

A
WORD
IN ITS
SEASON

1st Series

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Contents

"THE PRESENT TIME"

GOING UP TO THE HOUSE OF JEHOVAH

DIVINE CLOTHING

ENQUIRING CHILDREN

"THE PRESENT TIME"

Romans 3: 21-26; 8: 15-18; 11: 5,6 Ephesians 3: 8-10

N.T.M. These scriptures all contain the expression "the present time", or alternatively the word "now"; they are therefore applicable to us to be exploited. They are not future - some scriptures are: the redemption of our bodies is future - but these scriptures are among the many which give us some understanding of what our portion is even at the present time. It is not to be despised in any sense. We say it is "the day of small things" (Zech 4: 10), which publicly it is, but it is also a day with great possibilities, a day when certain experiences can be known and entered into, which I am sure we would like increasingly liberty to do. I have suggested the first scripture because it gives us a wonderful foundation to rest on, because we are in the day when the mercy-seat is set forth and God's righteousness is shown forth: "the shewing forth of his righteousness in the present time". It is a thing that Israel does not have in quite the same way. God left Himself open to challenge in the old dispensation as to how He could righteously pass by the sins of the Old Testament saints and not bring them into judgment. The mercy-seat was hidden in those days in the recesses of the tabernacle, but now there is a shewing forth because of the work of Jesus, "whom God has set forth a mercy-seat ... for the shewing forth of his righteousness". It is set forth, brought on to view, so that we can approach with the fullest assurance. The work is not in prospect, the work has been done, has been completed. The precious, blessed, matchless work of Christ has been completed. I suppose the emblems on the table and especially the cup give us that assurance.

L.McF. So we are in the greatest dispensation there has been; in that way we are distinctly favoured, do you think?

N.T.M. Yes, we are very favoured. Perhaps we do not enter enough into the possibilities of the day.

H.G.H. Is the meaning of the word 'righteousness' in verse 21 the same as in verse 25?

N.T.M. "Righteousness of God" and "shewing forth of his righteousness": I thought so.

H.G.H. I just wanted it confirmed. It is wonderful that God being who He is has the right to forgive sins. What love is manifested in that!

N.T.M. Yes indeed; and the righteousness is manifested: it is not in prospect, the work is done. Some things remain hidden but this is not hidden. I think it is to give us assurance and liberty, in the service of praise especially, but bearing of course upon peace in our souls and the whole manner of our life. It is an inheritance we have.

J.A.P. Do we need help to see that the gospel is a current matter in heaven? And is it right to say that the blood is on the mercy-seat in that sense? John, in chapter 19 of his gospel, says of himself, "And he who saw it bears witness". Mr Darby said that the blood of Jesus being shed was a current thing in John's mind. I think we have treated the gospel a little historically - which it is of course - but it is a present thing.

N.T.M. That is good. It is "for the shewing forth"; shewing forth is a completed matter. There are no 'ifs' in the gospel; it is established and manifested. One would not like to use the word 'advertised' but there it is for us all to see; it is manifested.

J.A.P. So the words used in the passage we have read are current: "being justified freely by his grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus; whom God has set forth a mercy-seat, through faith in his blood".

N.T.M. That is what I thought. It was not exactly current in Abraham's time, or even in Moses' time; the mercy-seat was hidden. Persons may have been told it was there, they may have been made aware that it was there, but now it is brought out so that persons can see it for themselves.

G.H. Do you have in mind that this present wonderful dispensation has a certain glory, being unique in that things have been manifested, as distinct from any other dispensation?

N.T.M. Yes; the present time is a unique period. While we rightly think of other periods (the patriarchal and all these other periods are very interesting to contemplate), yet there is something very wonderful about the present time. In our rightly acknowledging the public failure and our own failure and the sorrows with which we are alas too familiar, we must not lose the sense that there is still something at the present time which has its own glory.

C.F.D. Does this raise a challenge with us as to the preaching of the word of God? Do we not need to be stimulated and possibly reactivated in the whole matter of the preaching? Especially in this country there is a great need of gift in the preaching, that a full gospel might be presented, so that the work in people might be complete, having in view the securing of persons for the service of God.

N.T.M. Are you thinking of that expression of Paul's, "that through me the proclamation might be fully made", 2 Tim 4: 17? Do you think that we could be a little more enthused with the gospel? The word 'enthusiastic' would perhaps almost fit. When Paul said, "I am not ashamed of the glad tidings" (Rom 1: 16), you can almost read into that that he was thrilled with it.

C.F.D. Woe to me if I preach not (see 1 Cor 9: 16): Paul felt how incumbent the matter of the preaching was upon him. I think you have touched a sensitive point; we need to be revived in our enthusiasm for the glad tidings. Mr Taylor said many years ago in this city, Preach at every opportunity you get.

N.T.M. It may be something that we have somewhat neglected. The enemy always tries to hedge us in.

S.E.H. In some very small localities the preaching may be given up. Would it not be right for the preaching to be continued, where there is just a brother and his wife in a locality for example?

N.T.M. I doubt if it is God's mind that it should be given up, but rather that it should be continued. How it is continued may be a question. It may have to be taken out on to the street, but I think it should be continued. What would you say yourself?

S.E.H. I believe that is right. The testimony in a place would bear on the glad tidings going out from the locality, would you say?

N.T.M. Yes, I would. We have often said that the problems which the social workers work at, spend their whole careers at, are soluble by the gospel because at the root there is always a moral question.

H.G.H. If you and your wife were alone in a locality, would you preach to your wife?

N.T.M. I have preached to two, and speaking soberly, you find the Lord helps you in it.

H.G.H. Perhaps there were three there that needed help.

N.T.M. Very much so!

T.O. It says, "How shall they preach unless they have been sent?" Rom 10: 15. In relation to the smallness of gatherings, and also to enthusiasm, do you feel that, if you have a sense of being sent, the preaching is helped? Could you help us as to how we would make way for being sent to be expressed?

N.T.M. That is a somewhat deep question. The apostles knew they were sent, the Lord actually sent them. They had a known commission from the Lord. If anyone had said to them, What right have you to preach in this place, they could state their credentials.

With ourselves we may shrink to take that ground of being sent directly by the Lord. Some have that experience, but I think most of us probably just take up the work. Maybe we are aware there is a need for the gospel, whether it is among the children of the saints or grown-ups, or in the street; there is a need for it and we take up the work. I suppose if the apostles were amongst us we would gladly hand it over to them.

G.H. In Acts 9, when Saul of Tarsus had been converted, it says, "And straightway in the synagogues he preached Jesus that he is

the Son of God" (v 20). "Straightway": there seemed to be a certain urgency; he felt the need.

N.T.M. Yes; it was a very full preaching - he preached Jesus as the Son of God. I wonder what light must have come into his soul in that short space since he was converted. May be you (T.O.) have more to say, because we want to set young men free to preach.

T.O. I think we are in a slightly different situation in this country, perhaps not on the east coast here, but I feel exercised about an expression of this being manifested in localities. I do not know exactly how it would be set forward. In England persons are invited to preach and that maybe would give them a sense that they were sent; but it tests us when we work it out in a place, not being able to invite a preacher. Local brothers would feel a certain charge laid upon them regarding being sent, and although not apostolic in character, it would still be on their spirits that the brethren needed them and that they answered to that need in serving in the glad tidings.

N.T.M. If you have an invitation it is to be soberly considered. You would not quickly reject it, because it has come from a brother who you could credit was carrying exercise as to it. The assembly does not send out invitations to preach, but a brother does. In Villa Grove, presumably someone has taken up the charge of the gospel, or perhaps two of you, and you have charged yourselves with seeing that the preaching continues, and if there is no one else you will do it. That is the principle.

J.McK. If you do not have faith, do not go and preach. The fruit of the word may not come to light immediately, but I know of an occasion in which only one person was at a preaching by beloved Mr Gill in Canada, who preached widely; he went to this town, a hall was arranged for him, and the only one that came in was the man who owned the hall. Years later Mr Gill received a letter from that person saying that he had been thoroughly converted under his preaching when he was the only listener.

N.T.M. Such things are very interesting and for our encouragement.

K-n.A.O. I was wondering if, particularly at the present time, what Paul says to Timothy is to govern us: "Do the work of an evangelist", 2 Tim 4: 5. We may not have any distinction or gift but we are still to be minded to do that work. Is that right?

N.T.M. That is right. There are no official elders but the principle of eldership is to operate; so the work of the preaching has to be done, someone needs to take it up.

T.E.D. In Luke 15 it is "What man of you", and then "What woman". Would both come into this evangelical activity? I wondered too, as to the rejoicing there, whether that does not express the enthusiasm that you spoke of earlier.

N.T.M. That is interesting; What man? What woman? A brother's wife and all the sisters can support the preaching; it is very encouraging to see their interest if you are preaching, to see the interest in a sister's face. She is helping the meeting on all right.

K.A.K. Is not the work of the preaching more basic and closer to us than we may realise? The scripture says, "with the mouth confession made to salvation", Rom 10: 10. God has ensured that the word is to be propagated by our own confession.

N.T.M. Doing the work of an evangelist is more than the formal preaching. It would perhaps be timely to encourage one another to pray for gift in the preaching, ask the Lord to give you the ability to preach well. The gift of the evangelist in Ephesians is a gift, and there have been men who have been outstandingly gifted in the preaching - perhaps not many relatively. But why should we not be? Gift continues right to the end; it does not run out before the end of the dispensation. The young ones should think about that. Ask the Lord to help you, because souls need to be saved and the house needs to be filled.

J.McK. Does the basic side of the preaching in relation to the preacher manifest his love for souls - a conscious sense that the love of God that took him up has now given him this incentive to go out and bring in other souls and be blessed as he has been blessed? You cannot preach if you do not love those you are preaching to.

N.T.M. Very good. The preaching has been committed into men's hands, not to angels.

J.McK. So we do not set the terms of the preaching; it is a question of going out in faith and of what God will add to the preaching, whether it be thirty, sixty or one hundredfold. This is the principle. I feel we should go out in the preaching even if there are only a few, preaching the word in season and out of season.

N.T.M. When you say going out do you mean out into the open air?

J.McK. The hedges and the highways, and compel them to come in that My house may be filled (see Luke 14: 23). The word of God is what compels them to come in. As you remarked, the basis of righteousness in relation to the kingdom of God is what we preach.

N.T.M. Yes. I thought this scripture shows that you have full authority, there is a full declaration. No part of the gospel is questionable in these days; no part can be challenged because the mercy-seat is now set forth.

G.H. How does the compelling them to come in operate?

N.T.M. It must be moral persuasion of some kind; must it not? I do not know that one could say much more than that - "compel them to come in". You have somehow to make people understand that there is something worthwhile coming for. Then of course it may be that the preacher himself makes it clear in his countenance.

H.J. Would the word 'shining' in 2 Corinthians 4 relate to this "shewing forth"? The apostle speaks about what has shone in our hearts for a shining forth (see v.6).

N.T.M. It may well be that the compelling is linked with the preacher's countenance and his conviction. The first thing is to get the soul under the sound of it, then preach. That is what we did when we were young, we stood outside the room and asked people to come in; and for every fifteen or twenty you asked you might get only one with interest, but still, you are getting persons under the sound of it.

K-n.A.O. I was wondering if we have lost sight of the greatness of the preaching a little; maybe that is something in relation to which we need to be revived. It has been said it is the greatest service we can render.

N.T.M. Yes. It has been said that it is the outstanding feature of the dispensation because it was securing material for the house. As was said earlier, we need to keep the house in view; it is really securing persons for God's honour and praise. Of course, every one who is saved is a tribute to the work of Christ, it is to His honour.

J.A.P. I think our young men in Villa Grove and Indianapolis need to be encouraged; we hear good reports of them visiting one another. God is helping them. Timothy had a good report in both Lystra and Iconium (see Acts 16: 2); I would think he preached in his neighbouring localities, and we do that a little bit between New York and Plainfield. Do you think that should be encouraged?

N.T.M. Yes. There are brothers who preach week after week; they need reviving. It is so easy to become repetitive and also to lose keenness of exercise in relation to it. The idea of the prophetic character of the word comes into the preaching too. I mean it is not just a question of getting any word; it is a question of getting a word that is divinely seen to be needed.

H.G.H. For the company.

N.T.M. For the company and for every individual in it.

J.A.P. I think what you are saying as to the prophetic word in the gospel, would bear expanding. Would that be seen in Luke 4 when the Lord Jesus rose up to preach? He brought to bear on that locality what the issue was.

N.T.M. Yes; and the Spirit alone knows the state of soul of persons. In a way, I suppose a prophetic word is as much to be desired as a gifted expression, because it is timely and it meets the need of the moment, meets the state of soul and the exercise and the circumstances of the moment. It will do quite as much or maybe more than a word which is powerful in its way but missed the mark.

It is like firing a gun; if you hit the target with a twenty-five pounder you are more likely to achieve your result than if you miss it with a one hundred pounder.

J.McK. So the preaching involves everything as to the fulness of the truth. It is not only for sinners; you get the full glad tidings in Ephesians. We have to consider, as you remark, whom we are speaking to, and if we do not know, the Spirit knows, and He gives us the word to preach.

N.T.M. Yes. When we preach we should perhaps be prepared to stand up and in a certain sense let the thoughts come. I suppose it is so with every matter of ministry.

J.McK. You have initially here, as you suggest, the great matter of going out and preaching to men who are supposedly sinners, who have not committed themselves to the truth. It should be a very present exercise in all of our localities that there are those willing to go out and preach and leave the results with God. Paul said, I planted, Apollos watered but God Himself gives the increase. He said, neither is the planter or the waterer anything, but God Himself who gives the increase (see 1 Cor 3: 6,7). I think if we go out in that spirit in dependence on God and the Spirit, we will get results.

N.T.M. I think the Lord will honour it.

J.McK. The Lord said, in regard to that, that the word would not return to Him void but accomplish that for which it is sent (see Isa 55: 11).

G.D.P. Paul saw what was required on Mars hill; he saw the monument to the unknown God and he preached from that (see Acts 17: 23).

N.T.M. Yes, he took account of the circumstances. When you stand on the street corner you see plenty of empty faces, people waiting for the bus. It is not a bad idea to stand by a bus stop; you then have a captive audience. The Lord can delay that bus. There are a lot of practical things to consider; we need to preach where people are. It is not always easy to be heard. But still the Lord will help us

find a way whether it is in the room or on the street. I think both should be maintained.

C.F.D. We are being very practical; we are speaking about the open air preaching; how can this be revived amongst us?

N.T.M. "If two of you shall agree on the earth concerning any matter", Matt 18: 19. You find someone who might be free for half an hour at the same time as you can be free. I think two is good, two is testimony, witness. I would not say it would have to be two if one is able for it, but it is good to have a brother. Are we convicted as to the necessity of it or the need for it? If we are I expect we could manage a quarter of an hour or twenty minutes. Also I think, although it is a side issue, open air preaching makes you feel more real. It makes you feel that you are in Christianity, you have taken up the service of an ambassador, you are nailing up your colours, you are raising your banner. I think we have felt that when we have preached in the open air.

C.F.D. What you are saying is very helpful. Another has said, you might not get converts, there might not be persons there that all of a sudden are affected by what you are saying, but it gives spiritual fibre to those who take the service on. So that should encourage the young men. If you want to develop spiritual fibre, take it on, do you think?

N.T.M. Yes. As you say, that is not the main reason for it but it is a side benefit.

L.McF. The fact that the woman of Samaria went out alone would suggest that we are dealing with something relating to our affections for Christ. If the affections are right there will be this move with us, brothers and sisters alike, do you think?

N.T.M. That is helpful. She went out alone. We would understand, of course, that literally sisters would not go out and preach on the street. I suppose they could give away a tract. But this idea of going out alone shows that she was convinced that she had the answer to her need and her desires and her longings, and that Christ was for all men.

G.H. In regard to the open air preaching, you say it would help you to be more real: do you mean in your love for souls?

N.T.M. Well yes, and in testimony too. You may get a few cat-calls from across the street, you may get people jeering at you, you may get people revving up their car engines so that you cannot be heard; this kind of thing is all in the experience. But there you are, out in the cold world, in the enemy's territory. In the meeting room it is not quite the same, but in the street you are in Satan's area; he will quench it if he can. I think it brings out manhood. It is not the only thing that brings out manhood - assembly sorrows do as well - but I think it does bring out manhood, ability to face the stream.

K.N.P. Would speaking to souls individually have a bearing on this too?

N.T.M. It would, and it may be a very fruitful service. The work of the evangelist probably means that more than the formal preaching.

I would not say it does exclusively, but it is the ability to draw near to a person and to get the conversation round. I do not know what it is like in America, but in England you can always get a conversation going if you talk about the weather. Now it should not be too difficult to swing the conversation round to the One who controls the weather. There are persons who can do that.

J.McK. The Spirit said to Philip, "Approach and join this chariot" (Acts 8: 29), and he had a convert who went on his way rejoicing.

N.T.M. Yes, he was a convert of quality.

K.A.K. What about the gift of evangelism related to the publication or writing of tracts? I was thinking in particular about Paul's ability in writing and am wondering whether this would be seen in our time in writing to persons or in the writing of a tract.

N.T.M. I think it is open to us, open to any one to write a tract, make an appeal.

K.A.K. One feels the need of this currently. There are very few tracts that are up to date, that are suitable for getting a person's attention. Many are perfectly good but they were written for persons

of earlier times and there is need for something that is written with today's world in mind perhaps.

N.T.M. The gospel does not date, as you know, it is always appropriate, but if there is anything you want to enlist for your aid, a tragedy for example, you can use it. I think possibly gift is that you can give the gospel a present bearing. The same with a plane crash or a disaster. The Lord used the incident of the tower of Siloam (see Luke 13: 4).

T.E.D. In Athens, already referred to, Paul's spirit was painfully excited in him (see Acts 17: 16). Is that a need with us, our inward feelings before God and men?

N.T.M. I could not say much about it in an experimental way, and perhaps therein lies a failing. We tend to get cynical, we tend to get hardened, case-hardened as people say. All the sickness and all the sorrow that there is in the world we tend to accept as part of life without entering into what it means. I think what you say as to Paul shows he was not like that; it moved him deeply, it moved his soul when he saw the city.

H.J. A few years ago there was a brother who used to go to the hospitals and speak to persons in their beds. I thought that was a wonderful service. He did it regularly.

N.T.M. I think the Lord would bless that if any one commits himself to it. Such a person may not be able to preach publicly - I mean he may not be able to put words together too well - but the Lord will bless him, and it is as valuable as a public preacher.

C.F.D. That kind of service could be done by a sister. I heard of a sister recently; certain persons saw her coming and they said amongst themselves, Here comes that lady who speaks to us about the Lord. I thought that was a fine testimony.

N.T.M. That is fine. "Great the host of the publishers", Ps 68: 11. The note there says the word is feminine - women publishing victory.

G.H. Many years ago we had an elderly sister in Gothenberg, Sweden, really a mother in Israel, who went down to the harbour and spoke to the people about the Lord and gave out tracts; she rendered a remarkable testimony.

N.T.M. Well, the setting forth of the mercyseat is now, and we might perhaps say, from now on.

K-n.A.O. As to the enquiry made earlier about being sent; in that same scripture Paul says, "how shall they hear without one who preaches?" Rom 10: 14. He raises that issue. Do you think that that balances the side of being sent, that we just cannot say that persons are not coming to our rooms or things like that; we have the responsibility, have we not?

N.T.M. In Isaiah the emphasis is on 'send' is it not? The prophet says "send me", Isa 6: 8. He is prepared to go but he wants the Lord's support: "send me". It is a bit like Gideon and the fleece, he wanted some impression that the Lord was putting His hand on him - send me. We have been rather a long while on this but it is just how readings proceed.

In the next scripture, chapter 8 verse 15 it says, "For ye have not received a spirit of bondage again for fear, but ye have received a spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. Then it goes on to say, "And if children, heirs also: heirs of God and Christ's joint heirs; if indeed we suffer with him that we may also be glorified with him. For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the coming glory to be revealed to us".

"The sufferings of this present time" would include the testimonial sufferings.

J.A.P. Does it show the importance of the Spirit and that He would help us? The present time is the Spirit's time.

N.T.M. Are you referring to the latter part of the chapter?

J.A.P. That would be included, but what you read began with the Spirit and I wonder if that connects with the great matter of "the present time" because it is the Spirit's time.

N.T.M. Yes, very good; it is peculiarly the dispensation of the Spirit. "In all their affliction he was afflicted, and the Angel of his presence saved them", Isa 63: 9. The Spirit is here with the saints in their afflictions and their sufferings. Take a martyr: the Spirit never left a suffering martyr, He was with him in the suffering, speaking reverently. He is a divine Person who could not be touched and yet He was with the martyr in the suffering. This expression, "the sufferings of this present time", may possibly refer to the whole dispensation, but it may refer to any given time and the peculiar character of suffering of that time. In the western countries we are not in the period of the martyr sufferings but there are the sufferings of this present time.

H.G.H. How about the sufferings of Romans 7?

N.T.M. I suppose they have gone right through the church period. But I wondered as to the sufferings of this present time, whether we can identify any particular sufferings. I do not know what brethren think.

H.J. In this very chapter he speaks about "groanings which cannot be uttered"; would that relate to the sufferings that some go through?

N.T.M. Verse 26: "the Spirit itself makes intercession with groanings which cannot be uttered". He makes intercession but it is not aside from our own exercises. In other words you do not put it entirely on the Spirit; He makes the intercession but it is in connection with our exercises, our sorrows.

L.McF. Does not the taking on of responsibility in our localities entail a certain amount of suffering at the present time? I am thinking of the side of privilege, to share in that at the present time, getting involved in what is local, in the sorrows as well as the joys.

N.T.M. That is helpful, and something worth thinking about and speaking about in connection with the carrying of the tabernacle: that may involve suffering.

J.McK. I wonder if you would illustrate a little more fully what you consider to be the sufferings of the present time in regard to the

truth. Paul exhorts Timothy to take his share in suffering as a good soldier of Jesus Christ (see 2 Tim 2: 3). Then there are other sufferings as just remarked, the inward, the care of all the assemblies as Paul said (see 2 Cor 11: 28), what he suffered in his spirit. Now in our measure are we prepared to take on those sufferings and manifest the Spirit of Christ in them?

N.T.M. This bears on the labour of the service of the tabernacle, the carrying of the testimony in the wilderness, and the carrying through of meetings, the assembly calendar. It may involve some element of suffering; it is the service of the labour of the tent of meeting. It may be that in this present time more has fallen on a few.

H.G.H. Paul says, "Who is stumbled, and I burn not?", 2 Cor 11: 29. There would be suffering in that burning, would there not?

N.T.M. Yes, that is so.

A.S.H. Peter says, "Christ, then, having suffered for us in the flesh, do ye also arm yourselves with the same mind", 1 Pet 4: 1. What would you say about arming yourselves with the same mind?

N.T.M. "Arm yourselves with the same mind; for he that has suffered in the flesh has done with sin": I think probably that specially bears on what we find within ourselves in the way of lust and so on, that we will not give into it; we would rather suffer in the flesh. "He that has suffered in the flesh has done with sin" is a very real thing we all have to face.

J.McK. Maybe the ostracising of children at school, your part in the work in the office, or whatever it may be, involves suffering because you will not socialise in that element. I think that is part of the sufferings today, not physical in the sense of what the martyrs suffered, but what we suffer in our spirits to maintain the principle of separation from the world in whatever character of it we may find ourselves.

N.T.M. That is helpful. I think that, as arming ourselves with that mind, we come to accept that we can expect suffering. It is not going to be an extraordinary but rather the expected order of the day.

A.S.H. It says "arm yourselves"; it is not a light matter to arm ourselves.

N.T.M. You are expecting it; you are not caught unprepared; "arm yourselves with the same mind". Where things have to be carried by a few there are tests; I think that suffering has possibly become extended in that sense in recent years.

G.H. Paul writes to Timothy: "Take thy share in suffering as a good soldier of Jesus Christ", 2 Tim 2: 3. It is a military setting. What do you have to say about that?

N.T.M. Well, a good soldier expects it, he will not run away from it, "Take thy share": it has been said that if I do not take my share somebody else will have to carry an additional load of it.

T.E.D. Would you say something as to how we can enter feelingly into the breakdown in husband and wife relationship, the extraordinary suffering in that area.

N.T.M. I hesitate to say much because it is almost unbearable to think of. I have an impression that it will not be without some result. The suffering of the assembly as the Lamb's wife would include that kind of thing. It could not be without some result. Some element of glory and beauty will go into the holy city as a result of the sufferings of this present time; I mean the intensity of it and the reality of it, especially where there are few and there is not much company to make it up. It must be very, very real. One hesitates to say; it is there to be felt by us and prayed about.

J.McK. It is not going unnoticed or unrewarded. I was thinking of Revelation 19: "And it was given to her" - that is the bride "that she should be clothed in fine linen, bright and pure; for the fine linen is the righteousnesses of the saints" (v 8). It is going through; and that should be a great incentive to us as having part in that bride's exposition as the bride of Christ. We will have our part in that which is fine linen, bright and pure, everything that reflects what the glory of Christ is in her. Should that not encourage us? "The sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the coming glory".

N.T.M. That is the truth I am sure, and it is to sustain us.

S.O. I wondered about the scripture that says, "If one member suffer, all the members suffer with it", 1 Cor 12: 26. Does not the Spirit work in that way? If somebody is suffering you feel it in your spirit, do you not?

N.T.M. That is the intention. If one member suffer all suffer; that is the idea of the body, and it is something that we should not forget nor try to elect ourselves out of.

H.G.H. You said that we tend to be cynical. If we find ourselves that we should seek help as to it.

N.T.M. The spirit of the world that is abroad does tend to harden us. You open a newspaper and it is the same old thing, and you tend to become hard about it, but it is not intended that we should be. We are to endure hardness but not become hard.

We have not by any means finished this subject but I think there is something for us about "the present time", dear brethren, that we do not miss our day. We do not live in the future; we take up what is current in our own day. The Lord has caused us to be born in this day and this is where our responsibility is. The millennium will take care of itself, we shall be there and it will be very wonderful, but there is something at the present time for us.

H.J. Before we close I wish you would say something about the scripture read in Ephesians. How are the principalities and authorities in the heavenlies able now - it says 'now' - to know the all-various wisdom of God in the assembly?

N.T.M. I do not know that I can say much except that the way things are worked out in care and administration is something of a revelation to them. They observe it with interest, and no doubt the understanding of that would make us careful and keep us careful in how we administer, the spirit in which we do things, the all-various wisdom of God being seen, dealing with situations which could not be met in any legal way. You may get a hard case. Believers working under the numeral twelve find there is some way of wisdom,

some way of love, in which matters are met, and it is an education to these principalities and authorities. They learn from a few saints meeting a difficult situation in their locality, and this is happening now. That is how I understand the scripture in a general sense.

H.G.H. We are on stage.

N.T.M. That is an interesting expression. It is now. Yes, that fits.

H.J. I wondered too if there is a wider sense in which what God is doing in relation to His people at the present time in forming the assembly, and all the various aspects of His ways and operations to do that, brings out His great wisdom, even in the present course of things that we have had to with so much.

N.T.M. The book of Proverbs culminates in that woman, how she does things.

NEW YORK

4 September 1988

Key to initials

C.F.Dadd, Plainfield; T.E.Druckenmiller, Plainfield; A.S.Hinkson, New York; G.Hesterman, Plainfield; H.G.Holt, Chicago; S.E.Hesterman, Plainfield; H.Jensen, Los Angeles; K.A.Knauss, Indianapolis; J.McKillop, Chicago; L.McFarlane, New York; N.T.Meek, Malvern; Kevin A.Oberg, Villa Grove; S.Oberg, Villa Grove; T.Oberg, Villa Grove; G.D.Pfingst, Plainfield; J.A.Petersen, Plainfield; K.N.Pye, New York

GOING UP TO THE HOUSE OF JEHOVAH

Norman Meek

1 Kings 10: 4,5; Luke 2: 41-46; Psalms 122: 1-9

One was specially thinking, dear brethren, of this expression as to the ascent - "his ascent by which he went up to the house of Jehovah", referring to Solomon, but also referring to One of whom it could be said that He was greater than Solomon. I just want to convey a simple impression as to the uniqueness of the walk and movements of the Lord Jesus. He was here, as we often say, a Man amongst men, but He was unique amongst men. He remains so, He remains unique. His humanity was of a different kind but it was real, and His walk, His ascent, was distinctive. We must always allow for that when we think of Him. It seems to me right that we address Him in a peculiar manner, and all divine Persons, as 'Thee' and 'Thou' rather than 'You', although I understand that in some languages the latter is the only way it can be done. But I do cherish the distinctive address to divine Persons; we speak to Them in a manner that we use to no other. It may be, you say, traditional - well, whatever it is, one would like to keep the distinctiveness of Christ in one's soul and cherish it there.

There are many wonderful things about the house that Solomon built, about his servants, even about their apparel. The queen of Sheba noticed it, like women do, but what affected her in a peculiar way was his ascent. It is the last thing that is said, his ascent, his personal ascent by which he went up to the house of Jehovah. It is so, beloved brethren, that while we have the privilege of going up to the house, the Lord has His own peculiar route and His own peculiar approach, like the prince in Ezekiel 46 who had his own gate and comes in one way and goes out by his own particular route. No one else can entrench on that route. So it is that the Lord Jesus had His own approach, you might reverently say, even when here, of going up to the house of Jehovah. I suppose it was so in the passage in Luke where we read. The family went up to Jerusalem; and He went too, as Mr Darby said, "A child in growth and stature, yet full of

wisdom rare". I would like to occupy you with Jesus, beloved, not only with His work, wonderful and unique as that is, but with His Person. There is something about Him that stands out and will always stand out as unique and distinct for there is no one like Him.

He had His own ascent, and even here as a boy of twelve, as He went with His parents, there must have been something unique to heaven's eye. He was going up to the temple, yet in another sense He was the temple. But those buildings were going to be honoured by His presence; they were going to witness a Person coming in who was no less than God Himself.

Now you and I have the privilege of coming up to the temple, the gathering of the saints, gathering to the name of the Lord Jesus - going up to the temple. There should be something distinctive in our approach too. We would not entrench on the uniqueness of Christ, but we are not doing anything ordinary, dear brethren, as we approach God. We come into His presence, we go to the meeting to put it simply - a simple expression that, going to the meeting. What meeting? Who is going to meet us? Whom are we going to meet? We are coming up for the reading, or for the service, or the meeting for prayer, but into whose presence are we going to come? What ascending! We are going up, going up to the meeting, going into God's presence. Heaven must have watched these steps as they wended their way up to Jerusalem. I suppose most of Israel would have been doing the same, converging in their walk up to the temple, and yet among them One who was unique in His approach, who had His own ascent. Let no one entrench on that, His own right to go there and His own walk, and one may say His own gait, reverently speaking, as He approached God. His parents went and others went, and it is a happy privilege and custom that we have to go up to the temple, in principle go up to God's house and to serve Him there.

What is your view, dear brethren - I address you all, I know that you will forgive me - but what is your view of going to the meeting? Do we say we sing a few hymns there and brothers stand up and give thanks and break bread, and when it is all over we come home? I wonder if we give time to think about the profundity of what it is, to

appear before God, to appear before Him, it says, in Zion (see Ps 84: 7). We come into God's presence by the Spirit. That would rebuke casualness; we are going into His presence, we are going up to God. Remember Jacob of old; he was instructed to go up to Bethel, God's house, and without God saying anything to him he said, We cannot take the idols there. He said to his family, We will have to put them away, we cannot take them up there. We might take our thoughts up, you know, we might take up our thoughts of Monday and perhaps the stores are going to have a sale; you might take those thoughts up with you, but they do not fit, you will have to leave them at the temple door. Your walk, your entry, your ascent will be somewhat marred if you carry those things up. One would like to carry up right thoughts of Christ; one would like to carry up some impressions of His greatness; one would like to carry up something that one may be able to express and bring pleasure to God's holy ear concerning His beloved Son. We will receive impressions there, and no doubt, as this One who is so distinct comes into God's house, we become aware of the presence of Christ taking us on, taking us up in the service. And allowing for His unique place and distinction, one would like to be able to contribute something to that holy occasion, that occasion which is so delightful to God Himself. How do we come? How do we go? These things are very real because we tend to carry up all sorts of extraneous thoughts. Then the dear brethren who have young families arrive and they may be harassed; it has been difficult getting the children together that must be a tax and I would be very sympathetic. We were in a meeting in the north of England some time ago and a sister came in and she no sooner had sat down when the children started to cry. She had got them ready, she got them all dressed nicely, got up early to get to the meeting, and then she had to take them out before the meeting started. Do you not feel sympathetic with such persons? Do you not feel joined to them and wish you could in some way help in that kind of situation? I said to her later in the day, Well, you were not able to be there but the Lord has given you a mark, He has marked you down as present; because in spirit she was present. I thought that she evidenced something of an overcomer, and yet understandably not

wishing to have the meeting marred by the cries of the children. But she brought something, she left it there; there was something of the spirit of sacrifice left there something, in a certain sense, that was to God's glory in His temple. These things are very real. And one would like to think that, as we come up to the precious occasion tomorrow, we come up in a way that is suitable to God, that honours Him and honours His temple, honours His place. And as we come up in that sense we can come up with dignity, we can come up with something worthwhile, something that God has wrought in us.

Because if we have any feelings at all after Him, if we have any longings, if there is any praise, if there is any song in your heart, God put it there anyway. It is to be released to His honour and to His praise.

And it is not only the Lord's day that one refers to, although I suppose the expression which has been used, 'the great occasion', is not a bad one - it is the great occasion. But then any occasion where the Lord is present must be great. You find a few saints on Monday night and they are gathered together to express themselves to God in relation to His interests, they are going to carry their petitions into God's presence. In a certain sense it is the temple, maybe the house of prayer is a better description. Will you be there? The parents of Jesus came home after three days; I expect they had to, you cannot spend all the time at the meetings, although when we are in heaven I suppose most of the time will be spent in God's praise. We will not be praying then, will we? We will not have any need to pray in heaven. I suppose it will mostly be spent in God's praise; not that much is said about it, but that is some little inquiry you might like to pursue as to what will take place. You get a certain amount of help from Mr Darby's hymns as to what is going to happen in heaven.

The parents went back to find Him. They were a little remiss, because where do you think you would have found Him - in all the buildings in Jerusalem and the squares and the parks or the Roman headquarters, and so on? Where do you think you would have found the Lord Jesus? Do you not think it should have been the temple? They certainly would not have found Him at a picture show

or the circus. "The boy Jesus" - a genuine boy and yet unique even in His boyhood. Now on Monday night where will the brethren find you? Evening classes? Well, maybe you have to do some evening classes. You need enough money to meet righteousness. But you can overdo these things. You can become a professional student, as they say. I doubt if too much study is good. Yet the brethren will bear long with you and the Lord will too. But it would be a pity if you always missed the prayer meeting, would it not, year after year? It would be a loss to you and it would be a sorrow to God. Business calls, I know, are a real thing; I feel very sympathetic for persons in business these days. The business world seems to me to become increasingly competitive and increasingly demanding. It wants more and more of your time. Pharaoh is a hard taskmaster, he will want you to make bricks without straw; you have to get by some way, you have to push and press, it is competitive, life is hard. Although so affluent, in one sense of the word, yet persons sell their very souls and their lives to him. What a shame to sell it to the building up of Egypt and Babylon! If you are going to raise a family, I suppose you will want a house; if you are going to have some food you want to fill up the larder. All these things you will need money for, but get by with as little as you can. I think that would be the advice of older men.

So the Lord's parents eventually found Him; they had searched for three days. I think they would have said, We should have looked there before. They were a commendable couple, Joseph and Mary, but you do wonder why it took them three days to find Him when the obvious place to look was the temple. I say these things affectionately, dear brethren, but attendance at the meetings, whilst it is not everything, is a good index of our committal. It is not everything and far be it from me to make everything of it, but both you and the saints and the Lord are losers if you are consistently away. May the Lord encourage you to commit yourself to God's house and the maintenance of it, and you may see each day, week by week, something of the distinction of Christ. Every prayer that

goes up will be offered in His name. Is that not for His glorification, to ask for things in His name?

In Psalm 122 David rejoiced in those persons who encouraged him to go into the house of Jehovah. Perhaps you feel a little resentful at my speaking to you like this. Well, I will have to bear the fact that I am not very skilful in making an appeal. David says here, "I rejoiced when they said", or as the alternative reading is, "I rejoice in them that say;" I rejoiced when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of Jehovah". It might read, 'I rejoice in them that say'.

They are both good renderings, are they not? "I rejoiced when they said unto me": what better thing could he do than to go up into God's presence? Now, dear brother and dear sister, let us face it together, what better thing could we do than to go into God's presence? Someone said, "thy countenance is fulness of joy", Ps 16: 11. You say, I just hear a few prayers, they pray for the sick, and pray for the gospel, pray for men. Those persons are serving before God's throne, dear friend; those persons are approaching God at the golden altar. Ask the Lord to give you another view of it. You see a few saints and you hear their prayers, you hear their requests: do you find it boring? You would not be the first one who has found it boring. Just hang on, just persist and ask God to give you His view of it. He looks down and sees a few saints uttering their simple prayers; does He look down and despise them? No, dear brother, dear sister, He values it immensely. It means something to Him. It means more to Him perhaps than it does to themselves. He values everything. For one thing He always likes to hear the name of Jesus reverently mentioned, whether it is within the four walls of a room or on a bus or in the supermarket, He always loves to hear the name of Jesus mentioned. That name is yet going to be noised abroad, it is going to be known over the face of the whole earth. You anticipate that. Perhaps we do not mention it enough in public with the respect and the reverence that it deserves. "Our feet shall stand within thy gates, O Jerusalem. Jerusalem, which art built as a city that is compact together" - the saints together joined in love, knit together. One would yearn to get God's appraisal of a simple gathering. One

would yearn to have His view, heaven's view of the economy of local assemblies. Yes, there is one here and there is one there, heaven takes account of it. Heaven sees the skyscrapers, sees the United Nations building, sees the big silos in which these fearful weapons are stored, but heaven's greatest interest centres in God's house down here. I would like to encourage us. If we go up, beloved, let us go up suitably; let us go up and take an ascent that is suitable. We had something about this earlier today, touching on our clothing and our demeanour; that would be only an outward index of what is within; the greater thing is what is within. It is good if the outward thing corresponds and in some way reflects what is within. "Our feet shall stand within thy gates, O Jerusalem ... Whither the tribes go up, the tribes of Jah". Do you ever think of that - brethren wending their way to a meeting, the tribes going up? You put a name on them: there is Benjamin, you say, little Benjamin; he is guiltless, he will have his distinction. Here is Judah, he has his distinction too. Then there is Joseph, he is select. You put your name in, dear friend, dear brother, dear sister, and you are select. Do you know that? Every one is select, every one is unique. There are no duals in Christianity. Every one has a name, a name that is registered and is never repeated. You might even be a twin, you might be what they call an identical twin, but you have your own distinctive name. One is conscious that one does not speak too eloquently of these things, but I would like to encourage the brethren to continue in gathering, continue in going up, and your own distinction will sooner or later become apparent and will eventually reflect its own peculiar ray of the glory of Christ. Something of Christ is put into a believer that is unique: did you know that? We often say, You have an impression of Christ that is unique. No one else has anything quite the same. It is yours, it is distinct, that is your personality. And you have a distinct walk.

May the Lord help us in these things. Outwardly, dear brethren, the position is small and there is much weakness one way and another; nevertheless the Lord loves His people and it means something to Him to see them gather. One day He is going to show

it to a universe; He is going to display it; He is going to be admired in all those that believe. Will you be there or will you be ashamed at His coming? Well, let us keep going. I sometimes think it may be that the Lord will come when we are gathered - I do not know but I sometimes think it might be. One thing I am quite sure about is that He loves to see His people gather. May the Lord help us to commit ourselves to it, for His Name's sake.

NEW YORK

3 September 1988

DIVINE CLOTHING

Norman Meek

Genesis 3: 21; Proverbs 31: 21,22

I want to speak in this preaching, dear friends, as to clothing. It should be within our understanding. Man needs it; and I suppose the scripture that we read in Genesis shows that he needs it to cover his nakedness. These coats are not exactly coats of adornment or display; God has those too in His wardrobe, but these coats of skin are imperative and it is imperative that you have one. You say, Where can I get it? You can get it from the One who has made them; you can get it from God Himself. It is remarkable that He should be the first one who is spoken of in this way as a coat-maker. It is one of the great industries that has grown up, the making of garments of one kind and another. It is one of the prime industries extant in the world, but the first one to take it up was God Himself, and He and He alone can provide you with a coat of this kind. No other tailoring house has yet been able to make a coat of this kind; God alone knows how to make it and He has one your size and He is ready to supply it to you. "All things are naked" it says "and laid bare to his eyes, with whom we have to do", Heb 4: 13. Sooner or later, dear friend, you will have to do with God, everyone will, whether he is a president or a pauper; sooner or later every one of us will have to do with God - it may be sooner. Sooner or later it will have to be so, it is inevitable, it is one of the facts of life, as inevitable as death itself you have to appear before God. And how will you appear? If you have not one of God's coats you will be naked before Him, you will be exposed. My sinnership, my state, will all be exposed and laid bare before His eyes, the eyes of Him with whom we have to do sooner or later you will have to do with Him. He has other coats for you as well, but this one is essential; it is of prime importance.

Now you will know without my telling you that you are a sinner. Maybe you do not want to be but you find that you do things which you know you should not. We find that when we are quite young, we find we are tempted, drawn away and enticed by lust which gives

birth to sin (see Jas 1: 14,15). How will you appear before God? How will you appear, how will I appear before God? How can I come into His holy presence? He is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity (see Hab 1: 13); how can I appear before Him? Dear friend, only through the precious work of Christ. The work of Christ is connected with this coat; it is a covering. I wonder if your sins are covered, or are they there in all their stark reality. You say, I have never murdered anybody. No, but they are still stark. You only need a small fly on a white wall and you can see it easily, it will show up as if it was as big as man's hand. When you come into a scene of absolute purity, what passed muster down here will be exposed in all its true character and nothing will escape. Thank God nothing will escape. Believers say that, Thank God nothing will escape. They are going into a scene, 'Where deceiver ne'er can enter, Sin-soiled feet have never trod', (Hymn 206). It is intolerable for a believer to think of any sin going into heaven, it would spoil the whole scene, it could not be. And yet sinners will be there, sinners who have been saved by the precious work of Christ. Are you one of them? Come now, are you saved? Have you that happy, blessed assurance in your soul that you are saved, that your sins have been dealt with? We have all heard of Martin Luther; it is said that in his dream he said to the devil, The blood of Jesus Christ God's Son, cleanseth me from every sin (see 1 John 1: 7). Could you say that? It is very happy if you can say it, dear friend. How can it be? The work of Christ is for you; the cleansing power of that precious blood of His is for you. It has been shed that your sins might be atoned for and you might be cleared, absolutely cleared from everything that offends the eye of a righteous and a holy God. God can cover you through the precious atoning work of Christ. He has a coat for you and He brings it along to a meeting like this. He brings them along and He knows who needs one; I do not know. You might be breaking bread, but you may not be saved. That would be abnormal of course. Are you uneasy? Would you be uneasy if you came into God's presence? You need one of these coats. Ask Him for it now. You can ask Him while you sit on that seat, tell Him that you want to be covered by the precious, matchless work of Jesus. Tell Him that you want to avail

yourself of that divine provision. No one else can make these coats and no other coat will do, it must be this one. It is a coat of skin, notice; it is not a coat of nylon or terylene or one of these synthetics, it is the real thing, a coat of skin. And soberly we have to say this involves death somewhere along the line, and that death was the death of Jesus. This is the only character of coat that will do. Men make up their synthetics, they make up their ideas; man's mind is a very fertile area it can hatch out all sorts of schemes and all sorts of theories, but when it comes to the day of testing it will not stand. You want one of God's coats, dear friend. Persons go into shops and they look at the label, who made it; a lot of people buy by the label, the manufacturer's name, the inbuilt quality of it. Well, make sure you have one of God's coats. He has them, dear friend, and you can have one now. It is without money and without price and it is yours for good. You can wear it and it will not wear out even if you live to be one hundred, it is yours for good. Is it not wonderful? God's provision is a whole provision, not a temporary one. It is not one which is good for today and may not be current tomorrow; it is for ever; 'For I am His and He is mine for ever and for ever' (hymn 187).

Not even eternity itself will ever wear out these coats. It may not be prominent in the mind and thoughts of those who throng those courts of heaven, and yet it will always underlie it, it will always underlie those happy feelings. Those persons will never forget the blessedness of a time when they first took on for themselves and embraced for themselves that coat. They will be there in the full assurance that all is well. A wonderful thing that! Oh, dear friend, it is a wonderful thing to have perfect and settled peace in your soul. Do you have that or do you have a certain anxiety lurking yet? The only thing you can trust in is the precious work of Jesus. He died for you, He shed His precious blood for you, He gave His life for you. He did not call up kings and governors and presidents to give their life for you; the Lord Jesus gave His own life: "who gave himself for us", Paul says, Tit 2: 14. Well, God puts these coats on persons, they come into His presence, they acknowledge their state. You will not get one, dear friend, unless you acknowledge the facts as they are, you will not get one if you try to cover your condition. It is for persons

who repent the gospel is for repenting sinners. I would ask you again, What about it, have you this coat? It is important, most important, it is the most important coat in your wardrobe and it is fundamental.

I pass on to this other scripture in Proverbs. There you get someone else making garments too, and she is working for her household. A wonderful wife is this person who is described here in Proverbs 31. She can say a good deal, she can do a good deal, and she is active; she is not in any sense idle, she is doing things. It is not the work of Christ that is described here; it is really the activity of His people in the figure of this woman, and she is doing things and she is caring for her children and the household. She is concerned about them. These children will have to go out to school and they will have to face the world, go out to work when they get older; so it is a comfort to know that someone at home is caring for them, has their interests at heart and is busying herself for their welfare. God has these persons, dear friend, and they are persons who are interested in you. It is a very great favour in a world that is so wicked, and a world that is so selfish, to know that when you come home at tea-time you are going to enter another kind of atmosphere where persons care for you. This is in the gospel too.

It is not exactly the covering of sin here, it is the protection and warmth of the family circle, and God includes that too in His gospel for you. I suppose, dear friend, it is right to say that the world is going to get increasingly dark, it is going to get increasingly cold, self-centred, every man for himself is going increasingly to become the order of the day. In fact you sometimes wonder what is going to happen to civilization, you can almost see it grinding to a halt. The traffic controllers go on strike, and the dustmen do not come, teachers go on strike and it is every man for himself. You can almost see the anarchy coming, can you not? Dear friend, what an outlook! What a relief to turn your key in the door at home, is it not? Most of us can thank God for a home where there is a welcome, where the toast is ready and something else, a cup of coffee I suppose - in England a cup of tea, just what meets your need. Here is a person

who is active in providing all this. Perhaps you have guessed by now that it is the focal assembly. These are the saints of God and you will find that in that company there is a bosom and you can rest your head on it too, a place of warmth and affection. I suppose when we are young we do not value half enough the privilege of a Christian home, and the privilege of a circle of brethren where there is affection, a place that has a bosom.

That is where Obed was put: "Naomi took the child, and laid it in her bosom", Ruth 4: 16. It is a place of warmth and affection, a place of welcome, a place of safety and a place of satisfaction. Do you not feel sorry for these children that go home and find there is no one at home to greet them? It is a feature of the world, is it not - there is no one at home to greet them. They have finished school and they make their way home but there is no one at home to welcome them.

Not so in the believer's house; there is some provision, some care for the children; it is intended to be. I think it is so generally speaking. And along with that there is the local assembly. You may get some fine clothes there. They will tell you about some heavenly garment; you will learn about the best robe; it is the best one. They will tell you about it and they will even put it on you, give you some thoughts as to God's purpose for you. Is it not worthwhile to be in such company? Is it not worthwhile to go along and find a few believers reading the Scriptures and see what garments you have? You never knew they were in your wardrobe, did you? They are there, beautiful ones, garments which are going to suit even heaven itself. If you were going to a reception at the White House you would be very careful, you would want to make sure that your garments were suitable. These garments are fit even for the presence of God.

I hope I have not spoken too mysteriously, but one of the cardinal truths in the gospel is that there is practical salvation for believers, not only in their homes but in a peculiar way in the circle of the saints. This person is busy, and I suppose, if I may say it practically, those of us who are older should not fail to be busy in relation to these garments and other things too, so that when young persons come in they find something interesting is afoot, they find

there is something in the Scriptures that is theirs which they never knew, some privilege that is theirs and they never heard of.

May the Lord bless these simple thoughts. I would say again that you must make sure that your sins are covered in the sight of the holy God. He has made every provision for you, dear friend, but you must have to do with Him and ask for the benefit of the work of Christ. It means you need to acknowledge your sinnership and you will find that God has every answer to your need, not only for eternity but also for the present time. May you find and prove, and may those of us here who are older ensure, that as far as it is in our power it is so, that our homes and our local companies are places of safety and also places of enjoyment. For His Name's sake.

NEW YORK

4 September 1988

ENQUIRING CHILDREN

God expects young people to be interested in His ways and in His people. I am sure that the children in the city of Tyre joined, perhaps sorrowfully, with their Christian parents in having to say 'goodbye' to Paul, Luke and others in their journeyings. No doubt, as they all knelt down on the sea-shore and prayed, the children felt what a privilege it was to know something about the testimony of the Lord Jesus.

Centuries before these events, it was expected that the Hebrew children would ask about the feast of Passover which celebrated the time when the people of Israel came out of the land of Egypt. For the Christian it is a sign of the shedding of the blood of Jesus as of a lamb without blemish or spot. This has been done once for all and by it the believer is redeemed to God and sheltered from judgment.

When the Israelites later crossed the river Jordan into the land of God's purpose, twelve great stones were set up on the river bank. The children were expected to ask two separate questions about these. One was, "What mean ye by these stones?" and "What mean these stones?" The answer to the first question was that the water of the river was stopped a long way upstream whilst the Ark crossed the Jordan. For the Christian this means that death had to yield when the Lord died and rose again. The answer to the second question was that the people themselves had also crossed the river on dry ground. For us this means that the believer has been attracted after the Lord and is standing like one of these great stones in the new homeland of God's purpose.

Have you in spirit followed the Lord Jesus?

J.C.Evershed