

A
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Contents

DISCIPLESHIP (4)

"THE FIRST AND THE LAST"

ACTIVE CHILDREN

DISCIPLESHIP (4)

2 Samuel 23: 8-17; 1 Chronicles 29: 1-25

J.A.G. In looking at this thought of discipleship, I thought perhaps we come to the mighty men, to what the Lord speaks as to the disciples, that "sufficient for the disciple that he should become as his teacher, and the bondman as his lord", Matt 10: 25. I think these qualities are to be found in the recovery. If they are not, we have come short of the divine idea, because I suppose you could say of all these men here that they would be available to Christ to write upon them the name of His God, and the name of the city of His God, which comes down out of heaven, from His God, and His new name (see Rev 3: 12). They relate, too, to "the men whom thou gavest me out of the world", John 17: 6. There is maturity with them in manhood – "the mighty men whom David had". They in principle are joined to the Lord: "he that is joined to the Lord is one Spirit", 1 Cor 6: 17.

So we have the various exploits. The first one fought against eight hundred, "slain by him at one time". It seems to me that he is a person who is impervious to alien influence. He is in the full gain of the teaching of discipleship from Matthew 5 to 7. The next is one of the three mighty men with David. He is waging in spiritual warfare, against Philistines, not fighting "against blood and flesh, but against the universal lords of this darkness", Eph 6: 12. He is cleaving to the word of God; you might say he is holding fast to the teaching of the Lord Jesus on the mount. And as he does that he makes way for God; it says "Jehovah wrought a great deliverance that day; and the people returned after him only to spoil". The next one is a man who stands his ground - very fine that! There was "a plot of ground full of lentils"; this man stood in it, "stood in the midst of the plot and delivered it". He was concerned that there might be continuity of food for the brethren. He makes way for Christ, he makes way for God to bring in a great deliverance. Such do not give way to "philosophy and vain deceit" (Col 2: 8), they are firmly attached to David, firmly attached to Christ and His headship. The next three

are so near to David that they know the longings of his heart. He does not ask them to do it; their motivation is mature love for him.

All the circumstances of opposition are set out and in that condition they break through the camp of the Philistines and draw "water out of the well of Bethlehem, which is in the gate, and took it, and brought it to David", and they bring out the height of priestliness in David as he considers for God - he "poured it out to Jehovah".

I thought 1 Chronicles 29 brings out the palatial side of the truth. What is palatial belongs to the recovery. I was impressed with the readiness that is amongst the brethren, the willingness to offer and contribute under the touch of David, under the headship of Christ. So we have the kingdom and the fullest expression of it in that chapter. I think when we have the introduction of Solomon we touch "my new name". I wondered if that is helpful, if we could inquire into it and look to the Lord for help.

H.J.G. I like what you say about these men, that they are mature, mature in their thinking, mature in what they have done. It has always been something that has been brought forward in the time of the recovery, whether persons are dependable, whether they show maturity.

J.A.G. It is a big question with all of us, and we would have to be humble in the presence of them. Paul says, "As many therefore as are perfect, let us be thus minded; and if ye are any otherwise minded, this also God shall reveal to you", Phil 3: 15. The direction is towards Christ in glory.

M.P. "But ye are they who have persevered with me in my temptations. And I appoint unto you, as my Father has appointed unto me, a kingdom", Luke 22: 28. Would that fit in?

J.A.G. Very much so. They are qualified to hold divine office, qualified to exercise influence in the kingdom because they are like Jesus.

J.A.P. So certain men, like Shimei and Joab, did not get the new name written on them. Would you say more about "my new name" as connected with Solomon?

J.A.G. I think it is the fulness of sonship in Christ glorified. David, in 1 Chronicles 29, has his own distinctiveness. It is like "my Father and your Father"; then the saints are brought in, and He says, "my God and your God", John 20: 17. What is distinctive to Christ is maintained and Solomon is introduced. David says this is no ordinary building - the assembly is no ordinary thought, it is the greatest of divine conceptions, palatial. And that is what the brethren are; they need to think high thoughts of themselves, think God's thoughts of themselves.

J.A.P. This is not your subject, but the transfer to this great thought of sonship was a very critical time early in Kings. It was as if the devil would attack it with his angels.

J.A.G. Exactly; so Adonijah did not have it, Adonijah, Shimei, Joab; but all the mighty men, all those who followed the teaching of Christ, all those who moved from Matthew 5 to 7, were with Solomon. That is a fine thing. I am just making these suggestions.

G.R. Would the faithful men of Paul's exhortation to Timothy relate to the mighty men of David? He had them, it says - "whom David had". They were available and reliable.

J.A.G. Yes, they were at his disposal. We did not read of them all, there are thirty-seven in all. Mr Lyon said, There was David with shaking hand and smitten conscience writing in Urijah the Hittite, "thirty-seven in all" (v 39). But manhood is to be arrived at at the present time and the teaching is to produce it.

E.C.B. Would you say that for us they represent persons who know the headship of Christ individually?

J.A.G. I thought so. That is why I quoted the scripture, "he that is joined to the Lord is one Spirit"; that is the great point in the recovery, union with Christ in glory.

W.A.M. I suppose the three who were affected by David's longings stand out, they were the first three, as though David really appreciated their service. It ended up in a drink-offering for God.

J.A.G. Yes, I think that is very fine; they considered for David, they were at the divine level of consecration you might say, they heard him saying something, he longed, they knew how he felt, they were so near to him, and they could understand that. There was no rivalry with them, they were together. These are mighty men, the elite, you might say.

M.P. There was no express commandment of David, but just the expression of his desire, and they understood it and complied with it.

J.A.G. Exactly. That is why I thought they are linked fairly distinctively with the Philadelphian overcomer. They are near enough to him to know what he desires, and they are prepared to move sacrificially to meet that desire, and he appreciates it so much that he turns it over to God. Maybe we should think about the anointing and our relations with the anointing as underlying all this.

The big thing in these books of Samuel is how we regard the anointing. David regarded it in Saul, very much. David is the Lord's anointed. God has committed Himself to Christ and we do well to regard that.

B.J. In the Revelation we have exposed a trinity of evil, but is there any importance in these two sections in 2 Samuel being trinities? The first three are individuals, the latter three are working together.

J.A.G. Yes, it is fine when they work together. It is a wonderful tribute to the work of God that you have three personalities like that, each one a personality in his own right. I think it brings out the greatness of Christ that their personality is held in relation to Him.

That is "the men whom thou gavest me out of the world", the mature persons, capable of receiving His words. That all answers to the close of Matthew 28.

E.C.B. "He that is joined to the Lord is one Spirit" would bear on what you say as to the anointing.

J.A.G. It surely does; and that is the big test in these books of Samuel, whether we relate our selves to the anointing. Poor Jonathan! you feel so badly for him, he missed it.

R.N.H. We sometimes sing, 'Lord, Thy desire we know As Spirit-taught' (Hymn 361). Is the Spirit required for the anointing?

J.A.G. Yes, the Spirit is the anointing, and the Spirit comes upon the expression of the humanity of Christ.

M.P. "He shall have come to be glorified in his saints, and wondered at in all that have believed", 2 Thess 1: 10. Is it the final valuation of all those wonderful deeds of the saints?

J.A.G. I am sure it is. What a time that will be, will it not? You would like to enjoy it and anticipate it more: "be glorified in his saints, and wondered at in all that have believed".

H.J.G. You were speaking about teaching in the gospel. One of the great features of teaching in the gospel is that "God has made him, this Jesus ... both Lord and Christ", Acts 2: 36. He is the great operator for all that God is doing, is He not?

J.A.G. Yes, He is the great operator; God has made Him both Lord and Christ. It is because of His moral worth and value. That bears upon the anointing. Jesus Christ is the Man anointed. So God says of David that he found a man after His heart (see Acts 13: 22) before he was anointed.

E.C.B. Would it be right to think - referring again to that scripture in Matthew - that the disciple is not only as his teacher and the bondman as his lord, but there is the sense in which the disciple is of his Teacher and the bondman of his Lord?

J.A.G. Yes . I thought that in one sense these men maintain the ground where the attack comes, which by and large is Colossian and Ephesian ground. So their derivation is Christ.

E.C.B. But if you refer to Colossians you come back to the question whether Christ is head and whether He "is everything, and in all", chap 3: 11.

J.A.G. That is why I thought that this man, the first one, fights against eight hundred. He is maintaining that position.

J.A.P. Maybe you would say a further word about the anointing and the Holy Spirit as power in us. The Lord Jesus refers to the incoming of the Spirit in one place as the power from on high.

J.A.G. Yes, that is the end of Luke: "till ye be clothed with power from on high", chap. 24: 49. The anointing has in view that things are done in a dignified way, according to the level of the holy calling wherewith we have been called (see Eph 4: 1). These men maintain the calling at its height. The Spirit does not come upon man's flesh.

There is the evidence of Christ formed in them, and the Spirit is linking on with that; consequently they are victorious. That is why I thought the Lord could happily say of them, I will make them "a pillar in the temple of my God", Rev 3: 12.

G.R. We have to maintain the truth, do we not? The Spirit did not come into the world, He came into believers; He came upon Christ, and He came to believers.

J.A.G. The Spirit came upon the position at Pentecost; it was the handiwork of Christ, and that was perfect, flawless. You have something more to say.

G.R. Is it not so that the Spirit comes upon believers? Would you enlarge upon your expression that He comes upon the expression of the humanity of Christ?

J.A.G. There is subjection, there is the evidence of the work of God, and the Spirit links on with that. Many people in these books of Samuel were good men but they were tested by their relations to the anointing.

M.P. What do you see in this man whose "hand clave to the sword"?

J.A.G. Tell us about him.

M.P. I should say he has become fully one with the word of God, his way of thinking was united with the way of scriptural thought. So that it is a figure of somebody whose mind and way of thinking is completely subdued by the word. Would that be right?

J.A.G. I think so, he is thoroughly immersed in the features of discipleship. It is his being, it is part of himself, the word of God. It is

like Jesus - "man shall not live by bread alone" (Luke 4: 4) - he has the Scriptures to meet the devil, to meet anything. And that is what Christianity is.

E.C.B. It is interesting to connect this with Jesus in the temptations. The man went on "until his hand was weary"; but after the temptations angels came and ministered to Jesus as if recognising the weariness that was there from the allusions in the Psalms.

J.A.G. Yes, and the great support that the kingdom is, the resources of heaven, all committed to this kind of persons. So it says, by him "Jehovah wrought a great deliverance that day". That day: it did not take six months, or a year, or five years, to work the thing out, it happened that day, which is a great matter.

C.F.D. Is there a suggestion in the various ways in which these personalities are presented? They are not all doing the same thing; there might be conflict in the main but it is from a different viewpoint. Does the anointing come upon us in view of what is public, whether it be the giving out of the announcements or the preaching of the word of God and so on? All these things have their public aspect; are they to be done in the power of the anointing?

J.A.G. That is right. A brother stands up to give out the announcements: that is in the Spirit, is it not? The anointing is public. We well know that the house is not anointed. I think the anointing largely is for testimony, so the tabernacle is anointed but not the house.

J.A.P. What you are bringing out is important because, as we know, Joab was not included in the list of mighty men: that would bring out, it seems to me, what my motive is in conflict. Is it pure? These men had a pure motive for the kingdom and for the deliverance of David and for something for his heart. In history amongst us God has used prominent persons - they have done right things - but is it in the anointing? Would that be a test for us?

J.A.G. That is a great test, it is indeed. All these men had David supreme in their hearts. They had already been to Hebron, they had

made him king, they had transferred the kingdom; the whole business now was related to Christ, which is a wonderful thing.

R.G.J. Is it not beautifully seen in the Lord? It says, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to preach glad tidings", Luke 4: 18. Should everything that we do have the character of the anointing upon it?

J.A.G. It surely should. That situation comes about in the synagogue in Nazareth after Jesus had been tried in the wilderness.

D.T.H. I notice that on that occasion Satan attacked the Lord's deity, but out of it came the glory of His perfect manhood. Do you not see it in these men? The object of their service was the exaltation of Christ.

J.A.G. Yes, they are concerned for the maintenance of what is due to the Lord. They are maintaining it through the supply, you might say, of the Spirit of Jesus Christ.

R.N.H. Is there any link with Colossians where it says, "Whatsoever ye do, labour at it heartily, as doing it to the Lord, and not to men", chap 3: 23?

J.A.G. Yes, there would be. These are critical times here, and this is what happened. They were personalities - "the names of the mighty men whom David had". They were at the Lord's disposal. There is much more - there are three score of the mighty of Israel who surround Solomon's couch (see Song of Sol 3: 7), but here are thirtyseven, and they are named, they are very distinctive.

J.N.M. Would you say something about the spoil? It says as to the second man that "the people returned after him only to spoil".

J.A.G. I think that is fine. We have known what that is. Persons have engaged with the Philistines and smitten them, maintained the truth. God has wrought a great deliverance and we have all come into the gain of it. You can have as much spoil as you like. That has been characteristic of the recovery. Somebody has been with the Lord and maintained things and there has been much spoil.

H.J.G. Is this the responsible side which we had this morning? There is all that God had done - the horse and his rider He has thrown into the sea - He has done all that in Christ in His death. But here we have discipleship coming out, persons being able to enter into responsibility and take the power away from the enemy.

J.A.G. I think they are with the Lord in a very mature way in what He is doing, and that is something we would like to be. Let us say they are full-grown men.

C.F.D. In conflict in our localities, should the initiative be more in our own hands, not leaving it in the hands of the enemy? This principle of discipleship and the anointing shines in these men because they take the initiative.

J.A.G. Yes, it is a very humbling thing if the devil gets the initiative. It means a lot of trouble for people, a lot of sorrow, a lot of humbling, a lot of tears and a lot of toil to get it back, a lot of self judgment. But these men maintain it.

C.F.D. Would it be a mark of these mighty men that they are available in conflict before the thing becomes so gross that it takes such a toll on the brethren? As thinking for the Lord, and thinking for the saints, they act on the Lord's behalf to protect what is there for Himself, do you think?

J.A.G. Yes, that is why I thought it was "a great deliverance that day". Why let things get to such a state that there is a prolonged period of almost civil war? There should not be that. You catch the thing quickly; that is what these mighty men do.

G.R. With manhood, would we not see priesthood? You spoke of David as being at the zenith of his priesthood as he poured it out to God, but these men would take character from that, would they not? Priesthood is always needed in the matters to which our brother refers.

J.A.G. The fact they are successful in the conflict shows that their links with God are pure and priestly, and the Lord has helped them and they have made a way for the Lord to come in.

E.C.B. Do you think they surround Solomon's couch because of alarms in the night?

J.A.G. That is what I thought. There are thirtyseven here, but there are threescore, "all hold the sword, Experts in war", Song of Sol 3: 8. They are the elite, not the pioneer corps.

E.C.B. One way in which local exercises can be prevented from becoming protracted is if they are left to the locality to resolve.

J.A.G. Yes. I say again, the best thing you can do is mind your own business.

E.C.B. Colossians has been referred to: do you think these men received "the recompense of the inheritance"? "Ye serve the Lord Christ", chap 3: 24.

J.A.G. I am sure they did. What a moment it was for them in 1 Chronicles 29, as they knew that the war was over, the victory was complete. There was no more war or evil occurrent. There is the headship of Christ in David in its fulness, and all the wealth and spoil that has come through the conflict is there and everybody is willing to contribute so that this great palatial system might proceed. The name of Christ's God is written upon persons - full answer to the outshining of Matthew 28. These are great matters and they are proper to the recovery, in fact they are vital to the recovery, they are the top stone of the recovery.

E.C.B. A question in regard to all continuing assembly history, whether collective or individual, is really who is your king? where do you see the anointing?

J.A.G. Have you transferred the kingdom from Saul to David? or have you still a couple of rooms in your own heart that you keep spare for yourself?

J.A.P. When the state is good one will chase a thousand (see Josh 23: 10). When the state is bad even men of power cannot effect anything for God, there must be separation from evil to get power.

Mr Darby set out, if I may suggest, what you are saying, and he did it on the ground of not walking with evil, and God added to that.

J.A.G. We are never obliged to compromise with evil. Evil is to be dealt with. Disciples know how to do it.

B.J. Would this action of the three lead our affections on to what lies before us tomorrow?

J.A.G. I am sure it does. Are we near enough to the Lord to know His thinking? That is headship. David longed. They "went down, and came to David in the harvest time to the cave". "David longed, and said, Oh that one would give me to drink of the water of the well of Bethlehem".

W.A.M. Does the pouring out of the water before Jehovah as a drink-offering answer to the service of God as flowing out of the Supper, the Lord receiving His portion?

J.A.G. Yes, and He uses that for the service of God. These are tremendous persons, they are formed in love, formed in the divine nature. David longs, he does not ask anybody. This is what I would like - the Lord says, and off they go.

W.A.M. It speaks of the mighty men that David had. I suppose he had these men in a way that he had no one else.

J.A.G. Yes, they were always at his disposal. The Lord has that kind of people, and we should be concerned that we are among them. Any time of the day or night these men were available, because they were moving in the light of the greatness of the purpose of God, and in the consciousness of the love of Christ. So you can say about these persons, as was the case with Philadelphia, that David has nothing to say against them, no reproach to bring upon, there is no adjustment needed. It is almost like the Philippian epistle, they are ready to go into heaven at any time at the Lord's behest.

G.R. Their appreciation of David involved that they went at the risk of their lives. We speak about laying down our life in relation to a conflict. Could you expand on that a bit?

JAG. That is a fine thing to mention, because it shows how much the Lord appreciates any little sacrifice that is made for Himself. We

often judge the Lord by ourselves, but He knows, He knows every little sacrifice that is made for Him, everything that is done with a pure motive that has Him in mind, that has His refreshment, His pleasure, in mind, and He can perfectly give it its true valuation. So David appreciates this, he does not take it to himself. David says, I must give this to God. Consequently he becomes like the minister of the sanctuary.

R.N.H. Is that transfer you are speaking about like "the kingdom of the Son of his love" (Col 1: 13)?

J.A.G. Yes, "from the authority of darkness" - how dark it was under Saul - "into the kingdom of the Son of his love: in whom we have redemption". Then Paul goes on to open up the greatness of the personal glories of Christ, the Son of God's love. That is fine. All that is in their heart as they break through the lines of the Philistines. It is not easy, it is costly, it causes exercise. Are you going to make it, and what is going to happen to you? These men are totally free, it would seem, from self-consideration, which is a big, big question with us - it is with me in any case. But discipleship, as we come to the fulness of the truth of it, means that Christ is preferred to ourselves at every turn.

H.J.G. Did David understand that when he said it is "the blood of the men"? It is not just some exploit but there is the blood of the men that is behind it.

J.A.G. Yes; it was said of Barnabas and Paul that they were prepared to lay down their lives for the name of our Lord Jesus (see Acts 15: 26). We are humbled as we say these things.

M.P. The Philistine principle is to be overcome if we will minister to the heart of Christ. The Philistines were present, and the well of the gate of Bethlehem was beset with Philistines. It was similar in Genesis, the Philistines had stopped the wells Abraham had digged (see chap 26: 18). It is something which is in us, is it not?

J.A.G. It surely is in us. We need to keep these wells free and keep the gate of Bethlehem free from the Philistine domination, so that the Lord has access to what the Spirit has in the brethren.

D.T.H. How do you understand Paul's expression when he said, "always bearing about in the body the dying of Jesus" (2 Cor 4: 10) as related to these mighty men, how he served in that way?

J.A.G. I think what would come out in them in their actions here is the manifestation of the life of Jesus in their mortal flesh (see v 11).

In the very place, you might say, where sin reigned in the power of death, that is in these bodies of ours, there is the life of Jesus manifested. It is in evidence in our mortal flesh. What a transformation that was! Hence he is conscious of nothing in himself, bearing about in his body the dying of Jesus.

E.C.B. Does this bear on us as to what the Lord may have in the present time, until in the type He will be able to go into Bethlehem Himself and come out of it as the ruler?

J.A.G. Yes, indeed, out of thee Bethlehem, Ephratah, "little to be among the thousands of Judah", Mic 5: 2. It is His place, it is His place in every local meeting. Think of what the Lord has in Toronto, in the scope of it. Yet the Philistine is in the gate and the well is not available. That is very solemn, very sad. He has much people in this city, but the Philistine holds the gate of Bethlehem, he holds the gate of Toronto. The Lord has given a deliverance out of it, a clearance out of it; the Lord wants that well, that is what He longs for, He longs for the assembly. Can we minister to Him? Can we make up for what is not available? That is these mighty men; they know how to do it.

E.C.B. Perhaps there is a certain link with "He shall drink of the brook in the way", Ps 110: 7.

J.A.G. Yes, it is so strengthening for the Lord. That is how much He values the revival. He values the local meetings, which makes it a solemn matter to close down a meeting. There is a well and there is a gate there, there is something for Christ there that He can come to; it is like a little Bethlehem. It is a solemn thing that the Philistine holds the gate. I suppose there is a Bishop or an Archbishop in Toronto - I do not know - and all the paraphernalia that belongs to it.

The Philistine is in the gate. We should not in any sense palliate that sort of thing. Rome and all its derivatives are anti-Christian.

S.E.H. Would Matthew 18: 20 - "where two or three are gathered together unto my name, there am I in the midst of them" - help us to regain the initiative in regard to the gates?

J.A.G. You maintain it, you hold what you have for the Lord, in that sense. The local meetings are holding the ground for the Lord, and you are holding the ground for the brethren. It is not your ground, it belongs to every Christian in the place, they are all in that loaf and they have a right to be there. They prove that right by washing their robes and coming in through the gates. The gates need to be in right hands, the place of judgment.

E.C.B. Has it not been said, in regard to your remark about closing a meeting, that you can never say the Lord has finished with the testimony in a place because He bought the field?

J.A.G. Yes; we used to say that and it is so humbling. Everything about our history has humbled us, and in one sense that is a mercy. We should be the humblest people in Christendom because of the failures that we have initiated.

J.A.P. There were two things that David recovered, were there not? One was the ark -we heard of it, he says, in the fields, (see Ps 132: 16) - and the other is this well, the Spirit. These are the concerns for every brother and sister, that the Lord Jesus might have His place and the Spirit might have His place.

J.A.G. Yes, at the gate, that the gate should be maintained in right hands.

E.C.B. Those are not the only two things David recovered, because he recovered all (see 1 Sam 30: 18).

W.S.C. Would you say more about the idea of three. Ecclesiastes gives us two, and then three (see chap 4: 12).

J.A.G. I think they are very obviously Ephesians. He has reconciled "both in one body to God", chap 2: 16. These are three persons who are thoroughly reconciled; there might be a Jew and a Gentile and

somebody else, and maybe naturally we would not get on at all, but the bond of consecration is such that they are together, Christ is their object. There are companies of brethren who cannot have reading meetings because of clashes of personalities. We should thank God that we can sit down together irrespective of the personalities, and we can inquire together in the temple.

W.S.C. Do you think we should look for someone that we can get along with, in that sense, someone that we agree with?

J.A.G. Well, we are all supposed to agree together. But say more about what is in your mind.

W.S.C. I am thinking of our localities; we are always praying for additions, and in the light of what you are saying it is good for us to look for what is agreeable, what is of this character.

J.A.G. Well, we look for what God has wrought in persons. I might really get up your back - I do not know - but then we have to get on together; this is the borders in Joshua. In the day to come it will be all so different. We get on together because our bond together is Christ and the truth, and all these other things are subservient to the place that the Lord should have. So the brethren work together.

B.J. Is it apropos to ask about 1 Chronicles 29 now?

J.A.G. We come now, I think, to the height of things. "This palace", David says, "is not to be for man, but for Jehovah Elohim". Then I think we find out the committal that the Lord Jesus personally has to the house of God, how He loves it, is Son over it (see Heb 3: 5). You marvel at the desire, the committal that He has to effecting that house so that it is absolutely and perfectly for the pleasure of God.

God can come into that house and everything is in accord with Himself, and that is sonship. He overlays the whole house entirely with gold, it is all divine.

H.J.G. We often speak about David's affliction and his affection in preparing these things, but he says, "And I have prepared according to all my power for the house". Is that a bit like the end of Matthew?

J.A.G. Yes, I think so. Think of the Lord's service to all these people in the gospels and to all these brethren here; what He is thinking about is the house of God, thinking about the eternal day when God is going to dwell with men. His new name is going to be appreciated, we are going to see the greatness of sonship in His glory, and finality in Christ personally; and the move is such that everybody is willing. It is a great outflow of affection - willing-hearted, perfect hearts. David refers to his own heart, how upright it was with God. Then the people anoint Solomon the second time to be king and prince and then God magnifies him - a reciprocity of glory and divine affection in this great final time of the assembly period.

J.A.P. You were saying in Aberdeen that you and your local brethren were very impressed with the way the brethren generally supported that occasion. Is that not something that marks the brethren at three-day gatherings? We get through not only with the ministry but with the finances and all that is necessary, and the sisters and the brethren help. It seems that the brethren are trying to pull together in every place in these matters. That is encouraging, is it not?

J.A.G. It is really very encouraging. We began to wonder, are we going to make this money after all? Then it came and now we have a surplus. The willing-heartedness of the brethren! They open up their houses, they have brethren in and they enjoy the fellowship. I think we get a touch of that in Chronicles here. "And they ate and drank before Jehovah on that day with great joy". It gets the fellowship at that level.

C.F.D. There is the preparation according to his power and according to his affection, and then the listing of such wonderful commodities that become available, including the gold of Ophir which is something special and outstanding. Is this the way that divine Persons are looking at things in relation to the service of God that proceeds?

J.A.G. I am sure it is; it is the fulness of Ephesian truth, and the wonderful glory in expression of the manhood of Jesus amongst the saints.

M.P. Does it link with Ephesians where we have so often the thought of riches, over-abounding and surpassing, suggesting the wonderful wealth of what is illustrated here?

J.A.G. It is the greatness of the heart of God pouring out in love upon His people. It is God's pleasure, it is His desire, it is His will, that we should be fully blessed and in the greatest enjoyment of His company in His own sphere. It has been said that Ephesians 1 is love at home, and so it is.

G.D.P. Does this material lead on to this palatial thought that you were speaking about?

J.A.G. Yes, it is all going to be put together and make this palace. The assembly is no ordinary construction, it is the greatest evidence of the handiwork of God. What a conception it is! It comes out in the closing chapters of Revelation in its greatness as substantially formed in love. I think that is wonderful, because we would like to move in love and most times we do not know what to do, how to do it, and so forth. Mr Darby, in his poem, speaks about love's divinest ways.

K.A.O. It says, "moreover, in my affection for the house of my God". Would you say something as to that in relation to our local assemblies. I was wondering if we might be stimulated in affection along the lines of the anointing in this relation.

J.A.G. He is giving, you might say he is calling upon all that is within him to contribute, to make this thing one hundred per cent success.

It is all going to be according to the pattern which he has. He is going to give Solomon the pattern, and God is going to come in and fill that house with His glory. Christ is going to be the centre of it.

There is that beautiful reference in 2 Chronicles 5 to the ark in its place (see v.7). It had not been in its place before; the various places where it had been were not exactly its place, but Christ supreme in your heart, dwelling in your heart through faith, that is His

place, and the Father, God, claims all that for Himself and floods it with His glory.

L.McF. There is reference to the silver - "silver for things of silver".

Think of the redemptive work! Mr Darby's hymn says that we should have part through Jesus' blood (No.88).

J.A.G. Yes, we would never forget that. I think David touches on that here when he refers to the side of his own responsibility: "we are strangers before thee, and sojourners, as all our fathers: our days on the earth are as a shadow". He is like the worshipper in Deuteronomy 26, is he not? In that sense he has laid his basket down by the altar, he stood back, he has gone over his history and he has magnified God for His great care and love and mercy.

E.C.B. Just as in the construction of the tabernacle, you would hardly have known that the people had all this wealth until opportunity was given to bring it out.

J.A.G. And that, I think, proves how fully they have taken on this great matter of discipleship; they have worked out the thing with Christ. So David says, "of that which is from thy hand have we given thee". The substance is of Christ, the body is of Christ.

E.C.B. It is remarkable that from the book of Judges through the two books of Samuel, there is hardly a moment of peace; everything at the beginning of Samuel is marked by decline, and after that there is continual conflict, and there are disputes about the kingdom. Then immediately persons are asked to yield something for God and they are all full of wealth. How is that?

J.A.G. Well, you know how it is. You find it every Lord's day morning, or should do anyway.

E.C.B. It would limit the degree to which we concentrate on breakdown.

J.A.G. Exactly. Normally you live in the land, you are not engaged with conflict. Folks that are always engaged with conflict effect nothing. You can write as many letters as you like, but what is the effect? Persons who live in heaven, who are with Christ, are

effective. The city comes down to touch administration; that is how it is with God. Moses came down to deal with evil. It is always the case. If you do not do that you are not going to effect anything.

K.A.K. We are told to lay up for ourselves treasures in heaven (see Matt 6: 20). That is where our heart is to be, is it not? I was thinking of this in relation to what was offered freely, how all came to light when there was a reason for it, that God should have that which was due to Him.

J.A.G. Yes, through all this history, and the civil war that waged and the whole thing, persons were getting the gain of the experience, the wealth of heaven was coming into their souls. The time comes now for contribution; out it comes, which points to the fact that despite the breakdown and the ruin and everything else, God is going on successfully with His purpose, with His counsel, and things are working out to completion.

C.F.D. We can get beyond this weakness and the breakdown and the scattering and so forth which we seem to dwell on so much, and get a view of things from the divine side, do you think? You were speaking about the mountains: let us get the view from the top of the mountains and see what God has in the way of glory and majesty.

J.A.G. Yes, there is nothing more depressing than to be occupied with the breakdown. There is the Spirit and there are the Scriptures, and there is the wealth of heaven, and we are speaking about the awful failures that we have made!

E.C.B. No conflict can interfere with "baptising them to the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit", Matt 28: 19.

J.A.G. Exactly, that remains; "And behold, I am with you all the days". You might go to a meeting, the reading is going along and then somebody just pours cold water and says, look where we have been and so forth. It effects nothing.

E.C.B. That is not the cold water of the well of Bethlehem.

J.A.G. No, it is not. I think the man who has his eyes on Christ in glory says, "forgetting the things behind" (Phil 3: 13), reaching on; let

us get to Him whatever the cost may be, he says.

R.G.J. Reference was made to Exodus 35 yesterday; there was more than was asked for. Cannot we look for that as way is made for the Lord Jesus?

J.A.G. I am sure we can. I think, as the people came into the gain of Moses' song and came through the teaching of Romans 6 and became bondmen of God, you have the willing-hearted. So they have to be restrained, have they not?

W.A.M. And you will get God "exalted as Head above all".

J.A.G. Then we have the kingdom in its fulness. "Thine, Jehovah, is the kingdom", he says. 'It belongs to you'. Now we are into 1 Corinthians 15 and Ephesians 3. "Thou are exalted as Head above all; and riches and glory are of thee " - that is all this response, all this wealth - "thou rulest over everything; and in thy hand is power and might; and in thy hand it is to make all great and strong". That is the sanctuary, Lord, that Thy hands have prepared. It has all come under the divine touch. "The Father loves the Son, and has given all things to be in his hand", John 3: 35. Oh, the wealth of this is marvellous! Now we can well afford to anoint Solomon.

E.C.B. Is there a touch in this of

'All the Father's counsels claiming
Equal honours to the Son;
All the Son's effulgence beaming
Makes the Father's glory known'

(Hymn 14)?

J.A.G. Indeed there is. That is a fine hymn.

M.P. In Matthew 11 the Lord was feeling the enmity of the cities, but He finds resource in the realm of the Father's wonderful thoughts, the centre of which is Himself. Is that not a wonderful pattern for us?

J.A.G. That is very helpful indeed. "Jesus said, I praise Thee, Father, Lord of the heaven and of the earth, that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and has revealed them to babes",

Matt 11: 25. He felt His rejection, He felt the fact that the cities in which most of His works of power had taken place had rejected Him. But then He appeals to anybody else who feels that way; He says, Come to Me.

M.P. From this standpoint He invites all who are labouring and afflicted to come to Him.

J.A.G. Exactly, that is a fine touch. He leads the way in everything.

G.R. The silver in verse 4 is said to be refined. All the dross and impurities had to be taken out of it before it is serviceable. What would you say about that?

J.A.G. It would give us God's view, God's appreciation, in some measure at least, of the value of the blood of Christ, the blood of the Beloved, "the assembly of God, which he has purchased with the blood of his own", Acts 20: 21. That is a tremendous thing, the blood of the Beloved; that is David.

J.A.P. There is the reference here to their history - "we are strangers before thee", and so forth-but he also says, "Jehovah our God, all this store that we have prepared ... is of thy hand, and is all thine own". Is that what you are at, that the glory might be to God and we not occupied with the breakdown? God has brought the matter through Himself.

J.A.G. Yes, if anybody has anything they have it from the Lord; if it is of any value it has come from Him.

TORONTO

11 October 1991

"THE FIRST AND THE LAST"

G.Allan Brown

Joshua 4: 4-9; Philippians 1: 21; Revelation 22: 13

The brother who gave thanks for the emblems this morning where we were made a reference to the fact that the death of the Lord Jesus appeared to be the end outwardly, but it was really the beginning for us. I just want to say something about that, if I may, because a great many people would like to make a new beginning in their lives and they have great resolves. They are absolutely genuine in their resolves. The New Year is a time when many people make resolutions as to what they will do and what they will not do and not many of the resolutions last beyond the first week of January at least that is my experience. People talk of turning over a new leaf. You can do that if you like; you can turn over a new leaf, and there it is all clean and blank, but it has not taken away all the leaves that were there before. They are still there. If our lives are going to be changed we have to get back to the death of Christ.

There is no other way that lives can be changed. Not all the best resolutions and the strongest will-power in the world can change people basically and permanently. You have to come to the death of Christ. That is to be your beginning.

When Jesus died a great many people thought it was the end. Pilate thought it was the end. Herod thought it was the end. I suppose in some sense they were quite relieved because Jesus had been something of an embarrassment to them. Their careers, their politics, were all affected by this Man, and when they saw Him dead and buried they thought, That is the end, we can draw the curtains on this unfortunate affair. Even some of the disciples thought that too. Two of those who loved the Lord, in Luke 24, said, "But we had hoped that he was the one who is about to redeem Israel" (v .21). They thought He was going to take the throne of Israel and that the kings of the nations would all come and bow down to Jesus, and a new order of things would be set up on this earth. But now He was

dead. Things had not worked out as they thought. This looked like the end. Many were quite discouraged. Even the devil himself, I believe, thought he had accomplished something when he saw Jesus dead. But Jesus did not stay in death. He went into death but came out of it, and that was the beginning of a whole new glorious system of things into which you and I can come tonight by way of His death.

Scripture speaks about many beginnings and we cannot cover them all. John in his gospel commences with "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God".

That, I think, is about as far back as our human minds are able to go. Genesis 1 says, "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth". That is the beginning of the creation. Then in this epistle John speaks about the beginning of Christianity: "That which was from the beginning, that which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes; that which we contemplated, and our hands handled, concerning the word of life", 1 John 1: 1. These are all very interesting things. But what I want to come to, beloved, is the fact that, if your life is to be changed, there is only one place that that can begin, and that is in the death of Jesus. His death was not like the death of any other. His death was vicarious - what that means is, simply, that He died in place of us. He took our place. Death lies upon every one of us as the consequence of our sins: "For the wages of sin is death", Rom 6: 23. No penalty lay on Jesus, yet He died, vicariously. He died that we might live. Is that not wonderful?

There was a whole order of things that had to be ended. That is why the death of Jesus marked the end as well as the beginning.

The whole question of sin and sins was what Jesus took upon Himself when He died upon the cross. How great was the load, the burden, that He took upon Himself! Think of it! We sometimes sing:

'O Lord, what burdens Thou didst bear!
Our load was laid on Thee;
Thou stoodest for the sinner there
To bear all ill for me'

(Hymn 415)

The One who was sinless became the sin-offering and in those three awful hours of darkness the unmitigated fury and wrath of a holy God was poured out on the head of the sinless One. In the Old Testament the animal offerings were brought and laid upon the altar and the fire burned and the offering was consumed. When Jesus died on Calvary's altar the fire was exhausted but the offering still remained. At the end of these three dreadful hours God had exacted every claim that His righteousness could demand. There came a point when God had no more to ask for, no more to demand. The poet puts it beautifully when he says,

'Stern justice can demand no more,
And mercy can dispense her store'

(Hymn 357)

God was fully satisfied with the work that Jesus had accomplished. The judgment was finished and the man who had offended God was gone in the death of Christ.

Now, if your life is going to change, that is where it has to change. That is where it has to begin and nowhere else - in the ending of the man who has offended God, and in knowing that your sins are gone. It is a lovely hymn we sometimes sing:

'My sins - O the bliss of this glorious thought –
My sins - not in part, but the whole -
Were borne on the cross, and are gone evermore.
Praise the Lord, praise the Lord, O my soul!'

(No.238)

That is the glory of the gospel, that the work is finished, totally and completely finished, and God is fully satisfied, and now there is nothing but blessing for the repenting sinner.

I refer briefly to this passage in Joshua; I do not want to go into the detail of it. The Jordan speaks to us of the death of Jesus. There are different types, of course, and we just use them simply. The Jordan is the death of Jesus, but it is more than that; it is where

we have to go. The Red Sea is a different thing altogether. The Red Sea is Jesus dying for us to take away our sins and to deliver us from the world, but the Jordan means that we go that way with Him.

I understand that the Jordan is a tumultuous, tempestuous river that falls from a great height and its force and power are extraordinary.

Yet when the ark of the covenant, which speaks to us of the Lord Jesus went there that water which was full over all its banks (see Josh 3: 15) defied all the laws of nature and rose up in a heap. What flowed down to the plain was cut off. The people went over on dry ground, it was not a muddy passage, there was not a trace of water left when the people crossed the Jordan. Such was the power of Christ in going into death.

Joshua was commanded to cause the twelve leaders of the tribes each to take a stone out of the bed of the Jordan and erect it on the other side, and they did that. But Joshua did something else that he was not told to do. He set up another twelve stones in the bed of the Jordan, and in the passage we read it says, "and they are there to this day". They are still there yet. What that means, I believe, is this: if we are going to prosper in our souls we can never afford to forget that this is from whence our origin springs - the death of Christ. Let us never, never forget that!

Then the waters of the Jordan came back again. After the people were over, the waters flowed on, it says, "as previously" (v 18). It was just as though nothing had ever happened. The people were on the other side and the Jordan still flowed on. What does that mean? I think it means that people still die. Believers die: unconverted people die. The power of death publicly is still unchanged, but you and I, if we have come this way, are on the other side and there are these stones standing up to remind us not only that our origin was there in the bed of the Jordan where, typically, Jesus died but you can see these stones. It says, "When your children ask hereafter, saying, What mean ye by these stones?", then you will be able to tell them. It is a wonderful privilege to be brought up in a Christian household because you will get the answers from your parents. They can tell you and they can direct

you to the death of Jesus, the One "who himself bore our sins in his body on the tree", 1 Pet 2: 24. In that great sacrifice which He offered, there was the end of all our sinful past; our shameful history is all gone and there is the new beginning. Would you like to make a new beginning? Get to the cross! Get back to the death of Jesus! Never forget it!

Then you come out and emerge on the other side. What a day it was when they reached that, because they began to enjoy life as they had never enjoyed it before. They had food to eat that they had never eaten before. That is a literal fact because, apart from two men, everybody who crossed that Jordan had been born in the wilderness. None of them had ever tasted corn or bread: they had lived on manna for forty years. None of them had ever tasted grapes or any of the wonderful fruits of the land, the heavenly inheritance.

On the day they went over, the manna ceased, and they ate of the old corn of the land. They ate of corn that had been reaped by other hands. They drank the fruit of the vines and they ate of these grapes which they had not planted. They entered into all the wealth of a new inheritance and that is what Christianity offers you. Things are altogether different: instead of living like a pauper you live like an aristocrat, you live in plenty; the very choicest of heaven's store is opened up to you for your enjoyment and there is as much of it as you want. That land is a good and spacious land, the land that God has chosen for your blessing, and wherever you put your foot down, it is yours:

'Free, our peaceful feet may venture
In the paradise of God'

(Hymn 206)

Christianity is a great life! Would that more would understand it to be so! The world does not see half of what the believer has to enjoy.

You come into a small meeting and you sit down together, perhaps only a few, and read the Scriptures and speak over them together: what wealth opens up! Think of the reading this afternoon: just a few verses of Scripture, a few simple brethren talking together. Was it

not fine to be able to pluck of the grapes of the land? They ate of the old corn of the land. The old corn of the land is not Jesus down here exactly, it is Jesus as He is and where He is, enthroned in glory at the right hand of God, related to God's purpose and blessing for you and for me.

Paul was one who came that way, and I just refer to what he says in Philippians: "For for me to live is Christ". That was his beginning. I do not know if many of us could say that, but there is no harm in just asking yourself, Is that how I live? Paul was so captivated by the Lord who spoke to him out of heaven and broke down all his defences, he was so enthralled and captivated by the attractive ness, the glories of Jesus, that he says, From this time onwards "for me to live is Christ". "And to die" - well, that is better still because he would go straight into the presence of the One who loved him and whom he loved - "and to die gain". "For for me", he says, "to live is Christ". While we are down here in the wilderness we eat of the manna in the morning before we face the wilderness, and then as we go through the day, perhaps we pick up something from the Scriptures or from the ministry, and then go on to a meeting at night and get something of the old corn of the land to feast upon. The grapes of Eschol that were carried between two on a pole are a foretaste of the heavenly land. You can have them now even while we are still literally in the wilderness, but then you can also have entrance spiritually into this glorious, heavenly land. That is what we enjoy, particularly on a day like this, the Lord's day. "For for me", Paul says, "to live is Christ".

Now, just a word on the verse in Revelation. This refers, no doubt, to the Lord Jesus Himself: "I am the Alpha and the Omega". I suppose we all know that these are the first and the last letters of the Greek alphabet. If you are going to have a beginning, it is with Jesus; if there is to be an end, it is in Him too. He will be able to see you through; not only will He give you a good beginning in your Christian life, but He will see you through right to the very end. He says, "I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end". What that means, I think, is that God is fully

satisfied with Jesus and everything that He has done, and the full revelation of God which we have now and which is presented to men in the glad tidings is complete. There is nothing to be added.

People try to modernise the gospel and bring in new ideas and all that kind of thing. Beloved, remember your origin! Your origin is in the death of Christ. That is your beginning. And your end is also in Him. He is the first; He is the last. Man's only hope is Christ. How could it be otherwise? When men make addresses to others, quite often they have to be amended and altered, brought up to date. The gospel that is preached to men is the same gospel that has been preached for almost two thousand years and it needs no alteration, no amendment, because it is all in Christ, "the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end".

That is the Christian life. There is, of course, the possibility that some might refuse God's overtures of blessing in the gospel. Do not forget that there is such a thing as the great white throne, "and him that sat on it" (Rev 20: 11); that is the same Jesus. It says, "from whose face the earth and the heaven fled, and place was not found for them". That is the final assizes, the final judgment; it is Jesus, the same Jesus, of whom the writer says:

'What will you do without Him
When the great white throne is set
And the Judge who never can mistake
And never can forget,
The Judge whom you have never here
As Friend and Saviour sought
Will summon you, to give account
Of word and deed and thought?'

This is the last and final judgment. It is not part of the gospel, but it is in order to mention it; it is the final thing in judgment. But today, to the believer, the great white throne holds no terror or tear. We shall never stand before that great white throne because our sins are gone, gone in that precious death that has secured so much for God. I trust that every one of us here is standing on a secure and firm foundation, a basis that nothing can ever shake in heaven or earth or

hell itself. Not all the machinations of the devil will ever be able to shake the faith of one who knows that his origin has been in the death of Christ.

May every one of us know it and be sure of it now for His Name's sake.

GLASGOW

14 February 1993

ACTIVE CHILDREN

We used to hear a saying that 'Children should be seen and not heard'. This is not in Scripture, indeed there are some passages in the Word where children have been essential to the testimony of God and have been of real assistance in His works. Samuel, for instance, learned to serve as a priest when very young, and his regular task at first was to open the doors of the temple so that persons could come and worship there. When he was still quite young he was thought mature enough to be entrusted with a message of judgment to the Lord's beloved but unresponsive people. God "let none of his words fall to the ground."

We have in the Bible a short but precious account of the birth of John, later called 'the Baptist'. When growing up he was rightly concerned about the state of God's people, and he called upon those who were like-minded to undergo baptism in the water. His name means 'Jehovah is gracious'. Many persons were converted through his ministry and he was a prophet announcing the coming of the Lord Jesus.

Do you enquire about your baptism?

J.C.Evershed