

A
WORD
IN ITS
SEASON

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THE ASSEMBLY FOR CHRIST AND THE SERVICE OF GOD

THE LORD COMING

A MODEL

THE ASSEMBLY FOR CHRIST AND THE SERVICE OF GOD

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J.S. I wondered if we might consider the place the assembly has in the divine scheme of things, both as a vessel that would minister to the heart of Christ and one that Christ would use, if I could use that term, in praise of Godward. These are very familiar scriptures, and often spoken about with profit, but I trust that, as we enquire, the Spirit will give us a fresh and deepened impression as to the greatness of what the assembly is as having its origin in the purpose of God and formed by divine Persons themselves. It is not only a counterpart to Christ, a suitable counterpart in every way, but an assurance that the praise of God will be maintained in freshness as Christ will use it, to praise God eternally. These are simple impressions but we might get fresh help in them as we follow up what the Spirit may bring in.

A.McB. I think that sounds fine: we will get help as we speak. Does the greatness of the assembly come into this verse with which we began, "It is not good that Man should be alone" - he needed a companion - "I will make him a helpmate, his like" (chap 2: 18)? There is to be in the assembly something that answers in every way to what Christ is as man. What would you say about the "helpmate, his like"?

J.S. It is a vessel that is fully compatible with Christ. Paul brings out that truth in Ephesians: "I speak as to Christ, and as to the assembly" (chap 5: 32). It is not only after His order but it is formed in the moral features of Christ. I think the thought of likeness and image would run into that. There is something that is of Christ's order but it is formed in features which are wholly suitable and able to minister to His affections. It is interesting, and often noted, that it is God Himself from whom this suggestion comes. God taking account of what the heart of Christ would require and making provision for it. Everything stems from God Himself.

A.McB. Coming in as it does before the introduction of sin, would it show that the assembly for Christ is a primary thought for God and will go through eternally?

J.S. We need help to see that God had His thoughts in purpose before sin came into the world, and the assembly had part in them. These are things of great importance. We, as forming part of this great vessel, were in the thoughts and mind of God before even the foundation of the world.

E.D.A.S. The deep sleep is emphasised here. It involved death, the way that the Lord Jesus went, but as to the purpose of God, the assembly, in the type, was here out of man "bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh". There is something intrinsically perfect in what has come out of Christ. It is for the glory of God and the pleasure of Christ.

J.S. That is very fine. Every Christian would know something of the death of Christ as meeting the moral question and resolving it to God's glory. This is the foundation that our blessing is based on. But there is an aspect of the death of Christ that formed a basis for the fulfilling of the purpose of God and that is something we need to set ourselves to understand. I would like to understand it better myself, but I think I can see that it brings things on to a new platform. The first order of things was only provisional. The physical creation and man as part of it, a provisional order of things. But what God had in mind in His purpose was an order that is based on the resurrection of Christ. His final thoughts are linked with that, as is the assembly.

E.D.A.S. That would be perfect in itself without past history.

J.S. Exactly. It is good to think of that. Another thing that is difficult to understand is that, as individual believers, we all have a sinful and sorrowful history and we come in on the basis of the redemptive work of Christ, but the assembly as such has no past history, its origin is in the purpose of God. I trust that we will feel free to speak simply about these things. I would like help on them myself.

N.J.H. Is it right that the man cannot do without the woman, according to the mind of God?

J.S. Please help us.

N.J.H. The type implies that Christ cannot do without the assembly. It is a "helpmate, his like".

J.S. In verse 26 of chapter, "Let us make man in our image": I understand that involves the woman too. The man is not complete without the woman. We speak carefully and reverently, but the fulness of Christ is seen in the assembly, "which is his body, the fulness of him who fills all in all", Eph 1: 23.

N.J.H. He anticipated His like during His life, did He not?

J.S. Say more, please

N.J.H. I think you can trace that in the gospels. If you look through them, you will find that He is anticipating "his like". He speaks about "the men whom thou gavest me out of the world" (John 17: 6), but it is "his like", the assembly, that is in mind.

J.S. That is very good: so there is not only a likeness in divine purpose, but a moral likeness and you can see how that was coming to light. The Lord was looking for it: in the purpose of God, it needed His death and resurrection to establish it.

J.T.B. Do you think that the bringing in of the assembly results in the expression of a fresh glory of Christ? The word for man is changed at this juncture: it changes from the "The Adam" to "*Ish*", the husband. It brings out a fresh glory. The assembly was necessary in view of that.

J.S. Yes, it is a new name that is given. That is very good, and the assembly is part of the glory of Christ: "but woman is man's glory", Paul says in Corinthians (1 Cor 11: 7). The setting there may correspond to the wilderness, but there is a very fine, precious truth in it. The assembly is the reflection of Christ. It would lead us into the truth of the body as being the expression of that heavenly Man.

D.A.S. Why did He take a rib? Why did He not take two ribs?

J.S. I think it is to bring out the derivation of the assembly. It is derived from Christ. There is nothing in the assembly that is not derived from Christ. Do you not think that these things have a great moral effect, because if anything is introduced into the Christian circle that is of man, it is not of Christ and cannot be accepted?

T.C.M. Earlier it says, "And Jehovah Elohim formed Man, dust of the ground ..." and the "mist went up from the earth" (chap 2: 6,7): but this is from Himself. Does it bring out the distinctive character and special place that the assembly has as derived from Christ?

J.S. That is exactly what it is. It is completely from Christ. It is derived from Christ. These are things that we need to contemplate prayerfully as to what they mean, because we are dealing with the purpose of God and seeing that it was in God's thoughts that there should be a vessel, a bride, suitable for His Son that is completely of Himself and for Himself.

M.C. Would it be the glory of divine workmanship? I was thinking of the word "built". It is what is formed divinely and is perfect. It is only what is perfect that is suitable for Him.

J.S. That is very suggestive. There are some things that are touched on only in a suggestive way that are filled out further as we follow up the truth, and the thought of building comes into it. It is a new word again: it is "built". It means that workmanship is involved. Paul says in Ephesians, "For we are his workmanship, having been created in Christ Jesus for good works", Eph 2: 10. That is the filling out of this thought of being built.

R.G. Do you think that Paul had to have an appreciation of that when the Lord says to him at the outset on the Damascus road, "Why dost thou persecute me?", Acts 9: 4? It was from heaven. The perfection of the assembly was brought immediately before Paul.

J.S. That is very beautiful. That is what made me suggest that if we follow this thought through, it leads us on to the thought of the body, the complete expression of Christ, and that is here, is it not? That is a very wonderful thing. We are speaking about things that

are not only abstractly true or true in the mind of God, but they have been brought into being here by the Spirit.

A.McB. Say more about the aspect of the death of Christ related to purpose. We are much more familiar, perhaps, with the thought of His death in relation to ourselves and our moral state - the state of the world, indeed - but here it is the perfection of divine purpose, and yet death came into it, the "deep sleep"; not exactly the penalty side, but still the idea of the death of Christ. It is real.

J.S. I would like to know more about that and I am enquiring along with the brethren.

A.McB. I am affected by it, as we are speaking. What you are bringing out enhances the greatness God's thought as to the assembly, that it required this. It was not an act of power; it was not evolution or any of such things; it was as a direct result of the death of Christ that the assembly has come into being. Is that right?

J.S. That is very fine. The thought I had as to it is that it brings us on to new ground. It required the death of Christ, which meant the removal of all that had failed in the way of responsibility. I suppose that is the end of the line of responsibility. Man failed in that. Man was set up and given every advantage: God had placed him in the most congenial of circumstances and the history of humanity shows that he failed. It grieved God in His heart that He had made man, but then the death of Christ not only resolves the moral issue but brings us on to new ground, ground that relate to the purpose of God. Everything that is final related to that. As I say, the first order was provisional, but when He comes to what is second "He takes away the first that he may establish the second", Heb 10: 9.

A.McB. It involves then that the assembly is a feeling vessel as reflecting on her origins. The death of Christ means that the assembly is capable of entering into the feelings of God in regard of Christ.

J.S. I think that is a very important aspect of it. We find through this book that we get the feeling of God. It comes out at the beginning - the feelings of the Spirit as He hovered over the face of the waters:

then God taking account in a feeling way of the needs of the man - if I can use that expression without lessening the glory of it - the desire of the man to have a helpmate. She is able to enter into that in a feeling way.

That might lead us on to Rebecca because there we have the way it is worked out. Again, the thought comes from the Father, as Abraham himself is a type of the Father from whom all these thoughts emanate. This chapter - a long chapter an often spoken about - shows the feeling way in which the assembly is formed by the activities of divine Persons themselves.

W.S.W. I am impressed by that, the matter coming from God:

What raised the wondrous thought,
Or who did it suggest ...? (Hymn 92)

and it goes on to say,

O God, the thought was Thine,
Thine only could it be ...

J.S. We need to see that all these thoughts emanate from the heart of God. We speak about the purpose of God but we could say it is the heart of God.

J.A.B. You are speaking of these types, but could you say something about the link with what you are bringing before us and the Lord's words to Mary in resurrection? There was a woman who no doubt represented something, who in love for Him had stayed there when the responsible element had gone home, and she was given that message. Could you say something about the link between what you are saying now and that resurrection scene?

J.S. She had a great love for the Lord, as we all know, but she would have detained the Lord as she knew Him and the Lord has to say, "Touch me not", John 20: 17. I think it bears on what we are saying. He has another scene and another order in mind. He says, "Touch me not". He does not allow her to have a link with Him down here. That is finished. Paul says, "but if even we have known Christ according to flesh, yet now we know him thus no longer", 2 Cor 5:

16. Even Christ after the flesh did not set out the purpose of God. It is Christ in glory that answers to the purpose of God. And the link was to be here: "I ascend to my Father and your Father, and to my God and your God", John 20: 17. Mary's place was among that company of whom that could be said.

R.G. Is the link with Mary in the last verse that you read, that he "was comforted after the death of his mother"?

J.S. Say more please.

R.G. I was thinking about the greatness of the day into which we are introduced as Gentiles. In the beginning of John's gospel, "He came to his own, and his own received him not" (chap 1: 11) , but by the end of John's gospel He has a vessel, you might say, that is of a new order, after His own order, that is going to go through into eternity, and He will take her with Him into the praise of God eternally.

J.S. That is very fine because it bears on our own day. A tent is not a final idea - it is a provisional idea - but think of the Lord being comforted. I was thinking, as our brother was speaking, that the link between Mary with her sinful history and the new area the Lord is opening up is love. That is the link between us as sinful creatures and the purpose of God. It is love that goes through.

E.D.A.S. Does the "like" - "a helpmate, his like" – go beyond what is derivative? I am thinking of the woman of worth: "She doeth him good, and not evil, all the days of her life", Prov. 31: 12. "The heart of her husband confideth in her, and he shall have no lack of spoil", (v 11). There is that which is of Himself, but it can bring comfort to Him and reflect something of His Person, and is responsive under His hand. There would perhaps be some link with that and your scripture in Hebrews 2.

J.S. I think we see the progression in these thoughts. "Like" is to my mind a moral thought, and I think we see moral likeness in Rebecca. We know the chapter well - I did not want to read too much - but it says that the Spirit in type, the servant, wondered at her. There was something there not only of kindred, but she proved

her kindredship by her actions and her readiness typically to respond to the prompting of the Spirit.

E.D.A.S. "I will go" (v 58).

J.S. I wondered at it as I read it before I came out. "Perhaps the woman will not be willing" (v 5). Maybe that is the negative side, but it brings out the positive side in the willingness and readiness of what is morally like Christ. There is an area here that is not evil but would detain her, the area of her father's house, and we know what that is. There is what is related to our responsible life that is not evil: it is legitimate but it is not to hinder us from this journey to be with Christ.

D.A.S. This man was well qualified to go on this expedition, if we might call it that. He was "over all that he had" to begin with and then he was over all "the treasure of the master", so that he would have the discernment, be qualified to do that. How precious, therefore, the type is to us, of the Spirit in the present day.

J.S. That is very beautiful. The Spirit came "forth from with the Father", (John 15: 26), and not only has He the intimate knowledge of the feelings of the Father's heart, but the wherewithal to adorn and beautify the bride. I think we need to see how these thoughts are filled out in this dispensation. "The treasure of this master", mean that He has every means under His hand to beautify and adorn the bride for Christ.

D.A.S. Has He not been bringing out those treasures since Pentecost?

J.S. Indeed, He has.

D.A.S. He brings them out, one at a time maybe, or more than one at a time. It is all an adornment, is it not?

J.S. When we gather in temple character like this, would we not look for some of the treasures? They are not just to be admired; they are to be taken on.

A.D.M. Would you say something more as to kindredship. It is specifically referred to in verse 4: "...Go to my land and to my

kindred". Could you help us as to how we would understand that today?

J.S. The only way I can see it is to link it with what is moral. The Jews claimed kindredship with Abraham, but there was nothing moral underlying it and the Lord discounts it. He says, "If ye were Abraham 's children, ye would do the works of Abraham", John 8: 39. Kindredship in our day must relate to moral qualities that have been wrought by the Spirit. I would be glad of your thoughts.

A.D.M. I was linking it with what our brother said earlier as to when the Lord went through the gospels. There were elements that came to light: the woman in Matthew 15 - "O woman, thy faith is great" (v 28). It was the recognition of the kindred side. Perhaps persons did not have the light of it then, or did not know the doctrine of it, but the features of it were there. Do you think that should encourage us today that as we are captivated, as we had quite distinctly this morning, by the love of Christ, these features are there? There is that in the assembly which would captivate Him.

J.S. The woman in Luke 7 was captivated by Christ and the Lord is able to point to her: "Seest thou this woman?" I think the link between purpose and responsibility is love. She is captivated by the love of Christ. She had a deep and full appreciation of the love that came down to meet her in all her sins, and you can see as following it through the gospels, that that is the kind of person that forms the nucleus of the assembly.

M.C. Is the service of the Spirit enhanced to us as we consider the detail and the way in which the servant operated in securing Rebecca and, you might say, bringing out the best features in her that would be suitable for the man? The chapter always impresses you as to the operations of the servant, speaking of the Spirit. I just thought it helps us to appreciate His service as we see how skilful He has been, and is, in bringing out these features currently too.

J.S. He is taking account of her. He is observing. He is seeing the position she has taken, sitting by the well. These are all thoughts of which you can see the force. She is characterised as one who is

committed to the Spirit and He is able to take that and adorn it for Christ. That is what we want to see, and especially on a Lord's Day morning, that there is something there that is of a real and tangible character that is the result of the operations of the Spirit.

R.G. I was thinking that God's sovereignty has gone ahead here. There is a work of God in this woman. She pours all the water out for him, but not only for him but for his camels, but then there was a period when she had no company at all but the Spirit in type. She had left her parents' house; she had not yet reached Isaac; and she was on this journey and the only person she had to talk to was the Spirit. Now the Spirit brings to our remembrance the things concerning Jesus and that is what forms us for the service of the Lord in the seclusion of the tent, and then further on into the service of God.

J.S. I think there is a lot in that, the journey to Christ and the disclosures of the Spirit, so that when she says, "Who is the man ...?" he says, "That is my master!" "Then she took the veil, and covered herself" - she was not told to do that - she said as it were, This is the man who the Spirit has been speaking about. It has been pointed out that there was no veil on the journey; there was in type complete intimacy between her and the Spirit. The veil came when Christ came on to view: it means that she is exclusively for Christ.

A.M.B. We carry in our thoughts, too, the sense of urgency that the Spirit has. You spoke earlier about things that, though legitimate, would detain us and we have to face up to these things, but in order to enter into this wonderful journey, His urgency has to be realised and be made way for.

J.S. I am very glad you mention that because when we speak of these holy heavenly things, we have to give them a practical bearing. We can speak of things but if our life and motives and objects in life are different, we will know nothing about them. There is an urgency at the present time: the Lord's coming is near. This here is typical of a provisional time, but soon the full thing will be coming in and we need to make way for the pleadings of the Spirit.

A.McB. He needs to have, in some sense, the privacy of the journey. I think what has been referred to that there were just the two of them is beautiful. He needs to have that in our affections, untrammelled by anything else.

J.S. I think that is a very important principle because there are so many influences that hinder. We all know our own weaknesses and we know what things do hinder, but we need to give place to the Spirit in an intimate way, set aside time and allow the spirit to bring the glories of Christ to us.

N.J.H. Laban says, "Let the maiden abide with us some days, or say ten"; we might say that they would have been detained over the Lord's Day.

J.S. That is very interesting, the ten days. It is something that would have hindered what was for Christ and we need to think of that. If there is anything in our life that hinders what the heart of Christ longs for, we need to be ready to set it aside and have this willing spirit: "I will go".

N.J.H. The Lord's Supper and the service of God, is the Spirit's mind, is it not?

J.S. Everything focuses on the Supper. I have been thinking recently that there is far more in the Supper than I understand. Everything for the believer focuses on the Supper. It is the bond of fellowship, but then it is the occasion, where Christ Himself comes to His own. It is a unique occasion and there needs to be a state of readiness to receive Christ.

D.A.B. Do you think that is borne out in the way that Rebecca moves at the end of the journey, springing off the camel? We often speak of the agility of love, but do you think the assembly would be ready to meet Christ and greet Him in this way as Rebecca did with Isaac? It is interesting that of Isaac it says that he saw the camels, but Rebecca lifted up her eyes and saw Isaac.

J.S. I am sure you have proved, as I have, that you have, maybe, come to a meeting and been rather sluggish and had things in your

mind that hindered this readiness. It would bear particularly on the Lord's Supper, no doubt, but it would bear on every occasion. At every occasion the Spirit would be ready to bring a fresh manifestation of Christ to us.

T.C.M. Do you think it is a very great matter to see the way that the Holy Spirit typically is looking for confirmation all the way through this journey? Do you think we need to set ourselves to be material that would confirm the Spirit, you might say, in His mission? Things are not left to chance. If it is the central purpose of God, which somebody has said about the assembly, a divine Person Himself has entered into the matter that the whole thing might be secured.

J.S. Do you not think that every believer is not only a subject of divine interest but a subject of divine conversation in heaven as to what progress they are making? Do you think that is taking things too far?

R.G. When the Lord went to heaven, what did He speak to the Father about? I have often thought about that, that the Lord must have spoken to the Father about those that He had left down here. That is what you are saying, and then, by extension, that continues and, in another way, it continues in the Spirit coming here, as the Spirit still has access to the Father and to the Lord.

J.S. Do you think that John 17 prefigures what takes place all through this dispensation, a conversation between divine persons about His own? Mr Darby says it is the heart of the Lord poured into the heart of the Father concerning His own. That is very beautiful. It shows the place we have in divine affections. If we have that place in divine purpose, surely it is no less now when it has all been set on.

R.G. I was thinking about it just now. There were three divine Persons talking about us were there not - if we put ourselves in the position of the disciples - at the end of the gospels. When the Lord went to heaven, the Spirit was still in heaven; the Father was in heaven; now the Lord is in heaven as a Man; and they are speaking about what? About those that had been left and those that they

would be adding to. We become included in that through mercy and through grace.

J.S. That is very fine. He says, "And I do not demand for these only, but also for those who believe on me through their word" (v 20). We had a very fine touch as to what the disciples had in the first epistle of John, fellowship with the Father and the Son, and then they extend it to us. You could perhaps repeat what you have quoted from Mr Darby as to the Father and the Son.

J.A.B. It was a remark that impressed me about what communion with divine Persons means. He said communion is having the same thoughts and the same feelings and the same joys as divine Persons - a most profound thing. I have sometimes thought of communion simply as access to God and the ability to speak with Him - and it certainly includes that - but to have the same joy as the Father and as the Son, just as we are speaking of it now; what goes on between divine Persons. The Holy Spirit is here to bring these things to us, and as we are in the secret of that, the Holy Spirit indwelling us, we can know what that level of communion is.

J.S. It brings us into the very circle of divine affections. You can think of John 14 where the Lord says, "He that has my commandments and keeps them, he it is that loves me ..." (v 21) and then it says, "and we will come to him and make our abode with him" (v 23). You think about that precious way that divine Persons would bring us into those inward holy joys. I hardly know what words to use for it: it is just so fine to think about it.

N.McK. I was thinking about the assembly in Corinth. I wonder if it all ended in what we get in Ephesians: "To him be glory in the assembly in Christ Jesus unto all generations of the age of ages" (chap 3: 21).

J.S. It is very beautiful. Everything culminates in that. We are in a time when things are being gathered up: they go through to eternity and we will eternally enjoy that precious position of intimacy. But it can be known now. That is the glory of the present time.

A.McB. The verse that was quoted is preceded by "the power which works in us": that is another blessed aspect of the Spirit, is it not, in relation to divine service in the assembly?

J.S. "The power which works in us", and the power that is towards us, is the power that raised Christ from the dead, the greatest expression of the power of God. In chapter 3 it works "in us". Now, we want to know these things. We do not want them to be just something that we can speak about but something that is open to us.

A.McB. I wondered, when you spoke earlier about the Supper and the importance of the Supper, whether that is another aspect of it. It opens the way into divine purpose. We will hardly get into divine purpose otherwise, other than by apprehending in our mind, but experimentally it is the way into the realisation and enjoyment of divine purpose, and therefore we come into the benefit of every divine operation.

J.S. That is important. There are many believers who have the Supper at the end of the service, but the Supper is at the entrance of it, and it links with what we said before, that the link between responsibility and purpose is love. It is love in Christ and love in the saints: that is the link; that is the way in.

J.A.B. Does what you are speaking of now give us some impression of the scope of what lay before the Lord as He went into death, that there should be this answer to His heart? But not only that, that there might be an answer to God and to the Father in the assembly, as in that verse that has been quoted. I was thinking of that verse, "who, in view of the joy lying before him, endured the cross, having despised the same", Heb 12: 2. That was that He would have this answer but Hebrews 2 also brings in the praise in that vessel. The love of which you have been speaking goes through and results in eternal praise for God, does it not?

J.S. It does indeed. Maybe we should turn to Hebrews 2. I read the first section - I had in mind primarily verses 11 and 12 - but I thought we should go down and see the way that it has been arrived at: "But now we see not yet all things subject to *him*, but we see Jesus, who

was made some little inferior to angels on account of the suffering of death". I think we need to start from the bottom. We need to see where God began and the suffering that entered into it. That promotes feelings so that it is never just technical. It is a time when there is holy emotion and the service of God reflects that because we have a link with that precious One who went to the bottom of the mountains for our sake.

J.A.B. Psalm 22 would show us that - the depth and severity of what the Lord took on but the immediate release in response to God: "And thou art holy, thou that dwellest amid the praises of Israel" (v 3).

J.S. Very good. That shows what was immediately in the Lord's mind. That links with "the joy lying before him".

T.C.M. Does the tasting of death suggest that the Lord entered into something more than we ever would? Peter speaks too about "having loosed the pains of death", Acts 2: 24. These are expressions which are unique to Christ and His death, are they not?

J.S. You feel you are on holy ground speaking of that, but the Spirit of God would enable us to have some apprehension of the depth to which the Lord went. Again that brings us to the elements that are in the Supper, the path of devotion that took Him into death. Everything for the glory and praise of God is based on that.

N.J.H. Would glory too involve His place in the midst of the assembly? It says, "in bringing many sons to glory" and then He is viewed in the midst of the assembly. I wondered if it is on the same level.

J.S. Very good. We were affected at the Supper with the love that went into the place where we were and took on our liabilities, but what we enjoy is love in its own dwelling. That is where the purpose of God is. It is enjoying divinely appointed relationships where God intended them to be enjoyed. I would be glad if you would say more.

N.J.H. I was just seeking help. She is the vessel of glory, is she not? It is not the assembly in the wilderness here. I wondered if the assembly is in keeping with the whole scene of glory. For such a

One not only is suffering involved - the suffering of death, for instance - the expression is, He is in the midst. It is a wonderful scene, is it not?

J.S. It is indeed. Do you not think that it would link with the adornment of the Spirit as we are occupied with the sufferings and death of Christ and allow them to affect us deeply? It forms a basis for the Spirit to work with us to open up the glories of Christ. That makes the assembly a fitted vessel to augment the whole scene where Christ is everything and in all.

A.McB. We are taxed to hold in our minds the relationship of the assembly to Christ as His bride - the Rebecca aspect of it - but also as a vessel of praise?

J.S. I suppose we have to distinguish between union with Christ and association with Him but the thought is carried through, no doubt. Union with Christ is the man and the woman, but in association with Christ we are with Him Godward, which in a sense is the greatest thing.

D.A.B. Can you say something further about that? It speaks of declaring "thy name to my brethren" but "in the midst of the assembly will I sing thy praises". Say something as to the difference between union and association with Christ.

J.S. Union is what we enjoy in marital relation with Christ. We may touch that early in the occasion of the Supper: the Lord comes and claims His own, claims His bride, and the Spirit helps us to enter into the feelings of Christ as He has His bride. But the Lord takes His place in headship as the Minister of the sanctuary, and we know what it is to be alongside Him as He leads towards the Father, and that is really the greatest thing. We are with Christ as we approach the Father - "through him we have both access by one Spirit to the Father", Eph 2: 18. That must be greater than union.

D.A.B. So why does it say here, "in the midst of the assembly will I sing thy praises"?

J.S. I think everything is carried through; there is nothing lost. The precious link with Christ will be eternally enjoyed but it leads us on to what is further - looking on the glory of the Lord, we are changed from glory to glory. There is a certain ascending line as we move forward in the service of God.

M.C. The assembly is capacitated to expand His praise and in which the Lord has liberty: "in the midst of the assembly will I sing thy praises". She is really one with Him in that matter.

J.S. It is very fine that the Lord has a vessel where He can sing praises to God. We touch it a little on Lord's Day - would to God we touched it more! - but it is very precious to be brought into the liberty of being accepted in the Beloved, knowing that Christ has full liberty to use this vessel in praise Godward.

R.G. And is there an ever-widening sphere in our approach to eternity? The assembly is the only vessel that enjoys union with Christ; many families will enjoy sonship to some degree, but with the Firstborn, of course, we will have the first place. And then these features will be enjoyed together as men come before God, do you think? They will never be lost. There will be nothing lost of what the assembly and those that compose it have enjoyed in union and association when we come to the ultimate of man's relations with God.

J.S. That is very fine and extensive and reminds me a little of the winding stairs in Solomon's temple. You go up by the Spirit, suggested in the winding stairs. You are led through Christ by one Spirit. But I am glad you mentioned what you did because we need to be expansive in our mind. Once you get into the realm of the Father, you are coming to the Father of every family and touching the eternal day. But, as you say, the link with Christ is always maintained.

J.A.B. Would the absorption of the reality of that in our hearts help us in responding to divine Persons in relation to their thoughts in purpose, because all that you are bringing in was in the purpose of God before time was? We so often are impressed - and no wonder

that we should be - with the greatness of our place. We speak to the Father about what a wonderful thing it is that we have been lifted up and brought into His presence and what a wonderful portion we have, and that is fine and the Father appreciates that appreciation, but what you are speaking of now would, as it were, lift us on to another plane of response and the Holy Spirit would sustain us there.

J.S. Yes; we get the reference in Ephesians to the breadth and length and depth and height and yet "to know the love of the Christ which surpasses knowledge ", Eph 3: 19. That shows that Christ is there to sustain us: we could not enter into it without Him, the precious link we have that goes through to eternity. But as alongside Him we get help by the Spirit to expand in our thoughts and affections and see the whole universe of God, everything yielding in praise to God. We really should touch that every Lord's Day morning.

J.T.B. The tabernacle of God is with men, according to Revelation 21. That is in the context of the praise.

J.S. Very good. Well, that is finality. He is with men but in family relations. Every circle gathered round Him will constitute a family that has some knowledge of the Father.

R.G. So we have gone full circle in a certain sense: we are back to where you read at the beginning, but not on earth now - in heaven.

J.S. Very good - and greatly expanded.

R.G. Yes, manhood after Christ was for heaven, was it not?

J.S. Yes, indeed.

C.S. I was just going to say:

The grace that sets out souls on high,
And love that brings us nearer still.

(Hymn 116)

J.S. Well, we need to ponder these things. I trust that what has come before us will stay on our spirits and that we may follow it up

and get some more depth in our souls.

GRANGEMOUTH

20 September 1998

Key to Initials

D.A.Brown, Grangemouth; J.A.Brown, Grangemouth; J.T.Brown, Grangemouth; M.Cowan, Kirkcaldy; R.Gardiner, Kirkcaldy; N.J.Henry, Glasgow; A.McBride, Grangemouth; N.McKay, Glasgow; A.D.Munro, Grangemouth; T.C.Munro, Grangemouth; C.Spinks, Grangemouth; D.A.Steven, Grangemouth; E.D.Steedman, Grangemouth; J.Spinks, Grangemouth; J.Strachan, Dundee; W.S.Wallace, Grangemouth

THE LORD COMING

Robert Gardiner

John 14: 15-18; 1-3; 1 Thessalonians 3: 12,13

I have a simple impression to speak of the coming of the Lord. I do not suppose there is anything that so buoys the spirit of the Christian as thinking of the Lord's coming, the One who has died for us, been buried, been raised again, the ascended glorious Man who still lives for us, coming for us. What a prospect! How it uplifts the soul! How it takes you out of the circumstances in which you are into other circumstances where He is! And so I want to speak about the Lord coming 'to' us; the Lord coming 'for' us; and the Lord coming 'with' us. These are three great comings of the Lord and they have an exhilarating effect on the soul every time we think of any one of them. There are responsibilities, of course, attaching to them, and, around these verses that we have read the responsible side comes in; but that only works within us in joy because of the anticipation of seeing that glorious face. We have not seen that face yet. For nearly two thousand years there have been saints who have died and they have not yet seen that face. If the Lord tarry another week or two, there will be more who will not see that face until He comes, and then when He comes with glory, with radiancy, what responsiveness from all our hearts!

The first scripture says, "I will not leave you orphans, I am coming to you". The Lord in this section of the gospel is anticipating leaving them and He is speaking to them about that, and He is feeling for them in the midst of a scene of contrariety and known opposition to Him, knowing that there would be equal opposition for them. It would be a "desert dry" for them without Him. "I will not leave you orphans ..." An orphan, as we know, is a person, usually a younger person, who has no support. They have been bereft of support, bereft of a father's wisdom and guidance and of a mother's love and care. That is what an orphan is. And the Lord looked upon

His disciples and He felt for them. Then He said, "I will not leave you orphans, I am coming to you".

Just previously to this He is speaking about the Spirit and He is saying, He will send another Comforter, the Spirit of truth. What divine care by the Lord Jesus that He should consider at that moment for them in such wise that He would say to them, another divine Person, equal in the Godhead, will come and be your Comforter, the Spirit of truth. And the Spirit is here with us, is He not? Abiding with us and in us, as He says, day by day, comforting, giving us the care, guidance, help that we need. But then He is also the Spirit of truth and that reminds us that He brings us to the true God. It is not the Spirit of the truth - that is contained within it; it is the Spirit of truth and immediately we are related to the Godhead: "God is a spirit; and they who worship him must worship him in spirit and truth", John 4: 24.

But alongside of the Spirit being with us all the time - and how thankful we are for that - the Lord then says, "I am coming to you". And that is our privilege each Lord's Day morning that the Lord comes to us. The Spirit cares for us throughout the week, right up until that moment He is caring for us. He is with us, He is helping us into the truth, helping us to understand the true God and all that relates to the true God and His realm, but then at a specific moment the Lord comes to us. How wonderful! How precious! As he came to us on Lord's Day morning, did we see Him; not physically, but by the Spirit in reality - not actually, but in reality - understand the presence of the Lord Jesus, know something of love imparted to us as He alone can give it and then responsiveness on our side? What a privilege we have, dear brethren. The world knows nothing of it. "The world ... does not see him nor know him; but ye know him". We know the Spirit, we know the Lord, as the Lord comes to us.

In the second scripture I read in the first part of the chapter the Lord is coming for us: "Let not your heart be troubled". See how the Lord again is considering for His own! He considers for us all the time. Do we not know it? Have we not experienced that, the Lord coming alongside and touching us on the shoulder, as it were, and

saying, "Let not your heart be troubled; ye believe on God, believe also on me"? Then immediately He translated their vision to another sphere, outside the area of trouble, anxiety, care and woe: "In my Father's house there are many abodes". You think of the Lord thinking about that at that particular time. He was about to go to the Father. "In my Father's house there are many abodes". It is like the chambers round the temple in Solomon's building, if you remember. There were chambers all round, and there they are, the many abodes, for the many families - but "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 Lord is currently preparing that place.

Think of the Lord Jesus at the moment engaged in thinking about the day when His bride will appear before His actual vision. As a Man, He will see His bride! What glory, what wonder, and the Lord is preparing a place for her. You think about how a man prepares a house for his bride-to-be. You think of the Lord preparing this place. How wonderful! What furnishings! But, far better than the furnishing, what an atmosphere, the atmosphere of love: "I go to prepare you a place ... that where I am ye also may be." The Lord is coming for us, He is going to come very soon for us. What a wonderful time it will be when the Lord will see the assembly for Himself for the first time in its entirety, in its totality! The Lord has waited, and the only thing that tempers your prayer every morning when you ask the Lord to come before night, when you ask the Father to give Him the word that He might come before the day is through, the only thing that tempers that prayer is that "The Lord does not delay his promise, as some account of delay, but is long-suffering towards you, not will that any should perish" 2 Peter 3: 9. That is the only tempering thing in your mind, is it not? That God is not delaying "as some account of delay, but is long-suffering towards you, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance". So that the day of grace continues and will continue until that moment, and so I say your prayer is somewhat tempered because of that, but, nevertheless, you ardently pray that the Lord

will come before the day is finished, not just to get you out of your circumstances and me out of my circumstances - although that is quite legitimate too - but that the Lord might have for Himself that glorious vessel, that pearl of great price that He has given His all to secure. Oh, dear brethren, how it buoys the spirit to think of the Lord having an answer, that He will Himself be able to hold that bride that vessel, that perfect answer to His heart of love He will be able to hold her Himself for all eternity, and we will be part of that wondrous vessel.

Then in the last scripture He is coming with the saints. Paul is speaking to the Thessalonians as we were saying the other day, a young company. There are young, and then there are not so young, but all young in one sense - I trust so - all bright, all with the fervour and strength and outlook as the very day when you came to Christ the first time. So that from this point of view, we are all Thessalonians, and Paul is speaking to them and us saying, "But you, may the Lord make to exceed and abound in love toward one another, and toward all". He is talking now about coming with the saints, but He says before I come with the saints, I want to make sure that everything is all right with you and that you have the same outlook as I have so that we come together. The Lord loved us, did He not? What love towards one another and towards all! Think of the Lord loving His disciples and then that love extending out to all! It has been extending for two thousand years, and He is saying to the saints at Thessalonica, now that same love is to be seen in you, "toward one another" in your locality "and toward all" in every other locality. What a privilege we have but what a responsibility! Loving the saints, dear brethren, is I believe the greatest thing, we are asked to do down here because if you love all the saints, then there can be no discrepancy, no disturbance because love is the answer to everything.

And so "love toward one another, and toward all ... in order to the confirming of your hearts unblamable in holiness before our God and Father". You see, the saints at this point in the apostle's mind have been taken to be with Christ and are now before His God and

Father and it is from that point they come with the Lord. For us, the only thing that stands between the Lord's coming at the rapture and His coming in the appearing is the judgment seat of Christ. Some of us have been speaking about that. It is interesting how your thoughts get off-key sometimes. I used to wonder about that verse:

With Him look back on all the way;
To learn the meaning, at His hand,
Of every deed in every day! (Hymn 299)

It used to make me feel uneasy, but I have learned since then. When we come before the Lord at the judgment seat, we will be like Him. We will have a body of glory in "conformity to his body of glory", Phil 3: 21. He will have come for us Himself. No angel sent, no other person sent, no emissary. He will come Himself for us because He loves us and when He comes for us, we will go before the judgment seat with Paul and all the others who have fallen asleep over nearly two thousand years, and who have all been engaged with Him while waiting. Do you think the Lord would come for them, take them, make them like Himself and then say, Now we have some matters to sort out here? That is not the way the Lord does things. The Lord will have a body of glory and so will we all and there we will stand. If He goes back over the way, it will only be to demonstrate His perfect love, how that every movement that He made towards us was only to exemplify His perfect love which on occasions kept us from falling further than we did fall and when we did fall, raised us up from where we fell and put us beside Himself. What love! And that is what He will go over so that our hearts will swell the more in the appreciation of the glory of that blessed Man.

Well, as that has been accomplished, He takes us in to His God and Father - "my Father's house", remember! He takes us in there, holy and unblamable before Him in love and that is what He is working to with the Thessalonians, "to the confirming of your hearts unblamable in holiness before our God and Father". Oh, dear brethren, may we be set, each one, so that we can lift our heads and say, "unblamable in holiness" because of the action, activity, love of the Lord Jesus toward us each day of our time!

Then it says, "at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all his saints". Remember when John at the end of Revelation was taken up on to that high mountain and saw the Holy City, it says, "coming down out of the heaven from God, having the glory of God" (chap 21: 10). That is the equivalent to this verse "with all the saints", "coming down ... from God, having the glory of God". Dear brethren, it is the greatest coming of all, the appearing. Men in Christendom have it all telescoped so that the rapture and the appearing is one thing. It is not the case. The Lord comes for us and then, praise His Name, He comes with us to wondering worlds. Think of the Lord's satisfaction! It will be the greatest thing for Him to come out from the presence of God, seeing that vessel having the glory of God to demonstrate to wondering worlds what He has in His bride, in His counterpart, in the vessel that will satisfy Him for all eternity.

Oh, beloved brethren, the coming of the Lord Jesus - may we be ready for it: if He tarries until Lora's Day, coming to us! May we be ready at any moment for His coming for us! May we joy in the prospect, dear brethren, of His coming with us to wondering worlds! For His Name's sake.

KIRKCALDY

13 October 1998

A MODEL

Doug Welch

1 Timothy 4: 12,13

The great idea of a model I believe to be a principle in the house of God. When we think of a model, we would turn our hearts and our minds to the supreme Model, the Lord Jesus. He says in Matthew 11, "Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me ... for my yoke is easy, and my burden is light", (vv 29,30). What fulness there is in Christ as a model! He suffered for us, "for Christ also has suffered for you, leaving you a model that ye should follow in his steps" (1 Peter 2: 21), Christ supremely the testimony in every sense of the world, "suffered for you, leaving you a model that ye should follow in his steps".

The primary thought in mind has to do with the family in John's epistle, the graded positions of growth found there. We would consider the Lord Jesus as the supreme Model in the way that we are set in growth. We are all children and we know forgiveness; we know Him who has forgiven us. Some are fathers and "have known him that is from the beginning" (v 13); young men in whom the word of God abides (v 14) and "who have overcome the wicked one"; little children who "have the unction from the holy one, and ye know all things" (v 20). These great sensibilities are found in little children, those who not only know their Saviour but they know things inwardly, based on the experiences that come before them.

In the father, perhaps the thought of a model would be for the believers. I read the verse as to a young man, Timothy, perhaps not so young in age as we think of the beloved young brethren here in the meeting, but he was nevertheless referred to as a young man and, as Paul's child, he was to be "a model of the believers". The fathers, I think, at least the impression I have - have come that way through experience and discipline, perhaps referring back in my mind to Jacob. As he fled from Esau, the first experience he had was with Jehovah who was above him and the place was Beth-el,

and Jehovah said, "I am Jehovah, the God of Abraham, thy father, and the God of Isaac", Gen 28: 13. So the father would be one who would have experience with God and he would relate also to what has gone before him: "I am Jehovah, the God of Abraham, thy father, and the God of Isaac". A father would be one like Jacob who would return to Beth-el and who would as it were, gather up his children in finality and bring them to the land of Goshen. You might say a father would be an example for the believer. In 1 Peter 5 verse 2 - the brethren might recall the scripture - he says "shepherd the flock of God" speaking to the elders; Peter as a fellow-elder impressing us that we live in a day when there is not much that is great. These are not the days of the apostles, not a day to seek great things for ourselves, but we can certainly listen to the scripture, especially the fathers, I would say, and shepherd the flock of God. "Not as lording it", it says in the scripture in 1 Peter 5 verse 3, "over your possessions, but being models for the flock". What a wonderful thing, beloved ones, as we sit together - and we are together, the greatness of the assembly, the greatness of the testimony, supremely in Christ, but yet descriptively worked out family-wise - that persons can be models! Think of that scripture again in Matthew 11. The Lord would turn His eyes to the Father and He would say, "I praise thee, Father, Lord of the heaven and of the earth, that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them to babes" (v 25). And then as the apostle would write to the Thessalonians, young believers, and say that they were models to all that believe in Macedonia and in Achaia", 1 Thess 1: 7. Dear young believer, you have a place in the testimony and it is important to lay hold of these scriptures for the Lord needs you. The Lord needs each one of us to "strengthen the things that remain, which are about to die", Rev 3: 2. Let us strengthen them!

But I want to say a word to these young men. We have all been young, even if we are a little older. Some of us as to our spiritual growth perhaps are still in that phase, but we would want to keep moving. Considering Timothy as a young man, he was to be an example of a believer. Whatever was put into his hand, he would

want to be an example of that, and work it out in the light of Paul's ministry. That is a wonderful thing. If we were to read together the beginning of 2 Timothy, there is something very precious there. Paul says concerning Timothy, I remember your tears (chap 1: 4). The young man Timothy, if we can use that suggestively, was in a right state to continue in the things that he learned because he felt the condition of things: "remembering the tears". And then, if you go on in 2 Timothy: "Be not therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord" (chap 1: 8); "take thy share in suffering as a good soldier of Jesus Christ" (chap 2: 3). A good soldier has *one thing* before him. He is not diverted from that. There may be diversions but he is not really diverted from it. A good soldier is one who can go on and endure things because he has his eye on his commander, he rallies around his leader.

And so Timothy was to prove certain things. He was to prove himself a workman because he valued the scriptures. He was one we could relate to, who overcame the world: "For all that has been begotten of God gets the victory over the world; and this is the victory which has gotten the victory over the world, our faith", 1 John 5: 4. I am not sure that that is the operative, active element of faith (although I would include it in it), but to young brethren here, "our faith" is what has been given to us: "our faith", not my faith, nor your faith necessarily, although I would say that would be included, but "our faith": the whole body of the truth once delivered to the saints (see Jude 3). What a legacy we have, young brethren, and the Lord, as it were, is ready to take you from the crossway and have you and me fill that out as an example of a believer, "a model of the believers, in word, in conduct, in love, in faith, in purity. Till I come ..." You see, it is worked out in the light of Paul's ministry. The very greatest thing that God ever had in mind is worked out now at the present time in testimony, the very greatest things.

And so, beloved ones, we have these things in our hand and we have the legacy of the truth as it has been opened out and developed. And it says, "Till I come, give thyself to reading, to exhortation, to teaching". Reading is a great thing. I do not want to

be negative here, but I think in Revelation it says something concerning those who love and make a lie. As I said, there could be diversions, but a good soldier is not diverted and these things that we might take up extraneously and get our minds occupied with, let us bear in mind where they come from. If we are honest, we have all had some of these kinds of diversions, but the very fact that we see fathers in the room - and I am not leaving mothers out either - is the very proof that as young men they had one thing in mind before them. They were good soldiers and they made it through.

I would just say concerning motherhood before I sit down that there is an extremely important need in the testimony for its continuance and its completion at the highest level, and it will be completed at the highest level, and that is, desiring a man-child. The sisters in the room know the scriptures better than I do concerning Hannah. She made a request and her great desire was to see a man-child come forth, to see the features of Christ come out in these young men and these young women. The younger ones of us in this room need to take account of that: there have been sisters, the subjective element in the assembly, that have made requests and they have continued in prayer and they want to see a man child after the supreme Model of the Lord Jesus Himself.

Well, beloved brethren, may we just be helped in this idea of a model, not to pretend or anything like that, but to see that it is all there, to go in for it and not be diverted, for His Name's sake.

GRANGEMOUTH

3 November 1998