs of a woman in travail shall come upon him: he is a son not wise; for at the time of the breaking forth of children, he was not there. I will ransom them from the power of Sheol. I will redeem them from death: where; O death, are thy plagues? Where, O Sheol, is thy destruction? Repentance shall be hid from mine eyes", Hosea 13: 12-14. It is as if God is calling up death and the grave to deal with an unrepentant Ephraim. If you look at that in Corinthians there is a different picture. It is not what God is going to do in judgment to an unrepentant people; God is going to give you the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. The link between the end of 1 Corinthians 15 and Romans 8 is manifest. The consequence of that – in appreciating that He must reign and He will reign until the last enemy is destroyed – is that you are "firm, immovable,

abounding always in the work of the Lord, knowing that your toil is not in vain in the Lord". That is the way to strengthen the things that remain: go on and go on and go on, knowing that He must reign.

E.F.C. Will there be death apparent during the thousand years of the millennium?

E.C.B. Scripture actually refers to it, a sinner being a hundred years old shall die (Isa 65: 20).

J.S. Does not Mr Taylor say that sin will be in the latent state in the millennium?

E.C.B. Yes. It appears from that scripture that it will break the surface sometimes but I think that a consequence of Christ reigning in the millennium will be that If evil raises its head at all He will deal with it. That is an aspect of His reigning. Do you think that?

H.J.G. Although it is a benign reign man has not changed.

E.C.B. Very good. And the power of government against evil is a means of maintaining blessing to the people. If government, even temporal government, is weak and people can do just as they like, the result is always chaos. I remember once I was taking an exam and we were asked to suggest something we could speak on and then speak on it, and I said we are not prepared for more than a certain amount of liberty, because every liberty that I have impinges on your liberty. If I insist on sitting in this chair because I have liberty to do so, you cannot sit here as well even if you want to. Every area in which I claim liberty entrenches on yours. That must be obvious to everybody. It is not philosophy, it is just an ordinary matter of events – every liberty that I claim entrenches on your liberty. If I say I want to go home at four o'clock then everyone else must make arrangements for the fact that I am going home at four o'clock, I have entrenched on their liberty and man is such, but good government balances everything against everything else. And the perfection of the reign of Jesus is that everything will be perfectly maintained and the Spirit of the Lord will be there and there will be liberty.

A.P.D. The principle should obtain amongst us.

E.C.B. It should indeed.

A.P.D. I think what you say is good, but in principle that should be what we enjoy now that good government makes way for blessing.

E.C.B. Indeed it does. Good government is not something to be resisted. The only thing that will resist good government is self-will.

Am I humble enough? Am I sufficiently humble to fit in with my local brethren? Christianity is practical or it is nothing. It is not all 'pie in the sky', brethren. Christianity is worked out down here where our feet are on this solid ground, not this particular solid ground, but our feet are on the ground. Our eye may be on the crown above but we are here in circumstances where we have to work things out in the condition in which we are, and initially that condition is sinful and the flesh is in us all, but there is power in good government in the local assembly to see that peace is maintained, and blessing.

J.A.G. The King is always meek and lowly in heart.

E.C.B. Certainly He is, "I am meek and lowly in heart", and what the King says to you is, "Take my yoke upon you". He does not come in in panoply, He comes in on an ass and a colt, the foal of an ass. There is no panoply or display there.

J.A.P. This chapter that you read in 1 Corinthians 15 is conflict that no man could deal with except the Lord Jesus. It says, "The last enemy that is annulled is death". Only He can deal with that.

E.C.B. Literally there is no conflict in 1 Corinthians 15.

J.A.P. No, it is finished.

E.C.B. One thing after another. And what does 1 Corinthians 15 begin with? The gospel. I am very easily sidetracked, but one thing I think is that there is nothing more marvellous than the structure of the Bible. In 1 Corinthians 14 at last Paul arrives at spiritual manifestations. Someone comes in and he says, God is indeed among you. Where does Paul go from there? He goes to God all in all in chapter 15, the very next chapter; he goes by way of the gospel from "God is indeed among you" straight to the point that God will be

all in all. That is what spiritual manifestations lead to; we are taken out of everything here into a world where everything is of God – all things are of God. I do wish the brethren could get hold more of the wonder of what it is to be a Christian.

C.F.D. Is that the idea of finality in the glad tidings or in the gospel, that God will all in all? This is something arrived at now in the heart of the believer?

E.C.B. Yes, do you not think that?

C.F.D. I do. And I believe that it should come into the service of God on Lord's Day morning. Do you?

E.C.B. I believe that. The only thing I would say is this – perhaps you can answer this – I have not yet found anyone who could tell me what “God all in all” means.

C.F.D. In the form of a question, would it not suggest that what God is is filling all and in all; He is filling the whole position there as in the assembly, but He is all in all the persons that are present, He is fully in them; or they are allowing Him full scope in them, that is if they are, because actually sometimes that is not the case. What were you going to say?

E.C.B. One or two things: one thing is that God all in all is not confined to the assembly, it is universal. God all in all is God in everything. Everything is of God. You find it in another scripture that says, “And all things are of God”, 2 Cor. 5:18. What does Paul talk about in that connection? He talks about reconciliation – as remarkable as that is, “all things are of God” and he talks about reconciliation and you are drawn into that. But I think God all in all is that there is nothing that is not either God or His own work – God all in all, and He fills everything. But it is a universal idea, it is not just the assembly idea it is the universe. Is that not so?

C.F.D. I would think that. I think the glory of that really fills the whole universe that God has brought into being.

E.C.B. Now is that not a culmination of the gospel? 1 Corinthians to us is one of the great gospel chapters, it is the culmination of the

gospel. I am impressed with this – as I say I think the structure of the Bible is marvellous – but you go straight from prophecy – “covet earnestly the best gifts but especially that you may prophesy” (ch. 14: 1) – to, “I make known to you the gospel that I have announced to you” (ch. 15: 1), and where does that gospel end? When you started, you came to the ministry meeting and there was a stranger there and he said, God is here. And you went on and you thought about the gospel and you said, what I am going to arrive at is that God will be everywhere, God all in all.

J.D. Would it also involve that it will be a time when God will claim the undivided and unvariable attention of everyone? There will be no rival, there will be nothing else, everyone will be absorbed in God.

E.C.B. I am just hesitating at the word ‘time’.

J.D. Well, all that will exclude time, it is an eternal scene.

E.C.B. We cannot get out of time, but I think this has in view eternity when time shall cease to be and there it will be, and the fulness of what you are brought into – just putting these chapters together – by way of prophecy, prophetic ministry and the gospel, takes you to eternity. I think I am not exaggerating now.

E.F.C. Does not chapter 13 underline everything?

E.C.B. It does, “and yet shew I unto you a way of more surpassing excellence” (ch. 12:31), and that is love. But Paul is not content to stop there, he says, “Follow after love, and be emulous of spiritual manifestations, but rather that ye may prophesy” (ch. 14:1). Of course where love is is a great climate for prophecy. Where does prophecy lead you? It leads to someone coming into the meeting who says, God is there. Paul says, I will take you a bit further than that, I am going on to a scene where God will be everywhere.

E.F.C. The two tenons on which the boards of the tabernacle rested have been thought to be righteousness and love.

E.C.B. Yes. When we get ones and twos and so on we always to think of something they can be, but the sockets for the boards of the tabernacle were both the same thing. If you said that righteousness

and love were the same thing I would not mind, but there they are. I just leave these thoughts with the brethren. But I do just underline this at the end; my exercise is that we might be concerned to strengthen those things that remain. The exercise at the end of chapter 15, if I may quote again the Authorised Version since it is so familiar to me, “steadfast, immovable, abound always in the work of the Lord knowing that your labour is not in vain in the Lord”. That is the way in which you will strengthen the things that remain.

## **TORONTO**

**22 September 2001**

### **Key to Initials**

E.C.Burr, London; E.F. Carey, Los Angeles; A.P.Devenish, Edmonton; C.F.Dadd, Plainfield; J.Desai, Los Angeles; S.Drever, Calgary; A.Fennell, Toronto; H.J.Glass, Toronto; J.A.Gardiner, Aberdeen; J.Hibbert, Calgary; R.N.Hersterman, Woodstork; J.A.Petersen, Plainfield

## **“THE MAN”**

**Leonard Barlow**

**Isaiah 32: 1,2; 53: 1-8; John 19: 1-6; 1 Timothy 2: 1-7 (to “apostle”); Acts 2: 32-36**

I make no apologies for reading several scriptures although fully aware that those present, no doubt, know full well the scriptures read. One of the things found so often in reading scripture is that something fresh and living comes into your heart. How wonderful the scriptures are! When you get older maybe you begin to appreciate the scriptures more and more because, as the Lord Jesus said, “they it is which bear witness concerning me”, John 5:39.

Sometimes it might be well to present something of the terms of the gospel on such an occasion especially in regard to persons who may need help as to them. However the greatest setting out of these is found in the epistle to the Romans, and yet at the beginning of that epistle Paul says, it is “God’s glad tidings ... concerning his Son ... Jesus Christ our Lord” (ch. 1: 1-4). So that, if it is the setting out of the terms of the gospel, the subject is one glorious, blessed Person.

The scripture read at the beginning in Isaiah is of special comfort in the day in which we find ourselves. Everything around, you might say, is marked by confusion whilst matters of judgment seem all awry. Possibly there was never such a day when universally there was so much perversion of what is right. How comforting to have the light in your soul that there is a king who is going to “reign in righteousness” and princes who are going to “rule in judgment”. Perfect administration and control. It is not very far off – although it is not right to speculate when – it could happen in a very few years time, in less than a decade, when that glorious Person is going to take up His rights here, when He will exercise universal dominion. It will not be that men will have necessarily changed. But conditions will have been changed because all will be under that glorious King who is going to “reign in righteousness”.

Alas, as another has said, what is often scarce amongst believers is hope. Oh that in all the confusion and everything that so readily may

cast us down, God may afresh lift up our hearts in the glorious hope of the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, not only to take those who belong to Him to be with Himself, but the day when He is going to be fully vindicated! That blessed Person who was cast out and rejected here is going to reign. God would encourage our hearts that we might be looking up and thinking of that day as those who love His appearing.

Well, the scripture also goes on to refer to “a man” and that really is the burden of the message this evening. To occupy you with a blessed Man, a Man who is “as a hiding-place from the wind, and a covert from the storm; as brooks of water in a dry place, as the shadow of a great rock in a thirsty land”. That is what He would be to anyone at the present time. Though assuring to have the outlook of Him coming, this scripture draws our attention to “A man” as another said, “a man called Jesus”. Mr. Darby says as to the greatness of that Person, He never ceased to be what He was because of what He became, but He was perfect in what He became. A perfect Man, a real Man though no mere man, yet a *real* Man! Speaking reverently, He had all the sensibilities of a man, sin apart, and that is the glorious Person who is presented in the glad tidings. He is the One who on an occasion like this – and that is what is sought above all else – might draw near to us and just implant some fresh view of Himself, maybe if needed, “as a hiding-place from the wind, and a covert from the storm; as brooks of water in a dry place, as the shadow of a great rock in a thirsty land”. This is a thirsty land, for there is nothing here to satisfy. What needs there are! What storms there are, adverse winds that are blowing! What pressure there, is yet this Man would be such to all who have their faith and trust in Him. What a resource!

My mind was thus directed to Isaiah 53. How challenging as to whether we do believe; however it was the scripture that the eunuch was reading in Acts. He was going through that desert, a thirsty place where there are winds and storms. He had just been up to Jerusalem in the place where, I suppose, he most would have expected to have found something that would satisfy his soul, in

which was a crying need. He is going back disappointed, but is reading the scriptures. Do you? Oh I think that is beautiful, for the Eternal God's eye was upon that man as he went back on that journey from Jerusalem he where had not found anything to satisfy his heart. How good to think of that scene. God's eye is upon persons, especially those who might be seeking and who have not found any satisfaction, and His desire is to draw attention to the blessed Man in whom the answer is alone to be found. So he transports the most effective preacher of the day, the only man, I think, who is referred to as an evangelist. Oh to be truly evangelical like Anna. I am not talking about being asked to preach. An evangelist is one who can be used by God to bring souls to Jesus, "evangelise Him", who can present that Person in such a way that the heart of another is attracted towards Him, like John the Baptist. You think of God's concern for souls, looking down on persons who are seeking and have no satisfaction, and using every means possible in His grace to reach them. Think of Him using Phillip the evangelist and causing him to go right into a desert alongside of one man in order that he might learn about this Man who was "a hiding-place from the wind, and a covert from the storm" and the One who could satisfy his thirst. What a Person He is! Isaiah 53 does not tell us who He is. I have often been struck by that, that there are certain passages in scripture which are not exactly explained in themselves. I suppose if I had been reading this as an Israelite, not that I could exactly put myself in that place, I too would have wondered who this Person was. Is this the Messiah? (They will recognise Him as such in a shortly coming day). It does not say anything about Him being the Messiah. It speaks about the One of whom it is said, "For he shall grow up before him as a tender sapling, and as a root out of dry ground". In other words, it speaks of the lowly, wonderful way in which the Lord Jesus came into this scene as a babe in Bethlehem's manger, growing up, not seeking to make Himself exactly in favour with men although in one sense He could not do otherwise because of the moral excellency of His manhood. But He was not growing up before men; He was growing up before God. What pleasure, infinite pleasure, God found in the pathway of that glorious Person! One of

the things surely that God most appreciated was the absolute, unqualified obedience that marked that blessed Person. He Himself says elsewhere, “on this account the Father loves me, because I lay down my life that I may take it again ... I have received this commandment of my Father”, John 10: 17,18. What a wonderful thing to think in the scene which was marked on every hand by disobedience, there was a glorious Person marked by perfect obedience. This involved His downward movements and therefore no place in man’s world for “he hath no form nor lordliness, and when we see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him”. Another has said He would not have made a successful merchant or General, but how delightful He was as His servant in the sight of God.

And then it goes on to speak about Him. Oh to know Him better, “a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief, and like one from whom men hide their faces”. He was down here in a scene of misery, scene of sorrow, but how Luke loves to portray Him in the movements of His heart! Constantly we are provided with touches like, He “was moved with compassion”. Some of us were reminded this afternoon as we were reading in Matthew’s gospel, of those two blind men who called upon Him. It says, “Jesus, having stopped”, then “Jesus, moved with compassion” (ch. 20: 32, 34). Oh, how beautiful it is! For the prophet proceeds “surely *he* hath borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; and we, we did regard him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted”. But think of the way He allowed men to treat Him! You cannot help wondering at it, can you? When you think of who He was, the Creator of the universe, the One “without him not one thing received being which has received being” (John 1:3), and yet here as a blessed Man entering into the sorrows of others and bearing their guilt. “But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon him, and with his stripes we are healed”. God would engage us with Him tonight, and none else. He would remind us of the way He has been, what He has done, what He has suffered. It goes on to speak of it: “He was oppressed, and he was

afflicted, but he opened not his mouth; he was led as a lamb to the slaughter, and was as a sheep dumb before her shearers, and he opened not his mouth". What beautiful perfection was seen in those final steps of the pathway of Jesus!

You ponder about those earlier years, the best part of which we are told little about, those thirty years prior to His public ministry.

We get touches, but what is brought out even there was His committal and obedience. He says, "did ye not know that I ought to be occupied in my Father's business?" (Luke 2: 49), then immediately afterwards He was subject to His parents. What a feature that is! You think of the king that is going to reign in righteousness who was Himself the obedient, subject One, the One who "becoming obedient even unto death, and that the death of the cross", Phil 2: 8. That is the One whom God has "highly exalted ... and granted him a name, that which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow", Phil 2: 9,10. Because of who He is, it is right that every knee should bow to Him, but, if I may speak reverently He is entitled to it because of what He has done, because of what He is as a blessed Man that every knee should bow to Him and every tongue confess Him as Lord.

I wanted just to draw attention to that touch in John's gospel because it might be asked, well who is this Man? Pilate says, "Behold the man!" Acts presented to you as He was to that crowd.

Just cast your minds back to what is seen in those earlier verses, a Man who had been scourged, a Man who we are told elsewhere had been spat upon, a Man who had been mocked, a Man on whom they had put a crown of thorns and given a purple robe? However it says, "Jesus went forth". This, I think is the link with Isaiah, a king, the regal dignity that marked Him but the mockery that men would put upon Him. There was the King, yet Pilate says of Him, "Behold the man!", not just a man but "the man!" How great, how attractive He is to opened eyes as He is presented to the people. One of the testimonies that Pilate has to twice repeat is that he finds no fault in this Man. Can you find anybody in whom you cannot find any fault?

There is only one Person of whom that could be said and that is “the man”, Christ Jesus.

That is what made me refer to that other scripture in Timothy because it says there, “the man Christ Jesus”, that is no longer in a place of humiliation, but glory. Christ Jesus refers to Him where He now is. So in speaking tonight of One who was mocked, One who was crucified, that One who bore “the sins of many” (Heb 9: 28), in those hours of darkness on the cross, that blessed Person is risen and glorified and He is the “mediator of God and men ... the man Christ Jesus”. It says of Him that He “gave himself a ransom for all”, one of the beautiful ‘alls’ of scripture. It does not matter what their colour or creed; whether they are Muslims; whether they are Hindus: He “gave himself a ransom for all”. It is not that all will come into the benefit of it, but nevertheless the truth is He “gave himself a ransom for all”. “For God is one, and the mediator of God and men one, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself a ransom for all”, One, who because He is a man can lay hold of you and me; because He is God, if it is a right way to express it, can lay hold of God. How wonderful that is! Everything for God eternally, everything that stood related to God’s thoughts right from before time was involved the wonderful fact of the incarnation. That God Himself would come in as a man and in manhood fill it out in absolute perfection and not only fill it out in absolute perfection, but as a man suffer for men, “the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God” (1 Peter 3: 18), “the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself a ransom for all”.

The scripture in Acts relates to the very beginning of this dispensation; we are now at the end. Peter himself in beginning that address says, “a *man* borne witness to by God”, Acts 2: 22. And then he speaks about what God has done to Him. He speaks about the present moment in which you and I live, “God has made him, this Jesus ... both Lord and Christ”. You say, Well, yes, I have heard that plenty of times but have our hearts really entered into the greatness of what that means, that is universal dominion has been given to Him now. There is a man that is going to rise up in the day to come and he is going to sit himself down in the temple of God and say that he

is God. There is a Person who *is* God overall blessed for evermore who has become a Man in order to effect God's glorious work of redemption who has shed His precious blood, One who has suffered for sin, and that is the One that God has "highly exalted", the One whom Peter was speaking about right at the very beginning of this dispensation, and although things may have changed down here, that has not changed. God has made that same Jesus "both Lord and Christ", no change whatsoever. 'Lord' means that it is needful that everyone should bow to Him and recognise His rights; 'Christ' means, I believe, that everything that God has in His mind for men is available through and in that glorious Person. The proof of all is in the presence of the blessed Spirit of God here.

Isaiah says, "Who hath believed our report?" Who has believed it? Often I am challenged – I do not know whether you are – as to whether my faith really lays hold of the fact that there is a blessed, living, glorious Man in the presence of God, the One who "bore our sins in his body on the tree", 1 Peter 2 :24. The One who lives to make intercessions for us, the One who is going to take us to be with Himself, the One who is going to give us a part eternally alongside of Himself in the presence of God, the One, as a result of whose exaltation, the Spirit has come, a divine Person here to indwell us, the very Spirit of God's Son in our hearts, "whereby we cry, Abba, Father", Rom 8: 15. How great these things are! The fact is that God in His grace has not only "not spared his own Son, but delivered him up for us all" (Rom 8: 32), but has given men of His own blessed Spirit. What a God! What wondrous reality it is that you and I as believers will never have anything more than we have at the present moment. We shall have glorified bodies, yes, but the glorious place where Christ is, is our place, and the blessed Spirit that is indwelling our hearts indeed will be the power alone eternally that will enable us to enjoy the vastness and fulness of everything that relates to that glorious Man.

How great God's glad tidings are! These persons were convicted. There is a great need at the present time for conviction. They said, "What shall we do ...?" There are persons who think they

can do something to earn something from God. No, you cannot do anything. The simple answer to it, Peter says to them here is, "Repent ... for remission of sins, and ye will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit", much greater than the things that this world can possible offer, things that are lasting and abiding, things that are related to the blessed knowledge of God Himself. Things related to the Lord Jesus, the Man who was once here, the One we *have* read of in the scriptures, in all meekness, lowliness, humbleness, that One is the One whom God has "highly exalted". He has not changed. He has not altered. Nothing has changed Him. Nothing has altered Him. The compassions that He showed as a blessed Man in His pathway down here have not changed; they have not altered one iota. As I am speaking tonight in this very room at the present moment there is a glorious, living Man on high, the One who wants to be and to be proved by us all as a personal glorious, living Saviour. While in the presence of the blessed Spirit here, there is a divine Person who desires that He might be our strength.

The answer to that scripture I read in Isaiah relates to these two things, the present glorification of Christ on high and the presence of the Spirit here, "in a thirsty land". The Lord said of the Spirit that He is, "a fountain of water, springing up into eternal life", John 4: 14. Then He says later on as to His glorification, "out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water", John 7:38. In the first scripture, while it waits the day when He is going to be acknowledged as the king and reign in righteousness, what is presented in the latter portion of it, are things that can be entered into and known even at the present time. May God grant, beloved, as persons who believe the report, that we may know and prove these things and that there might be a present, living answer to the affections of our Lord Jesus Christ and that there might be increasingly what is for the pleasure and glory of God. May it be so for His Name's sake!

**ST ALBANS**

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