

A WORD IN ITS SEASON

SECOND SERIES

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THE MANNA AND THE LIVING BREAD

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AM We have been engaged with the Lord Jesus as the living One. Yesterday we were occupied with Himself, the living One, who has overcome death and the power of death, and has established an order of Manhood which is on the other side of death. He is able to impart life; He is able to sustain life; He is the Giver of living water, that life should be sustained, the Holy Spirit being viewed in that light.

I had in mind to look at John 6 - the living bread. I now have an impression that we might, first, look at the manna. The manna is not the same presentation of the Lord Jesus as the living bread. The living bread is in view of a new order of life, but the manna is Jesus down here in the lowliness of His life and circumstances here. He entered into the circumstances of men - in all their afflictions, He was afflicted, Isa 63: 9. Sin apart, He knew what men go through, and He entered into those circumstances. In that we see perfection in the Lord Jesus. It says in Matthew, "Himself took our infirmities and bore our diseases", Matt. 8: 17. He actually entered into men's circumstances and through it all, we see a perfect sameness, a perfect evenness. He did not change and He was perfect under the eye of God whatever the circumstances. He knew what it was to go up the mountain and be glorified; He knew what it was to come down and face man in his need and degradation. It was a scene of need in the wilderness; the wilderness is a scene of need, and the Lord Jesus came into the scene of need and in it He displayed everything that God looked for in man. He displayed it all perfectly. And He is food for us, sustaining us through the circumstances of life. We find as we go through the circumstances of life that He has been here before in perfection.

Now in John 6, we have a different view of the Lord Jesus. He has come down out of heaven to give life to the world, not simply to sustain believers in the wilderness scene here, but to bring in another order of life. He came down to bring in that order of life that men should have part in it. He speaks of Himself here in different ways - "the bread of God is he who comes down out of heaven", v 33. Think of what took place when the Lord Jesus came in. He came in with all the power and resource to give life to men, not simply in relation to men's need, but that man should be set up for God. Then the bread of life (v 48) which sustains us, and then, "the living bread which has come down out of

heaven", v 51. And then, as the passage goes on, He speaks about the fact that He Himself would go into death, and that is food for our souls. We feed upon Him as He came with all the will of God in His heart and mind. He came in order to fulfill that will, and that involved that He would have to go into death. So He speaks about His flesh and His blood - that is a suggestion of the death of Jesus and we feed upon Him thus; and finally towards the end of the passage, He refers to Himself now in heaven: "*he* also who eats **me**", v 57. That is the Lord Jesus where He is, the source of life. We are still in the condition of flesh and blood, but there is another source of life in relation to another scene, and as we feed upon the Lord Jesus in that relation, we live on account of Him.

WSC So we approach this from the wilderness standpoint. I am thinking as we begin in our pathway with the Lord, in our relationship with Him, should we not ask, 'What is it?'

AM I think that is a wonderful thing. This food was given that name, the name 'manna', Exod 16: 15. Somebody might ask what manna means. Why do you call it the 'manna'? 'What is it?' - there had been nothing on earth like it before. I love to think of a householder getting up every morning, and saying, 'I am just going out to collect What is it?'. It is something unique. It is the life of Jesus - there it was on the face of the wilderness; somebody said it was seen on every twig and thorn in the wilderness. It was lying there. How the wilderness was transformed, was it not?

WSC It is something like when you hear of someone just opening a Bible and there is a verse right there; and somehow they say, 'What is this?'.

AM Yes, the dew is really a touch of grace, is it not? It is divine grace coming down. The dew comes down from heaven, it is divine grace and there conveyed on that dew, is the manna. You will remember Mr Bellett's words about that:

But stores of heaven were oped each morn,
And angels' food, or heaven's corn,
Conveyed on dew, supplied the place -
Grand, gorgeous miracle of grace! (The Lamb of God)

Every day the dew came down and there was the manna upon it. Well, there was also different food where we read. The first thing was that quails came up. That was the kind of food that they knew. They had

wanted flesh, and God in His grace, said 'Well, if that is what you want, that is what I will give you'. He gave them the quails. Then the next morning, He said, 'I have got something better now'. The quails did not come back again for nearly forty years, I suppose. But God had something different for them; He had a Man before Him.

GMC I was jumping ahead a little bit, but I was wondering what was involved in naming the manna?

AM What is your impression?

GMC I wondered. They did not name it the first time it appeared. It is after experience comes in. The Spirit protects what comes in. As Numbers presents it the manna fell with the dew, chap 11: 9. It is protected but as they go through in their experience, eventually they come to a point that it is the house of Israel that names it. It was not a priest that named it or an individual, but it was the house of Israel that takes ownership of it. That is what I am wondering.

AM Yes, all that is good. It is really as partaking of this food that you can identify it. Anyone can read the gospels but if there is no work of God they will not appreciate what was seen in the Lord. The manna was to form them in the wilderness.

KAK I was noticing that the dew precedes the manna. That was God's provision, was it not? Not to take away from the subject of the manna, but we were looking at the living water, and it was mentioned about John the baptist and his appreciation of what the Lord was, and then the Lord coming into light in the beginning of His public service. I am wondering about the way that God works to use the dew to introduce the manna. What would you say about that?

AM You are thinking that He prepared the way for the coming in of the Lord? I think God always prepares the way for whatever He is going to do; we even find that in our lives. And it is in order that we should learn Him, learn the wonder of His grace that He can prepare the way first. The dew was a suitable medium for the manna to rest on.

KNP Is the extent of the manna something we need to realise and recognise? That was all they could see on the ground. All they could see was the manna; every grain of sand was hidden by the manna.

AM That is right. Is not that wonderful? The trials of life are here, but you look at them in the light of One who has been here before. There is not an experience that a believer can go through that the Lord

has not endured either actually or more intensely. The Lord knew what it was to suffer reproach; He knew what it was to be cast out, to be alone. All the experiences that a believer can go through, even as to natural things, the Lord endured. And through it all there was something there that was perfect: "There was something fine, granular, fine as hoar-frost". You think of that; you might gather a portion of manna from one place, gather another portion elsewhere and they were just the same. There was never a difference - He was the same Jesus whatever the circumstances. He was the same and He still is; He still is the same Jesus.

WSC The grace of the whole scripture is that he that gathered little did not need any more, v 18. They could cook it, they could do everything with it, but they could not store it. It is something fresh each morning.

AM Yes, and that involves commitment. We lead busy lives and there is so much that occupies us, and we are all different. If the Lord comes into your life in a definite way, you begin to wonder, how was it that I ever went out to work or school, without speaking to Him first? Speak to the Lord first thing in the morning, and read the Scriptures, and read them for yourself. But I would say it is an important thing for couples, husband and wives, from the beginning of your married life, to read the Scriptures together. Read them; that will help to preserve you through the wilderness.

JKK Could you say something about what is granular? I was just thinking about what you were saying that there is something that can be taken account of, even at the smallest element. It was defined in that sense, and in relation to what you were just saying, even a small impression of that, is very definite.

AM It is. I am sure that you must have found that at times reading the Scriptures you see something that you have never noticed before. It is bringing out another feature of Him; it is another grain of manna. But being granular also shows that there is this perfect consistency. In our lives there are lumps and gaps - you do not get that when it is fine and granular. We feed upon it and become filled with it.

DMW So the manna is for this wilderness life.

AM Yes, it is. Say some more.

DMW Looking at the reference in Genesis 2, it was before the rain came that the mist went up that moistened the ground. So in the

circumstances of this life it is important, to read the Scriptures for yourself, and to read them householdly before we go out into this life. This life comes to an end, but we need the manna for this life.

AM Yes, that is right. I think getting a touch from the Lord in the morning is a great thing, and as you go through the day, that will come back to you. It is a preservative from sinking into the level of what is in the world around us.

TWL Would it be right to think of the manna as the overcomer's food?

AM It is in Pergamos, in Revelation, Rev 2: 17. Go on.

TWL I was thinking about it in the light of what you were saying, and what our brother just mentioned about it being food for this life. You start your day with Christ so that you can overcome in this life, to be serviceable to God and keep yourself for God. Christ always lived in relation to His God.

AM Yes. The word to the overcomer in Pergamos is, "To him that overcomes, to him will I give of the hidden manna", that is, the manna before God, "and I will give to him a white stone, and on the stone a new name written, which no one knows". Pergamos is significant there, because we know that these seven assemblies can be viewed in the light of the history of the church. Ephesus speaks of how things were set up, but decline came in. Persecutions came in at Smyrna; and then at Pergamos there is failure, there is breakdown, and the church began to align itself with the world. I remember a brother saying what a terrible thing it was when the emperor Constantine adopted Christianity as an official religion, because it brought Christianity to the level of the world; that is Pergamos. The promise to one who seeks to overcome there is the hidden manna. God treasured the life of Jesus and He shares it with the one who is exercised to overcome so that he should be here as a vessel pleasing to God.

WSC Paul says, "leading captive every thought into the obedience of the Christ", 2 Cor 10: 5. I was thinking in relation to what our brother said about the overcomer, this is the food for that. It is what strengthens us - as you get a touch of the Lord, it produces something.

AM Yes, indeed.

There on the hidden bread
Of Christ, once humbled here -
God's treasured store - for ever fed,

His love my soul shall cheer. (Hymn 79)

DaJK I wonder if you can help us as to the “measure” a little more?

AM There is sufficient for everyone. We know as to the Lord Jesus that you can have as much as you want; there is no limit. He that gathered little was not hungry, and he that gathered much did not have excess. We each have our measure. In this room there are some brethren who have greater capacity than others of us. But the great principle in Scripture as to measure is not that we should view it as a limitation, but that we should fill it, and if we fill it, our measure grows.

DaJK I appreciate what you say. I think that is excellent, because our measure might not be much, but when my measure is full of Christ there is nothing left of the world that can be, so my whole thought is still Christ.

AM Exactly, yes.

CJB I am glad our brother brought that up. The woman who cast in the two mites there was something that was really beautiful about that picture. Does that link a little bit with the measure?

AM Her measure was great, was it not? She gave the Lord everything. She had no human resources to provide even her next meal; she had given all to the Lord. Some might have said, 'Well, surely in wisdom you should hold a bit back you have got to eat'. But, no. Of course, the Lord in His faithfulness observed that woman and He would have made sure she was provided for, but she did not know that. No doubt she had faith that she could depend on God, but it shows how great her affections were. Our measure is really in our affections. How much do we love? That is the measure of a person. That woman, like the woman in Luke 7, loved much.

AML Could you say something about, “This is the thing which Jehovah has commanded”. Would it bring out the dignity and the responsibility of what is ordained to us?

AM Well, that is very good because the manna was never to be regarded as common. They were going to have the manna every day, and it should never have been regarded as ordinary. There was a commandment from Jehovah; there was regulation as to it. God had given it and it was to be taken in this particular way. The supply of it did not depend on them, but they were to regard it as a gift from God. When God gives something, what is He giving? He gives what is of Himself. This is a figure of the Lord Jesus. He gave Himself and we must regard

everything that God supplies from Himself and of Himself. Is it not wonderful, that God should do that?

AML Is the thought in John 6 how much what comes out of heaven is mentioned?

AM Yes, that is right. It says in Psalm 78 that the manna came out of heaven, v 24. But in John 6 we have another view of the Lord Jesus coming in, and really John 6 is what I had in mind for this reading; but I think circumstances took us to the manna. In John 6 we have the Lord Jesus coming into this world with all the will of God in His heart and mind; He had the whole purpose of God before Him and He came to give effect to that purpose. You think of the greatness of that. He says, "the bread of God is He who comes down out of heaven and gives life to the world". This source of food is available to the whole world; the world is the world of men in John's gospel, but this food is appropriated by whoever comes to Him and feeds upon Him. Let us feed upon Him more. John did: "we have contemplated his glory", John 1: 14. He was feeding upon the bread of God which came down from heaven: "a glory as of an only-begotten with a father".

GMC Does coming down out of heaven have in mind His deity? It does not say it came from God, that is what I am thinking; it is just "has come down out of heaven".

AM It was a divine movement, was it not? We could not appropriate Him in this way apart from His manhood, but it was a divine movement from heaven and that is John's presentation. It was a divine movement when the Lord Jesus came down; that was His own action. He came down out of heaven to give life to the world. Think of the world as going on its own way and not even appreciating the need for the life that God appreciated. And He came down to give Himself for the life of the world. This is the living One, coming down out of heaven to give life to the world, and He is there for our appropriation.

TWL In relation to John 6, this food is to make us acquire a taste for heaven, is it not?

AM Yes, that is right. The manna feeds us during the scene of need, but this is food to sustain us in view of a scene where there is no need.

TWL Yes, I was thinking that, and it is the food proper to heaven, but it is also the food to enjoy heaven. It is life that enjoys the sphere of God.

That is what this food does.

AM We do not need to wait until we are actually with the Lord to feed upon it. The Lord was saying, “him that comes to me”; that is the present.

DMW In verse 40 of John 6 we have, “For this is the will of my Father, that everyone who sees the Son, and believes on him, should have life eternal”. Life eternal is brought in here, not life as we have in the flesh in our circumstances. So the will of the Father takes us into another sphere, an area of things. Would it be right to say that we get His death later on in the chapter? But “even as *he* is, *we* also are in this world” and we are those who have life eternal, and are not just concerned with our circumstances where we need the manna to meet every one of those circumstances, but have another life and another order of things entirely accessible to us by or through His death.

AM That is right; if we were to go through this chapter as to its teaching, we would find that He has come to terminate everything down here according to this life and to introduce us into another realm, a realm where real life can be enjoyed. That is what eternal life is. We were speaking about eternal life yesterday. It involves a sphere where divinely ordered eternal relationships can be enjoyed together. And this food is in view of entering into that.

DMW He goes on to say, “and I will raise him up at the last day”; so the eternal life is now: “raise him up at the last day” is future.

AM Exactly. We have that day before us. It is not some day in the distant future; it is a day soon to come that we are looking for, when all the Lord's people, *every single one* from Abel onwards, who have had faith, who have been secured through the blood of Jesus, will be raised in a moment.

WSC What would you say about collecting double on the sixth day? Is that related?

AM Go on, what is in your mind about that? Help us.

WSC I was just thinking they collected in view of another day. I supposed in the actual sense where you read in Exodus, it is really looking on to the oblation for the people, but for us, I think it would relate to John 6.

AM Yes, can you just explain what you said about looking on to the

oblation for the people?

WSC The oblation was a handful of fine flour mingled with oil.

AM Yes, so that the oblation was primarily for God, the manna was for the people. What they offered to God was consistent with what God had provided for them. John 6 is looking to another day. God has brought man on to new ground. He has removed the old ground in the death of Christ. We were touching that yesterday. In the death of Jesus, God had come to the end of man in flesh and blood conditions. God does not terminate one line of things without introducing another; He introduces what He had in His heart all along.

DJK Is that seen in this expression, “Work not”? The energy is not into doing but receiving, do you think?

AM That is good, “Work not for the food which perishes”. What are we putting our energies into? Is it something that is going to abide, something that is going to form us after another Man in another world? Say some more.

DJK It is testing for myself, because maybe I feel I have got to do certain things and I need to read the ministry and all these things, and I am not against that, but sometimes just receiving what God has given in Christ, it satisfies the soul.

AM You have touched on something there which I feel very much. We have a lot of teaching. I do not say the truth is on our bookshelves; the truth is in *Jesus*. The doctrine is on our bookshelves, and we need to understand the doctrine. “Have an outline of sound words”, 2 Tim 1: 13. We need to understand it. Older brothers can provide guidance to the younger ones as to where they might start to read, because we need to understand the doctrine, otherwise you will find human thinking being introduced. But along with that, we need the daily food from the Lord Jesus Himself in heaven. And the Holy Spirit would minister to you a portion each day. We need that. You cannot have the doctrine without the daily food, and you cannot do without the doctrine; we need them both. And whether you are speaking of the teaching or the daily food, it is all concerned with the living One who is above.

LPC In verse 38 it speaks about that: “I am come down from heaven, not that I should do *my* will, but the will of him that has sent me”. He is referring to the will of the Father, that He has sent Him down as the Bread of life. So you have a gracious Father who spares not His Son -

He sends forth His Son, not only for our redemption, but to feed us, as the Lord being the Bread of life.

AM He sent One whom He knew and to whom He could commit everything, One who was the source of greatest pleasure to Him. The Lord Jesus came out of heaven; He came down to this earth; He lived a private life down here for thirty years: those thirty years are treasured up in heaven. And then, the Father sends Him out. One who is the worthy object of His own affections, and He sends Him. He sends Him in order that there should be life available to men.

KNP They had to say, "What sort of man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey him?", Matt 8: 27.

AM Yes, you think of the greatness, what they could take account of. Mr Darby says,

We see the Godhead glory
Shine through that human veil,
And, willing hear the story
Of love that's come to heal. (Hymn 188)

There were glimpses there of His greatness.

LJG In John 3 it says, "He who comes out of heaven is above all, and what he has seen and has heard, this he testifies; and no one receives his testimony" (v31, 32), and , "He that has received his testimony has set to his seal that God is true; for he whom God has sent speaks the words of God, for God gives not the Spirit by measure", v 33, 34. I am thinking as to the truth that we see in Jesus, and what He speaks and how He speaks, and then how that would relate to us as the Spirit would help.

AM Yes, He speaks the truth. He *is* the truth. "I am the way, and the truth, and the life", John 14: 6. It would be impossible for Him to do anything other than that. "Every word of God is pure" (Prov 30: 5), and it came from the lips of Jesus. He is speaking the truth, and the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of truth, brings it to us. In John's gospel, the Lord Jesus speaks about the Holy Spirit. In chapter 16 He says, "he shall not speak from himself; but whatsoever he shall hear he shall speak; and he will announce to you what is coming. He shall glorify me, for he shall receive of mine", v 13, 14. Now, we often quote that as if it says, 'he shall take of the things of mine' but the scripture says, "he shall receive of mine". Who does He receive from? Christ above is dispensing

through the Holy Spirit to His people here below, the truth, which will sustain us and keep us and set us free.

DMW So Christ lived on account of the Father's living (John 6: 57), did He not?

AM Yes, that is later in the chapter, carry on.

DMW Just carrying on with what has been brought out. In John 14 it says, "The words which I speak to you I do not speak from myself; but the Father who abides in me, he does the works", v 10. So He lived on account of the Father's living, and as the footnote says, what we come to in John 6 is that we live on account of His living; and then the Spirit seems to be the link in our state with what we apprehend in Himself - "as the truth is in Jesus", Eph 4: 21. We apprehend that the state is formed by the Spirit, without effort or studying books or all of that, which we appreciate, of course; is that the way it works out experimentally?

AM I think that is right. The Holy Spirit's service is formative in the saints to bring about a state and formation after Christ; He lived on account of the Father. The Father was the source of everything for Christ; He was His every resource. When He was here as a blessed Man, He drew nothing from the world. Even as to His infancy, He drew nothing morally from Mary; His resource was the Father. We are to live in the same way, but our resource is Himself.

PMM I was looking in Mark 6: 39, 40. I was wondering if you had a thought as to that? "And they sat down in ranks by hundreds and by fifties", and "And he ordered them to make them all sit down by companies on the green grass". I am thinking that the Lord would bring in peace and rest. Would that link to what we had as to when there is food, and Christ is in our hearts and in our lives, there is rest and peace?

AM Well, He provided the environment, did He not? Elsewhere we read that the place was desert; that is not a very comfortable place, but He provided the environment; He provided green grass in the desert. Where there was a need, He Himself would meet it. To quote Mr Bellett's poem again -

'Twas thine own heart that felt the need,
'Twas thine own hand the bread supplied.
'Twas thine own lips the blessing breathed -
Heart, hand and lips the service weaved.

You think of the Lord Jesus being so fully involved in providing what was

needed for the preservation of life.

PMM That is really good. I was thinking about when we come to the meeting, and we think about something else at work or school; but when we come and we sit down, and Christ is in our hearts and in our lives, other things all pass away, or do not seem as big; but do you think there is something in putting Christ in our hearts and in our lives, so that there is peace and rest?

AM That is right. And it is wholesome really to turn to the Holy Spirit, just simply, before an occasion to ask Him for help to control our minds. There are times when we may miss something because our mind has been far away. But speak to the Holy Spirit and ask Him for help to control our minds that we might receive what Christ would provide.

CJB There is great comfort in what our brother was referring to there, and I am really touched by verse 12 here in John 6, "And when they had been filled"; so they were full, but the fragments were gathered, and the Lord says, "that nothing may be lost". Is there a comfort in that? That the Lord - everything He has, though we may miss something - is still available that we might be filled.

AM Yes, indeed. Whoever took those baskets away would have taken care of their contents, would they not? If asked 'What have you in your basket?' they could say, 'I have got something from the hands of Jesus.'. Have we all got something from the hands of Jesus? I am sure we have, it is clear from the brethren's faces that each one of us knows what it is to receive something from Him.

DMW Would it link on a little with our brother's comment, "that nothing may be lost"; is it a family thought? It is not individual; it is a family thought, I believe, that nothing may be lost. So does it stimulate us to fill out our part and find our place so that nothing is lost, even in remnant days?

AM In the divine family, everyone has a place. There is nothing formal about this these baskets. They just gathered them all up so that nothing should be lost. It is that circle, the family circle, where things are held, and things are enjoyed together.

TWL I was thinking about this scripture, "He that eats my flesh and drinks my blood dwells in me and I in him". That involves the death of Christ, and it is important. But is it the death of Christ not so much in what it meets, but in what it produces?

AM Yes, exactly. It is the death of Christ in a different aspect altogether. It is not need here. The Lord in His death has removed everything that belongs to the scene of need, but it is in view of feeding upon Him. You think of the One who has actually gone into death in answer to the will of God in order to secure for God what will be for His pleasure, and secure man in the fulness of blessing.

TWL Yes, it goes on to where we had reference to earlier, "As the living Father has sent me and I live on account of the Father", and the note to that is very interesting. Christ served the Father because of His love for Him. We will live on account of Christ because we have eaten Him and have come to love Him, not simply because of what He has done in removal, but just because of what He is.

AM Yes, and our appreciation of Him grows. The love of the Lord Jesus for the Father never changed. It was perfect and full in every respect. Our love for the Lord Jesus grows; that is the service of the Holy Spirit, to cause it to grow. How much can we say about our love for Jesus?

TWL And we often speak about what it is to serve God, but we will never serve God in a character other than what was seen in Jesus; consequently, there is the necessity to eat Him.

AM Yes, that is right, and we feed upon Him in His death, the flesh and blood of the Son of Man. Just to make this clear, His flesh refers to His humanity, but where the blood is spoken of separately it will always refer to His death. I just say that so that we all understand.

DMW I am glad you said that because I was thinking of the Supper, and what you just said helps. Do we not get both sides there, the removal and the acquisition, so to speak? Would you say something about that to help us?

AM This actually is not the Supper, but it is a figure. We have the Supper before us tomorrow. We will come in on Lord's day morning, we see the brethren there - wonderful! Most of us would never have met each other if the Lord had not worked in our hearts. Think of what the Lord has done. And then look at the loaf and think of the One who said, "This is my body which is given for you", Luke 22: 19. Think of what the Father took account of when the Lord Jesus was here. We often sing,

Holy vessel of God's pleasure
In His service day by day;

Nothing but His will Thy measure

- that is John 6, the will of God -

All along that suffering way. (Hymn 30)

That holy body was given up in obedience to the will of His God and Father. In the book of Job, Satan appears before Jehovah and says, "all that a man hath will he give for his life" (Job 2: 4), but God had another Man before Him who, in obedience, the obedience of love, would give His own life. We see the cup and we think not only of the basis on which everything has been dealt with - divine righteousness established - but also the way into the presence of God. In the tabernacle system, one could enter that great court and see the blood at the altar. Then there was the laver. If you were a priest, you could go inside and see that the blood had been applied to everything. The blood had also been sprinkled before the veil; the high priest could go in through the veil, and there was the ark and the mercy-seat, and the blood had been sprinkled on the mercy seat and before the mercy seat - the very ground of our approach to God is the blood of Jesus. At the Supper you have the two simple emblems, the loaf and the cup, before you, and when the service of God has proceeded and the meeting comes to an end, you may think, 'That is the basis of it all'.

Wheaton three-day meetings (3rd reading)

26th November 2022

THE LIVING HOPE AND THE TREE OF LIFE

1 Peter 1: 3-9

Genesis 2: 8,9; 3: 22-24

Revelation 22: 1-5, 14, 15

AM We have been considering the living One, our Lord Jesus Christ. We have spoken of Him as having that outstanding glory. We have spoken of Him as the One who imparts the living water, and we have spoken of Him as the One who gives Himself as living Bread. I had the impression that to consider Him as the Tree of life will take us away from the whole scene in which we are, because it is never seen in any other context than in paradise.

But first I think it may be profitable to consider the living hope that we have. He is the Hope of the believer. We have a living hope now. Peter here addresses the saints and immediately his heart goes up to God. These saints whom he was writing to were undergoing trials; they were actually being persecuted. He said, 'These things are necessary for the proving of your faith'. God allows things; it is not that things come upon us that are not necessary; he said they are needed for the proving of our faith. They are part of our education, but he says, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who, according to his great mercy, has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from among the dead, to an incorruptible and undefiled and unfading inheritance, reserved in the heavens for you". There are precious thoughts in these words. There is something that is reserved in the heavens, and it is as if it has your name on it; that inheritance is reserved for *you*.

We are kept guarded now by the power of God. That is the power of the Holy Spirit in the believer guarding him in view of entering into this living hope. Hope in the scriptures is not wishful thinking; that is what men have. Hope for the believer is present assurance as to the future. You do not hope for something that has been fulfilled. There is what is in the future and we have assurance as to it; absolute assurance. And it is a living hope because it is centred in the living One, our Lord Jesus, and soon we are going to see Him. Soon He will come. God has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from among the dead. How blessed this is.

WSC We think that Adam had it really good because he had the garden and he had all the trees and everything, but his hope was in the

earth.

AM Yes. And really he did not know God. He had a very limited understanding of God, but he did not *know* God. Our hope is One we know. He has been to this scene, and we have just expressed in our hymn and prayer, that we are His. He has put in His claim, we know Him, and He is our living hope. I thought this would lead on to where we read of the tree of life.

GMC I was just wondering if the living hope means we can enjoy it now. It is not only a future thing.

AM Yes. That is right. When we enter into our eternal portion it will no longer be hope. So a living hope is for now; it sustains us. What will it be to be with Jesus! That has sustained many, has it not? A sister told me five years ago that every morning she asks the Lord to take her. And He has not done so. But she has that living hope. She is not asking Him to take her exactly because she is tired of the conditions in which she is living; she is asking Him to take her because she has a living hope burning in her soul, and she is really just waiting to be with Him.

RNH So hope deferred is not hope. I am thinking of the power of God, and also of the Spirit who is the earnest of our inheritance. We have the enjoyment and the entering into it now by the Spirit, do we not?

AM Yes, and faith also makes things real, does it not? We have faith and we have the Holy Spirit. "Faith is the substantiating of things hoped for", Heb 11: 1. So what we are hoping for is future, but by faith we can enter into it now. Everyone of us here must have come to the Lord initially; we have been in His presence. We long just to see Him, to gaze upon Him as He is.

RNH Adam knew of God. He knew there was a God, but he did not know God as Father. Peter is speaking as one who has been introduced to the Father as a result of the work done by Christ.

AM This title, "the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ", what a title it is. Think of the Lord Jesus here in manhood, a perfect Man before God, but then think of Him in relationship. He who knew the Father so perfectly. "The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ". The expression is used five times, I think, in the epistles and each time it is in a different context, Rom 15: 6; 2 Cor 1: 3; Col 1: 3; 1 Pet 1: 3. The Lord Jesus referred to "my Father and your Father ... my God and your

God", John 20: 17. So we are able to be brought into something of that relationship and we know Him. We know the One who is the source of all. The hope that we have is centred in Christ, but the Father is the source.

KNP Does the fact that He "has begotten us again" involve the end of one side of things to bring us into another side of things? That is the living hope, where it comes from.

AM Yes, everything down here decays. There is an old hymn that contains the line,

Change and decay in all around I see

but the next line says,

Oh Thou who changest not, abide with me.

DMW The unfading inheritance is made with the tree of life, is it not?

AM Well, I thought there may be a connection. Can you help with that?

DMW It is wonderful really to have Someone who is out of death; and because He is out of death, He is in another place, and that place is held for us in that Person. And the earnest of it is by the Spirit who was sent from heaven, the promise of the Father.

AM That is right; so the tree of life really is Christ in resurrection.

WSC Is it significant that Adam was not forbidden to eat of the tree of life?

AM It is significant. Go on.

WSC I am thinking about what you read in Revelation, that the tree of life goes through. God guarded it then because of man's choice.

AM Yes. And you have just used the word of scripture: He guarded it, Gen 3: 24. He did not remove the way to it. The way to the tree of life has never been removed. God always had in mind that man would have access to the tree of life, but it was guarded, that anything tainted by sin would not have access.

WSC It was guarded by the Cherubim which speak of holiness.

AM Yes, that is right: the holiness of God and His rights. The flame of the flashing sword was there. The flame of God's flashing sword was seen at Sinai. God came down in relation to His people, and they were

terrified. The mountain quaked and smoked; there were thunder and lightnings, Exod 19: 16. The flame of the flashing sword was seen and the people said they could not go near, and God said they were not to break through and come near. That would have been the end of the people. And where the people were in terror, there was one man who went up that mountain and he drew near to the obscurity, chap 20: 21. He was able for it.

DMW Is it right to say then that we are kept guarded?

AM We are. We are kept guarded by the presence of the Holy Spirit here, are we not? We have spoken several times of His service in formation, and uniting us to Christ, but another part of His service is guarding us. So I suppose the little children in John, who had the unction, were guarded, were they not? “Ye know all things”, 1 John 2: 20. And that is an important thing that we need to lay hold of. If the Lord leaves us here, as we go through life, there will be suggestions: What about this? What about that? And a young person may not be able to explain it, but just have a sense that something is not right - *then leave whatever it is alone*. It is a voice speaking and you do not ignore it. And whatever you do, *never* base a judgment on the question, 'What is wrong with it?'. Never base any judgment on that question, because that is what the devil did. The devil said, 'Can you not eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil?'. What is wrong with it? That is not a question for a believer.

WSC You spoke about the mountain. When He was transfigured on the mountain the word was, “hear him”, Matt 17: 5.

AM Yes, that was the Lord, “hear him”. He is to be the source for all direction, all guidance. He has trodden the path before; He has shown us the way.

Well, in Genesis 2 the tree of life comes first, does it not? “And out of the ground Jehovah Elohim made every tree grow that is pleasant to the sight, and good for food”. That is, trees for the sustaining of life on earth. “And the tree of life, in the midst of the garden”; that is the central point; and then the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. The tree of life is there in the midst of the garden. It was the focus for God even before sin came in. What was established before sin came in is what is according to the purpose of God. We had a touch yesterday about the purpose of God. This is something that was in the purpose of God. Sin had not appeared in the garden but

there was the tree of life.

AML We have the thought that Eden was eastward. Would it relate to the incoming of Christ seen in the sunrise?

AM That is a fine outlook to have, is it not? There were those in the camp around the tabernacle, Moses, Aaron and their families, looking eastward, Num 3: 38. Their attitude was the sun rising. He is coming again; that is the living hope that we have, to look to the Man of God's choice.

AML Eden was a great area. The thought of the garden would be a domain that is covered by Christ, would you say?

AM The garden is a place of pleasure, is it not? It is a place of delight. "I am come into my garden, my sister, my spouse; I have gathered my myrrh with my spice", Song of Songs 5: 1. It is a place where the Lord can find rest, and Jehovah was looking in the garden to find rest, in the company of man. It was a place of delights, but man did not fully appreciate it.

PBK You said never to say 'What is wrong with it?'. Can you expound on that, and how we would approach the things in life?

AM Well, I would rather ask, 'Would the Lord do this? What would the Lord think about that?'. I think when any question arises, we do well to take it to the Lord. If I start asking what is wrong with something, I might be rationalising with my own conscience. My conscience might say, 'Warning', and I will say, 'Why?', and reason about it. If you do that, you fail. What do you think?

PBK Well, the devil "transforms himself into an angel of light" (2 Cor 11: 14), does he not, so he can outperform us in any argument? Is it really the Lord that would bring us to something?

AM Yes. Always seek directions from the Lord.

DB I was just going back to what was being said about hope. You said we hope to be taken to be with the Lord. I was wondering what you meant by that, because I remember in one of the preachings that I was at the preacher said that the gospel was a gift from the Father, so why would we have to hope? If we just accept the Lord Jesus as our Saviour, we know we are going to get it because it is a gift from the Father.

AM That is exactly the meaning of hope in the Bible. Hope in

Scripture means that there is something that we are going to get, and it is definite. What I meant by people hoping for things is maybe they hope that they are going to get good results at school, for example. But that is not definite. Now that is the natural kind of man's hope, but in the Scriptures, hope is definiteness. It is an assured thing. To be with Jesus is an assured thing for the Christian. If I am a believer, if I receive the Lord Jesus in my heart, there is *nothing* that is going to stop me being with Him. Does that help at all?

It has been said that probably the tree of life had no relevance to Adam. Adam would have seen no relevance to the tree of life because he was in innocence. There was no death at that time. If it had been possible for Adam to continue in innocence, he would have expected to live forever; and thus he would have seen no relevance to the tree of life to sustain life. But this is God's thought in purpose and God knew that sin would come in. God already had His answer.

TRC I wondered about that. The Lord had no beauty that we should desire Him (Isa 53: 2), but I was thinking of God's delight in the tree of life. The Lord grew up as a tender sapling: what it meant to the heart of God! The trees were planted, they were good for fruit; but I wondered as to the feelings of God. So that the tree of life is something that goes right through to the eternal day, does it not?

AM Oh it does, yes. What you quote from Isaiah 53 is very suggestive because it begins with what God saw. "He shall grow up before him as a tender sapling, and as a root out of dry ground". God took account of that "tender sapling"; He was drawing all from Him. He was like a root out of dry ground. And then the verse continues, "when we see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him". But as Mr Darby says,

To its own rich soil transplanted, (Spiritual Songs p43)

the tree of life is seen today in paradise.

DMW Someone said that "begotten again" is not begotten to innocence.

AM No. God will never set up anything again that has once failed. God set up an order of things and committed it to man's hands in responsibility, and it failed; and then in the fulness of time, God brought in what was really in His mind. It is centred in Christ, the living One, and that can never fail. It is for His glory that He does it. He proves that

anything that is not centred in Christ is doomed to failure. He proves that first, and He proves it so that ultimately the whole universe will accept that in the wisdom of God's ways He has done everything to His own glory.

DMW It is for His own heart it has to be effectuated, by His own movements sovereignly to secure His counsels and His purpose.

AM And His purpose goes through; nothing can change that. On a Lord's day morning, do we not touch that? How often the thought is expressed on a Lord's day morning that God has secured everything according to His mind before time was. Even Job came to it: "thou canst be hindered in no thought of thine", chap 42: 2. The whole of the ages of time are used to prove that God in His supremacy will secure what He had in His heart.

JKK Is that "the proving of your faith"?

AM Yes, go on about the proving of your faith.

JKK Well, it is something for us. God already knows. It is not something that is necessarily for Him, but it is being brought to the fulness of that hope that you are speaking of. When we come to the realisation of it we would say that: "thou canst be hindered in no thought of thine".

AM Exactly, and very often we do not understand it until some time has passed and then you look back. The hymn writer says,

With Him look back on all the way;
To learn the meaning, at His hand,
Of every deed in every day!
Clearer than ever shall we see
The grace that God our Saviour showed,
The love that lead so faithfully
Along the pathless desert way. (Hymn 299)

JKK It is very affecting that proven faith is spoken of as more precious than gold.

AM It is "gold which perishes". Now man regards gold as imperishable. Peter says, 'No, it will perish'. Peter tells us later that all the elements will perish, 2 Pet 3: 10. Everything will be done away, but there is something that will not, the work of God in the believer, and it is more precious than gold which perishes.

DHM I would like you to help me in these scriptures where it says in verse four, "incorruptible and undefiled and unfading". Is that a heavenly thought?

AM It is. It is in contrast with everything on earth. Everything on earth begins to fade, does it not? Things grow old and they begin to fade; and then they become defiled; ultimately, they become corrupt: that is the way things are in nature. It is a process of decline, but with heavenly things not only is our inheritance incorruptible: it cannot be corrupted. Not only is it undefiled, but it will not even fade. It will be maintained in its pristine glory through eternity. It is blessed, do you not think?

DHM It is Christ Himself.

AM Yes, that is right.

WSC Aaron made a calf of gold. He told Israel that this was their god that brought them up out of Egypt. Moses ground it up; but it was gold.

AM Moses would not use that gold in the tabernacle. That which represented an Egyptian idol has no place in the tabernacle. He ground it up and he scattered it on the brook that flowed down from the mountain. That is the Deuteronomy account, and that account is a very precious one because he says, "I took your sin", Deut 9: 21. You think of Moses, who had no part in the creation of the golden calf, saying, "I took your sin". Oh, beloved, there is One who has done that for us all: He has taken our sin. And then it says, "And I cast the dust thereof into the brook that flowed down from the mountain". Divine resources were available to wash away every trace of the sin. What a wonderful thing that is.

GMC Is the root out of dry ground connected with the tree of life?

AM Mr. Darby connected it; yes -

As a tender sucker, rising
From a dry and stony land,
Object of man's proud despising
Grew the Plant of God's right hand.

And then he speaks about when it is transplanted to its own rich soil. We can only take account of the tree life in the place where Christ belongs, in paradise.

GMC I was just wondering because these trees, the four different

kinds that are presented, are not a progressive idea ' "pleasant for the eyes, and good for food, and the tree of life ... and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil". The first two are described, but the third one, which is really eternal comes to light. Then there is the reference afterwards to the one they were not supposed to eat.

AM What it says about the tree of life is that it was in the midst of the garden. Think of Christ as taking that place in divine purpose, the focus of all. Then we see the tree in Revelation. From verse 9 of chapter 21 through into chapter 22 of Revelation is a description of the holy city in the millennium. There will be a thousand years of the blessed reign of Christ when the earth will be fruitful and it will have seasons that it has never had before. The earth will enjoy a wonderful time of blessedness. If you want to read about that you will find it in the prophet Isaiah. But this passage is not referring to the earth; it is about the holy city. This is what will be in heaven during the millennium. We are not going to be on the earth no matter how beautiful that will be during the millennium. Our place is with the Lord in heaven and we will be forever with Him. And there we will enjoy the great resources that are there, the preciousness of all that marks the holy city from verse 9 onwards. There is holiness and there is life. The whole city is flowing with life. "He shewed me a river of water of life, bright as crystal, going out of the throne of God and of the Lamb." And then this wonderful description of the tree of life "In the midst of its street, and of the river, on this side and on that side, the tree of life." It is not possible to represent this scene according to nature; this is spiritual. But we have this wonderful description, and the suggestion is that wherever you are in the holy city, the tree of life is available. And that is what God had in mind, that you would always be able to reach out and take of the fruit of the tree of life. It is different every month.

TRC Can you help us as to the promise to the overcomer in Ephesus?

AM I was wondering about that. Have you got a thought?

TRC No, it is a genuine question. It is quite a striking promise. "I will give to him to eat of the tree of life which is in the paradise of God", Rev 2: 7. Not only does the writer draw attention to the tree of life but the position that it had for eating of it.

AM I think that that promise to the overcomer in Ephesus would have spoken to his conscience. We know the assembly of Ephesus in

Revelation represents the early days of the church. There were the apostles and then there were the church fathers. It was not long before decline came in. You had men who were set up officially as bishops in different places. All that happened soon after the apostles' time. And the Lord appeals to the overcomer in Ephesus; in a sense He would say, 'What about me? You have left your first love. I am still here. The tree of life has not been taken away. You are the one that is turning away. Come and take of the tree of life and get your spirit revived and your affections quickened'. What would you think?

DMW . This may refer to the millennial time but the holy city is in heaven. Would this mark the reign of Christ?

AM Yes, maybe you could help us, because there is a certain mystery about how the assembly will communicate with Israel on earth and the rest of the earth. But there will be an influence, will there not, and an influence of healing? Just think of when the Lord comes to take up His rights. We know already the powers of destruction there are on the earth. The Sun of righteousness will arise with healing in His wings, Mal 4: 2. How much healing will be needed in that day, after Satan has had his way for a short time. Healing is available throughout the millennium.

DMW I think that is very helpful to contemplate the importance of the assembly to Christ. He was the One who was full of grace and truth; and would it be the operations of the same perfection seen in that Blessed Person, the true Vine, coming out through the influence, from the assembly in heaven to the earth?

AM I think that is very instructive and helpful. I appreciate that reference, "full of grace and truth", in relation to the leaves. The leaves of the tree are what you see. What you see in a living tree in the full light of summer are the leaves, "full of grace and truth". Those features have not been lost; they are still there, still active; and they operate in the assembly today. Those who have been formed after Him are marked by grace and truth. It would have an effect upon men today would it not? Just that healing word maybe to somebody who is going through trouble.

NJP The thought of unity is in the tree. In Ezekiel 47 you get many trees, do you not, by the river, but here you get one tree? It is notable, is it not? In this scene that we get here, and in what we had in Genesis 2, the thought of unity was involved, was there not?

AM That is very good. Ezekiel had to go into the river, and when he came back he saw that there were many trees upon the banks. There was something that is produced in the saints which all takes character from Christ, from the one Tree. In that sense He is the uniting power. The Spirit is the uniting power, but He is the uniting focus of all His own. There will certainly be unity in this city.

SWS Chapter 22 brings in the millennial period. I was wondering why there is a need for healing of the nations at that time. Do you have some thoughts on that that would help us?

AM The earth will be under the reign of Christ, but man's heart will be unchanged. That will come to light at the end of the millennium when there will be a rebellion against God, against Christ. And the Lord will come in and summarily deal with it all. I think during the millennium there is the suggestion too of decline. We were speaking of the feast of the tabernacles and the sacrifices reduced daily, Num 29. Every day there was decline. And that is because man in flesh and blood condition will always decline. Do you have any impression yourself?

SWS That is very helpful and interesting too. We were talking earlier today as to the millennium, and righteousness will reign during the time, and you just wonder if things will be dealt with as needed. And as things are dealt with there may be the need for healing as a result.

AM Yes, that could well be. Sin will not exactly be abolished, but it will be judged immediately it appears.

TWL Would the leaves for the healing of the nations facilitate the kings of the earth bringing their glory to God for the heavenly city? It facilitates life. It removes what breakdown has done, heals it so that there is a bringing to the city of glory.

AM Well, that is good, yes. There will be a time when the blessing of the Lord will spread across the world and - I do not think it will be immediate - but it will spread from Israel across the world, and the nations will be affected by that. They will find all that they will need in the supply that comes down from above and they will bring their glory to the city. Israel's view of the coming kingdom was that Israel will be blessed. The divine view is that man will be blessed.

TWL The scope of this, the influence of Christ, will change the heart of Israel. It will change the focus of men on to a glory. Persons in the millennial day will be filled with glory too and the healing that comes

from the leaves will facilitate that. Do you think that is right?

AM I think that is good. The tree of life is unique; it stands in all its dignity and glory, totally different from the other trees that Jehovah created. Their leaves were to be food for the cattle but there is nothing common about the tree of life! It stands there in all its glory in the paradise of God, the place where it belongs. Christ belongs to heaven. When He was here, He was a stranger. As we have our part with Him, we are strangers here; we do not belong here. We are on a journey and soon we will be with Him and we will see and we will have our part with that tree of life. But do we not taste it now? We have had some of those fruits, have we not?

TRC The tree of life is not just set before us to be admired, is it?

AM Certainly not. In Genesis 3 Jehovah says, “now, lest he stretch out his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat”. Well, that was God’s thought for man, although sin rendered it impossible for a time. That is what God desired for man and that is what we have.

TRC And that must surely bring in correspondence to Himself. I just wondered whether the features of Psalm 1 are a man that is taking his resource from the tree of life, do you think?

AM Say some more about Psalm 1.

TRC It is the Lord Jesus in His distinctiveness, but I just wondered as feeding on that character of man that we become like a tree planted by the brooks of water. There is a certain correspondence to Himself and the features that belong to Him, do you think?

AM I think so. I think in the three passages that have been referred to; Psalm 1, Ezekiel 47 and Revelation 22, there is one thought going though. Psalm 1 brings in the thought “whose leaf fadeth not” (v 3); that is unfading like the inheritance. “Whose leaf fadeth not”; how often our leaves fade, do they not?

DMW We often say that we are in the learning time. I was just thinking of what our brother was bringing out. We sometimes might link that to administrative actions, but is not the assembly formed in correspondence with Christ, and we draw our supply and influence from heaven now? So that experimentally we are formed in correspondence with the tree of life. So this scripture seems to take a deeper meaning as to the influence and the supply coming from the tree of life, but through the assembly in the way it was formed here,

even in the day of decline in which we are, so that there is real healing, based upon experience.

AM Yes. That is good. So the correspondence of the saints with Christ is really the crux of the exercise of these meetings. We can speak of the Lord Jesus as the living One but that is to have an effect. We can speak of the living water. What is the effect in me? We can speak of the living bread. What effect has that had in me? Now we have the tree of life. Is there a correspondence? Does somebody see that I am planted by brooks of water and drawing on the supply that is available?

LEO That is helpful. I wondered if you could help me understand what it means to wash our robes? It seems to be the only way to have the right to the tree of life. I would like help in understanding that.

AM We get different references to washing the robes in Revelation. There is a family who have their part, identified with the Lord Jesus, they have washed their robes in the blood of the Lamb. We have done that, every one of us who have come to the Lord. We are washed in the blood of the Lamb and that is once and once only. But when the Lord Jesus died there was the blood and there was the water. And the water is really for cleansing and the word here is, "Blessed are they that wash their robes"; not that had washed them, but wash their robes. "Pure and undefiled religion ... is this: to visit orphans and widows in their affliction, to keep oneself unspotted from the world", James 1: 27. Now as we go through the world we pick up defilement, constantly. There is what is in our own heart that answers to it; you cannot help it; you are picking up defilement. We speak of the water which flowed from the side of Christ. We speak of the application of the water through the word, "the washing of water by the word", Eph 5: 26. So we need to constantly apply the word of God, and keep ourselves unspotted from the world, so that we are not tainted by it, because any taint of the world prevents us from accessing the tree of life. Purity of affections and purity of conduct are most important as we go through this scene so that we are not tainted by it. Someone said how easy it is to loosen our girdles and let our robes drag in the mud. But we must wash our robes, that nothing impure may attach to us.

WSC Can you explain the girdles?

AM Well, it is that our affections are under control, are they not? We must keep our affections under control.

WSC I was thinking that John demonstrates an answer to this whole city. He says, “And I, John” saw this and so on; and he goes to worship the angel, Rev 22: 8. The angel says, “Do homage to God”, v 9. And that should be the result of this whole thing in this chapter: “come, Lord Jesus”, v 20.

AM “Do homage to God”. And as you say it ends, “come Lord Jesus”. Well, that is what we are looking for, is it not? There are those who are in His presence already. Soon He will come for us all, and then we will see Him: “his servants shall serve Him, and they shall see His face.” We love to think of that, to see the face of Jesus.

The traits of that face, Lord,
Once marred through Thy grace,
With joy we shall trace, At thy coming again; (Hymn 19).

Wheaton three-day meetings (4th reading)

26th November 2022

List of Initials:-

C J Brien	Aberdeen ID
Darcy Brien	Aberdeen ID
R Brown	Linlithgow
T R Campbell	Glasgow
G M Chellberg	Wheaton
W S Chellberg	Wheaton
L P Chin	Wheaton
W K Clark	Kirkcaldy
L J Gray	Calgary
R N Hesterman	Beachville ONT
R B Hill	Toronto
Daryl J Klassen	Aberdeen ID
Doug J Klassen	Aberdeen ID
M J Klassen	Aberdeen ID
P B Klassen	Aberdeen ID
J K Knauss	Indianapolis
K A Knauss	Indianapolis
A M Lidbeck	Aberdeen ID
T W Lock	Edinburgh
A Martin	Buckhurst Hill
D H McFarlane	New York
P M MacFarlane	New York
P H Morris	Sunbury
K R Oliver	Denton
L E Oliver	Denton
N J Plant	Toronto
K N Pye	New York
S W Selman	Denton
D M Welch	Denton

THE GRACE OF GOD

Jim T Brown

Hebrews 2: 9 (“so ... everything” (note 'f' 'every one'))

How vast and extensive the grace of God is, “the grace of God which carries with it salvation for all men”, Tit 2: 11. It “has appeared” in Jesus. By that same grace the Lord Jesus tasted “death for everything”; He tasted it for you and me. He, of course, personally was immune from death; He was superior to death. As John says, “we ... report to you the eternal life, which was with the Father” (1 John 1: 2), that is, the Lord Jesus as He was down here as a blessed Man. Death had no claim on Him but He tasted it for us.

Our brother in prayer referred to the voice of the Lord Jesus. One day soon that voice will penetrate the graves of His lovers and bring them out in triumph. But His voice pierced the tomb, even as a living, glorious Man down here, reaching into the domain of death in the case of Lazarus: “Lazarus, come forth. And the dead came forth, bound feet and hands with graveclothes”, John 11: 43, 44. Lazarus came forth, irresistibly released from the grave and the grip of death.

Then there was the youth who was carried out of the city of Nain, Luke 7: 11, 12. “And the Lord ... was moved with compassion ... and coming up he touched the bier, and the bearers stopped”. He arrested the procession of death. “And he said, Youth, I say to thee, Wake up. And the dead sat up and began to speak, v 13-15. What a wonderful manifestation of the power of the Lord Jesus over death. Indeed, He was “marked out Son of God in power, according to the Spirit of holiness, by resurrection of the dead”, Rom 1: 4. But before you and I could experience the joy of forgiveness of sins, the Lord Jesus had to taste death and He tasted it for our dear departed sister.

In the greatness of His person, He was “Emmanuel ... 'God with us””, Matt 1: 23. Butter and honey was the food of Emmanuel (Isa 7: 15); it did not require death to be assimilated. The Lord Jesus tasted the sweetness of the honey in His relationship with His Father. He says, “The lines are fallen unto me in pleasant places” (Ps 16: 6), but He also tasted, as no other could, the bitterness of death. What a contrast that was! Our sister has gone to be with the Lord Jesus because the Lord Jesus has overcome the power of death for her. How remarkable that is! But not only did He taste death; He went *through* death, “that through death he might annul him who has the might of death”, Heb 2:

14. He went in through the portals of death; He entered the domain of death; He went into the depths of death. Job says, "hast thou walked in the recesses of the deep? Have the gates of death been revealed unto thee? and hast thou seen the gates of the shadow of death?", chap 38: 16, 17. The Lord Jesus saw "the gates of the shadow of death". Not only did He see them; He went through them. He went down to the lowest place in order that the power of death might be annulled. But He is risen again and each one of His own awaits that great assembling shout, to be taken to be with Him eternally.

His grace is very extensive, and our sister proved it in her lifetime. She was "saved by grace", Eph 2: 5. How wonderful, if everyone here has had that experience. She was justified too by grace, "being justified freely by his grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus", Rom 3: 24. And then, what a remarkable touch of grace that the Lord Jesus should Himself put our dear sister to sleep. How gracious and how gentle is the tender touch of the Lord Jesus as He takes His loved ones home. I suppose too that grace enters into that great, climactic moment when the dead in Christ rise from their graves: wonderful climax to love's story! And then she is going to be like Him. Our hymn (No 131) referred to the fact that we long to see Him face to face: what a glorious privilege to be with Him and to be like Him!

May our sorrowing family be comforted by the fact that grace has met every need of our sister and given her a place in the presence of Jesus eternally, and He has done it by tasting death for 'every one', for His Name's sake.

Word at the burial of Mrs Isabella Bailey

Edinburgh

9th December 2022