

A
WORD
IN ITS
SEASON

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Contents

"I AM COMING TO YOU"

AWAKE TO THE HOLY SPIRIT

THIRSTY CHILDREN

"I AM COMING TO YOU"

John 14: 15-24;21: 14; Acts 1: 3,4; 1 Corinthians 15: 3-8; Genesis 29: 32-35

R.T. I wondered if these scriptures might provide a basis to speak together of the Lord's personal service to us. Often, when we think of the Lord's service, we think of His service on high as Priest bearing the saints on His shoulder and on His breast, which is very blessed, but I was also thinking of this verse in John's gospel: "I am coming to you". It is something that we may enquire, and be expectant, about. He says "I will not leave you orphans, I am coming to you". The other scriptures show how He came. John says it was the third time. In Acts he tarried here forty days; later on in the chapter it says that He came in and went out among them, as if He would accustom their minds to the fact that, while He was not going to be with them in the circumstances that He had been, He was still going to be in contact with them - He came in and He went out; He left something. I think what He would leave would maintain us in freshness. It is a very remarkable thing that the testimony has continued in freshness right down until today, a tribute to the Lord's movements in grace. He comes and He leaves what would sustain us. All around there is a tendency to going back and to decline. In order to try to maintain things they bring in prayer-books, music and so on, but we are maintained, as the Lord comes in, in the freshness and vitality that is to mark the dispensation.

In Corinthians there was what was distinctive as to the apostles, but then it says "to above five hundred brethren at once". What a deposit must have been left on that occasion! I only suggest these things that we might accustom our minds to think of the Lord leaving something among us. Leah would possibly bring that out. It says of Jacob that he served for a wife (see Hos 12: 12). With Isaac it is the father's consideration for the son that secures Rebecca, but with Jacob it is his own personal service that secures his wife. In Leah there is a secret line going on that produces fruitfulness and praise and union. These things would be the result among us as the

Lord comes in. You do not read much about the detail of it in Jacob and Leah but there is positive evidence that he has been there in fruit appearing. I would like to see that in our localities. There is no outward sign, a few coming together in one place and another, yet there is freshness and joy maintained, the Lord having been among us.

Well, He is leaving those disciples and I think this word must have been very precious to them: "I am coming to you". His appearing later on encouraged them to come together; they thought things were declining so they went back to something they knew, they went back to fishing, but the Lord rallies them as He comes in, and I think after that they do not go back. They expected Him to come; He had come those three times, and then in Acts, He came in and went out. I think we should move in the expectancy that He is coming in with something and He is going to leave what will maintain us in freshness to be here in vitality for His pleasure.

R.L. We need to be governed by faith, do we not? I was impressed the other day in reading that we are prone even in meetings like this to be governed by sight. The Lord said to Thomas: "blessed they who have not seen and have believed", John 20: 29.

R.T. Yes; it is fine to come together and expect Him. I do not think He will disappoint us. All around they come together with everything laid out as to how the occasion is going to proceed. If we come together to expect Him we do not know how the occasion will go, but what He brings in would be our guide, and what He leaves would be our stay. I think what you say is right; we come together not counting on some individual (we would miss anyone who is not there) but counting on the Lord - "I am coming to you". He may be shut out many times through the lack of faith; we may revert to counting on other things, we may look for other props, but I think the attitude of mind should be stimulated among us that we come together and we expect Him. "I am coming to you".

F.G.M. Would the incident in chapter 12 bear on what you are saying, where Jesus came to Bethany? The persons there were

prepared to receive Him, prepared for Him.

R.T. Yes, what a fine occasion it was! Someone there came with something. She may not have known how she was going to use it, but as the Lord came in she knew what to do, and the odour filled the house. It was there just as ointment, but used as the Lord came in there was an odour that filled the house. I think we have had some experiences like that in our time, we have had a sense that the Lord has given a touch, and I think we should be exercised that we know that touch oftener, and that the odour permeates us and remains with us in the way of vitality and freshness.

F.M.K. Would you expect that we have answered to the way He has begged the Father to send another Comforter, the Spirit of truth? Is way made for the Lord to come as we are in the blessing of that?

R.T. Yes, I think the intimacy with the Spirit makes way for it. That is seen in Genesis 24; the intimacy between Rebecca and the servant made way for Isaac to take her and she became his wife. So the Spirit is with us for ever, He is there all the time, to be turned to, to be known in our individual exercises. There is something special, I think, in this "I am coming to you". The Spirit would be in it in a very marked way. But the Lord came in in those forty days as if to accustom them to the fact that while He was not to be seen with them every day, He would accustom them to expect Him to come in and go out. So in faith we would come together like that, that the Lord may come among us and leave something definite that would maintain us.

J.C.E. Would one thing that the Lord deposited here be some fresh impression of the Father, not only the knowledge of the Father but the way the Father would act? He says He would not leave them orphans.

R.T. Yes, what a comfort! I think as the Lord comes in He would always meet the state that is there. As we are expecting Him and as we are ready He will go beyond that, He will leave something additional. As you say, here it is in relation to the Father. He opens up a whole new area to them, so it is not only what we know as we

come together, but I think as the Lord comes He gives a touch that is fresh and living and it would maintain us.

J.C.E. In chapter 21 He had to regulate them by bringing in a touch as to His lordship, did He not?

R.T. Yes, He would always meet the state that is there, but as we are in faith about it He would give us something fresh. Even as to scriptures which we have read so often, the attitude of mind should be with us that the Lord would give a fresh touch, and that is to remain with us and maintain us in the vitality that is needed in our day.

E.P. Why do you think that in the latter part of the section you read in John 14 the Lord goes on to what is individual: "He that has my commandments and keeps them" (v 21)? We expect the Lord when we assemble, and I wondered why from verse 21 it is so individual.

R.T. I think He comes down to that. Here the Lord is looking down the dispensation; so it is not only when we are together but it is a question, as it says, of "he it is that loves me", "he that loves me shall be loved by my Father, and I will love him". It is as if the Lord cannot stay away, that there are persons who are precious to Him and He says, "and I will love him and will manifest myself to him". If there is affection for Him He will never leave you without guidance. I think that experiencing this would cause us to be gathered with the brethren, do you?

E.P. Yes, I do. You spoke about state, He comes to the state that exists. I wondered whether that state is found in the aggregate of the exercises of the brethren. So that I am responsible to contribute to it.

R.T. Yes, that side is always there; and there is another side to it which John 20 shows, that the Lord makes the most of the state that is there. If you are in a better state than I am, as together I may get the advantage of your state. The Lord appeared to Mary, the rest of them had gone home, but what He finds with Mary He accredits to the whole when He says, "go to my brethren". So it would

encourage us that as we come together we expect Him; the state changes as He comes in.

C.R.B. Were the forty days a pattern for normal Christianity?

R.T. Say something about them please.

C.R.B. Does the way in which the reality of Jesus living is stressed in connection with them show that as living He would give us some fresh entrance into the whole sphere of life of which He is the centre?

R.T. Yes, "to whom also he presented himself living, after he had suffered, with many proofs". He has died, He has been into the grave, these things affect us, but He presented Himself with many proofs. I think these proofs remain in the history of the testimony and they are to stimulate us, encourage us to come together; and, as you say, it would be normal Christianity. During those days He came in and He went out; so they came together not for a social event but because it had been established that He came in, and they looked forward to that. Would you say that?

C.R.B. Yes, and can you just enlarge on that a little as to how we experience it?

R.T. I think it is something to be experienced. In our gatherings when we are reading a book, we go through the chapters and there is certain doctrine in each chapter that should always be in our minds - the doctrine is always there - but the Lord may turn the whole thing through some touch that comes in. Would you say that?

C.R.B. Yes, and the Spirit would keep us expectant as to it, that even while we are speaking about a scripture, we are looking for the way the Lord will give a touch which perhaps will make some particular verse stand out as it were in letters of gold, do you think?

R.T. Yes, and it is that that matters in a meeting. It is not what we may have in our own minds; what matters is a touch that the Lord may impart. I only suggest these things so that an attitude of mind like this might be promoted among us and that we are ready to follow the touch that He may bring in.

R.L. He says to some, as to searching the Scriptures that they might have eternal life, but ye will not come to me that ye might have life (see John 5: 39). Is that necessary for coming into the living character of what we have?

R.T. Yes, I think it is vital otherwise we decline and fall back on something else to keep things going, but the centre of all is that we come together and we expect Him and He comes, and He leaves something that we are prepared to give ourselves to, and follow up too.

C.C.I. It is characteristic of the whole dispensation. I was wondering whether the Lord does not give an impression of His direct relations with the assemblies in the seven churches in the Revelation, giving to each some distinctive personal impression of Himself. So that at the present moment there are overcomers that result from His direct relations in manifestations among us, do you think?

R.T. Yes; as we said earlier, He speaks there as to the state, but He leaves a promise that would help the overcomer to be freshly committed to the way He was going.

S.D.K.R. Do you get some thought of it in the Song of Songs? It says, "My beloved put in his hand by the hole of the door; and my bowels yearned for him. I rose up to open to my beloved; And my hands dropped with myrrh, And my fingers with liquid myrrh, Upon the handles of the lock", chap 5: 4,5. Is that something left by the touch?

R.T. Yes; she was a bit slow in getting it, was she not? That scripture would bring home to us that He is far more ready to leave an impression with us than we are to receive it. But as she went to the lock of the door, as you say, she found he had been there and had left something that quickly restored her. There would be a touch like that with Thomas in John 20: he thought, what is the use of going, he thought things were finished, but he is like what you refer to, the Lord left something and it came to him eventually. So the next time he says "My Lord and my God" (v 28). What you say

would encourage us that the Lord is far more ready to impart than we are to expect Him.

F.M.K. Is there something affecting about what Luke says: "to whom also he presented himself living, after he had suffered", Acts 1: 3? That affected Thomas, did it not?

R.T. Yes, "after he had suffered": what a presentation of Himself this must have been as He came in and showed them His hands and His side and says, "Peace be to you". He meets the anxiety that is there to make way for something else, He is ready to go further. So here He presented Himself living. He would confirm them that they were in touch with a living glorious Personage and these proofs would remain among them; and they remain among us, the proofs remain among us in the history of the testimony to encourage us to proceed with meetings like these.

R.L. Does it raise the challenge as to whether we are really longing for His presence? You have spoken of Mary; she was not happy without Him. Is it a question whether we are finding our whole joy and life in relation to His presence?

R.T. Yes. Well, these things test us today. We may be content with what is past. The disciples went to their own homes, perhaps saying, Well, we have had some years with Him, we have something, our sins are forgiven, we can look back on happier times; but that was not going to do for Mary. She wanted a living Person and she found Him. He says to her "Mary". She turns round and had all that she wanted and far more. So it would be a word for us today, that we are not just content to look back on things and feel that the present day is only breakdown. Mary had affections which would not be satisfied with out Him. I think the Lord will minister to those affections.

F.C.M. Would that link with verse 18, "I will not leave you orphans"? The Lord seems to count on His own being in the conditions and longing of orphans here.

R.T. Yes, that is right; from this point of view we should feel orphanage. To Esther and Ruth orphanage was a very real thing,

and it speaks in the Psalm of forgetting thy father's house. That is felt, is it not, that we are without public support? We are very liable to fall back on doctrine that we know, but what is going to maintain us is the faith in our souls that "I am coming to you"; "I will not leave you orphans". The Lord feels the breakdown more than we do, and He knows that we are exposed, but He rewards it with a touch, a visit from Himself.

E.C.M. Would what the Lord said to Paul, "what I shall appear to thee in" (see Acts 26: 16), have a bearing on it?

R.T. Yes, that scripture was in mind as to what was going to continue through the dispensation. As was said, those appearances would be a pattern of how things were going to continue. So it was not only that He appeared to Paul on the Damascus road, but it says, "and of what I shall appear to thee in". So things develop through these comings in, do they not? There should be growth with us. What would you say?

E.C.M. Yes, I thought that. When he refers to it first he says, "have I not seen Jesus our Lord?", 1 Cor 9: 1. I take it that he saw the Lord in the condition in which He was in after He suffered and was glorified.

R.T. What assurance to have in our souls that the Lord came in and went out! Who can shake that? There may be many things come into your life that you have doubts about, but it is as real as conversion, that the Lord came in and left something, and who can shake it? The Lord means us, I think, to be regulated by these comings in and goings out.

E.H.W. So that there are living conditions. He says, "because I live ye also shall live". Would that bring in the growth you have just spoken of?

R.T. Yes, it emphasises that we are not left to our own resources, we are orphans but we are not left to that side of things only: "because I live ye also shall live". The continuance of the local position being maintained in freshness is because He is living.

E.H.W. And would you say that the Lord has His own joy in coming to us from time to time?

R.T. Yes. Why did He remain for forty days? He must have had His joy in coming in and going out. He was not seen by all, but the Lord had joy, as you say, in coming in and finding them together. It is as if He says, They are expecting Me. And what He was ready to unfold to them!

E.H.W. Would you say that, together with what we are saying, we need to see what there is for the Lord Himself in it?

R.T. Yes, that is something that we should think about, what there is for the Lord in our comings together, but that will flow out of this experience, that as we come together and as He leaves something, I think it will result in something for Him. As was said about Thomas, it promotes a note of worship: "My Lord and my God".

B.W.W. In relation to Thomas, his reaction to what the disciples tell him was seemingly very negative; "I will not believe", but he is there the next time. Would that be an encouragement not only to enjoy what we have but to speak of it to others even if the reception is seemingly negative?

R.T. Yes, we do not want to be discouraged through first reactions; we all may have times of being down and feeling that things are not as they should be. Thomas felt that - you can have a lot of sympathy with him in a sense - but the Spirit is there to encourage us to move. The Lord does not come in and say, Thomas, you said this or that, but the Lord comes in with a presentation of Himself, and for Thomas the whole ground is covered; he says "My Lord and my God".

A.A.B. So the word "I am coming to you" carries the thought of the Lord coming when conditions are normal amongst the brethren, and also would you say when they are subnormal?

R.T. I think it is the Lord's attitude throughout the whole dispensation; whether normal or abnormal, His attitude remains the same.

A.A.B. Yes, but in particular the coming when things are normal seems to involve that He comes to where love is: "If ye love me keep my commandments ... He that has my commandments and keeps them, he it is that loves me", and "If any one love me, he will keep my word". Is there a moral side to our experiencing the blessedness of the Lord's coming?

R.T. There is, and I think we should think of what is normal rather than what is abnormal. Abnormal means that it does not happen very often; the normal thing is that these persons love Him and, as you say, that encourages the Lord to come in and He comes to where He is loved. He is shut out in some places, and yet sovereignly He can make an entrance, He can do things, but here He comes to where He is loved and the response is very quick, would you say, as He comes in?

A.A.B. Yes; it is a great comfort though that He comes when things are subnormal, otherwise all would be gone, would it not? That is, as you say, He comes sovereignly. Even to Ephesus He expresses these same words: "I am coming to thee", Rev 2: 5.

R.T. Yes, but then if He comes to what is abnormal His desire would be to leave it normal. Thomas would show us that, He does not say to Thomas, Why were you not here last week? A presentation of the Lord Himself appeals to the work of God in the soul, and that gains the ascendancy and it becomes normal. So there is a note of worship immediately that covers all the history.

R.L. In Mark 16 He reproaches them all with their unbelief, but He adjusts things. When coming into what is not normal He adjusts things, does He not?

R.T. The Lord does not expect, and we should not expect, what is abnormal to continue. If it is abnormal it should be very short-lived; it should not continue. The Lord coming in would be that the scene is changed and the brethren are united in response to Him.

C.R.B. If there is anything needing adjustment, does the Lord not do that by the presentation of Himself without necessarily a word being said about the adjustment?

R.T. Yes, I thought that came into this. The Lord is pin-pointing that as to Thomas, and the mount of transfiguration I always think shows that. Peter was going to build three tabernacles but is adjusted through the Father's voice: "This is my beloved Son", Matt 17: 5. So we should not expect what is abnormal to remain throughout the meeting. As the Lord comes in He is capable of appealing to His own work in any soul and that would result in a change immediately and there would be normal conditions in the meeting, would you think?

C.R.B. Yes, I think that is our experience. Do you think we get a touch of that in the Revelation? In the very midst of the salutations in chapter 1 there seems to be a divine speaking suddenly introduced: "I am ... the Almighty" (v 8), and that is really the manifestation that governs the seven assemblies, is it not? The Lord just gives a special touch which remains. That is to be the character of every meeting, is it not?

R.T. Yes, and His word to Laodicea in chapter 3 - If you open the door I will come in. Maybe you only open it a little bit, but He says, "if any one ... open the door, I will come in unto him and sup with him, and he with me" (v 20). The whole Laodicean state is changed there. I think these things would encourage us to expect the change, and a quick change, to what is normal and what is vital and what is living in response to Him.

G.A.P. Is that seen in verse 20: "In that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you"? Would that involve the affections?

R.T. Yes, I think in what we are saying there is an underlying tribute to the Spirit's service to maintain normal living affections for Christ that make way for Him as He comes in. "In that day" would be the Spirit's day. In the exercises that we have to go through the Spirit would be with us so that there is what is vital for Christ maintained through His gracious service.

F.M.K. Should we make way for any subjectminded person thus to be found with us to experience something of this?

R.T. Well, we would welcome anyone who loves the Lord, especially any interested person. It says "if ye love me"; that is a vital link in the soul. We would desire every lover to be present, would we not?

R.L. He has a word personally for each one. Is that not what we need to feel? You have spoken of meetings like this, but we want to feel the word personally, this word in adjusting things. To Peter it was "Follow thou me". There is to be a response with me.

R.T. Yes, the Lord comes down to that and He would speak to us all. So none of us should say we are young, we are old, or sick, none of us should feel these things hindering us in the assembly. The Lord comes in and He appeals to what is of Himself in us and He has the ability to quicken that and help us to rise above what may have hindered us when we came.

D.J.H. What would you say as to the mutual side in Acts 10 where Peter says "us who have eaten and drunk with him after he arose from among the dead" (v 41)?

R.T. That is a very fine expression. It refers to the establishment of things. He appeared to all the apostles. Each of the apostles had his own distinctive appearing. So the dispensation was set up with abundant witness and testimony, and as you say, there was the mutual side, that the Lord enjoyed their company as much as they enjoyed His.

D.J.H. Yes. It was not that He was eating and drinking with them but they were eating and drinking with Him; they were sharing what He was enjoying as out of death after having suffered.

R.T. It brings out the distinctive place that the assembly has, that there is an easy flow between Christ and the assembly. What ground we are brought into, still in bodies of flesh and blood! We are still in circumstances where we get depressed, but as we touch assembly ground, in the occasions of gathering together, there is a mutual easy flow of things. It brings home to us how near this vessel is to Christ.

F.M.K. Is the apostle labouring for this in Corinth in anticipation of one coming in and falling on his face? Is that power to be seen there despite what conditions there might be?

R.T. What you say brings to mind that the apostle introduced the Supper there. You might say, was there a state for it? Well, I think the apostle introduced the Supper there to meet the state in a sense. They were reigning as kings, Paul even was shut out at Corinth, but he introduces the Supper as though those emblems would have an appeal to the affections of the brethren that would provide an atmosphere for the Lord to come in in a normal way and relationship be enjoyed.

C.R.B. Do the appearings in Corinthians show how the experiences of the forty days are to be continued? Most if not all those appearings would have been from the glory, would they not?

R.T. Yes, I was thinking of that in reading it. We might have said that those appearings during the forty days were inaugural, but then, in Corinthians 15, you have the Lord glorified. Some of the appearings were very distinctive which would be peculiar to the apostles but I thought that "Then he appeared to above five hundred brethren at once, of whom the most remain until now" would possibly encourage us in our day, would you say?

C.R.B. Yes, I would think so, and they were not the twelve, were they? It says that He appeared to the twelve during the forty days.

Above five hundred brethren: I think someone said that Paul would have made it his business to seek them out to get an impression from each as to what the Lord had said and what the Lord had done as He appeared to them.

R.T. Yes, that is very fine. As coming into a place, you think, what has the Lord deposited here, what has the Lord left in one locality and another? He has left something. In each place where the saints are - it may be few, outwardly small and despised - the Lord has left something and, as you say, it would be fine to get in touch with it, to identify yourself along with it and know what the Lord has left there.

I think those appearings as He comes amongst us are cumulative.

You could look back on Abraham's history and Jacob's history and see that the Lord came in and that the next time it was cumulative. It was circumcision one time and there was a gap, and He comes in again and there is a movement, there is a gap; He comes in again and there is a movement. These things would be pattern for us, that the Lord coming in making Himself known is cumulative and there should be something additional left which grows in the locality.

C.R.B. After many of the appearances that you refer to in Genesis men built an altar, and that is to be the effect in every locality is it not, that as the Lord appears an altar is to be built? There is something that remains that is rock-like in relation to the service of God .

R.T. I think that is good. We should think of that; do we build an altar or do we just say it was a fine meeting? Building an altar would consolidate what the Lord has left among us. If the Lord has left something in your soul and you have built an altar you cannot go back, the thing remains there, you can only go forward. You may stay stationary for a bit but there is something there the Lord has left in your soul and He means you to go forward from that.

C.B. Would you say that He has left the Supper with us, with the assembly, and that that garrisons us, rallies our affections?

R.T. Yes, that I think is why you get it referred to in Corinth where there was much to keep the Lord away. It kept Paul away to a certain extent, but the presentation of the emblems there is to rally every true lover. There must be something wrong if a person is not remembering the Lord and claims to be a lover. So the emblems are calculated to be an appeal to us and I think that appeal would change our state. It would link with what was said as to loving Him and keeping His commandments, that there is already easy access for normal relations.

A.A.B. I have been impressed recently with John's word in the epistle: "let us not love with word, nor with tongue, but in deed and in truth", 1 John 3: 18. What the Lord is looking for, do you think, is proven love, underlying the keeping of His word and having His commandments and keeping them?

R.T. It stands out as all the more real in the background of profession, and would it not be right that a person's love for Christ would manifest itself in remembering Him and working out the truth?

A.A.B. Yes; I think that as soon as we get the sense of His liability to come on any occasion we would not miss it. I am coming involves His liability to come, does it not?

R.T. Yes, He is more ready to come than we are to expect Him. As was said earlier, in referring to the Song of Songs, what a rebuke it must have been to her soul and yet how graciously administered; when she touched the lock it was dropping with liquid myrrh. I think these things are very close to us and have been in our experience, but then as here He is able for five hundred brethren at once. Not one of them went away without some fresh impression of the Lord and, as has been said, it would be fine to seek it out and to get the gain of it from one and another.

E.C.M. There was something distinctive in Paul receiving from the Lord and delivering to the saints. Could you say a word about that: "I received from the Lord"?

R.T. Well, it is in line with what we are saying about Corinthians 15, it was from the glory. It brings into relief the distinctive place that Paul has in relation to assembly light, that the Lord from the glory appeared to him and He continued to appear to him. He gave him this light as to the Supper, showing the living Person that we are linked with while we gather together in His absence.

E.C.M. I just thought it would show the distinctive place that the Supper should have in relation to the assembly, that Paul puts it like a jewel in its right setting.

R.T. Yes. We speak carefully, but we expect lovers to be remembering the Lord.

A.A.B. When you speak of the Lord leaving something, it may not be the setting out of things in terms (which, of course, it is in certain instances) but it may be by way of an inkling of something - "Why

persecutest thou me?", Acts 22: 7. The Lord left that in the soul of Paul, did He not? The truth of the mystery was in it.

R.T. What you say is my feeling, that it is generally an inkling of something - "Was not our heart burning in us as he spoke to us on the way?", Luke 24: 32. He had interpreted in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself. A lot depends, as you said earlier, on our state; the Lord is ready to go further sometimes than we are - "he made us though he would go farther". Our faith is not just up to things at times, and the Lord graciously leaves an inkling. I think persons who are concerned would follow that up so that there is something more deposited, and if you follow it up and I do not, the next time we get the benefit of some one following it up, and the Lord would add to that. Would you think that that is how it works?

A.A.B. Yes, indeed.

S.D.K.R. Would you think that the reading following the Supper is an opportunity to follow it up?

R.T. Yes, without making it too hard and fast; that is something we should think about, but we should not leave it there, it should still be prayed about, and it should still come into the ministry meeting and be in our daily exercises. The word used, 'an inkling', is good; it is not the whole thing but there is a germ left there that the spiritual and exercised would follow up.

C.R.B. So that whatever book is being read, whether on Lord's day or during the week, the Spirit would keep us alert as to how the Lord would enlarge the impression or experience He may have already given, do you think?

R.T. Yes, we should leave the door open for that - "I am coming to you". We read a book and most of us may have an outline of the doctrine of the chapter, but what we are looking for is the Lord to give a touch and that is what remains with us.

C.R.B. Does the very word 'appearing' seem to involve what is sudden? It seems to be what Paul emphasises in Corinthians - He

appeared. Do you think it would keep us alert at any time as to how the Lord is going to appear? If we are not watchful we may miss it.

R.T. Yes, I think that is good: it is He appeared *to*. It was not like something mysterious or miraculous coming in and creating something, but He appeared *to*; there was an atmosphere there which made the appearing easy.

A.A.B. "Let me now turn aside and see this great sight", Exod 3: 3.

It gives us liberty to be turned aside under the stress of an appearing, the spiritual stress which is created by the Lord appearing at the Supper; I do not mean in the sense of tension or anything of that kind, but how that word would work out what He says in John, "because I live ye also shall live".

R.T. So that helps to unite the saints; it gives us another view of difficulties. The problems will still have to be settled, but if we could get a view like this a lot of things would disappear quickly.

A.T. Mary, when the Lord appeared to her in John 20 gets this inkling from Him, so when she goes to the disciples she does not at first say what He said to her, she says "that she had seen the Lord".

It is something to see the Lord first and she can then say what He said, but then is there not immediate action by all in shutting the doors for fear of the Jews?

R.T. Yes. Nobody questioned her; Peter did not say, What you Mary, you have seen the Lord? They all believed it. It shows the marked effect upon her that the appearing had. They were all set aglow when she said she had seen the Lord. It brings out the substantiality of what the Lord may leave in a soul and how it is credited and spreads into the whole locality.

R.L. Would it be a question whether I really received something? Where you began reading in chapter 15 Paul says, "For I delivered to you, in the first place, what also I had received". Is it a question of our consciously receiving something?

R.T. Yes, that brings home to us the substantiality of what the Lord may leave among us; it is not something that is unreal. Peter says,

we have not followed cunningly imagined fables (see 2 Pet 1: 16).

But as you say, he received from the Lord, it is something that is left and deposited there, and it is to be followed up and it is to be rock in the soul.

A.H.M. You have mentioned much about the Lord leaving something: why does He do it, please?

R.T. In grace He leaves something to improve our state, to confirm us if there are doubts, as with the two on the way to Emmaus. There are many instances where the Lord comes down to the state to meet that side of things. Then there is also the other side; "I ascend to my Father and your Father, and to my God and your God". I think the Lord does it all in view of what He says in John 13: "part with me".

What are your own thoughts about it?

A.H.M. Well, we become so occupied with Him that we cannot do without Him.

R.T. That is right. We were speaking about Mary, she is just an example of that, she could not do without Him. The Lord does it to bring us on to His ground, and then if we have to go to administer certain things we will administer from the ground that He has brought us on to. So He breathes into them and says "Receive the Holy Spirit: whosoever sins ye remit, they are remitted to them", John 20: 22. They do that because they are on new ground; and administration would flow from that line of things, that we are doing it as drawing on our experience of being with Him.

C.C.I. Would you allow 2 Corinthians 3 to enter into this matter of appearing? It says, "But we all, looking on the glory of the Lord, with unveiled face, are transformed" (v 18). Would that imply that the Lord has His own distinctive way of manifesting Himself?

R.T. Yes, I think so. That scripture would bring out our expectancy: "we all looking". Leah was looking, was she not? Leah was very desirous of Jacob, and what comes in from the looking is that something comes in for God - Reuben (sonship) and Levi (united).

These things come in and they remain in the way of positive fruit

that the Lord has been there. With Jacob there is a secret line of things which bears lasting fruit.

G.W.E. And it results in praise: is that not the divine end in all these visitations?

R.T. Yes, what the Lord leaves is not for us to spread ourselves here but to accustom us to a spiritual realm where everything is for God.

A.T. Pressure comes in but the praise flows. Leah was hated but the pressure does not hinder her from praising, does it? Is it like the apostle in prison with Silas?

R.T. There is a secret line there that you cannot destroy and we are to know that, know that in the local company. Authorities may not grant us rooms and there may be restrictions about certain things, but there is a certain line of things there that nobody can stop, and it is evident in fruit. Now that fruit is to be seen in our localities.

J.C.E. Is there some kind of obligation on us to share what the Lord deposits with us? The working out of it may require wisdom but this apostolic line of receiving and conveying, delivering, seems a very determinate kind of thing. It may not be the same extent with us but I wondered if the principle still remained.

R.T. I am sure it does. As was said, what was left in those five hundred would be in circulation, and you get a touch of it at the end of Luke, He appeared to Simon and He appeared to the two on the way to Emmaus. There were those distinctive touches but they all seemed to flow together, they are put in circulation and they make way for the Lord to open up more.

J.C.E. I thought perhaps that was one reason why the mother named the children here in Genesis. There is that which she is able to identify and others get the benefit of it.

R.T. That is good and she named them well, did she not?

J.C.E. Yes, every time their name was mentioned the thought behind it was prominent.

R.T. Very good, so that there is something left that is trustworthy, something left that can maintain things in the Lord's absence until He comes again, and there is something fresh.

C.R.B. Why does Leah refer to Jehovah or God in connection with all her sons except Levi?

R.T. I do not know; you say something about it please.

C.R.B. I thought perhaps you had some impression of how it linked with having to do with divine Persons directly in relation to these matters. A name is something definite, is it not, not just some vague sort of impression in the air?

R.T. Yes; so that she says, "for now my husband will love me". She does not draw her resources from any other place; there is something there that is of the husband, that is of Christ; and as was said, every time it is named it would draw attention to something. There is a secret line maintained all the time that supports us at a spiritual and true level, would you say?

C.R.B. Yes. it is a great matter to be conscious that Jehovah has looked and Jehovah has heard, praising Jehovah, and then with the later sons God is brought into the matter. There seems to be something by way of enrichment of what is for God.

R.T. Yes, that is good. So that orphan feeling that we began with would cause us to be dependent. Leah had nothing from one point of view, she was not so attractive as Rachel, she had nothing publicly to command interest; that would be our position, dependent on God for support. So she says "Jehovah has looked upon my affliction".

E.H.W. There is not only something left with Leah but it comes out, it was expressed. Do you think that should be normal with us, that if something is left with us, even today, it should be expressed, we should know what it is and be able to speak about it?

R.T. Yes, and we should know the secret of how it has come in. What she said is interesting: "Jehovah has looked upon my affliction", "Jehovah has heard I am hated". She knew the reason for

it. She was not boasting that she had some ability that others did not have, but she knew a line of things in looking to God and how fully it was answered. It would be like a secret to us here of how the testimony is going through, as we are dependent upon God.

F.M.K. Has it in mind building for God - "which two did build the house of Israel" Ruth 4: 11? Is what is given to us for building up assembly features?

R.T. Yes. We cannot claim anything; from our own side we are very weak and unattractive, we have a history, a great deal of history, that may depress us, but here someone gets beyond all the history and says, Jehovah has looked and Jehovah has heard. She knew how to get in touch with God; and how readily He comes in and, as you say, expands to building the whole house of Israel. It would encourage us to commit ourselves in dependence to look for the Lord and He will not fail us.

E.C.M. Would you extend the secret service, the personal service of Jacob? I am thinking of your earlier reference to Hosea: "Israel served for a wife, and for a wife he kept sheep", chap 12: 12. The sheep were not the objective but the wife. Would that be the fruit of the secret service, the personal service?

R.T. I thought that Jacob emphasised that side of things, that it was not the Father or the Spirit exactly bringing the assembly in but the Lord's own personal service to her. He went through those things to have her, and now, as glorified, the same service is going on that there might be a maintenance of freshness and vitality and living fruitful conditions, do you think?

E.C.M. Yes, I go with that fully.

R.L. The way things have come to us would affect us; He became poor that we might become enriched.

R.T. It would indeed. I think the Lord would just encourage us at this time that, as He comes in, things change. As we have said about Thomas, as He comes in all is changed. We need to think like that, there can be a quick change-over, and as has been said about

Leah, we are looking to God for it to come in. So we pray at the beginning of our meetings; it is not just to be a formal thing. We sing a hymn and we pray, we are looking to God that the scripture read, or the impressions that come in, may expand into fruitfulness, and that a touch may be left among us that will cause an altar to be built, that will cause something to be left substantially in the locality for the divine pleasure.

MAIDSTONE

26 August 1978

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AWAKE TO THE HOLY SPIRIT

D.Andrew Burr

Exodus 27: 20,21; Matthew 25: 1 -7; Zechariah 4: 1-3

We will remember the occasion when the disciples had to be wakened to see the glory of Christ. It says "having fully awoke up they saw his glory", Luke 9: 32. We recall too the word of Paul to Ephesus: "Wake up, thou that sleepest, and arise up from among the dead, and the Christ shall shine upon thee", Eph 5: 14. I wonder if we might put alongside those thoughts a desire to be more awake to the presence and power of the Holy Spirit. I am particularly impressed with this section in Zechariah in that connection, but the other scriptures seem related to it.

It was a command at the outset of Israel's history that they should bring oil for the light. It was a daily matter. We do well to remember that we have a responsibility to bring the Holy Spirit into the course of every day. I do not wish to make the Holy Spirit just a supply, because He is a glorious Person; we must always remember that. It is very easy to tax Him for our needs, so we need to remember all the time that He is a glorious Person. But He is also the Spirit of wisdom; that is, I believe, He is a great resource. He has great resources, but I believe He is a great resource in His person. We have to make use of that resource; that is a responsibility. These two sides are presented in these passages.

Zechariah is a very interesting prophet to read: his prophecy was apparently rejected but if you read his prophecy you will find that there are many thoughts in it that come into other prophecies. He seems to be a great gatherer up of God's mind. He spoke in a day of recovery but the recovery was faltering. I think it is very apt, therefore, that he should have this vision of the Holy Spirit. Verse 6 makes clear that the Holy Spirit is referred to. The vision does not present responsibility; it presents the resource in the Holy Spirit apart from our responsibility - this wonderful bowl. It says "a lamp-stand all of gold, and a bowl upon the top of it". Zechariah is full of very

bright images, very dramatic images, and I think this is one of the striking ones, referring to the unfailing resource that may be drawn on in a dark day to give light and to give power. Think of the exalted character of the Holy Spirit, and everything that comes to us through Him! "A lamp-stand all of gold, and a bowl upon the top of it". What a great reservoir there is in the Holy Spirit! It has not been reduced by our failures. It cannot be tainted in any way. The lamp-stand had not been debased in the dark day in which this prophet spoke. It does not actually say so, but I am sure we could infer that the bowl was full. God had said to another prophet at the same time: "The word ... and my Spirit, remain among you", Hag 2: 5. Here we have it, the Holy Spirit presented gloriously, and the fulness of resource that is associated with Him. And then the fulness of supply too: "seven lamps and seven pipes to the lamps". There is no possibility at all of the supply being interrupted; there is one reserve after another by which these lamps draw upon the resource in the bowl.

There is another dark day in Matthew 25, and here a question of responsibility arises. The scripture in Zechariah shows that the resource has not failed, but here were five virgins who had failed to draw upon it. I believe that is the test for us. There is no question about the supply available in the Holy Spirit but have we drawn upon it? Have we oil in our torches? That is a question for us all. I feel searched by it. I often have to be aroused, and have very little. So, if our attention is drawn to the glory of Christ as the Bridegroom, this question is also raised, do I have the resource in the Holy Spirit that will enable me to embrace and receive Him?

The thought of sleep is mentioned in both these scriptures. Zechariah was asleep and the virgins were asleep. Zechariah was perhaps not aware of what was available. If he had been awake he would have seen it, but he had to be awakened. He was awakened by an angel, "as a man that is wakened out of his sleep".

I believe, beloved, that God would do that in His grace so that we might have this sight of the glory of what is available in a day such as we are in, and which will be with us until the end. "He may be with you for ever, the Spirit of truth", John 14: 16. How wonderful

that is! He is the great Guide into the things of God (see John 16: 13). "With you for ever"! Beloved, I believe we need to be awakened to just what that assurance really means. I am sure we do draw upon it, but let us have a greater understanding of what it is we are drawing on. On one side it is not a matter of effort but rather of divine supply. But then on the other side, beloved, as that divine grace is before us, let us never forget that we may also fall asleep and may fail, as all these virgins did. Let us awake and draw, like those who had it, on the supply of the Holy Spirit. Let us not forget what God has provided, nor that we have to draw upon it.

This is a simple thought, beloved. I put it alongside what the Lord has already given us about the glory of Christ, and desire that we might be encouraged to see what is available. God has life in view. There were olive trees as well as the lamp-stand. There were also the sons of oil, those who drew upon, and shared the character of, what the bowl speaks of. They represent those in whom the Spirit had worked, those in whom there was something formed of the same character. Beloved, may we be awake to see the resource we have and be concerned to maintain the supply from it. The resource is the Holy Spirit; it is our responsibility to draw upon it.

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THIRSTY CHILDREN

The history of Ishmael, when just in his teens, shows us how God's mercy met him at a time when he was likely to die from thirst in the desert. Scripture records that "God hath heard the voice of the lad there, where he is", so he must have prayed. This is an encouragement to children to pray to God, now known as Father, 'just where they are'. He will show the resources which He has to meet the need of the moment. He showed to Ishmael's mother a well of water which they had not seen and which enabled them to fill their flask and drink. Remember that "The Lord is near".

There may have been children on board a ship nearing the coast of Brazil many years ago, and which was delayed so long that the supply of fresh water was exhausted. The only hope of the crew and passengers was to signal a passing ship asking for help. Imagine their surprise when, on doing so, they were told just to let down their buckets. This they did - and found fresh water! The great river Amazon sends its waters hundreds of miles out into the salt ocean so that the answer to the needs of the voyagers was around them all the time. This reminds us of the words of Scripture, "Before they call, I will answer" . Sad it is that God also had to say, "I called and there was none to answer".

The water to quench the thirst of the Hebrew children in the desert came from a rock which was always ready for them to turn to. This rock was a sign, or type, of the Lord Jesus who satisfies the needs and the longings of our souls. Scripture says simply, "now the rock was the Christ". Wonderful it is that in the depths of His sufferings at Calvary He should cry "I thirst". In grace He identified Himself with the very soldiers who crucified Him, by drinking of their own "vinegar". Earlier He would not take the medicated drink offered to Him as a relief. Wondrous Saviour!

The last exhortation of the Bible is, "and let him that is athirst come, he that will, let him take the water of life freely". Do you do so?

J.C.Evershed