

A
WORD
IN ITS
SEASON

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Contents

THE HOUSE OF GOD

ONENESS

THE HOUSE OF GOD

Ezekiel 43: 10-12; 1 Timothy 3: 14,15; Hebrews 10: 19-25

P.v d.B. I thought the Lord might help us in considering the house of God, the order of the house of God. The recovery to the truth in which we are has led us to the great thought of the assembly and it is a privilege to be here in relation to it. We are in a day of public departure, but the sure foundation stands and the Lord knows those that are His. The sure foundation relates to the purpose of God which is unchangeable. God has not changed His thoughts because of the departure that has come in and He will see His thoughts through. The divine pattern is brought out in Paul's ministry particularly, recovery being to Paul's ministry. John's ministry gives us the family conditions in which these great truths can be worked out in a broken day. In the beginning of Ezekiel the glory departed but in the end the glory is coming in and Ezekiel was to show the pattern, he was to make known the form of the house, its fashions and its goings out and its comings in. Things need to be worked out according to the pattern. In the tabernacle system Moses had the pattern shown to him on the mountain and, consequent on the tabernacle being set up, the glory filled it, and God spoke to him from off the mercy-seat. David had the pattern of the temple, the house of God and its service by the Spirit. And here in Ezekiel we have the pattern again referred to. Things need to be worked out according to the divine pattern. The ministries of the recovery helped us in relation to it in the peculiar day in which we are and there is what the Lord would say currently to us. We are not living in the time of Mr Darby or Mr Raven or Mr Taylor; we are living in this present time. Circumstances have changed but the truth is unchanged and we need to see what the Lord would be saying now in relation to present conditions. The divine standard is always to be maintained. We need to have a sense that every help is available in what God has provided for us in the priesthood of Christ and in the presence and power of the Holy Spirit here. In 1 Timothy 3 the apostle is speaking to Timothy as to how he was to conduct himself in the house of God

which is the assembly of the living God, the pillar and base of the truth. And in Hebrews we have reference to Christ as Priest over the house of God. The priesthood of Christ is available to us in the day in which we are and there is also need for priesthood to be developed amongst us - priestly feelings, a priestly sense of what belongs to the assembly, the glory of the assembly. In the assembly we are in the presence of God. I thought the Lord might help us on these lines.

L.McF. That is a very good subject to consider. Do you think the coming of the Spirit in Acts 2 involves the formation of the house?

P.v d.B. It came into being by the presence of the Holy Spirit here. The body was formed and the house of God was here in public expression. It is closely related to the incarnation. The link in 1 Timothy 3 is with the mystery of piety, God manifest in flesh. God was here in Christ and now the assembly is here; God is here in the assembly.

L.McF. Is that what is involved, the presence of the Spirit with us?

P.v d.B. Yes, the assembly is "a habitation of God in the Spirit", Eph 2: 22.

J.A.P. In our hymn this morning it says, 'and God our dwelling be' (No.254). I was wondering how that works out.

P.v d.B. "He that abides in love abides in God, and God in him", 1 John 4: 16. The nature of God is love, and holiness is closely related to it. "This is the law of the house: Upon the top of the mountain all its border round about is most holy". We need to have a sense of the assembly; it is not a believers' meeting. In the assembly we meet Christ as Son over God's house.

C.F.D. Would you say a word for us as to what the law of the house involves. This reference in Ezekiel is very forceful.

P.v d.B. You are on holy ground there. What Paul wrote to the Corinthians was the Lord's commandment. The assembly of God in Corinth was where the presence of God was, they were the temple of the living God and God was present there. Paul says, "If any one

thinks himself to be a prophet or spiritual, let him recognise the things that I write to you, that it is the Lord's commandment", 1 Cor 14: 37. Things must be worked out there according to the divine pattern, according to the law of the house. Paul says, "thus I ordain in all the assemblies", 1 Cor 7: 17. There should be uniformity in the working out of things in local assemblies. The enemy is always trying to intrude, but the Lord has His own rights in local assemblies and all is to be governed by the word of God according to the 'law of the house'.

C.F.D. So would it be right to think that in our dispensation Paul was given the law of the house? In the way he opens it up in his writing to the Corinthians, especially the first epistle, he gives the whole structure of the law of the house. It is the principles that govern the house of God at the present time.

P.v d.B. I am sure that is right. You will remember how Mr Taylor stressed it. He said that we should lay it well to heart that the idea of the assembly as a corporate responsible body is in view from the very outset in 2 Timothy (see vol 84, p.362). Some quote 2 Timothy 2 and think they can have their own way about things, but what is in view in 2 Timothy 2 would lead us to the law of the house. It is to lead us into what is set out in 1 Timothy and in the epistles to the Corinthians in relation to the house of God.

J.R.C. In the chapter here he showed them; "Thou, son of man, shew the house to the house of Israel, that they may be confounded". That would involve intelligence as to what is happening, you might say, in the broad spectrum of things in Christendom, would it not?

P.v d.B. Quite so. So it is very important that ministry should bring out the pattern, that it should bring out things as they are according to God. Much of what is negative can turn you away from it, but the truth is very positive, it is the law of the house - "as the truth is in Jesus", Eph 4: 21.

J.R.C. So Paul, in writing to the Corinthians, says in the first epistle several times, Do you not know? - "Do ye not know that your body is

the temple of the Holy Spirit...?" (chap 6: 19) and so on. In other words we have to be aware of what the law involves, do we not?

P.v d.B. Quite so. The assembly at Corinth was the temple of God. In the temple of God you are in the presence of God. There may be certain conditions that have to be met, but even a simple person coming in in Corinth would recognise that God was there in that assembly. We have to have great regard for the local assembly.

A.S.H. It says, "let them measure the pattern." Would the measuring bring out the accuracy of the pattern?

P.v d.B. I am sure that is so. It would involve the detail and that we have things according to the divine measurements.

J.A.P. In verse 7 of the chapter we read, "And he said unto me, Son of man, this is the place of my throne, and the place of the soles of my feet, where I will dwell in the midst of the children of Israel for ever".

P.v d.B. From the very outset God desired to be present in the midst of His people - "they shall make me a sanctuary, that I may dwell among them", Exod 25: 8. It was not anything according to men's thought, it was to be according to the pattern. The glory of Jehovah would not have filled the tabernacle if things had not been made according to the divine pattern that was shown to Moses. It says seven times in Exodus 40 that Moses did as Jehovah commanded. Things are to be according to the pattern. The Lord would help us and His priestly grace is available to us.

L.D.P. In Exodus 18 Moses' father-in-law told him to "teach them the statutes and the laws, and make known to them the way in which they must walk, and the work that they must do" (v 20). This was set out early, making us all responsible.

P.v d.B. He was saying what was right there. Moses was wrong later in wanting him to be for eyes (see Numbers 10: 31), whereas the presence of Jehovah was amongst them, the cloud was among them and the ark; that was where the guidance and the direction were to be found, not with the father-in-law of Moses. He had to be

adjusted in that. In the assembly we are not governed by any thoughts of man, we have divine guidance through divine speaking. The people of God moved by the commandment of Jehovah.

C.S.E. The thought of the pattern is extremely important because in a day of breakdown and departure we always have to go back to the pattern. It is like a point of recovery. What has been set out in the Scriptures is for us to go back to. Just keep to the line that is set out in the Scriptures to preserve what is for God. You might say, God did not leave things to chance in the beginning but He set things out very clearly for His people to follow.

P.v d.B. That is very good. So that the sure foundation stands and the truth of the assembly is what the recovery has brought us back to: "the faith once delivered to the saints", Jude 3.

L.McF. We are in a day of small things and there is a tendency to have our thoughts lowered in respect of what is due to the Lord and to the assembly. Do we need to guard against that?

P.v d.B. Very much. We need to be ready to contend for the faith once delivered to the saints. Although we are in a day of small things the truth is the truth and the assembly is the assembly. God has never changed His thoughts. We need to hold on to that. The foundation is there in Zechariah 4, Zerubbabel laid the foundation and the Spirit is mentioned there. The Spirit is present, the Spirit is here in the assembly. What was given Zerubbabel to do was to go on to completion. The plummet was in the hand of Zerubbabel, things were done according to divine measurement.

L.McF. So you have in Luke 2 a man in Jerusalem. Would you think that would set forth the thought? Things are down may be to one man but he is maintaining the light of the house, do you think?

P.v d.B. That is very good. A man in Jerusalem, Simeon, that means hearing. We need to hear what the Spirit is saying to the assembly. Nehemiah was a man who was concerned for Jerusalem, he was seeking the welfare of Jerusalem and he was not building on any other foundation but the foundation that was there, the sheep-gate and the fish-gate and so on. It was all on what was there; there

was not anything new. The recovery brought us back to what is from the beginning.

J.R.C. Could I ask you to say something about how far our responsibility goes in regard to the standard of things that you mentioned?

P.v d.B. Well, we have to regard the day we are in. We were saying earlier in Plainfield that our responsibility is equal to our privilege. The ministry we have had in the recovery has clearly set out what our relationships are and how that bears on our responsibility, the matter of union and the matter of sonship all enter into the effective working out of things in a day of small things according to divine purpose. So that the sure foundation stands even in a day of small things; even in the midst of all the public breakdown we are shown the pattern.

G.D.P. In Ezekiel, apparently, we do not get the pattern if we do not acknowledge our iniquities. It says, "that they may be confounded at their iniquities". That has to come; if we do not do that the pattern will not mean much to us.

P.v d.B. So that ministry should be on positive lines. If there are conditions that have to be met they are to be met in a positive way. God's way of meeting matters in any locality is by ministry. Priestly service would go with it. When it comes to administration that belongs to the locality. We need to be shown the pattern so as to know what to do.

G.D.P. It seems to be emphasised "that they may be confounded at their iniquities; ... And if they be confounded"; it seems to be predicated on that. What do you say about that?

P.v d.B. You are not going into the details of the wrong that may be there, you are setting out the pattern, the form of the house. That is God's way of doing it and then it will be seen what is not in keeping.

C.S.E. "That they may be confounded at their iniquities; and let them measure the pattern": that would be each individual - "Let

every one who names the name of the Lord withdraw from iniquity", 2 Tim 2: 19.

P.v d.B. Very good. Paul set out the whole pattern; he set out the whole counsel of God. He knew what was coming in at Ephesus, and elsewhere too, but he prepared them for it. Paul was setting out the whole pattern; what was in divine purpose and counsel was set out at Ephesus and we are to work accordingly; the sure foundation involves that.

J.A.P. One of the things God seemed to feel here in verse 8 is, "in that they set their threshold" (that is man's threshold) "by my threshold". That would be man's idea of how to settle matters.

P.v d.B. You cannot have the assembly on the level of your own threshold. You are on divine territory, you are there on divine terms, you are not there on your own terms. In the assembly you cannot have your own way about things.

J.R.C. In the public position the Lord Jesus cleared the temple: "The zeal of thy house devours me", John 2: 17. He takes it up publicly. In measure Mr Darby did somewhat like that, did he not? He named things as being wrong and iniquitous. Therefore the pattern has been set out for us to follow in departing from these things. Is that right?

P.v d.B. Yes. Paul was jealous for the Corinthians with a jealousy that was of God. What he presented was positive, he sought to espouse them as a chaste virgin to Christ (see 2 Cor 11: 2). The truth is positive. The enemy brings in what is negative; he wants to engage us with what is negative. Paul's authority was for building up not for throwing down (see 2 Cor 13: 10).

J.R.C. What I was trying to get at is that it is not laid on us to put things right in the public setting of things; it is on us to keep what is in relation to the truth of the assembly in accord with the pattern that we are speaking about.

P.v d.B. Quite so; and thank God for all those who are available in the working out of it. We can be very thankful that we are here

together in the light of these great thoughts of God that were there in divine purpose before the world's foundation. The recovery was in the Lord's mind from the outset. He anticipated the breakdown that was coming in and that, at the end of the dispensation, there would be a concrete answer to Him in the light of the assembly. This is what is to be maintained.

C.F.D. I think what you are emphasising about the local position is very important and it is what the enemy would assail at the present time. You referred to Ephesus; in Acts 20 Paul says he did not shrink from announcing all the counsel of God to them, and yet immediately goes on to say that after his departure grievous wolves would come in. That would be in that place, would it not? Wherefore, he says, watch. That is a word to us now, do you think, in our localities? "Wherefore watch" and let us protect what is pleasurable to Christ.

P.v d.B. That is very important. These elders at Ephesus needed to be in relation to the throne. In Revelation the elders are seen in relation to the throne and there are the seven Spirits which are before the throne. The rights of the throne are to be maintained at the present time.

L.McF. There is this thought of writing in verse 11; "and write it in their sight, that they may keep the whole form thereof". Now we have the Scriptures and ministry of the Spirit; all that would be in our thoughts, would it not?

P.v d.B. It would be. There has been a lot of adverse writing: it is very important to go by divine writing. The new covenant ministry is divine writing on the fleshy tables of the heart. God's attitude in the working out of things is seen in the new covenant and in reconciliation.

C.S.E. The first thing it says in the section we read is, "Thou, son of man, shew the house to the house of Israel". Is that in a sense saying, Show them the glory that is proper? If we get our sights adjusted to the glory that is due to God, the glory of what came in at

the time of Solomon, the grandeur and the setting that was really due to God, if we get a view of that first, would that regulate us?

P.v d.B. I am sure it would. So we need to see things from the divine side in what may come up amongst the saints. Administration in the assembly proceeds from above in the dignity of our relationships according to divine purpose. We approach practical matters down here in that light and that would make it attractive, would it not? John was shown the holy city; he was taken to a great and high mountain and he saw the assembly coming down out of heaven having the glory of God. It is the administrative setting working from above. Jerusalem above is free, which is our mother, and things work from that level.

G.A. In Acts 9 Saul was shown the house; he had to go to Ananias to the street called Straight. Would that be a thought similar to what you are saying?

P.v d.B. Very good. He was to go into the city. You get in Paul's conversion what was going to enter into his ministry, and one thing was that he was to go into the city, the administrative side, into the street which is called Straight. The one street in the heavenly city would link with the street called Straight. And then the idea of the brother, "Saul, brother", and his being let down from the wall, all that enters into Paul's ministry. The Lord gave him those impressions that would enter into his service.

K.N.P. Is it a complete matter? The writing is that they may keep the whole form thereof. Sometimes we may look at part, but Nehemiah, as you referred to earlier, had the whole thing in mind, did he not? Is that important for us?

P.v d.B. That is very important. We would seek to work out to what is complete in that way, that we do not leave matters undone. Nehemiah completed the wall. In Zechariah we read that the hands of Zerubbabel will complete the house (see chap 4: 9).

I thought in Timothy we have very much what enters into our day; Timothy was to know how to conduct himself in the house of God which is the assembly, the pillar and base of the truth. Paul

says, "but if I delay". That would hold Timothy responsible in the absence of Paul. What were the people of Israel doing when God was bringing out His great thoughts on the mountain? They were setting up the golden calf down below in the absence of Moses.

J.A.P. In Corinth the Spirit of God used certain persons in that assembly who were not local. One of them was Timothy and another was Titus and another was Sosthenes the brother, as well as Paul; they would be safe people, would they not? Timothy would have regard for the order of God's house. They were safe people to help the brethren but not interfering there.

P.v d.B. Timothy and Titus were apostolic delegates, and Sosthenes represents the brotherly element with Paul which is so necessary in the working out of the truth. Moses was given his brother; God said, "Is not Aaron the Levite thy brother?" and when they met they kissed one another on the mountain of God, on that level (see Exod 4: 14,27). Great things were at hand, God was going to do great things for His people, and the brotherly element was there. So Paul had Sosthenes the brother with him in writing to the assembly of God which is in Corinth. They are addressed as the assembly of God. In Acts 20 the elders were to shepherd the assembly of God; it is the assembly in relation to God.

J.R.C. What would you say about "the living God"?

P.v d.B. It links on with Peter's confession, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God", Matt 16: 16. The Lord says, "on this rock I will build my assembly, and hades' gates shall not prevail against it" (v 18). We have to do with the living God.

J.R.C. The word in Hebrews says, "It is a fearful thing falling into the hands of the living God", chap 10: 31. Would that always be a challenge, as to how we act and react in relation to assembly things?

P.v d.B. Certainly. The fear of God is the beginning of wisdom and wisdom is a divine resource. It is not in you, it is not in me, it is in Christ. We draw on Christ as Head of the assembly for wisdom.

C.F.D. You referred to the idea of an apostolic delegate; Timothy would be a trustworthy person who knew distinctly the pattern which was established in Paul's ministry. He was the apostle to the Gentiles and had the truth of the assembly. It was not committed to everyone, it was not committed to the twelve, it was committed to Paul. Therefore, do you think, we have to go by the ministry that Paul presents, the light of the assembly, to understand what was committed to Timothy? According to the second epistle, Timothy was to pass it on to faithful men who could maintain things according to that pattern.

P.v d.B. That is right. It had to be committed to faithful men who would be able to teach others also. Things have come down to us through faithful men and the pattern has come through in the recovery in that way.

C.F.D. In Acts 17 the Bereans searched the Scriptures daily to see if these things were so. Do you think we are in a time when what is being said needs to be tested?

P.v d.B. Just so. They received the word with all readiness of mind, daily searching the Scriptures if these things were so. Paul says of the assemblies in Macedonia, "they gave themselves first to the Lord, and to us", 2 Cor 8: 5. We need to see how things stand according to the Lord's mind. Distinctive ministry can be discredited by persons moving away from it and yet quoting such ministry. We need to be on our guard against that.

D.McF. Do we see from verse 15 that the assembly is the pillar and the base of the truth?

P.v d.B. Just so. That is, the truth is upheld in the assembly. The truth is the expression of what is right according to God and that is supported in the assembly; the assembly is the pillar and base of the truth.

J.A.P. To refer to Timothy again, Paul says to Corinth, "if Timotheus come, see that he may be with you without fear; for he works the work of the Lord, even as I", 1 Cor 16: 10.

P.v d.B. Yes, it is wonderful to see the two generations working together. That is what we need to be concerned about. The enemy is at it of course, but it is important that the two generations should go together. Elijah and Elisha went on together. When the Lord went up to Jerusalem in Matthew He claimed the ass and the colt and He sat on them. He sat on them both, there were two generations there.

G.D.P. It says, "that thou mayest know how one ought to conduct oneself in God's house". In the old dispensation things were more or less spelled out, they were written. Now we have to make way for the Spirit. Is that right?

P.v d.B. Certainly. We have the headship of Christ and the leading of the Holy Spirit, Christ on high and the Spirit down here.

So when we come to Hebrews we have this reference to Christ as Priest over God's house: "having a great priest over the house of God, let us approach with a true heart, in full assurance of faith, sprinkled as to our hearts from a wicked conscience, and washed as to our body with pure water. Let us hold fast the confession of the hope unwavering, (for he is faithful who has promised)". We can count on the Lord's faithfulness to see the testimony through and we need to be fully committed to it. Mr Taylor said he was assured that God would see the testimony through but that as to the continued faithfulness of the brethren he could say very little. If we are not faithful the Lord will give it to others.

C.F.D. Do you think the challenge comes at the end of John's gospel? Peter had failed before, but the Lord was taking him up and the challenge to him is, "Art thou attached to me?" John 21: 17. You might say he received his commission on the principle of being attached to Christ. Is that where we can be trustworthy at the present time? As we are attached to Christ we will be taking things from Himself.

P.v d.B. That is very important, our love for Christ and our attachment to Him. The great thing is to be with Him. We can leave the other side to the Lord; the Lord will be with us if we are with Him.

C.S.E. In the scripture in Ezekiel and the one in Timothy what is written comes very forcefully to us. In Timothy it is "These things I write to thee". Does that point out the importance of what is written?

P.v d.B. That is very important. The Scriptures were written and they are of course the primary authority. Peter speaks about what Paul had written, things that were hard to understand, which some people were wrestling as also the other Scriptures - what was written by Paul was Scripture. When it comes to written ministry, Paul was concerned that when Timothy came that he would bring the books and especially the parchments. The books would be like the printed ministry and the parchments current ministry. I am only giving it an application, but I think that is how things have come out in the recovery; there are things that have been ministered in the course of the recovery and there is what is being currently ministered. I think the work of the ministry is important and that what is published currently conveys the Lord's mind, particularly in relation to current need.

J.A.P. The expression is used in this passage, "the assembling of ourselves": what is the force of that expression?

P.v d.B. Simply our meetings, our coming together, is it not? We do not forsake that. We seek to be present at the meetings when we can. There is a danger in staying away from the meeting. You are not getting on when for no valid reason you are staying away from the meetings. It says of Joshua that he departed not from the tent of meeting (see Exod 33: 11). That is a current exercise, that we seek to be as much as possible at the meetings because it will never be repeated. It is a time of formation, a time when the Lord would convey His mind to us. We have our readings and prayer at home and personally too, but in the assembly we meet Him.

C.F.D. I was noticing last night that Mr Taylor makes a remark something like this: If we do not support the local position, if we do not come together as we should, it will bring in local disintegration. I thought that was a very stunning kind of a word to bring forward. And I think that is just the way it happens.

P.v d.B. Quite so. Then it says, "by so much the more as ye see the day drawing near". I trust we have a sense of the morning star rising in our hearts that the coming of the Lord is near. The day is drawing near. "I come quickly": the Lord says it three times in the last chapter of the Revelation. He Is coming and He wants us to be just ready for Him. Peter says, "until the day dawn and the morning star arise in your heart", 2 Pet 1: 19. It should be rising in our hearts now; His coming is near.

J.A.P. It seems to me too that there is something very deep in assembling yourselves; it is not just attending meetings but assembling. What would you say about that?

P.v d.B. It is that we come together in the light and in the recognition of the assembly. The assembling of ourselves together would be the coming together body-wise in relation to one another so that under the headship of Christ the body would be functioning. That would be involved in assembling.

J.R.C. Would that involve the element of dignity?

P.v d.B. There is no greater vessel than the assembly; it is an august vessel. There is no family like it, it is nearest to the Deity and we need to be lifted in our apprehension of the assembly and the consciousness of it, what it is and what privilege we have in the light of the assembly. The assembly is the body of Christ; she is one with the exalted Man. She is the vessel where God will dwell eternally with men. There is nothing greater. All the other families will be related to it. It says of the line of faith: "that they" (that is the Old Testament saints) "should not be made perfect without us", Heb 11: 40. It all awaited what Abraham looked for in relation to the heavenly city, a city which has foundations. And every other family will be in relation to it.

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Key to initials

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ONENESS

Pieter van den Berg

John 1: 14; 10: 27-30, 16-18; 17: 20-23

Glorious matters are spoken of in these scriptures, beloved brethren. I thought of the way the mind of God has come out in Christ in the majestic statement in John 1 that "the Word became flesh and dwelt among us", His shepherd service in John 10 in securing what is to be one. Then in John 17 as priest in the holiest desiring that we may be one in the oneness that is there in the relations between the Father and the Son, not just unity but oneness. It is a glorious matter that God has purposed us to be in such nearness to Him, that we should be in the circulation and in the reciprocal affect ions between the Father and the Son by the Spirit in a flow that will go through into eternity, that we should be taken into this flow in such nearness as only the assembly will know throughout eternity. The tabernacle of God will be with men, and the other families will be in near proximity to it, but the assembly is where God's immediate presence will be eternally in blessing. There will be a return flow of divine affections flowing out from this nearness, extending to other families and returning in response in the assembly. There will be glory to God in the assembly in Christ Jesus. There are circuits in what God has put in the physical creation in a wonderful way, the way all goes round in view of its being maintained, and in a spiritual

way God will continue what will be for His pleasure through the assembly, what will extend to the other families. All that is flowing out from God in blessing will be returning in praise and glory for His own heart, in praise to Him, known as Father, Son and Holy Spirit, the glorious Name in which God has made Himself known. All this, beloved brethren, is based on the work of redemption. It was in God's thoughts eternally that He would have it in such a way, that He would be known in His nature and attributes. I have been reading in John's gospel and it goes very much with what we have in Hebrews, that God has spoken in His Son, the glory in which God has come out in speaking in (the) Son, the Word, the declaration of God being in Christ and the way that that is to lead us into unity and this wonderful oneness, that we might be one according to the Lord's own desire. The Lord is serving us in present grace in view of having us in this wonderful holy oneness in nearness to Himself. So that the Word became flesh and dwelt among us. It was the Lord's own act, the peculiar glory of the incarnation. It is greater than the work of creation, great as the creation is, unsearchable. The scientific knowledge of our day cannot reach to the end of what God has created. But think of the way God has come out in Christ! Creation only served in God's ways. What was in view was this great matter that God would come out in Christ to secure His purpose. He became Man and will be Man eternally. What a wonderful thing that is, that a divine Person should come into manhood, "the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us". One by whom the worlds were made; He is great enough to give effect to all that was in the purpose of God: "Behold, I come, in the volume of the book it is written of me", Ps 40: 7. You think of the greatness and the glory of Christ that He was able to give effect to the purpose and counsels of God and that He took this stoop into manhood in effecting what was for God's eternal pleasure. And then His going into death, as we have read of it in John 10, that He had authority to lay down His life and authority to take it again. Think of the glory of that Person, what He did Himself in virtue of who He was in His own Person, that He went into death, that He broke the power of death and that He rose again, that He ascended, ascended to His Father

and our Father, to His God and our God. Oh, what a range it opens up to us, beloved brethren, what a place, what a portion we have with Christ that God in His wondrous grace has come out in such a way. And He wants us to be in oneness.

God was concerned that the tabernacle should be one (see Exod 26: 5). There should be those great relations amongst us. The loops of blue and the golden clasps represent the heavenly side, the glory of the work of God in the saints that keeps together what is of Himself that we might be one, one in the divine nature. It is the inner covering of the tabernacle that is actually called the tabernacle, the byssus, the blue, the purple and the scarlet, speak of the glory of Christ. God will have His own dwelling in what is one in Christ. We see in the ark the glory of the way God has come out. John presents that line to us in chapter 1 in the way God came out in Christ. The acacia-wood covered with pure gold, the mercy-seat, represents the way God has come out in Christ, in that Person who became Man. The table of shewbread brings in our association with Christ, and in the candlestick we have the testimony of the Christ. It is a wonderful thing that God has a testimony at the present time in the light of the way He has come out in Christ. We are to be affected by it: the tabernacle of testimony. There is reference to the veil of the testimony and the ark of the testimony in view of the way that God is shining out in testimony and we can go in. So that we are living in a wonderful time, a time of privilege, a time, dear brethren, that is unique in church history - the completion of the dispensation in the glorious light of what God has purposed before the world's foundation, even for the present time. Great as the eternal day will be, glorious as the world to come will be, and all this was in the purpose of God, but the present time was also in the purpose of God, the administration of the mystery, Christ and the assembly. The glory of it should come out in the assembly. The all-various wisdom of God was to be made known to the heavenly principalities and authorities through the assembly, according to the purpose of the ages. It is a great thing to be in the light of divine purpose and in the stability of it. Whatever moves, whatever breakdown there may

be on man's side, let us stand in the stability of divine purpose and we shall not be moved.

So we read in John how the Word became flesh and dwelt among us. The epistle to the Hebrews also brings out how great He is, "the Apostle and High Priest of our confession", Heb 3: 1. "The Apostle" connects with the Word, what comes out authoritatively in Christ, the whole mind of God which came into expression in Him; and as Priest He is on our side. It is a wonderful thing to know that not only are these things true for us and have been brought out by Him to us in His own Person, but that He is also as Priest on our side to help us into it, to lead us into the light of our heavenly calling, our heavenly place, our heavenly privileges. This is what the Lord is to us, dear brethren; the One in whom God has come out is the One who is on our side to lead us in. We see that in John 17, the Priest in the presence of God on our behalf in order that we might be brought into the realisation of our place with Him in the presence of God. How great the present time is, dear brethren. How wonderful our privileges are. May this govern us. May we be in the light of these things in the working out of matters in the scene of contrariety, testings, departure, breakdown, all this, but have the divine view of things. Administration works out that way, it works out from these great thoughts that God has for us.

So in John 10 we come to the collective side of things. God is working in persons but what is in view is what is collective. The purpose of God stands related to what is collective. Thank God for the way He has individually with each one of us, but God's purpose is related to what is collective. When you come to the over Jordan position you feed on the old corn of the land which is Christ as indigenous to heaven; it brings in what is collective, it brings in impressions you have of Christ as feeding on Him in a collective way. Your experience is my experience, it brings you together in the collective enjoyment of what Christ is as the old corn of the land, heaven's store. Oh, what a privilege we have! May we not only have the faith for it but may we be formed by the Spirit in the good of it, that we may know what eternal life is. It is in Christ and we lay

hold of it in Christ. He is the expression of the purpose of God. That is the line John brings out, the greatness and glory of Christ as the expression of the purpose of God, the One in whom God has come out and who is the expression of our heavenly portion in the over Jordan position. John shows us the way into it. He shows us the way through the brazen serpent and the springing well in John 3 and 4 and the food that you have in John 6 in view of crossing the Jordan and taking up your portion on the other side of death where you come to what is collective. So that in John 10 eternal life is in view and you come to what is collective. The sheep in John are the one body in Paul's ministry and you have what is collective. So the Lord, having spoken of the fold, now goes on to say in John 10, "I have other sheep which are not of this fold". Earlier on He had spoken of the Jewish fold and the way the Lord legitimately came into it. It was through the baptism of John the baptist: "thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness", Matt 3: 15. Thus the Lord came in by way of the door into the Jewish fold. But there were greater thoughts in mind in relation to the assembly, His body. John, as we know, is writing for the last days in which everything publicly has broken down, but there is no breakdown on God's side. God has what is one, there is one Spirit and there is one body; there is no breakdown on that line and the assembly will go through intact. The enemy will not be able to overthrow it, the gates of hades will not prevail against it. God will see it through. He will see it through in His own way and He has the means and the ways to do it and He will do it. So He "works all things according to the counsel of his own will", Eph 1: 11; God has provided for every exigency. So it says here, "I have other sheep which are not of this fold: those also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one flock, one shepherd". It answers to Christ as Head of the assembly, the assembly His body - one flock, one Shepherd. We are in a day of breakdown, a day of public departure, but John gives us the conditions in which these great thoughts as to the assembly can be worked out collectively. 2 Timothy 2 is not to leave us on individual lines. The enemy ever seeks to divert the saints from God's thoughts and counsels in relation to the assembly, but we have to hold firmly to it. The sure

foundation of God stands, the Lord knows those that are His. So the Lord says here, "My sheep hear my voice ... and they follow me". It is a great thing to be in the gain of the voice of the Shepherd, to hear the voice of the Shepherd. We may get away from it as Peter did in John 21, but there was the voice that John recognised. John said, It is the Lord. He recognised the Lord's voice and the Lord recovered the situation. And the Lord is able for any situation to recover it. He has His sheep in mind; He says to Peter, "Feed my lambs". The first thing was to feed the lambs, the young. We want to think of our young people here; thank God for them. How much they mean to the Lord Jesus, His lambs. "Feed my lambs"; that was to be Peter's first concern. So in writing his epistle later as a fellow-elder and witness of the sufferings of Christ, he laid it upon the elders to shepherd the flock. And when the chief Shepherd is manifested there would be the unfading crown of glory when everything that has been here in testimony will come out into display in the world to come. What a time of glory it will be when He appears! The heavenly city will come down out of heaven having the glory of God; nothing has failed. All God's work will be complete. God cannot be hindered in any of His thoughts. So here in John we have the one flock, one Shepherd. It is all one, there is this oneness. John shows us how near we are to divine Persons. It is a wonderful presentation in John: "I know those that are mine, and am known of those that are mine, as the Father knows me and I know the Father (vv 14,15). Think of the knowledge that is there; we come into it by the Spirit. The Spirit helps us to arrive at these great things, that we should be in the understanding and have the conscious knowledge of these eternal relations, and the eternal flow of divine affections that are there between divine Persons as having come out in revelation and the oneness that marks them. So we have the Shepherd in John 10, and in John 17 we have the Priest in the presence of the Father. He lifts up His eyes to heaven and says, Father. How wonderful to be in the gain of all that God is to us in the way He has come out in the Father, the Son and the Spirit. The Lord speaks extensively in chapters 13, 14, 15 and 16 about the Comforter, the Holy Spirit. What a gift that is! How we should value the presence of the Holy

Spirit, dear brethren. What nearness there is in the relations we enjoy with divine Persons. The Comforter will be with us for ever. In life and death we will have Jesus and we will also have the Holy Spirit with us. The Spirit bears witness with our spirit that we are the children of God (see Rom 8: 16); we are in very near relations with the Spirit, a divine Person with us and in us. So in John 17 we have this wonderful chapter, the High Priest, you might say, in the presence of God, the presence of the Father, the way He is speaking about His own. If you want to have a sense of what the Lord is saying in His priestly feelings for us at the present time, read John 17; you get a sense there of the Lord's feelings for His own that are in the world and what surrounds them in the world. How we need to be kept from the world. The name of the Father as given to Christ is the name in which we are to be kept. It is the Father's love that preserves us from the world. The Father is over against the world. "If any one love the world, the love of the Father is not in him", 1 John 2: 15. So the Lord is interceding for His own, He is speaking about His own that are in the world; they are not of the world as He was not of the world. In verse 20 He says, "And I do not demand for these only" - that is the apostles - "but also for those who believe on me through their word; that they may be all one, as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us". Think of the nearness we are brought into, the way the Lord serves in priestly grace in the inner circle as seen in John 13, that they might have part with Him in this holy realm. John 1 is the ark, in John 10 is the door, and in John 13 you are at the laver; and He is washing the feet of His own. The priests' feet were washed at the laver before they served. The Lord is washing the feet of His own in John 13 in view of their part in John 17 in order that they might be with Him, that they might have part with Him in the presence of the Father. It says in verse 24, "I desire that where I am they also may be with me, that they may behold my glory". What a privilege is open to us now, that we can be with Him, that we can be in the presence of the Father in the dignity of sonship and share the glory of sonship: "the glory which thou hast given me I have given them, that they may be one, as we are one". What wonderful oneness! It is not just unity, it is

oneness. In the assembly we are in union with Christ, the exalted Man in the presence of the Father, but here we have our association with Him in sonship. The glory and dignity of sonship is a glory that was given to Him, He unique being the Son and we the many sons with Him brought to glory, sharing with Him in our association with Him in the presence of His Father and His God.

What a place we have, what privileges we have, what glory we partake of as having received the Holy Spirit; "but whom he has justified, these also he has glorified", Rom 8: 30. So it says, "the glory which thou hast given me I have given them, that they may be one, as we are one". May this oneness be realised in a deeper way amongst us in the way we have been set together in our localities in the working out of the truth, the sense of what our eternal relations are, as it says, "that they may be perfected into one and that the world may know that thou hast sent me" - that is testimony as a result of it - "and that thou hast loved them as thou hast loved me. Father, as to those whom thou hast give me, I desire that where I am they also may be with me". What a privilege that is, dear brethren, to be with Him! We may get away, as we tend to do, sheep tend to stray, but there is always the Shepherd's voice to lead us back into the reality of these wonderful things. There is the voice in John 21, there is the voice even at the door of Laodicea knocking; it says, "If any one hear my voice and open the door, I will come in unto him and sup with him, and he with me", Rev 3: 20. To be with Him what a privilege that the Lord would just come to where we are in our circumstances and serve us in His priestly grace in view of having us where He is, that we may be with Him. That is the greatest privilege that we could ever think of; association with Christ is the greatest privilege the believer has.

May the Lord help us to be in the gain of these relations in fulfilling our responsibility here, for His Name's sake.

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