

A WORD IN ITS SEASON

SECOND SERIES

No. 48

March 2011

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RECOVERY

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RG We have been reading locally through Ezra and Nehemiah and seeing how God operates in recovery, first of all sovereignly, and then on the line of responsibility. I wondered if it would be helpful to consider further the line of recovery. The first chapter of Genesis might seem a slightly unusual chapter to start the enquiry with, but as we consider it we can see that, indeed, it is a work of recovery and a very great one, because verse 2 shows that something had come in to spoil God's original work in creation, and this chapter shows how God can recover matters according to His own will. But God does not simply replace things as they were; He brings in something additional, and that is a great feature of recovery. There is glory for God in it. I wondered if the basic principles set out in Genesis 1 would help us because there is no doubt that we are in a time of remarkable recovery. We do feel the state of decline that has come in, but I believe that we should not be overcome by that but rather see that what God is doing is according to His mind and will, and He will complete it perfectly.

In the scripture in Samuel we have the thought there of recovery, what abides through exercise. I went to this reference to David at Ziklag because there was an element of responsibility - more than an element: David was at fault in what he had done, first of all in regard of the Philistines and then in leaving Ziklag, but nevertheless God brought in recovery and He brought in an advance in His work in David. Magnanimity came out in David in his dealings with those with him that showed that he had got the benefit of what had come in.

In Luke's gospel we read from two sections, the first one dealing with those who had been on the way to Emmaus. This

shows how the Lord worked even in the forty days in which He was here after the resurrection. It sets a stamp on the whole dispensation. The Lord also worked with Peter in recovery in those days.

And finally Mark, as the brethren well know, was a recovered man and what he writes about is the essential character of the Supper. It is well known, and has often been said amongst us, that Mark does not even say, 'Take, eat'; he just says, "Take this", as if he would concentrate the minds of those to whom he was writing on the Supper itself and on its value.

MJW You have spoken of recovery in the sovereign sense, in the sovereignty of God. Can you say something about that?

RG We know that in the book of Ezra recovery was set on, but it was really set on by God. That is always the case, but it is brought into prominence there because of the activities of king Cyrus, God having raised him up for that purpose. In Nehemiah it was more a question of the individual exercise of one of the saints who felt conditions. What would you say about it?

MJW I think it is a very important thing to see the sovereign side because God does things for Himself. He does them for His own satisfaction and in view of a testimony as well, and I think it is a very stabilising thought, before we think of any matter connected with our responsibility, which must go along with it, of course.

RG Yes; we do need to be encouraged, I think, in the light of the fact that God has recovery in mind, but, as Paul brings out in 2 Timothy, it is very much a sovereign matter: "if God perhaps may sometime give them repentance to acknowledgment of the truth" (chap 2: 25), but it does not say 'never'. The door is still open, and the Lord is working, I believe, in recovery.

GR Recovery in Genesis is outside of man altogether. It was before man was ever created, having passed through the first words, "In the beginning God" and calamity coming in, but then God acting sovereignly with His own ideas and His own thoughts.

RG That is helpful because one of the reasons I went to this chapter is that we see God working by Himself and for Himself, and what He has in mind is what is for His own glory. We see something of the thoughts that were in the divine mind. It says, “and the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters’. The first thing God would tell us is that His feelings were involved, His sympathies.

DJW What could you say to help us that, in this chapter, it is always “Let”? It is almost as if God is working for Himself. It is as if He knows that there is going to be a response to His desires.

RG Well, God sees the end from the beginning, as we know, and He knew what the outcome of all this would be. I link it in my mind with the verse in the Psalms that says, “For *he* spoke, and it was done”. That would, I think, connect with the initial thought of creation. But then it says, “*he* commanded, and it stood fast”, Ps 33: 9. I think that applies to this section because what He had in mind really in this was the incoming of Christ. What do you say yourself?

DJW Do we get the bearing presently? God looks for something responsive to Himself, but there is something that can respond to His command.

RG Yes. It is not merely an arbitrary act of power. It *is* an act of power, and great power indeed. But what God was looking for was a sympathetic condition of things into which He could introduce His own thoughts, and I think your reference to the word “Let” bears on that.

PJH The prophet Isaiah says, “Remember these things, O Jacob, and Israel, for thou art my servant; I have formed thee: thou art my servant Israel; thou shalt not be forgotten of me”. He goes on to say, “I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, thy transgressions, and, as a cloud, thy sins: return unto me; for I have redeemed thee”, chap 44: 21, 22. It is what God has done, but it is something that we have to do: “return”.

RG Yes, the marvel of the matter is that God creates conditions in which we can return. That door is open. I do not want to start too many lines of thought, but I do feel we should carry this in regard of

our preaching of the gospel that not only has God produced the initial work of salvation in the finished work of Christ, but He keeps the door open that we might be recovered if we turn aside.

JAT Is the work of recovery sovereign at the initial touch that we are converted by?

RG God's work, as our brother has pointed out, is sovereign. It proceeds from Himself and we add nothing to it, but there is a side also which we cannot forget, that we are responsible. God does not secure automatons; He secures persons who are in sympathy with Himself and elevates them to the place finally of sonship.

BWB Is it important that the Spirit of God comes in so early here, and obviously the Spirit of God has had to do with the recoveries in our own day, beginning with the Reformation, and more particularly perhaps in Mr Darby's day. It was a distinctive movement of the Spirit over against the deadening of Christendom, do you think?

RG Yes, that helps. Who told Moses that all this took place? Do you think that the fact that the Spirit of God has imparted these facts - it must have been the Spirit of God who imparted these facts to him - would show that God is seeking to produce a sphere of things which is sympathetic to what He is doing? Would that be right?

BWB Yes, and the Spirit of God has ever had the end in view, do you think? That is what you get in the end of Revelation: "the Spirit and the bride say, Come", Rev 22: 17. He is here to secure that vessel distinctly for the heart of Christ. It is a mission that goes all the way through, perfect in its inception, perfect in its completion.

RG That is helpful and it is something that we must carry in our affections because if we look at the breakdown - and we have to; we cannot ignore it - but if we look at it only, we could be overwhelmed. Romans says, "Adam ... is the figure of him to come", chap 5: 14. That is, God had the final thought in mind when He set out on this original work.

MJM Is there something very appealing about the activity of the Spirit here in "hovering"? Was that anticipatively in relation to results

that He would be looking for?

RG Yes, I think that is good because if things become difficult, or failure comes in, I think the enemy would seek to persuade us that matters are fixed, and there is no redress, no way back, but as some of us have proved experimentally, God can work in recovery over a very long time, and produce the results He has had in mind while we have learned the lessons involved.

JMcK Is the introduction of light as the first element here important? It is a question, is it, of divine revelation?

RG I think that is good because one of the things that struck me about this in reading it over was that God brings in light first, but then He puts things in their place. That is, "God divided between the light and the darkness", and then He put a name on it: "And God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night". To me that is a feature of recovery. We know well from experience that when exercises come up, things tend to be opaque and we have different views and different opinions. What God would do is show where His mind is, and He does that by naming things. Would you agree with that?

JMcK So the power to discriminate is with God Himself.

RG Yes, and it is not just a question of seeing that God is working. That is vital, but He would have us to be with Him in what He is doing and learn, speaking reverently, as He goes along, learn the lessons involved.

PJH Is there an idea here that God intends man, by His creation, to be occupied with the day? It says, "And there was evening, and there was morning". It does not say, 'there was morning; and there was evening'.

RG Well, the Lord said when He was here, "The night is coming, when no one can work", John 9: 4. That had a bearing when the Lord said it, and still does. Work belongs to the day. The Thessalonians were told they were "sons of light and sons of day", 1 Thess 5: 5.

RDP God bringing in recovery has in mind the maintenance of that recovery, does He not? I was thinking we have spoken of the Spirit in the initial matter of recovery, but the Spirit also maintains things at a level to which God recovers them, does He not?

RG Yes, that is another important thing that could be developed. There is always the tendency when recovery comes in, that then things decline a little and we accept the decline and a little lower standard, that things are difficult and so on. But what you say is right. The Spirit who has acted in recovery maintains the recovery at the level of divine thoughts.

RDP No doubt we will come to it, but the Supper really has that in view, does it not?

RG Well, do you not think the Supper is a tremendous divine provision? Israel's history, of course, related more to months, but we have what is daily and what is weekly because we need that to preserve us from the darkness.

SJH Would you say something as to the process of recovery? God could recover in an instant and yet He chooses to take us through a pathway of exercise and strengthening and growth for His glory. Could you help us as to that?

RG What you say is worth thinking about because in recovery we learn two things: firstly, we learn what we are, that is, we have failed, and we learn lessons in regard of that; but the second and more important thing is we learn what God is not just in relation to the great scope of things, but what a God He is in relation to my need. Colossians speaks about "growing by the true knowledge of God" (chap 1: 10), and that is a very important thing.

DBB Would you say more about the way that God divides and names to help us?

RG God divides things up. At this stage we do not exactly get moral teaching as to that. We know, as someone has remarked already, about Day and Night and the moral connection. I think that God divides things up so that we might arrive in an orderly way at right

divine thoughts. Now, I would link that with Romans 7. We learn painfully to divide things up and then put a name on them: “no longer I ...but the sin that dwells in me”, v 17. “No longer I”, that is the work of God in me, “but the sin that dwells in me”. It is important because what I have found, and others no doubt too, is that when times of difficulty or exercise come, we so tend to get our eye off the main point and become taken up with personalities and opinions and so on. And God here says, 'This is Day, and this is Night', and that is a distinct help. Say what is in your own mind.

DBB The enemy will always try and muddle things and bring in confusion by it, but God divides things. It is clear; it is concise; and it is exact.

RG Well, He does and in order to help us, not only does He put names on things, but He gives us a standard by which to measure everything, and that is Christ.

PHH Paul said in 1 Corinthians 13, “now I know partially”, v 12. Things might not be clear-cut to us. He also says, “If any one think he knows anything, he knows nothing yet as he ought to know it”, 1 Cor 8: 2. Would that bear on what you are saying?

RG We were speaking about Paul's exercises in Acts 16. Paul was in the path of faith; he was in the service of the Spirit; he was doing what was right; but he came to a point when he had certain things in view and the Spirit of Jesus forbade him, so he thought of something else and that was not allowed either; and then it says after his vision, “concluding”, v 10. I submit that that was the work of God in the apostle and those with him coming to a right judgment under the hand of God. But things are not always clear-cut.

PHH We require patience with one another. I might be quite clear in my mind that a certain thing is right or wrong, but my brother might not see it that way, might he?

RG Well, the thing that humbles me and which comes back to me is that it was at the time in my own spiritual experience when I was most convinced that I was right that I was furthest wrong. You say, 'Oh well, you just do nothing then, just do not have any exercise'.

No, that will not do, but we must be dependent and obedient. Can you help us?

RWF I was hoping that you might tell us a little about the dry land.

RG Say what is in your mind.

RWF I wondered if it was something fundamental within recovery that there is a firm basis upon which we can stand, but it is not dry as parched or arid, because the paragraph goes on to speak of what is very productive almost immediately. You can add to that.

RG What you say is helpful. I suppose we could have spent the whole reading on this chapter, but when God was restoring things here as He was, it says, “let the dry land appear” when, in fact, the dry land was under water at the time. Waters covered the face of the deep. God still viewed it as dry land. That is what it was in His mind. It was productive. He so arranged things, the waters were taken away and the dry land appeared and, as you rightly point out, it became productive under God’s hand. I have a feeling that there is quite a lot of dry land at the moment under water. I know that might sound a little strange, but it suggests that there are persons exercised but not free. There is something of the work of God there, and we pray for such.

RWF We pray for such about those in whom God’s work is as having potential. It seems to me that thought comes in early with the Spirit of God “hovering over the face of the waters”. What was in view was something entirely productive through the Spirit’s power. The same thing applies, does it not, to the dry land? What you say is interesting.

RG Yes, I believe it does apply. My own exercise has been to try to have a balanced view of things as they are at the moment. We *are* in a time of remarkable recovery. We *are* in a time when there have been some remarkable failures. But we must not be obsessed by these but rather see what God has in view as to the potential that was there and what may yet be brought into usefulness.

DJW I was thinking of what you said about what proceeds the day before, that God divides between waters and waters. Man could never do that.

RG No; we do well to go through these exercises, although we cannot achieve anything on our own. God is the One who works sovereignly. But we must not allow that to take away our sense of responsibility. I have a responsibility to act in relation to the truth.

JMcK Does the reference, “the earth brought forth” link with that? That is, that it is not stated exactly as an act of divine power. I wondered if that linked with exercise divinely generated that brings results.

RG Yes, I think so. So Mark’s gospel speaks of the husbandman who sows the seeds and it says, “and the seed should sprout and grow, he does not know how”, chap 4: 27. That is the potential and the power are there, “first the blade, then an ear, then full corn in the ear”, v 28. It is God-given.

BCB Would you say there are some exercises we might need to go through on this journey that are not explicitly good? Some days it explicitly says, “God saw that it was good”. On the second day there is no reference to that.

RG What is in your mind?

BCB Well, I was just thinking that in my experience I might go through something, I might be on this journey and it is painful, it is difficult, and I could not say that it was good, but I do know over all that “all things work together for good”, Rom 8: 28. I was just wondering, since the second day has this idea of dividing and it is necessary but not explicitly good. I am asking for help.

RG Yes. It has been said, as we well know, that what was introduced in this day was the expanse and it was that into which sin came. At the end of all this, when God reviewed the matter in verse 31, it says, “and behold it was very good”; you might say, why have the expanse then? But the whole point is the expanse was entirely

necessary for the working out of God's thoughts in relation to the present time.

JAT Does the death of the Lord Jesus, His sufferings, death and resurrection, have a bearing on the matter of recovery? I was thinking in John's gospel it was a very serious matter that Peter took on himself to go and fish at one stage, and others were influenced by it. I thought of the grace of it, the Lord Jesus having risen, and this was the third time that He appeared being risen. It says, "And early morn already breaking, Jesus stood on the shore", John 21: 4. I thought that was a very wonderful thing.

RG I thought about reading that; it is a supreme example of how the Lord wrought in recovery. Think of His patience with those disciples, Peter and John and others, and Peter particularly. What does He say? 'You denied me'? No, there is no word of that. "Lovest thou me more than these?", v 15. He appealed to the best in Peter, brought it out and showed Peter that he had things to learn. He brought him on. He did not repel him by words of criticism. I am not saying we should overlook evil; but wisdom would enter into the way we deal with one another.

JAT Could we expect this in this day that we speak of as a day of breakdown? It says, "and though there were so many, the net was not rent", v 11.

RG Well, that is what was referred to earlier. There is a side of things which is not going to break down; and that is God's work; and John's epistles bring that out, that there is a side of things - we may have to view them abstractly - which is not subject to failure.

JAT It might link with Paul. He says, "Love never fails", 1 Cor 13: 8. I thought that was something like the net that was not rent.

RG Yes, we have failed; the recovery may have failed, so far as man's responsibility is concerned; but God has not failed. He never has; He will not; and we need to cling to that.

GR There is no doubt about it that God is always going to have worship, but I was thinking of what we have been taught in John 4

that "the Father seeks ... worshippers", v 23. That brings in the feeling side. He works with persons and develops feelings in them like unto the Lord Jesus. What God is doing, He is doing in recovery.

RG Yes, that is helpful. It is what our brother said earlier on in the meeting. Why does God pass us through the things that He does? Could He not have maintained the recovery in all its original integrity? It was not. There was more to be learned; there was more to be brought in in the way of light. But God has done what He has done to show us the resources He has in Himself, the resources in grace and patience and forbearance. We will not learn these things in heaven; they will not be needed. We learn God now in a way in the wilderness testimony and pathway that we could learn in no other setting.

MJM Does the division we have been referring to really have in view the establishment of an area of things where there is not to be any division?

RG Yes, that is exactly what is in mind. As quoted earlier, "Adam ... is the figure of him to come". What God was working in view of was perfection, but in His wisdom He allowed things to come in that permitted the display of Himself and His love.

TSO Is time an important component in relation to recovery? I was just thinking that God is the God of eternity, but yet there is this passage of time when things develop and I wondered if that was an important feature, God's patience and working, and also the way that it has an effect and impact on our own selves and brings out what is of God.

RG Yes, that is helpful. Time is important. I think it begins for us when the great lights are set to rule the day and rule the night, and it finishes when it says in Revelation, "And the city has no need of the sun nor of the moon, that they should shine for it; for the glory of God has enlightened it, and the lamp thereof is the Lamb", chap 21: 23. It is an interesting thing to me, and something I would say to our younger brethren: God is doing things in time which will stand the

test of eternity. It is a remarkable thing that God has come into time with its limitations and operated within these limitations and yet produced what is of eternal value.

DJW Is this reference to seed important as well? God's work cannot break down. You referred to the failure from which recovery is necessary, but there is that which we can identify which is apart from breakdown. Is that something that brings stability into the soul?

RG Yes. I think it may be a lesson that I have to learn a bit more about. If I fail I tend so much to think of my reputation, what the brethren think. It is not that we would ignore what the brethren think but what we should rather think of is the work of God in our souls which is imperishable, and seek to be recovered to God's full thoughts for us. Is that what is in your mind?

DJW The death of Christ has brought to light that which cannot break down. If I am to be recovered, I go back to what is pristine in that way; not that we go back to Pentecost, but in principle we have to touch the vitality of things which God Himself has introduced.

RG I think that is important, and John's epistles help us greatly in that. John's gospel sets out for us the principles that were seen in Christ, God's thoughts displayed in His Son; but John's epistles show the kind of persons who answer to that and what we get there, as we have been taught, is that we learn to take soundings. "I know", he says as to certain things; "we know". "We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love the brethren", 1 John 3: 14. I would say that again to our younger brethren. You might feel difficulties in your exercises and feel you are a bit of a failure, as we all have, but hold on to what is positive, what is real, the work of God in yourself. Do you love the brethren? Well, that is God's work.

RWF Is the imperishability of God's work what David came to? It says, "but David strengthened himself in Jehovah his God", 1 Sam 30: 6.

RG Yes. Can you say a bit more about that?

RWF Well, I was hoping you would, but it seems fundamental to recovery. What struck me about that passage was that David took the whole matter on himself. He accepted responsibility, and responsibility which you referred to as following sovereignty. Recovery is something that I need to take up personally; I cannot expect someone else to do it for me.

RG Yes, that is important. God could make things exactly as He wished to make them, as we well know, but the glory of God lies in the fact that He can produce persons formed after Christ who are like Him; that is for His own glory. And persons in that state do take up responsibility and reflect what God is, and there is glory for God in that.

MJW What did you have in mind yourself about this scripture in Samuel?

RG I was thinking of the fact, as our brother has already pointed out, that David had failed. We do not put a premium on failure but we should be comforted by the fact that these saints have failed, and their failures are recorded for us, and God shows how they were recovered; so, "David strengthened himself in Jehovah his God". He got his eye off all the other confusing issues and returned to the source. What do you say yourself?

MJW I am enjoying that.

JMcK Is it fine to realise the divine objective is the same. Whether we view it from the point of view of divine sovereignty or whether we view it from the point of view of the exercise He promotes in the soul, the objective is the same.

RG Yes, that is so. Do you think that we get a touch of that at the Supper, and the service of God, and what flows out of it? The service of God can be taken up rightly and fully in the light of the glory of God's thoughts in purpose, but we begin to see what God has allowed in His ways in your life and mine coalescing with His purpose.

RWF It says, "David recovered all". That is what God had in view. But through his exercise - it was very deep exercise - what actually occurred matched what God had in mind originally.

RG That is exactly what I am trying to get at. God saw the whole thing from beginning to end. David came to it through very tortuous pathways, but the end was reached. I do have the impression that an exercise is not really complete until there is glory to God from it.

DJW Is it significant that this recovery through the Egyptian comes through David feeding him with what represents what is collective, "a piece of fig-cake and two raisin-cakes", v 12?

RG Yes, David was moved because of the exercises, severe discipline, to which he had been subjected. You can see the work of God beginning to come to the surface. He gets his eye on the essentials. This young man is not just made use of and discarded; he is brought into a sphere where these collective things are valued. Is that what is in your mind?

DJW When we come to Revelation, "the Spirit and the bride say, Come"; so there is what is pristine in bridal features, but then it leads to something else: "And let him that hears say, Come", chap 22: 17. It widens out the circle. It seems as if David, in holding on here, you may say, to what is collective, which perhaps answers to the bride, is using the opportunity to go to a wider circle. I wondered if that was important.

RG It is. I was directed recently to read an address of Mr Raven's in volume 1, 'Fellowship, Privilege and Testimony'. It just bears exactly on what you are saying. There are the responsibilities of the fellowship, but then there is privilege and as we taste and touch that, then we come out in testimony and reflect what we have enjoyed in privilege.

MJW It is interesting the other scripture you read in Samuel. Really what happened brings David into the truth of the expanse. He connects it with the greatness, width and blessedness of God's thoughts in his own soul.

RG Well, that opens up a further line of enquiry. What happens to David when he is recovered is that he begins to reflect God in a way that he did not do before. He becomes magnanimous. My own feeling is, I say to myself first, that we should be the most magnanimous people on earth if we had a sense of what we have been saved from, and brought into, and recovered to.

RDP Is that what you had in mind in regard to not only what was initial was recovered but what was additional?

RG What men are trying to do now in regard to the financial market is put it all back the way it was before. That is what they want. God does not do that. God recovers what is of value, what is of His own work, but He always adds something. When you get the leper cleansed and the blood is put on his ear and hand and foot, and the oil is applied similarly, the priest then takes what is left of the oil and puts it on the cleansed person's head, Lev 14: 18. That is that man has something he had never had before.

RDP So it says here, "This is David's spoil"; but then David's spoil is not just used for David; it is used for the saints, is it not?

RG That is the point. I sometimes think of it at the Supper. You look round and you see your brethren and we know something of each other's history, and you just say, 'Well, that is David's spoil'.

Perhaps we could go on to Mark. I do not have a great deal to add. It was simply the thought that Mark, as we know, was writing in the light of recovery as to the loaf at the Supper. Jesus said, "Take this: this is my body", and then the cup.

MJW So what would you see? I am just trying to get your thought. "Take this": so your mind is concentrated on what the "this" represents without being particular. Say what you have in your mind.

RG I suppose there are times in most of our lives when we have felt tempted to give up, or seek an easier path, or do something different. I think Mark (who had, as we know, turned aside) brings out here what he considers to be the vital elements of the testimony, and this is one of them. I do not want to make the Supper more than

it is - you can hardly do that. The Supper is entirely necessary to our spiritual life.

JMcK Is there a reference to the completeness of His body here? "Take this: this is my body".

RG That helps. That would be the primary thought in looking at the loaf: "this is my body". I do not think we can exclude from that what Mr Pellatt's hymn says,

The bread reminds us we are one
(Hymn 430)

but I think the primary thought is in relation to the Lord's body and the fact that we break it. I do not know what the brethren think about this. It is just a personal impression, the fact that we look on it, and what it speaks of, and then we break it. We do not cut it up into orderly pieces - I am not being flippant; we break it. There is a certain suggestion of violence in that, the act of physically breaking the loaf, and it appeals to me that we have to remember that the blessings that it points to, the only way into them, is through the Lord's death.

GJR Is there a suggestion of what is final in the breaking, a body given, never to be recalled in that condition?

RG Yes; Matthew says, "Take, eat", chap 26: 26. Luke's side is more the side of remembrance, but what you say is good, that the Lord's death - we just have to be wise and careful with this - is not the foremost thought as we come together: it is Himself. We come together to remember the Lord. One of the hymns we have says:

We, Thy beloved, remember Thee, Lord, and Thy dying
(Hymn 311).

PJH The breaking really brings in the accessibility and anticipation and entering into a new sphere, "baptised unto his death" (Rom 6: 3), "identified with him" (Rom 6: 5); so we can enter into the joy of the cup which is "the communion of the blood of the Christ", 1 Cor 10: 16.

RG Yes, I have often been impressed by the sheer simplicity of the Supper. You could hardly get anything simpler: a loaf; a cup. The enemy has tried to corrupt even that, but still, it is divine wisdom that the matter is so basic and so simple and yet it is so full.

BWB So when you come to 1 Corinthians 11 the prominent thought is “in remembrance of me” (v 24, 25), the personal, and Luke is on the same line. I distinctly remember the time when Mr James Taylor brought that out. He stressed the fact it was “in remembrance of me”, not so much what He had done, although surely we will never forget that, but the very point was in the Supper, the remembrance of the Person.

RG I think it is helpful to emphasise that, and right. He is before us. We come, as we have been taught, and see the brethren, and that is a valuable thing, a good thing. We take account of one another in connection with the work of God in each, but as our affections are drawn together, then Christ becomes the centre.

Newport

25th September 2010

Key to Initials

B C Bodman, Bristol; D B Bodman, Birmingham; B W Burton, Taunton; R W Flowerdew, Sunbury; R Gray, Grangemouth; P H Hazell, Bristol; P J Herbert, Newport; S J Herbert, Newport; M J Matthews, Birmingham; T S Oberg, Villa Grove; R D Painter, Yeovil; G Richards, Malvern; G J Richards, Malvern; J A Turner, Malvern; M J Welch, Newport; D J Willetts, Birmingham

FIRST WORKS

Doug M Welch

Daniel 2: 40-43

Daniel 6: 4-10

Joshua 2: 1, 6, 8-14

1 Samuel 16: 11-'sheep'

1 Samuel 17: 14-15

The children of Israel were brought back out of Babylonish captivity and eventually came under the Roman yoke, the kingdom strong as iron. The latter part of that kingdom will be mixed with iron and miry clay. Malachi has been referred to already, where persons are seen as having a desire for God, and, in some sense, with a desire to enter into God's feelings about all that had happened to Israel. Therefore, a remnant was identified as meeting the Lord's approval. At the end of Malachi, those who spoke often to one another were taken account of, and a book was written with their names in it, chap 3: 16. Some 400 years afterwards, the Messiah came to Israel and there were children of Judah morally descendant from that company in Malachi.

The children of Israel had been corrupted, and God judged them, delivering them into captivity, and a remnant eventually came out of captivity. A remnant was in the land but under Roman rule at the advent of Christ. This Roman kingdom would re-emerge and be mixed with iron and miry clay. While the latter form of that kingdom was not ushered in at that time - nor is it official at the present time - the precursors of it are before us in our day.

So, Israel were under the Roman yoke, the fourth kingdom of Nebuchadnezzar's vision and dream, the fourth kingdom of Daniel the prophet's interpretation, and there was to be an extension of that. You think of the remnant in Malachi 3 - how attractive! - and then of the unbelief among those of Judah who had returned and were in the land when the Lord came; and yet there were those in the hill country referred to in the beginning of Luke, a very attractive

company. Some were identified: Simeon, Anna, Mary, Elizabeth. You see in them the spirit of a remnant continued although the public and official side of the profession was in unbelief. It accepted Roman rule, so much so that they said they would not have this Man to rule or reign over them, Luke 19:14. Those in the profession rejected Christ so as not to lose their public place.

Now I would simply like to bring this down to the present day. The extension of the Roman yoke will be upon this poor world very soon. There will be full blown apostasy in the profession, and the great house will take the place of anything that was here of the house of God in vitality, because the church will be gone. I presume all the church buildings will be here, all the activities religiously continuing. They will usurp the only Man that has place with God; it will be apostasy, full blown - not just the principle of it, which proceeds now as persons turn away from the love of the truth. The trinity of evil will come to light (Rev 13), and God will have to come in again and do "his strange work", Isa 28: 21. He will judge the whole thing. He will have literally spued out the profession, the true church having been caught up: the profession of God will still remain for severe judgment.

Now I ask a simple question. This kingdom, a revival of the Roman Empire, made of iron and miry clay - some strength, some weakness, and its ten kings, and so on, is that what will be in evidence when the Lord Jesus comes to establish His kingdom? It will be so, and the kingdom He establishes will not in any way be vulnerable to what man sets up for himself here, which will come under the Lord's hand for judgment. The point I am trying to make, beloved, is that unbelief characterises the profession in general. Not that the profession of God is given up now: you may talk - or I may talk - with persons who will speak to you about God; that is good as far as this goes, but God is not necessarily the test now. The Man is the test. It is the Man at God's right hand whom He has made strong for Himself (and what He has here of heavenly character after Himself) that is the test. God deserves to have obedience from His people because the Man has entered there, and has established

Christianity from there. But this kingdom of iron and miry clay will come to light and unbelief will be publicly exposed because the true church will be gone. They will not have the Lord Jesus to reign over them when He comes at His second advent, any more than the first. I am speaking of the profession largely rejecting the heavenly Man now - professing to know God, and in the profession as carrying the name of Christ. The profession (spoken of as a mystery, Babylon, Rev 17: 5) is joined to the world but separately judged by God by using the Beast and the kingdom of ten horns for that purpose; and comes in for the most severe judgment of all in the book of Revelation.

But what I wanted to get to was Daniel's exercise. He knew things. The assembly is to know things; it comes in for the secret things of God. It knows the One who is "the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end", Rev 21: 6. And the assembly is to know things as He knows things, in its measure as a creature vessel. So we know what is coming, and we should know where we are, and this kind of exercise would revive us as to the Man at God's right hand. That is the present test, and it was the test when He came in the first time. It will be the test when He comes the second time but He will come in power and great glory to establish His kingdom. This kingdom of iron and miry clay will come down. All that man has built up religiously, economically and politically will all come down and there will be one Man left, and He will reign in righteousness. The judgment of the sheep and the goats will occur and there will be those who pass into eternal life in an earthly way, Matt 25: 1-46.

It is very solemn as we deal with God's matters. Daniel knew that; he went through great exercise in order to arrive at something in his own soul. His interpretation of the dream resulted in the conversion of the man God set up as head of the Gentiles during the captivity of the children of Israel. Nebuchadnezzar was converted because of Daniel's witness, and no doubt the witness of those who were companying with him, a remnant in captive conditions, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego. God came in for them and sustained them in separation, but then we read in chapter 6 of those

who did not desire the testimony of Daniel and the things that he was involved with, and they sought through envy, jealousy and deception - the enemy's work - to set Daniel down. We must have grace and wisdom to know how to go through the captivity, because the public matter has been judged morally already by God Himself and we are to feel that. Daniel felt it; he felt the captivity. He learned certain things by books as to what was going to occur, but he sought God's help to know how to go through the captivity. This is the value of the book of Daniel, young persons, because Daniel entered the captivity as a young man, a boy. He committed himself to the Lord in certain matters so that he could keep himself pure, chap 1. I often say that to one and another, "Keep thyself pure", 1 Tim 5: 22. "Keep thyself pure" means we are learning something of what the Lord Jesus went through at Calvary by judging ourselves. Also, do not allow mixed thoughts and motives about things that belong to God, and holy things, where He requires our obedience to be maintained testimonially and for us to go through the captivity in a right way, although without a captive's baggage. Daniel did it - and we can as well.

But as was said, there were those who sought to do him harm. They did not come up with the same scheme they came up with initially and that Nebuchadnezzar approved, which was that if no one fell down to worship the image, they would be cast into the fiery furnace, chap 3: 6. His companions suffered this, but a fourth, one "like a son of God", stood with them, v 25. They survived the captivity - and we need survival skills like they had and count on the Son of God. You and I should survive the captivity. By captivity I am talking about Paul's ministry not known in its vitality in the profession. The mystery is unknown except some doctrinal view only perhaps. We are not to have captive baggage and by that I mean we are not to bring anything in from the area of profession which has set up another kind of man, although professing to know God and a historical Jesus generally. We are not to bring things from that area into our meetings, beloved. It is an exercise with me to use a sharp knife on myself, or I will bring something of human

sentiment, emotion or what is earthly religious into the heavenly environment of God's house here.

So, we have to know how in wisdom to go through the captivity, in faithfulness to God. One thing that can be said about Daniel, among other things, is that he was a faithful man, and he had no support, presumably no outward support. Everything was against him. I would just say this to the young persons that everything is against the testimony of Christ. Everything is against Christ testimonially, just as it was against Him personally. "He would not walk in Judea" (John 7: 1), for example, because of unbelief, because of resistance, because of hatred of that kind of Man, the only Man attractive to heaven. Where was Judea? It was in the profession. There is no difference between Christ testimonially and Christ personally, except He is unique and He is the one blessed, perfect Man at God's right hand - a divine Person in manhood.

What is being brought through in testimony is a vessel, and persons in that vessel like Christ, and nothing else will be brought through. There are persons here who live for Christ, who seek to know the Father's will, whose one motive is to do God's will. Even in mixed conditions, this is possible - just as it was with Daniel in doing God's will in captivity.

They sought to destroy Daniel. No, they did not use the same tactic as with those who went into the furnace. They said, 'let us just give this thirty days', because they knew Daniel was a faithful man, and they intended to trap him in his faithfulness and turn the king against him; so they convinced Darius. Well, Daniel continued with no outward public support to do just as he had done aforetime. Jerusalem lay in ruins then, and the professing church lies in ruins publicly now. That is the condition of the church publicly today, dear friends; it is in ruins. Did that stop Daniel from praying as he always had? With his window open, on his knees three times a day, he "prayed and gave thanks before his God as he did aforetime". "His window being open in his upper chamber" has in mind an elevated area linking with Christ in heaven typically. His body on earth is in the elevated area of the testimony during the Spirit's day. It is a day

to be open towards Jerusalem, as concerned about its heavenly prosperity and the truth of the assembly as the divine centre here. We cannot cling to any ecclesiastical time, structure or set of rules, but we can cling to what Jerusalem is for God, what it is to Christ's heart; and that, beloved, would help us to keep ourselves from sectarian tendencies and know how to go through the captivity. If we see the assembly rightly, we would see it as Christ sees it, and what it is to His own affections. We may pray three times a day, or more, and even though Jerusalem outwardly is in ruins, it is still the divine centre in Christ's view and as in His heart. Christians are scattered here and there, great huge millions of dollars spent on buildings and so on, yet what is suggested in Jerusalem is what it is in the divine mind, and it always will be, even in remnant days and remnant testimony, the day of small things in which we find ourselves currently. It is a wonderful thing to pray, to have the thoughts and feelings of Christ concerning what is His, and in that way remain in communion with Him about what is precious to His heart.

This brings us to consider Rahab, and in thinking of these three personalities, beloved, there are features of Christ coming out in each and available for our exercise as well. Features of Christ testimonially came out in these beloved ones who, in varied circumstances, found their way in communion with heaven. Also, in thinking about these three personalities, I thought that manhood seen in them is characterised by first love and first works. Daniel did just as he always had done - first works based on first love. He did not let that drop, and even though he knew that perhaps it might have cost him his life, it did not matter to him. He was going on as he always had. Well, Rahab is like many others, not raised in a Christian household but retrieved for the special things that God has only for His people - only for His people. Jericho was a great matter and is a great matter for us. It stands athwart our enjoyment of the land. It is going to block you, young brother and young sister, just as it attempts to block me and all interested persons. Jericho is insubjection to God and His Christ in the profession. It is every man doing that which is right in his own eyes in the religious sphere - that

is Jericho, and those walls have to come down with me first. Faith is to be actively tested in this exercise. The children of Israel were in the process of bringing those walls down: it took movement, faith and continual exercise. They go and spy out the land and here is this dear heart, a sinner saved by grace, who wants to help. Why? Because she has been convicted and wants to commit herself to support the movements of the testimony. She is convinced that what the people of God had and were going in for was right and good; she wanted it for herself and for her loved ones. She had heard about it; she lays hold of it. She heard how God had delivered the children of Israel out of Egypt. Egypt is where man's resources are, religiously, economically and politically; very great resources. She had heard how they were brought out of that influence and she wanted to know the same God they knew; she desired the same deliverance they had experienced, and she wanted to be saved for the land. Crossing the Red sea affected her; she was convicted to repentance, and desired to turn toward God and be with those who had been delivered, and to seek help for herself. She would do anything, she would be a traitor, she would overthrow the world, as young persons and older persons must do, overthrow that world system of things, religiously and morally. The sin system is characterised by man in the flesh, giving the lead religiously and every other way. Young persons and older persons, we have to overcome that area of things, reckoning ourselves dead unto sin and alive unto God to acquire any territory for ourselves morally. That is, we are seeing ourselves now as God is seeing us. Well, this is all by report for her. Faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the word of God, and she wanted that kind of deliverance. The efficacy of the death and resurrection of Christ in type is what she wanted. Do you want that? Do you want present salvation from self and the world? The efficacy of the death and resurrection of Christ are toward you. That is what the scripture says, "towards all and upon all those who believe", Rom 3: 22. Not only that but she had heard how they had overcome Sihon and Og. In the power of the Spirit, young brother and sister, older one too, we are to overcome all against us; and this is our charge presently for the journey through the wilderness. We need the blessed Spirit of

God to subdue the flesh in ourselves so that we do not have a religious bent of mind, so we do not do our own will in holy things - plausible as our feelings might seem in a natural or religious sense. We are set for the will of God. Sihon and Og would represent self in some way, considering for self. While Daniel did not have support publicly, although a remnant was with him in the captivity, this dear sister had the support of the fellowship, and she is able for it too. She is able for it, to the extent that she is mentioned in the genealogy in Matthew 1: 5. A book was written about that remnant in Malachi 3, their names were recorded; your name is recorded as a lover and sufferer for Christ during His rejection publicly, including the rejection of that kind of Man in the profession generally. What is being added to that book in connection with divine things? Features of Christ seen in persons with real genuine exercise to go through the captivity for God in faithfulness and to be with His people in their movements testimonially; who seek to understand the depth and come into the gain of the work of Christ at Calvary, and His present position at God's right hand. It brings us into the wilderness where these tests occurred, but then links on with the blessed Spirit and overcoming self in some way whatever it is, self consideration, self gratification, and so on. What first works characterised the remnant seen in connection with Rahab's exercises? She overthrew the world, the Jericho world. She was not insubject in the profession, she was subject to what she heard, and interested in the truth; she was with those who were going on in conflict, and going into the land.

I come to David and I would just say that David had the support of heaven. The reason is that, while David is pre-eminently a type of the Man who has taken us up into His affections and for our consideration and care for our souls, he has concern for His sheep in their movements testimonially. Christ is the Good Shepherd of the sheep, set to bring us to know the Father as He knows Him. You can take that work up too and have the support of heaven in it. If *you* care for the saints and protect the saints in the truth, if you consider for them, it can be said of you similarly, "Are these all the

young men?”. Young men what are you doing? What is your occupation? Young sister? “Behold he is feeding the sheep”. Was he going after Saul in the sin system? I use this carefully; God gave Saul every opportunity to succeed. He could not; he could never overcome the Philistine; he continually reverted to his feeling of self and his position among the saints. But David had the right occupation so that he could overcome the Philistine. It says, "David went and returned from Saul to feed his father's sheep at Bethlehem". The house of bread - which "Bethlehem" means - is involved in that kind of thing; the assembly is where properly He feeds His flock.

I will conclude with a final thought about David. His first works had the support of heaven. We know he, David, failed, and I would just ask a simple question in closing. If you trace it through, what is the one thing that led to David's failure? It is when he left this exercise of feeding and caring for the sheep and became occupied with himself. When he thought about himself, when he got weary with the way, when he would not go out where the kings were to go out, he lost the sense of the royal priesthood; and he fell into sin, terrible sin! His failure is linked with failure to occupy his time before God, when he chose to consider himself and not the saints, what they need, and the care and protection and help they need. That kind of occupation with the saints linked him with heaven, and it would link us with the Man there (the object of this kind of life given up for the good of the sheep of God's pasture), who is the Chief Shepherd, the great Shepherd of the sheep. If you and I do that, pray about it in leaving these meetings, have some exercise to enter into it through prayer, we will have the support of heaven, the support of the fellowship, and be able without support from the public sphere of profession. May God bless the word.

Vancouver

14th August 2010

THE WAYS OF GOD

Robert Gardiner

Zechariah 6: 1, 9-15

I have been thinking, dear brethren, of what we have to learn from the conditions in which we live, and where we are as gathered together to the Lord's Name. It is interesting that we have to do with external conditions that are allowed of God, and we have to see that; but then it is all with a view to the enjoyment of the place where there is one Man that is, and was, and ever shall be God.

This chapter came to my mind because I think it would help us in our understanding of the ways of God. We have a new government in this country, which is representative of God's indirect government through the Gentiles. These four chariots that come out from between two mountains come out from the area where God is, and where the stability that belongs to God remains. These chariots, representing the empires from Nebuchadnezzar to the present day, have come out from that area not only that we might be subject to them, as we are exhorted in the Scriptures, but also with a view to there being, in the ways of God, a way made that is to be for the benefit of the people of God. I believe we are at a juncture when we might see something of that. If you look back over recent history you will see times when there were operations that obviously came from the hand of God through secular governments, which were for the ultimate blessing of the people of God - the conscience clause for military service is one of them that comes to my mind. These four kingdoms and powers have been operating right down to the present day, and we are living in the last of the four. How powerful the Roman power has been. It affects you to think about the Roman empire being in power when the Lord was born and when He died. Remember how the parents of the Lord went up to Bethlehem to be inscribed in the census. That was God's ordering. Then you remember the Lord said to Pilate, "Thou hadst no authority whatever against me if it were not given to thee from above", John 19: 11. The

Roman power continued, and became more powerful religiously, after the apostles were gone until the time when the light dawned again through the Lord's mercy that "the just shall live by faith", Rom 1: 17. It is seeking to rise again, but God's ways in indirect government are for our learning and for our obedience.

Now the enemy has had great sway in past years through the promotion of what is called the affluent society. What damage it has done to persons, even some of our own beloved brethren, but now the powers that be are indicating that there is going to be a time of austerity. You will be wondering why I am speaking about this, but it will come out, I hope, in a minute or two. So there may be a time of austerity. How are we going to react to it, dear brethren? How are our young brethren going to react to it? Are those that are older going to be able to help them through it? I do not necessarily mean materially; I mean in our spirits and in our guidance, as being in the presence of God in relation to it because God in His wisdom orders these things. Why? So that we might value more the area where the One who is "the Branch" is supreme, and I think that is what is shown in this chapter.

Jehovah says, "Take gifts of them of the captivity ... and come thou the same day, and enter into the house of Josiah the son of Zephaniah, whither they are come from Babylon; yea, take silver and gold, and make crowns, and set them upon the head of Joshua the son of Jehozadak, the high priest". And then we get this marvellous verse, "Behold a man whose name is the Branch; and he shall grow up from his own place, and he shall build the temple of Jehovah". Why should He refer to silver and gold, dear brethren? Surely it is because He is the one Man that, in the power of redemption, has brought us into liberty, the liberty of the children of God. He is also the one Man that is able to bear the glory, and signified what the bearing of the glory meant as He was here, a Man amongst men. But it continues, "even he shall build the temple of Jehovah; and he shall bear the glory". I love to think about the Lord saying "on this rock I will build my assembly", Matt 16: 18. He is the One who grew up from His own place. He grew up in Nazareth, drew nothing from

the world, only drawing His power from God Himself. He is the one who “shall build the temple of Jehovah ... and he shall bear the glory”. When one of the disciples drew the Lord’s attention to the temple saying, “see what stones and what buildings!” He said to him, “Seest thou these great buildings? not a stone shall be left upon a stone, which shall not be thrown down”, Mark 13: 1, 2. In John He says, “Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up ... But *he* spoke of the temple of his body, John 2: 19-21. How perfectly the prophets of Old Testament times portrayed what came to pass, and it is continuing while He is on high and the Spirit is here on earth. Then it says after He builds the temple, “and he shall bear the glory, and shall sit and rule upon his throne; and he shall be a priest upon his throne; and the counsel of peace shall be between them both”. Beloved, the area of the assembly is where He bears the glory and where He sits and rules upon His throne. The majestic rule of the Lord Jesus, known one day soon publicly in the millennium, is known now privately in the hearts of those that are subject to Him. There is the Man, the Man Christ Jesus, who is divine and who in His relationships with His God demonstrated that there was peace between them both. When the Lord came in, the heavenly hosts said, “on earth peace”, Luke 2: 14. Peace has never come to the earth except in that one Man. Oh, the purpose and counsel of the heart of God seen in that One, demonstrated in every step of His path, every attribute of His God being seen because there was peace between them both. It should affect our hearts that we have been brought where it can be appreciated. May it be appreciated more by me and by every one of us.

Then it says, “And the crowns”; more crowns, dear brethren. There is a crown laid upon the head of Jesus - how worthy He is! - “granted him a name, that which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus ...”, Phil 2: 10. How He has been crowned with glory and honour! But then there are crowns put upon the heads of others, “And the crowns shall be for Helem, and for Tobijah, and for Jedaiah, and for Hen the son of Zephaniah, for a memorial in the temple of Jehovah”. I often think, dear brethren, how I would like to

have been here when Peter and John went up to the temple, Acts 3: 1. I think they were two men that were wearing crowns. The silver and gold that adorns the head of Jesus adorned the heads of these men. I think we see the silver shining in Peter, and I think we see the gold shining in John. Peter, the one who knew what it was to say, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, Lord", Luke 5: 8. He knew the power of redemption displayed in the silver, but John who was so near the Lord Jesus, that he might have been one that he could record the Lord's prayer in John 17. There was the glory shining. The Lord said, "And the glory which thou has given me I have given them", (v 22); and "I desire that where I am they also may be with me, that they may behold my glory", v 24. What privileges are ours beloved! God's operations outside are all with a view to us enjoying the privacy and exclusiveness of the place where Christ is honoured and this was all laid out at this time by this young man, Zechariah. "And they that are far off shall come and build at the temple of Jehovah: and ye shall know that Jehovah of hosts hath sent me unto you." Are we building at the temple of Jehovah, beloved? It says that they will come from afar and build at the temple of Jehovah. The nations are brought in to share in the building of this wondrous edifice that the Lord speaks of as "my assembly", which is going to be for Christ to have for Himself: the assembly in which the service of God will proceed, and in which the glory of God will shine, and that for all eternity.

Let us help one another in whatever God allows externally, but let us help one another too in the appreciation of the One who is "the Branch", that blessed, glorious Man; and let us see what it is to surround Him with our crowns as He has His crown

How rightly crowned is Jesus
(Hymn 212).

Beloved brethren, what a time we are living in! I do not think there has been a time to compare with this time, and we are privileged to be in it. As being privileged, may we give ourselves to it so that God Himself might receive the glory. For His Name's sake.

Kirkcaldy
18th May 2010

THE MARRIAGE OF THE LAMB

David J Hutson

Ephesians 5: 25-27

Revelation 19: 6-10

I feel confirmed in thinking of these scriptures, beloved, by the hymn that we sang. We sang:

Oh how precious thine assembly
Is, Lord Jesus, in Thy sight
(Hymn 359)

- but the assembly is not yet complete, and the time of the marriage of the Lamb has not come. I thought that was something we could take account of in relation to this occasion we have before us. We are not here on account of the marriage of our bother and sister, but in anticipation of it. One would trust that there would be something coming into the occasion - indeed, for that purpose we are gathered - which will encourage them and set them on their way. I might just say incidentally that I can only recall one similar occasion. I mention that as a matter of interest, that there has been a similar occasion; not exactly the same but the same kind of thing, where we felt that as a local brother - in the present case a beloved local sister - was leaving us to be married elsewhere, we should be together in relation to the matter.

Here we have in these scriptures which I have read that "Christ also loved the assembly". We might say that, at that time, when He delivered Himself up for it, the assembly was not in existence as such. Indeed, it is not as yet complete. But His love for the assembly was manifest in the way in which, as it says, He "has delivered himself up for it", in view of its sanctification and purification; in view of the action of the word, that He might present it to Himself glorious. Now all these things that are found in the ties of nature are by far superseded by the truth in relation to Christ and the assembly. We might say that our brother loves our sister, but it has no comparison to what we read here that "Christ ... loved the

assembly", and has served her, and continued to serve her, I trust - and I say it simply and dependently - even in such an occasion as this. In this occasion, we may prove something of His service in view of what will ultimately be presented to Himself "glorious, having no spot, or wrinkle, or any of such things". Every time of our gathering together would have this in mind, and we would have before us the greatness of His love for the assembly, and the way He has delivered Himself up for it. As I say, this far exceeds anything of nature. We cannot speak of our brother as delivering himself up for his wife, as she will be. There will be that committal as they are joined together "in the Lord", as I trust it will be. Sadly, we have had sorrow as to the break up of marriages among us. I do not dwell upon it, but it raises a question about whether the marriages were originally in Lord. But I am sure that, in this case, we can take account of what is in view, a marriage in the Lord; and there will be the working out of it in view of the furtherance of the testimony where they will live. We will be praying in view of that, following them in our prayers. So, as I say, the matter of Christ and the assembly supersedes anything which we have here in these natural relationships, and yet it would give us some indication of the standard by which we are to view them, and would stimulate us in our committal to the assembly and what is precious to the heart of Christ at the present time.

Well, I read in Revelation because we have there again the consummation of the matter, that "the marriage of the Lamb is come". If the Lord will and we should live, this will be something of a later experience for our beloved brother and sister. But it is interesting that it says that His wife has made herself ready. It is not His bride, but His wife. There again, you only have what is typical and suggestive in relation to this great matter; the matter far exceeds what is suggested in type and figure. And so it speaks of His wife. You might think it would speak of His bride having made herself ready, but the wonder of it is that she is here in faithfulness at the present time, as a wife would be to her husband. The assembly is here in faithfulness, and thus she is ready on her side. There is the

side which we read of in Ephesians where we have the sanctifying and purifying of the assembly as the actions of Christ, but here we have her own action, her own activities: she has made herself ready. She is clothed accordingly now on account of her own moral worth and what she herself has been engaged in, in the waiting time. She is clothed in fine linen, bright and pure. Then it says, "the fine linen is the righteousnesses of the saints". So that we are all to have part in this; we all have part in the making ready of the assembly in view of this glorious day when she will be presented to Christ, "having no spot, or wrinkle, or any of such things".

I just bring these scriptures forward, beloved, as coming to mind in relation to this occasion; but we trust it will be for the blessing and encouragement of our beloved brother and sister; and not only that but there might be something in us all which will lead us to a greater appreciation of what the assembly is to the heart of Christ, that there may be more for Him as a result. In His precious Name.

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