

A
WORD
IN ITS
SEASON

1st Series

No. 249

December 1993

Contents

THE STONE ROLLED AWAY

A TIME TO SEW

AT A BURIAL

SICK CHILDREN

THE STONE ROLLED AWAY

Mark 16: 1-6; John 11: 39-44; 12: 1,2; Genesis 29: 1-3, 6-11

W.D. These scriptures record the fact that the stone is rolled away, in Mark 16 and John 11 from the entrance to the tomb, and in Genesis 29 from the mouth of the well. It was the one in Mark 16 which set in movement with me the train of thought as to this enquiry. The hymn we had at the commencement of the Supper -

'Death had on Thee no claim' (No.152)

also affected me. The purpose of the stone being rolled away in Mark 16 was to demonstrate that fact to those who had come. As to the other two scriptures, the temple should open up what might be their significance, but certainly this one in Mark - "the sun having risen" and the very great stone being rolled away - should enhance to us the glory of the One upon whom death had no claim.

E.C.B. The rolling away of the stone in Mark has no reference to the release of Christ from death: it is only a demonstration. In John 11 it has in view the release of Lazarus, and in Genesis it has in view the release of the water, but in Mark 16 it is only a demonstration.

W.D. I think so, particularly if you take the first verse - these three sisters "bought aromatic spices that they might come and embalm him", an act of devotion but without the comfort of the precious light that death had no claim on the Lord.

D.J.H. Reference was made in thanksgiving this morning to "thou wilt not ... allow thy holy one to see corruption" (Ps 16: 10), but of Lazarus it says, "he stinks already". There is a very great contrast, is there not?

W.D. That is so. As we come to John 11 we will see that others were instructed to roll away the stone but the demonstration that is given in Mark 16 of this fact is remarkable. Does it not underline the very precious thought that, as we enter on the privileges of the first day of the week, there is nothing to burden our spirits?

D.J.H. Yes; it just says, "they see that the stone has been rolled away". It does not say who did it, but, as you say, everything is cleared out of the way.

W.D. Yes. It is important, to me anyway, that in the gospels stress is laid on the resurrection, as if to bring out the glory of the Lord Jesus, that He entered into death so that there might be nothing to hinder the service of God proceeding. It is not exactly Mark's teaching, but I thought it was a fruitful scripture because it does emphasise that the stone, while it was very great, was nevertheless rolled away.

B.W.W. Does it link with what you have in mind that it says immediately after that, "And entering into the sepulchre, they saw a young man"?

W.D. Much enters into that, but apparently somebody was in the gain of the victory, and we have to profit from the fact that what the Lord has accomplished in breaking the power of death is to bring us into the gain of these things. It is a remarkable thing, particularly in the circumstances of the possibility of death coming in, that we have a link with One on whom it had no claim.

M.A.J.T. These sisters were worried about the stone being in the way. We have worries and troubles like a stone, but when we live near the Lord and look to Him our troubles are rolled away.

W.D. Their enquiry is peculiar to Mark. It is important to grasp that the stone was not rolled away so that the exit from the tomb could be facilitated for the Lord. It was, as our brother said, a demonstration.

The service of God is a very delicate thing and it calls for a certain leverage in our souls spiritually speaking. As we proceed in it we are conscious of the victory that the Lord has accomplished in order that the way might be made clear.

D.A.B. Matthew's gospel confirms what we are saying because he records that the women saw the stone being rolled away; but they did not see the Lord. The angel came and rolled the stone away in front of them. They did not see the Lord emerge, did they? It does say there that the angel sat on it. I wondered if that links with what

we have in 1 Corinthians 15 that God gives us the victory, that in that sense we have a right to sit on the stone.

W.D. Yes, undoubtedly. We must have the sense, as we gather for the Lord's supper, of a peace that comes from the knowledge that the One who is engaging our affections in the loaf and the cup has made the way clear for us to touch a deathless scene.

J.C.E. When I was a boy, at the time of the Supper there might be one or two hymns or one or two prayers bringing out the Lord's sufferings maybe, leading up to the Supper in that way. That was not quite what you mean.

W.D. Well, we should be liberated in our spirits. At the Supper I do not like to dwell too much on my love for the Lord. I would like to say, 'I am here, Lord, because I love You and all here love You', but it is a certain uplift in our spirits to get a sense of His love for us. It has been demonstrated in that He has gone into death, and one purpose of His overthrow of death is our liberty. He gives us a place with Him as beyond death, what liberty marks that position!

E.C.B. It is important for all of us who are there to have in our spirits that it is a living Christ we recall. The Supper is not the remembrance of His death, it is calling "me" to mind.

W.D. And so "the sun having risen" really reflects the setting amongst us, does it not? The light of resurrection shines over the scene.

E.C.B. I think we should all get very clearly in our souls that, if Christ were not raised from the dead, there would be no such thing as Christianity.

W.D. That is right. It is often said, and rightly, that the ascension is the great thought in Christianity, but what you said is important because I increasingly see that Colossians is the vital thing state-wise that governs the service of God.

D.A.B. I never read this scripture without thinking of a brother who used to be in the city. Sometimes at the prayer meeting there would be a lot of prayer about difficulties, and we would wait quite a long

time before he prayed, but on a number of occasions, after a lot of such prayers, he would pray that we might find that the stone had already been rolled away.

W.D. Well, Christianity is victory. Every cloud that hinders may find a place in our own hearts, and the victory of Christianity must be established in our hearts before it can be established collectively amongst the saints.

D.A.B. Yes. Going back to what you were saying before, ascension is, I suppose, the answer to earthliness - it takes us off the earth - but resurrection is the answer to death, and that is a fundamental thing. We have nothing unless there is an answer to death.

W.D. So you would agree with what I said that Colossian teaching is a vital thing in Christianity? There was a reference this morning in thanksgiving - and others followed it up, rightly so - to quickening. There is no experience of quickening as such unless we come to it that a Man has risen from the dead.

H.A.H. I was interested in your reference to Colossians because, when I was younger, there used to be words in the morning meeting on the ark going through the Jordan. We do not have them now, but that seemed to be the basis of our moving on in the service of God.

W.D. That scripture as to the ark in the Jordan is a great help, but the ark reached the other side. There is the important thing. And all the people had reached the other side. So we come back to Colossians, that it is by faith, but that is not quickening. Is that right?

E.O.P.M. Yes, quickening is the answer to embalming, is it not? As to what you were saying about our love for the Lord, we may seek to retain the Lord at the level of our appreciation of Him. Quickening would link us with Him where He is.

W.D. Yes, and quickening is the spiritual evidence that the truth of a risen Christ has penetrated through all that is natural and human in us that would hinder the expansion of the glories of Christ seen in Colossians 1 and 2.

E.O.P.M. Could you help us practically about this? What quickened you this morning?

W.D. It was the sense that the glory of the Person was before me right from the beginning, even before the intimations were given. I was sitting there with the beloved people of God: what affected me was the glory of the Person who could gather together loyal hearts in a scene of death. No other Person could do that. No other Person will ever do it. But the Lord of glory can do it!

J.S.G. It says here "when they looked". There were exchanges between themselves evidently: "they said to one another". But then it says, "And when they looked". I wondered if looking is important.

Is what you have in mind that, as looking and having faith, we should expect the Lord personally to move in our hearts to cause movements in us?

W.D. Because you are in the realm of spiritual realities and you have to test them out for yourself. That is why I said that what is in your own heart has to be proved, so that the power of the Lord can help you to overcome and reach forward into the service of God.

J.A.B. I was interested in "the sun having risen". It has a liberating effect, has it not?

W.D. It brings out the glory of the first day of the week. I wonder whether we could be more sanctified in our minds about the first day of the week. I would not be legal in any sense but I think the sunshine of another day would have a sanctifying effect upon our minds so that the reality of these divine truths we are speaking about would be deepened with us.

E.C.B. I m sure that all of us would feel the need of that. I was struck with this expression "the sun having risen" because it introduces for us impressions of eternity, but it introduces the world to come: the whole earth will be lit up with His glory when the sun is risen. That is the world to come. But thinking of something else you said earlier, do you think we could have some greater impression of the bearing of the last enemy that has been destroyed? If the last

enemy has been destroyed, every other hindrance has been taken out of the way because Christ is risen.

W.D. I think so. Just to turn aside for a moment: at our meetings for burial, if I may say so, we should never leave without a deepened sense in our souls of what you have said. It is so important in meetings for burial that we grasp that, because that would be the intent of the Spirit in the saints being gathered together. We say, rightly, that it is a token of respect and affection for the one who has gone, but we should leave with something in our souls as to the Person we love and know, and our hope is based on Him in virtue of what He has done in overthrowing the power of death.

D.J.H. There is something special about what the Lord would say on such an occasion, is there not? We have our meetings on the calendar - Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday - but a burial is not pre-arranged, it is interposed, and the Lord would say something special and, particularly, in regard to this matter you are speaking of.

W.D. Yes, well, the beloved one, brother or sister, whoever it may be, their portion is rich beyond all question. The occasion is an experience we pass through but it is not primarily for the comfort of the bereaved. It is to bring out the glory of the Son of God - there is an impression of One who can provide in His risen life what nature lost. Is that right?

D.J.H. That is John 11 again, is it not? - "This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God may be glorified by it" (v 4). In a sense every death that happens is with that in view.

E.C.B. In regard to meetings of burial, it is important that we keep in mind that the meeting is for the living. 1 Corinthians 15 is not a funeral chapter; it is a chapter for the living. As was quoted before: He gives us (the living) the victory. Do we not also need to bear in mind that there is only one memorial meeting and that is the Supper? A burial is not a memorial meeting for the dead.

D.A.B. It says here that the sabbath was passed.

W.D. It is the termination of the old order. It may mean that what was connected with the Jewish order of things was over. The death and resurrection of Christ has opened up an entirely different area.

In speaking about sanctified minds on the first day of the week, the violence and wickedness that marks the scene outside should not enter into our conversation on the first day of the week.

D.A.B. The supper in John 12 was "six days before the passover".

You could say for them the sabbath was passed. There was nothing of what was merely religious and nothing of the world. It was not the Lord's supper but perhaps it shows us how the day can be held for Him in that fragrant way.

W.D. The first day of the week is peculiarly rich for us. What I had in mind in Genesis 29 was preparatory to John 11. The younger brethren may not have thought much about the fact that there is a purity about the observance of the Lord's supper and its environment which is peculiar to the light that the Lord has given by the Spirit in the times in which we live. The shepherds here were bound by tradition; they said, "We cannot until all the flocks are gathered together". The whole environment was governed by tradition. It was equivalent to what the Lord did in the recovery of the truth. When Rachel comes into view - the assembly in type - the necessity for the Spirit in type being recognised must come into effect. The Supper and the service of God as the brethren know it and practice it is not a man-made thing; it is divinely prescribed and has come under the direction and help of the Spirit over the years.

E.C.B. It is interesting that the shepherds always put the stone back but Jacob did not. There is that liberty of the Spirit now, the church in view, and the stone cannot be put back.

W.D. We rightly speak about the heritage that has come to us. I do not see the heritage exactly in what we have in our bookcases; it lies in what the Spirit of God has worked out in regard to the functioning of the assembly proceeding from the Lord's supper, the flow of the well when the assembly in type comes into view.

D.A.B. What you say is confirmed by another of Jacob's wells that is referred to in John 4. It says it was "near to the land which Jacob gave to his son Joseph" (v 5). That is the heritage, is it not? But then it says, "Now a fountain of Jacob's was there". The heritage is of no value without the fountain of Jacob.

W.D. That confirms what is in mind.

B.H.C. I was thinking of how the water is marked by life. The Spirit would bring in life, would He not? Quickening would relate to the Spirit's activity, would it not?

W.D. Yes, in view of the assembly. It was when Jacob saw Rachel that he acted. The touch that the Lord has given as to the assembly, her feminine aspect, needs to be furnished by the Spirit. Actually union is not much known amongst us.

B.H.C. In regard to the address to Philadelphia it says, "and he shall go no more at all out", Rev 3: 12. Would the idea of quickening and union have the sense of going in?

W.D. Yes, undoubtedly. That promise will be fulfilled in a day to come, but the assurance to Philadelphia that "he shall go no more at all out" is the touch that is left on our spirits in the service of God.

D.A.B. Are you thinking here about the emphasis on the kindredship between Jacob and Rachel which underlay their union? Jacob embraced Rachel because she was his mother's brother's daughter.

W.D. This is a most interesting scripture compared to Genesis 24. The environment is the same there. Rebecca comes to the well, but it is the Spirit, typically, who is prominent, but here it is typically Christ that is so distinct. That distinction is helpful because it does bring out that the Lord wants to facilitate the development of the affections that are connected with union.

E.C.B. You say that union is not very much known among us: I think you are right. But what difference would it make to us if it were better known?

W.D. There would be a sense of being in concert with the mind of Christ.

E.C.B. I think there would: and, if union were better known, sonship would be better understood.

W.D. That would be true. That is why I felt at liberty to interpose this scripture between Mark 16 and John 11.

E.C.B. Perhaps we do not learn everything about this in the meeting, but seeds are planted in our minds, and when you come to another meeting a bit later on, you find that something has grown in you. These things are very important. I was struck - you come back to the well here - with the reference this morning to satisfaction. I thought we had some impression of that, that there is a place where every heart is satisfied.

W.D. Every heart is satisfied. That has the elements of union in it, has it not? Satisfaction is not a thing that you can define in terms.

E.C.B. In the hymn 'In heavenly love abiding' which was in the 1952 hymnbook and earlier books, it says,

'The bridegroom and the bride
Are seen in glory ever
And love is satisfied.'

D.A.B. There is a contrast in the Song of Songs. It presents at times love at a distance. There the spouse says, "Oh that thou wert as my brother ... Should I find thee without, I would kiss thee; And they would not despise me", chap 8: 1. But here we find that this association between Rachel and Jacob gives liberty for the expression of affection.

W.D. So the Song of Songs is a typical scripture which perhaps demonstrates what is being said, because the varying experiences of the spouse with her beloved reflect often our own experience. The first and second chapters indicate satisfaction, in chapter three decline comes in, but what brings the spouse back is the sense of the love of the beloved filling her heart. As we long for our Beloved, there is some experience of what we are saying.

I.L.B. We started our meeting this morning with the hymn:

'Lord Jesus, come' (No.274)

and at the end of that hymn we get

'Spirit and bride
... say, Come!'

How are we to experience these things in a greater way?

W.D. I would say in the development by the Spirit of the affections that will underlie that cry. What we are referring to in Genesis 29 with Jacob and Rachel is as if the Lord is saying, 'The great matter before Me is the development of affections by the Spirit amongst the saints to facilitate My movements amongst them'. Rachel is not strictly a type of the assembly but the way Jacob served for her for fourteen years - two periods of seven years - shows in type the depth of the love that the Lord had for the assembly. The stone was rolled away - a remarkable stark contrast to the ritualism in the established church and in what Rome practises. The Lord in His sovereign movements rolled the stone away and set on course the whole thought of the service of God. And the word to us, beloved brethren, is to be always in the gain of the Spirit so that we do not in any way inhibit the Spirit's movements by the restraint of tradition.

I.L.B. I was thinking when he "lifted up his voice and wept" of the strong emotions there, and that is to be reciprocal. That is not traditional but the real experience of emotions.

W.D. Have you ever wept for joy? One of the choicest experiences you can have is to weep for joy. In weeping for joy, in these days of darkness and departure, you get some impression of how much the assembly means to Christ. So in John 11 Jesus says "Take away the stone". Then Martha intervenes, and then the Lord speaks about the glory of God and "They took therefore the stone away". What do you think would be the point of that?

E.C.B. Immediately, of course, it was to release Lazarus, but I wondered whether there should not be ability among us to take away the stone so that the liberty of the occasion is thoroughly enjoyed.

W.D. It is as if the Lord would encourage us to take on the experimental side as to realising what His death has accomplished

so that the glory of God might be manifest. The Lord could have done it Himself but there would have been a void on the experimental side with them. They acted in faith, and faith is an element that we need at the Supper as much as at any other time. It makes way for the experimental side and the Lord acted on that, and there was somebody brought forth in Lazarus that was for the glory of God in chapter 12.

E.C.B. That experimental side would be before we come to the meeting so that there is liberty for the glory of God to be manifested in the meeting, whether that glory is in the Father, the Son or the Spirit.

W.D. Well, that must be something that becomes manifest. If there is not some evident touch as to the glory of a divine Person, there is something incomplete.

D.J.H. Does this experimental side relate among other things to how we view one another as we come to the Supper? We might view one another with thoughts in relation to the natural order of things, but we are to take that away so that there is liberty for all in view of the service of God.

W.D. Well, your viewpoint of the saints as you gather for the Supper must of necessity be an abstract one. The experimental side is necessary to support that abstract view of things. Would you say that?

D.J.H. That is what I was thinking. We take away what would hinder that abstract view.

W.D. I think so. Take John 12; the "much fruit" was the product of the death of Christ: "Except the grain of wheat falling into the ground die, it abides alone; but if it die, it bears much fruit" (v 24). The experimental side gives you, as apprehending that, to clothe the beloved saints in the full light of the abstract thought.

H.A.H. Is there a link between Martha's interpolation here and Nicodemus's natural thinking about a man entering into the womb of

his mother a second time? It would help us to have spiritual thoughts: "that which is born of the Spirit is spirit", John 3: 6.

W.D. I think so.

E.C.B. I was thinking of two other lines of the hymn to which you have already referred which we had at the beginning this morning:

'Out of Thy death has sprung
A wondrous living throng'.

That experimental side is over, and you are looking round, as was said, at the wondrous living throng and in your mind you see it all. Would you say that?

W.D. Well, what I meant by linking the experimental side with that is that you take that view; - and then you say to yourself, How has that come about? You could not put that dress on the saints by a human appraisal. You have to say, How has that come about? It has come about because the Lord Jesus has broken the power of death and something has been secured for the glory of God. Eventually that is how they will all be in the divine thoughts.

D.A.B. There was a reference earlier to looking into the tomb of Jesus which was empty, but there was no question of looking into the tomb of Lazarus while he was still there. It is very interesting that they rolled away the stone and Jesus looked up to heaven. He did not look into the tomb, as if to be in accord with the heavenly view of the matter, and Lazarus is first seen living, is he not?

W.D. Yes; then he comes forth and he is "bound feet and hands with graveclothes, and his face was bound round with a handkerchief. Jesus says to them, Loose him and let him go". The Lord by His death has removed every encumbrance and we have in our thoughts to do the same. A person with his feet and hands bound with graveclothes and face bound round with a handkerchief could not possibly serve in the service of God.

E.O.P.M. I have often been impressed with this scripture that the Lord does not do it Himself. I would love to have the ability to do this to free some of our brethren, those we know in system as we say,

bound with graveclothes, but even one another too. We all get tied up in knots at times, do we not? It is ability amongst the saints to unloose one another: the spirit of heaviness turns into a garment of praise (see Isa 61: 3).

W.D. You cannot do these things by human means, no matter how you try. You might look at a brother and you might say, Well, he must have some good point in him somewhere, I shall try and find it. But that is not the force of the scripture here but that he is so because the Lord Jesus has broken the power of death, and the new generation has come forth and that is what you proceed with in the service of God.

D.J.H. Would you say it is like Paul embracing Eutychus and saying "his life is in him" and then they broke bread?

W.D. Yes; but what we are speaking about is not deep Christianity but the truth of resurrection. You cannot proceed into the depths of divine service unless the power of death is removed from your spirit.

D.J.H. I think what we have had these two days is very helpful in that regard. Yesterday, you cannot proceed in the testimony without it; but today, you cannot proceed in the service of God without it.

LONDON

20 December 1992

Key to initials

London unless otherwise stated

D.A.Burr; E.C.Burr; I.L.Barlow, Bexley; J.A.Burnett; B.H.Clark;
W.Dickson, Edinburgh; J.C.Evershed; J.S.Gray; D.J.Hutson;
H.A.Hutson; E.O.P.Mutton, Walton-on-the-Naze; M.A.J.Terry;
B.W.Ward

A TIME TO SEW

Andrew Burr

Ecclesiastes 3: 1; 7; 1 Corinthians 1: 9-10; Matthew 4: 18-22

I would like to say a simple word about this word in Ecclesiastes "a time to sew". The list of things is interesting but it needs to be rightly understood. I do not think Solomon means that at one time one should do one thing and then at another stop and do the opposite.

His observation is that there are settings, or times, in which quite opposite things might be appropriate. They may have little to connect them. I can take an example from verse 5 - "A time to cast away stones, and a time to gather stones together". We read of Jerusalem being left without one stone upon another - stones cast away (see Mark 13: 2); we also read of Jesus as a stone cast away (see 1 Pet 2: 7). But in that same passage it speaks of coming as living stones: there is a time to gather stones together. We could not say this is a counterpart of the judgment on the city. We see how the different things in this chapter are viewed in their own setting. If we look at verse 7, there are settings in which it is never a time to rend, although there are other settings in which there has been a time to rend. God says to Saul that he had rent the kingdom from him and given it to his neighbour who was better than he (see 1 Sam 15: 28). We read of the veil of the temple being rent (see Matt 27: 15). There is no sense in which the veil is restored, God has come out. Then we read of Samson rending the lion as one rends a kid (see Judges 14: 6), speaking of the way in which the Lord Jesus has triumphed over the power of death and Him who had it.

I would like to suggest that the setting and time in which we are is a time to sew, that is a time to stitch. We are not necessarily called upon for great works all at once, but we should be occupied in this positive way.

I read the passage in Corinthians, as much for the note to it which we have no doubt all read. Paul had very much in mind in Corinth that it was a time to sew. I read verse 9 along with verse 10

to see that Paul combines statements of truth that relate to the assembly as a whole, with a more practical exhortation as to the working out of those principles in our local gatherings. In verse 9 I think we have what is proper to the fellowship as a whole: in its broadest sense it embraces all. After all, if there were any not in this "fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ" one might wonder what fellowship they are in. It is universal and it is not just a local idea.

Whether it is rightly entered into by all is another matter, because every divine institution is marked by certain divine principles. God is a God of order and an institution such as the "fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord" is marked and characterised by certain principles that God Himself has established in order to give the thing its true character. I am reminded by verse 9 of the bodycoat that Jesus wore. It says "the body-coat was seamless, woven through the whole from the top. They said therefore to one another, Let us not rend it", John 19: 23-24. That is interesting in the light of our first scripture: there was something that could not be rent and had not been sewn. It was woven, and it had no seam. A seam would have been sewn, but there was no seam. We might say it corresponds to what we have here. It expresses a divine idea associated with the body of Christ. I think it has some connection with fellowship viewed from the divine side. The body-coat was seamless, woven through the whole from the top. That is, if fellowship is to be rightly taken up, if what the body speaks of is to be rightly expressed, we must, as Paul says to the Colossians, hold fast the Head (see Col 2: 19) - "Jesus Christ our Lord". How precious it is that things are presented in perfection to which we, in our responsibility, have been called to contribute nothing. There is a unity that Satan and his agents dare not rend. What a precious thing to hold on to in a day when things outwardly seem so broken up! We are entitled to regard ourselves as part of something that Satan will not touch - he cannot. He may try and claim it for his system, but he cannot violate it. However, if we are to enjoy this we must hold fast the Head. There must be that connection with the top. That was one of the difficulties at Corinth.

Paul then goes on, having made that statement of the divine standard, to examine how far the Corinthians locally were conforming to that standard. He says "I exhort you ... that there be not among you division; but that ye be perfectly united in the same mind and in the same opinion. For it has been shewn to me ... that there are strifes among you". The word perfectly united means - Where all the members have each its own place, or make a whole; or, if broken, are restored to one complete whole. It is to be seen that this is presented to a meeting like Corinth where there was so much disorder. Paul exhorts them to revert to the divine standard.

He has in mind all who are in every place "who call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Cor 1: 2), that is those who hold the Head. I think that links with this note. Each has his or her own place, each is associated with his or her own local gathering and local assembly and each one has a place in that gathering. The perfect expression of what is here for Christ is to be found in the working of that our.

We find, naturally, that it is otherwise. It is a sorrow to me how easily points of division and divergence are allowed to take root.

How jealous I am, or tend to be, about my opinion! How grievous these things are! If that is our occupation, we are not sewing. Is it not the time to sew? We will never come to the same mind if that mind is to be my mind or your mind; the only mind in which there is any unity at all is, as Paul says in Philippians "this mind ... which was also in Christ Jesus", 2: 5. There is a way to unity in the adoption of the mind "which was in Christ Jesus". I do not think I can say very much about it, but it is a wonderful thing to contemplate, "this mind... which was also in Christ Jesus". As Mr Darby says in another note in that chapter, it is the very opposite of Adam's mind. Christ Jesus had a right to claim everything as one whose it was to exercise the rights that belonged to equality in Godhead, and yet think of what He surrendered in going even into death and that the death of the cross (see Phil 2: 8). I find that even to think about such things measures the value of my opinions and puts them to shame. What is the value of my opinion of any matter? What does it add? What does it bring, alongside the mind which was in Christ Jesus? That mind was not

much in expression in Corinth and disunity resulted. I do not suggest that there is disunity here but I fear in myself that unless the mind "which was in Christ Jesus" is in me, I am exposed to the assertion and influence of my own mind. To allow that mind in us is the secret of sewing. It has a wonderful effect. It was most attractive. Mr Darby says He was the most affable of men (Letters Vol.1, p.164) - that is, He was the most approachable, the very attitude He expressed to people banished distance. It drew them together around Him, it made them nearer to Him. This, I believe, is how the perfect uniting that Paul speaks of here is arrived at.

It is very testing how much that mind is really in expression, how much does the Holy Spirit really have room in me to bring it into expression. It does not exactly compete for the place that my mind would otherwise claim: I must actively displace what is contrary to it if it is to be arrived at. These things are important. It is observable that in a small company the temptation to express my own view of a matter seems to be stronger and less easily restrained, but how wonderful it would be in the intimacy that we enjoy with one another if there was to be an expression of "this mind ... which was also in Christ Jesus".

I read this verse in Matthew's gospel because it is referred to in the note in chapter 1 of Corinthians; the word for mending their nets is the same as the word for being perfectly united - if broken they are restored to one complete whole. The Lord found these brothers mending their trawl-nets, that is they were sewing. It has laid hold of me very much recently that the Lord is not in any sense required to manifest Himself at the inception of any matter. The time of His intervention into any matter is His to choose. That does not mean that He is ever caught unawares. It is a wonderful mark of divine power that every moment is propitious for an intervention by the Lord. He does not have to wait for that we would judge to be a favourable opportunity, He can come at any time. So once He came in "about the fourth watch of the night ... walking on the sea" (Mark 6: 48). The wind was contrary: it is clear that He walked into the wind. If the wind was contrary to the disciples it must have been contrary

to the Lord as well because He was walking in the same direction as they were rowing. We could think of many other times when the Lord has chosen His own moment and expressed His power in doing so. But, if He chooses to wait, as He often does, we are tested in two ways. The first is whether we can wait. It is not easy to wait, but if His mind was in us, we would wait. The other test is, what does He find us doing when He does come in among us? How does He find us occupying ourselves? Does He find us preoccupied and in some sense not ministering to His interests? Or, as He says in relation to that importunate widow, "when the Son of man comes, shall he indeed find faith on the earth? " Luke 18: 8.

It is interesting to see what He found these men doing. It says "Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea". Then it says "he saw ... James ... and John his brother ... mending their trawl-nets". That is how He found them; they were sewing, that was their occupation. You would not, of course, expect to find fishermen rending a net. I believe these things require an attention to detail involving the use of time. They demand some ability to work patiently and skilfully to gather up detail that may not appear at first to make much of a contribution to the whole. We must have an eye for the whole and to work towards it patiently in everything that we do. Paul says to the Corinthians "Let all things ye do be done in love", 1 Cor 16: 14. I believe that as that spirit is promoted among us, something of the whole will begin to emerge for us to see. There will be a gathering in. There will also be the capacity in the mended net to gather more. There must be a mended net before we can fish. I believe that now is a time when we should be occupied in such a way, not allowing people to escape, but rather to gather them together so that there is more for Christ and more for His glory here.

LONDON

7 September 1993

AT A BURIAL

(i) Andrew Buchan

Psalm 68: 13; John 14; 2 Timothy 4: 5-8

I am encouraged, dear brethren, to read these scriptures. Our brother's prayer took account of the work of God in our brother's soul. I think there is nothing, in view of our comfort at this time, like the substantial character of God's work in the soul because it is going through to eternity. It is here in the scene through which we pass but untouched by it, drawing nothing from it, belonging to this scene of life and glory. It is wonderful to take account of the work of God by itself. It has a grandeur all of its own. Nothing of the world can add to it. It draws nothing from it: it is somewhat like the tender sapling, a root out of dry ground. What is said prophetically of Jesus becomes the portion of the saints, but it belongs to a sphere on the earth presently that has to do with death. That is the local assembly. Where death is, the ashes are there. If you read the footnote (Psalm 68: 13), you will find the ashes there. I think they are the ashes of the red heifer that brought about a condition of things in purification amongst the saints at the end of the wilderness down here. There is a sphere where these things are being worked out and where the work of God is developing and being brought to a conclusion, as we witnessed in our brother's closing days.

This scripture he referred to on Friday and I thought I should read it: "Though ye have lain among the sheepfolds, ye shall be as wings of a dove..." It is the Spirit's work. Wonderful thing that! Not the work of man, but the work of a divine Person here in the assembly working out into a great final result, and I would say what was witnessed was this: the completion of the work of God in a man's soul. It says "wings of a dove". I think that is a reference to the Spirit of God, the One who works subjectively in us and brings about this great result for the glory of God. And then he says further, "wings of a dove covered with silver". That is the great work of redemption: "in whom we have redemption through his blood...", Eph 1: 7. The basis of everything for God lies in the precious blood of Jesus, the blood our brother put his trust in, the blood that sustains everything and will sustain everything for God's delight and pleasure, not only now but eternally. Further he says, "and her feathers with

green gold". I wondered when our brother referred to this but I think it is the completion, the grandeur of God's work: "feathers with green gold" or 'greenish-yellow', what the Spirit is working out currently in the hearts of the saints in an area in which He has liberty and where death is applied, the death of Christ. That is what the local setting is. Now, these are wonderful things the triumph of divine workmanship.

But you need to be in the sphere where it is known and where room is made for the Spirit in view of its enjoyment. You see it is on the wings, "the wings of a dove", not attached to anything here, ready to be transported to the realm where it belongs. And what was witnessed was unattached down here, but what belongs to another realm, to a scene where Jesus is, in heaven above.

I turn to the scripture in John 14. I think our brother frequented this realm. Very often he spoke to us from John's writings: "and if I go and shall prepare you a place", a place for what is being wrought out presently in the assembly. It is in view of the assembly. What a wonderful thing that is. Oh that we would value it more! It says, "for I go to prepare you a place; and if I go and shall prepare you a place, I am coming again and shall receive you to myself, that where I am ye also may be". The impression I received was simply this: it is "you" and "myself". No-one else matters. It is you, the assembly, and myself. This is of God! No disparity! That is a wonderful thing that is being wrought out now, a vessel in which there is no difference, no disparity between the Lord and His own and He is preparing a realm for that kind of thing. Our brother mentioned this two weeks ago in giving thanks for the emblems. No disparity! How does this come about? It comes about, I think, by drinking into the spirit of the new covenant and looking upon the glory of the Lord and hence the glory of the work of God takes on its own distinctive character.

I pass on. Paul has written to Timothy and he says, "the time of my release is come". Not that he wanted to be away out of suffering, but he longed to be back in the sphere that he had once touched. Paul was a man who was caught up to the third heaven, and he longed to get away into that realm. He says "But thou", addressing himself to a young man - and it may be to us today - "But

thou, be sober in all things..." Be sober! Note the footnote: do not come under influence! We are in a day when influence is at work against the great thought of what the assembly is, and Paul is warning Timothy: Do not come under influence! See that the pure mind is maintained. Then he says, "Do the work of an evangelist".

Do it! You might say our brother sought to do the work of an evangelist, and that will have to be filled up. I never ever heard our brother when he was asked to preach but that he gladly put his hand to the work. Do the work of an evangelist! "The time of my release is come", the time of his release!

The blessed Spirit, "wings of a dove", hastening in relation to the heavenly realm. Beloved brethren, the Lord would attract us into it. There is nothing belongs to it but the work of God and it is formed substantially in us by the Spirit and presently the urge is onward.

The voice of the Spirit is saying, "Send me away to my master", Gen 24: 54, the work almost completed, completed as far as our brother is concerned, brought to completion by the Spirit, soon to be completed in all the saints in that glorious rapture to be in the presence of Christ, the One whom we have learned to love.

Well, may our hearts be encouraged and strengthened and comforted, especially those who mourn, for His Name's sake.

(ii) James Webster

Philippians 2: 25-30; Deuteronomy 34: 1,5,6; Haggai 1: 7; 2: 3-9

I have in mind to say a short word on these scriptures for our comfort and encouragement. Our brother does not need any comfort now. He is beyond the sphere of responsibility where comfort and support are needed. He has needed it in the past; but we are still here and there are those left behind who need comfort and support and encouragement. We are in the sphere where things are against the Christian: in this world they are against the believer. The current of things is not really favourable to the Christian and the believer needs comfort and support and the help of one another. That is what the Lord Jesus said to His disciples. There is a wonderful testimony to those who do not know God in persons who love one another going on with God Himself. Today, we are feeling the sorrow.

I read this section because it brings out Paul's feelings for Epaphroditus. God had mercy on him at this point: He did not take this beloved man. He left him. Paul says, "that I might not have sorrow upon sorrow", v.27. I thought it brought out the feelings of Paul in relation to a beloved brother. That is what our feelings for one another should be, feelings for one another that when one goes, he is missed. And this dear brother here, our brother Peter, will certainly be missed. We have been reminded in prayer of his service, and I thought about Isaiah. The word came to Isaiah: "Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? And I said, Here am I; send me", Isaiah 6: 8. I think that was our brother, always available. If you wanted somebody for the preaching, he was there; he was ready. If you wanted somebody for a word at a burial meeting, he was available; or a marriage meeting, he was available. And he will certainly be missed. So Paul says here, "that I might not have sorrow upon sorrow". These things are real. We do not mourn as those who have no hope, but there is certainly sorrow connected with such an occasion as this.

In the scripture in Deuteronomy it was Moses, the man of God, one of the few persons in scripture spoken about in this way: man of

God. God took him up. There is a goodly company of persons here but there were not many at this burial at the end of Deuteronomy, in fact, as far as we can see, just God Himself. God buried him there.

God took him up and gave him a view of this land. It speaks of the heavenly land. I wonder if we all have a view of it. God took Moses up to the top of Pisgah and gave him a view. It is a point from which you can get a view backwards, look over the history of the way.

What a history our brother has had, a long history! I understand that he came into fellowship when he was fourteen, nearly seventy years in testimony with God: very like Moses in that respect. What a man Moses was! And God took him up to the top of this mountain. It says, "And Jehovah shewed him the whole land...", v 1. Would you not like God to shew you something? I think our brother had a view of it: he had it in his heart. You cannot go this way, against the current of things in this world, unless you have a view of this heavenly land. It is heaven, it is where Jesus is. Paul says in Colossians, "If therefore ye have been raised with the Christ, seek the things which are above, where the Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God", chap. 3: 1. God took Moses up here and it says He shewed him the whole land. And then it says, "And Moses the servant of Jehovah died there in the land of Moab...", v 5. The time comes when the responsible history is finished. The wise man tells us, there is "a time to be born, and a time to die", Eccles 3: 1.

Nothing happens by accident in the divine calendar and for our brother the time has come to die. And so it says, "And Moses the servant of Jehovah died there in the land of Moab, according to the word of Jehovah '. And he buried him in the valley in the land of Moab, opposite Beth-Peor; and no man knows his sepulchre this day", v 5 ,6.

I touch this scripture in Haggai because it is a word to us who remain. It says, "Consider your ways", chap 1: 5. I take it to myself. I am not putting this on anyone else. I take it to myself. I think it is a time for walking in humility. We were reading in our local reading the other day - and our brother was there and my father, both men who were over eighty - about Caleb who says, "I am this day eighty-five

years old", Josh 14: 10. We thought it was a fine meeting there for the over eighties. We did not realise that maybe our brother had so little time left. And Caleb says, "If so be Jehovah shall be with me, then I shall dispossess them...", v 12. It is not a time for assuming too much; it is a time for walking in humility as these men have done before, yet seeking in earnestness to have some sense of the presence of God. And so it says here, Consider your ways". Then he goes on to say where I read, "Who is left among you that saw this house in its former glory?" These old men have seen things in the testimony, and it has been a long testimony. There have been the ups and the downs, times when things were, you might say, in their glory, and times when, you might say, it is a "day of small things".

We would encourage all of us to hold on to these precious things which belong to God. However broken the day, God is going to do things Himself. He has done this: He has put our brother to sleep.

Things go on and on and we think they are going on for ever, but the time comes when God comes in and He acts Himself. And that is what He is going to do. He says here, "for I am with you, saith Jehovah of hosts", chap 2: 4. We are to be going on with the building. These are to be going on. The return of the Lord Jesus is not far distant. It may not be long. It may be shorter even than we think. But God is going to finalise things Himself. He is going to head up things in the Christ. God is going to do things. He has the initiative. We look around this world. He says here, "... and I will shake the heavens, and the earth, and the sea, and the dry land...", v 6. Think of the instability that marks this world, politically, economically: it is all unstable; there is no foundation to it. And God says, I am going to shake them. What is your hope on, dear friend? What is my hope on? You need to have your hope on something that is solid and that is sure and that is the Lord Jesus, the One of whom we sing sometimes as the "Rock of Ages".

And so it says here, "and I will fill this house with glory...", v 7.

God is going to bring in a whole universe of glory. God is going to do that in a day to come and He would encourage us, everyone here, to be working at these things. There are things that are worth

going in for. We have to do things; we have to do our work - and we should be diligent in these things - but we do not want to overlook the things which Paul says are unseen but eternal. There are things that are important in life, things that are not going to end with death, and I think God would encourage us Himself. What a God He is! "And work", He says, "and work", v 4. Well, however small the day may be, there is something for everyone of us to do. I think our brother has left an example. I would encourage our young people especially, but all of us, that we fill up the gaps. There is much to be done positively in the way of helping and encouraging one another and working at these things, that there might be something for the pleasure and satisfaction of God Himself. I would encourage us all on this line, everyone of us, young and old, for His Name's sake.

(iii) James Mather

Genesis 23: 16-20; 49: 29-32

Death means loss, beloved, and I do not need to enlarge on that today. Each mourning heart here could enumerate many things formerly enjoyed with our brother and now lost. Some of these, we know, are lost for ever; some are lost temporarily and will be taken up again soon in a new and fresh and living way. But death is not all loss, beloved. Certain things remain firm and go through death. I wish to speak of two of these.

The first one is divine possession. Death has nothing to say to divine possession. The scripture says, "For both if we should live, it is to the Lord we live; and if we should die, it is to the Lord we die - both if we should live then, and if we should die, we are the Lord's.

For to this end Christ has died and lived again, that we might rule over both dead and living", Rom 14: 8, 9. Death makes no difference to divine possession, and the reason is that Jesus has died. Jesus has shed His blood - in type, has thereby purchased the field that we read of in our first scripture. If you care to read it all at your leisure, you will find that twice over Abraham in such sorrow to bury his wife who had just died, was twice over offered a burying place for nothing and twice refused, finally weighing out the money, the price set, "current with the merchant", v 16. What the passage portrays is the price paid by God, which was the life-blood of His own Son shed on Calvary's cross so that everyone who believes on Him might pass from this life through death to the life beyond and still belong to Jesus. What a wonderful thing! What comfort to our hearts in their desolation to know that death has not affected this wonderful truth in relation to our dearly beloved brother. This can be the blessed portion and it is the portion of many, if not all, here today.

The second thing that remains is the love of Christ. I wish to point out the peculiarity of these words at the end of Genesis. It says, "There they buried Abraham and Sarah his wife; there they buried Isaac and Rebecca his wife..." The fact is, of course, that Jacob was present at the burial of his father, Isaac. It was Esau and

Jacob who buried him, but he does not say that. He says, "there they buried..." Then he says, "and there I buried Leah". That is a most powerful testimony to the love of the Lord Jesus for His own: "I buried Leah". It was not simply a historic fact as the other incidents might have been. It was what it meant to himself.

Leah very much represents ourselves. Could I just say, in all simplicity, that she represents the saints of this dispensation? There is another wonderful passage describing Rachel's death and when Jacob recounted it he said, 'she died in my arms'. That is one possible translation of the words, "by me". What a testimony that is to the love of Christ for His earthly people. Although they would not have Him and delivered Him up to death, His sense of loss comes through when Jacob says she died in my arms! But Rachel was not buried in the cave of Machpelah as Leah was. Rachel was buried where there was a certain distance still to go to Ephrath, Gen 48: 7.

But Leah was buried in the cave of Machpelah which is in Hebron - in the purpose of God, that is where Leah was laid and she was laid there by the loving hands of her own husband, of her own husband.

He personally had to do with it and saw to the placing of her body. The word says, "So to his beloved one he giveth sleep", Ps 127: 2.

He has done that. Jesus' personal, loving service goes through death. Our brother is presently enjoying the love of the Lord Jesus without a cloud and who would wish him back to this scene of trial and confusion?

May our hearts be strengthened in these things, beloved! When you are owned by Jesus, He never lets go, nor does His love!

PETERHEAD

March 1993

Burial of Peter Buchan

SICK CHILDREN

Two of the Gospel-writers relate the incident of Jairus' daughter who became so ill that they said she had died. She was twelve years of age, but we are not told the nature of her illness. Jesus came to where she was and said to her "Talitha koumi" meaning "Damsel, I say to thee, Arise". This was a life-bringing word and it is open to all the children to have this same experience with the Saviour. The evangelists mention that Jesus took the girl by the hand. This is encouraging because it gives assurance that He would help you in the things that He desires for your blessing.

We feel a special sympathy for those little children who suffer in health, some for a short while, others perhaps for longer. Even infants were brought to Jesus that He should touch them in blessing. When we see the toddlers we remember that God has said "And I it was that taught Ephraim to walk, - He took them in his arms". As to all the children, Jesus desires that they should come to Him. They are able to do this by faith.

When Jesus was in Cana of Galilee there came to Him the father of a sick boy, asking the Master to come down and heal the invalid. Jesus in doing so must have felt in His spirit the burden of that which He graciously, and with few words removed. One result of this incident was that a whole houseful believed on the Lord Jesus. Do you believe on Him too?

J.C.Evershed