

A WORD IN ITS SEASON

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THE HEM OF HIS GARMENT

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DAB These scriptures came to me one at a time, but I wonder if taking them together would set on something that would allow access to what else might have come upon the hearts and prayers of the brethren as engaged in divine worship flowing from the Supper this morning. My simple thought was to consider together what the Lord has supplied to the Christian circle, and what it produces. I may use the hem of his garment as a figure for the Christian circle.

We were hearing last night about the beauty of the Lord Jesus, and the garment that is referred to in this Psalm was of that character. It was a holy garment, for glory and ornament, Exodus 28. As far as we know, it was never worn on account of the failure of the priesthood; because the priest was not up to it. The Lord Jesus, as I trust we saw at the Supper this morning, is capable of being arrayed in holy garments of glory and ornament, on account of what He is. And something flows down from what He is as the anointed Man, and it says it flows down to the hem of his garments, like the dew on the mountains. Now, around the hem of the garment of the high priest, there were several forms of decoration, and among them there were bells and pomegranates. The purpose of the bells was that, when the priest went in, the people of Israel would know that he was alive, because the bells would ring. We do not need to be in doubt about that now in relation to the Lord Jesus, of course, but I think it is a precious aspect of the service of praise that we can hear the bells ringing: Christ is living in the presence of God. I suppose most of us would know what a pomegranate looks like: it is packed with seeds. It has been spoken of as representing the gatherings of the Lord's people set in relation to one another, but with an identity that links to the glorious garments of our High Priest. And from that piece of teaching comes the thought, which is not mine, that the hem of the Lord's garment represents the Christian circle, in the sense in which that circle is not just a matter of profession but is that area which is closely identified with and under the influence of the movements of Christ. As something flows down from His anointing, it touches and reaches that circle and beautifies it and gives the experience in that circle of eternal life.

The next scripture that I thought of was the one in Revelation, because there the flow is upwards. “The Spirit and the bride say, Come.” I have an impression from the wording that this is something that Jesus tells us. The paragraph begins with the Lord Jesus speaking about Himself, and then He says this about the Spirit and the bride, that they say, “Come”. And there are two thoughts I would just like to mention about that. One is that a bride must have some sense of union. She would not call herself a bride if she was not thinking about union. And the other thing I think we should say is very simple, that this call is out of love. But then we read on in this verse into what might be called a gospel appeal. And there is a reference to living water. I am interested that there are a number of references in Scripture to this living water. The Lord offered it to the woman at the well at Sychar (John 4); and then He offered it more generally at the end of the feast of tabernacles. It says, “as the scripture has said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water”, John 7: 38. We might ask where that is in the Scripture. I believe it refers to Zechariah, where the prophet looks forward to a coming day in which living waters will flow out of Jerusalem, chap 14: 8. But we do not have to survive without water in the meantime because the Lord shows in that section that, although the fountain of Israel is sealed, that same stream of living waters may flow out of the believer. And in this passage in Revelation they flow out of the assembly. So here the assembly is seen bearing testimony. There is a fountain. In a future day it will be in Jerusalem. In the present day it is spoken of as in the believer and in the Christian circle. It is the thought of supply in a dry world. There are living waters flowing out of the assembly, out of the believer.

And that gave me liberty to speak about the woman in Matthew 9. It might seem a bit of a come down from Psalm 133 to pick that second reference to the hem of His garment. The woman came with insoluble need and her aspiration was to find some way of touching Him. I have read in Matthew because all the detail given elsewhere is missing, and we just have the simple thought. What she touched was the hem of His garment, and she was immediately healed. Without wishing to lower the level and spoil our enjoyment, the exercise I carry is whether anyone with this kind of need in their souls would find this kind of immediate blessing if they came among us. And that takes me back to the higher level of the subject, where we might stimulate one another to seek the things of which Psalm 133 speaks. We spoke about divine grace yesterday; it will not only fill us, but it will make the

circle in which we ourselves enjoy that blessing a source of blessing for others.

KAK To begin with the priestly garment, in the case of the Lord Jesus, His garment was one piece; there was no seam, John 19: 23. Do you think that has a bearing on your inquiry?

DAB Yes; it is a distinctive feature, is it not, of the Lord's body coat? It was woven through the whole from the top, and there was that unity about the garment that the Lord Himself wore. And it associates with what we read as to the high priest, that the crown of his installation into that priestly office was the anointing. And this Psalm celebrates the fact that that anointing, or the means of that anointing, the holy oil, came to characterise everything, every aspect of his office; and to spread in its influence into what speaks of what we enjoy with one another.

KAK So that that flows down, and we are "to keep the unity of the Spirit in the uniting bond of peace" (Eph 4: 3); we are to maintain our links together in such a way that we do not make way for a rent garment.

DAB Yes; I thought these passages present what was normal, and also presented that normality as having been supplied by God Himself. It is part of God's design; God has seen the thing as working and operating, and He has envisaged a circle of blessing where the influence of His Anointed secures these united and living relationships among His people. At the same time, it provides a spring of blessing from which even those with insoluble problems can get salvation.

KAK You would not expect, so to speak, to see missing bells or pomegranates.

DAB There never were. They were permanently attached to the high priest's garment. What we see in the high priest is that the garment set a certain standard. They were holy garments for glory and ornament. If the priest was not up to it, they did not strip down the garments; he did not wear them. The divine level had to be maintained. And now we have in Christ one who can wear them with the utmost dignity. And once He has got them on the anointing has a means of flowing down into the Christian circle.

DJW Does the reference to the beard remind us that He sustains it in His life at the present time. So the flow is not stale.

DAB Yes, and it comes down on account of our being with Him, and

that is why I mentioned the bells. You see, if you were an Israelite your link with God depended on the priest. If the priest was to die without a successor, your link with God would break. And there were two occasions when that nearly happened. There was an occasion where the only priest was a new born baby, 1 Sam 4: 19-22. And there was another occasion when Saul slew all the priests, except one (1 Sam 22: 18, 19), and the particular line of the priesthood through which Israel had their relationship with God hung by a thread. There had to be a living priest. Now we have a different Priest. Hebrews says that, "a different priest", chap 7: 11, 15. And He is to stay in that office in the power of indissoluble life, v 16. Now, that is a glorious thing to think about, but certain things flow from that. And this circle here should be the place where that can be demonstrated, not only for our enjoyment, and to stimulate bridal response upward, toward the Head; there is an evangelical aspect in which others can trace that living water to its source and *touch something substantial* from which all the benefits of that circle become theirs.

GMC Could you say something about the fact that it is *dwelling* together? It is not just meeting together.

DAB Well, you have made the point for me, that this is a proper condition. It links with what was being suggested negatively, that the type we have in relation to these things is intended to be an abiding one. You do not dip in and out of this. The hem of the priest's garment was a continuous thing. Another thing that is very important is that it is a poor thing if we have to struggle for unity. Perhaps we spend a lot of time knocking down the hindrances and disagreements, but *dwelling* together in unity suggests the kind of common membership, or commonwealth, in which our rights and interests, and our obligations, all flow out of the place in which God has set us, and we would not have it otherwise.

MJK What do you say about that reference in Ephesians where it says, "using diligence to keep the unity", chap 4: 3?

DAB Well, the unity is there. This reading is an exercise in diligence. I am not creating it, or trying to discuss how we might create it; but it exists. And this living flow is felt. It flows down, past the beard; it comes down through the dignity and glory of His anointing, down through the holy garment that He wears, and there is a sphere in which that can now be found and enjoyed. We are apt to be lazy, we are easily distracted, sadly we prefer something lower. And this becomes something we just

visit. My exercise is that we might be more consistent, because we owe it to one another and we owe it to the Lord.

MJK So it is found in Christ. The standard is already set, and I suppose sometimes we make it too difficult, because it is really there to go and enter in.

DAB Yes; this garment is too good for us to make; this is too great. And it would be utter presumption for someone else to put these garments on and set this process in motion. And you would not put them on a mannequin, to speak simply. There is a living Man who is able to sustain all this for His glory, for the blessing of His people and the salvation of thirsty souls. He is able to do all that. And it seems to me that it is only an impoverished soul that would want to be away from this if they had ever tasted it.

MJK Why would we settle for less?

DAB I do not know.

WSC The footnote 'e' says, 'or "flows down"'. Abundance is there.

DAB Yes; when it came to the maintenance of the lamps in the tabernacle, they had to bring oil; and that links with what was said about keeping. These lights had to be kept lit; and they also had to be kept trimmed. But what flows down from the headship of Christ comes out of His fulness, and I trust we have had some taste of that over the weekend. We do not have to go down to a lower level when we leave, even if circumstances intrude.

JKK Does it help to consider what abides? In relation to Melchisedec, it says "abides a priest continually", Heb 7: 3.

DAB "Abides ... continually", yes; and as I quoted, "according to power of indissoluble life", v 16. I like that very simple expression, which the writer uses twice, "a different priest". And what is different? There is no death, no failure there. There is no disqualification; there is no infirmity. He stands erect in the glory of His office and these things flow from it.

NJP Do you think too that there is order in the hem? It is not a bunch of bells and a bunch of pomegranates. It is "a bell and a pomegranate, a bell ...", Exod 39: 26. There is order there, is there not, and it comes out in what we have had this weekend as to the purpose? There is order there in heavenly things.

DAB I think that is right. “God is not a God of disorder”, 1 Cor 14: 33. He is not a God of confusion. It is not of God. If you trace it to its source, it will not be God. That order is a beautiful thing; we keep talking about the breakdown, and we are very conscious of it. We have had to come from such a wide area to gather even a hundred people together, which reminds us of the breakdown, but that order remains. And what I find very affecting is that the supply from the Head was set up when there was no breakdown, and it continues as if there *had not been* breakdown. Is that what you were thinking? And it can still be touched. Breakdown does not mean that the sense of such a unity cannot now be realised.

NJP I think the power that comes from the hem is in that ordering, is it not? It comes from God.

DAB Yes.

MN Does the hem represent the completion of things? The garment is not just cut; there is a hem. I was wondering if there was any link with what the Lord said in John 17 “that they may be one as we”, v 11. There is a completion there.

DAB I think that is quite right, yes. Of course we are working at this, and we are seeking to arrive at it more fully, but we can see a complete, a whole, divine idea, I think. The psalmist says, “how pleasant it is”. Well, that is true, is it not? We cannot say it is unachievable.

WSC Is the idea of the blessedness underscored by the preciousness of the oil? We have spoken a lot about the hem of the garment, and so on, which is right, but the oil was not to be fabricated by any other. It was precious oil. “He that ... has anointed us, is God”, 2 Cor 1: 21.

DAB Yes, I was just thinking of that very thing; they were not to make any like it. I was just wondering if anyone could remember what the components were. Exodus 30: 25 speaks of “the work of the perfumer”; and myrrh was a substantial part. We began our meeting this morning with a hymn about what He gave supremely, which is never to be taken back. Let me just quote that -

The bread and cup, O Lord, recall

That sacrifice supreme, (Hymn 347).

I think that is something that would affect you. If you take up the spiritual application of this picture, you might see yourself now in the

hem somewhere, and this is flowing down: what is this smell? What is this perfume? It contains a good deal of myrrh, and let us always remember, beloved, that the price paid for our enjoyment was suffering. And it was not our suffering. Someone else suffered. The anointed Man is the Sufferer, and this is the fruit of His sufferings now.

WSC Is that what filled the house in John 12? The odour of the ointment filled the house.

DAB Yes, it did; and it lingered I think, too. Anyone who had been there on that occasion would have still smelled it when they had come back, would they not? You would know if you smelled it again.

KRO Do you have an impression that we would have the Lord's standing for this flow to occur? I was thinking that the flowing down to the hem would by necessity have Him standing.

DAB Yes; I think possibly even further than that: serving. The priest was the servant. He was not just an office bearer: he was a servant. The garments themselves, and the bells which were an integral part of the garment, are associated with his movements. And that is a precious thing too, that what I am speaking about is maintained through the active service of Christ. And Christ risen, too. Eternal life is only accessible to the believer through His resurrection. If He had not died, what we speak of as eternal life would simply be a relationship between Him and His Father; but we come into it through His death, through resurrection. And even in resurrection, He serves us in this exalted way. I like that touch in Revelation because it is almost as if He speaks on behalf of the bride. He says, "I am ... the bright and morning star. And the Spirit and the bride say, Come". It is very choice to see how He enters into that happy unity with the Spirit and the bride.

DJW Why do you think he goes onto a second illustration of it? To "the dew of Hermon"?

DAB I think it conveyed, possibly in a way that the oil does not, the heavenly freshness of it now. He is not now speaking only of the anointing, but he is speaking of what has come out of heaven, "the dew of Hermon". The thought is that there is what relates to the anointing; and then in the second allusion to the dew there is what comes from heaven. "The dew of Hermon" descends upon the mountains of Zion. Maybe the psalmist had this impression that the order of the priestly service, with which he was in measure familiar, spoke of something greater; spoke of something heavenly.

DJW The dew suggests something very sensitive, does it not? It is almost an illustration of what is spiritually normal, is it not? It is not something that you work up to; it is something that is part of the Spirit's service to us.

DAB Yes; if you go out in the evening sometimes you can see the dew beginning to form. But there are occasions when you would go out in the night and you would not find any; but just when it gets light the dew comes. The temperature drops to its lowest and at that point the dew comes. Now, brethren, are we in the days when the dew is coming. Do we feel that? Do we feel refreshed by something from heaven? Or are we weary with the nights, and the burdens of the journey?

GMC The manna coming down from heaven was connected with the dew, Exod 16: 13. I wondered if that would help sustain us in the dwelling aspect of this scripture?

DAB Yes, the manna lay on the dew. It is a very precious thing that we never forget the One on whom we feed. We must never forget Him. We cannot do without our daily food. It is there to remind us that that itself has come from heaven. It did not come out of the ground, it came from heaven. I remember hearing that the reason it came upon the dew was that the manna did not touch the earth. It was not all mixed up with the sand of the desert. The Israelites did not have to sit down, scrape their ephah together, and wonder how much of it was sand. How much of this comes out of my circumstances? How much of this do I have to discard? What is going to grate my teeth? No, it lay on the dew. There is something that comes, which you might find in your circumstances, but which is spiritually separate from them, and therefore it is not contaminated by the irritants of wilderness life.

DJW It has its application in the days of breakdown according to Gideon. He wrung it out, Judg 6: 38.

DAB Yes, that is a very precious picture; I know it has its application to Israel. But Gideon says, "let it, I pray thee, be dry upon the **fleece** only, and upon all the ground let there be dew", Judg 6: 39.. The Lord knows what it was like to be dry. It speaks of His sufferings, I think. It speaks of how He was alone, under the judgment of God. And the consequence of that, the counterpart of that, is that there is dew on all the ground. So living water flowed out of this circle formed by the hem of the garment. The dew is not contained in the Christian circle but flows out as living water: "him that is athirst"; it is to everyone. There is

a source of living water in the Christian circle.

RNH Stephen was in the good of this, was he not? He saw “the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God”, Acts 7: 56.

DAB Yes. He looked up and there was a Man standing, and that flow came down to Him. And what a testimony it was to others, too. They chose not to receive it, but they could have had it. They were not thirsting; but there was the supply if they had had desire for Him.

DJW It is interesting it is connected with life for evermore, is it not? Is there a reference to eternal life? Is that something very precious in the Christian circle? That is the only place where it is experienced.

DAB Yes. There was a blessed relationship between the Father and the Son here in manhood. You can contemplate it as we heard last night; a perfect, living, loving relationship. It was “the eternal life”, (1 John 1: 2) so that it was in that measure exclusive. But, He having died and risen again, it is now something that we can enter into. And eternal life does not just mean living forever, although it will not ever finish, but it is a way of life and relationships too. Everyone knows something about school life, for example, and business life and family life and so on; and there are certain things and certain relationships associated with them. Army life is another example. A husband in the army may never seem to be aware of how alone his wife is when he is away. He has his mates, his troop and that kind of thing, and he is lifted out of his family life, and dropped into his army life; and the two may not be joined together. Then all of a sudden he is on the doorstep and expects to pick up family life where he had left off. I just use that to illustrate that life involves associations and relationships and enjoyment, and love and common interests. Eternal life is something into which the believer is brought in which the circle of those common interests and relationships, includes God. And he becomes someone who shares with the Father and the Son and the Spirit in the blessed circumstances in which They themselves find their enjoyment.

DJW It affected me when I was quite young reading somewhere how much of our Christian experience is collective. So we could encourage the young people to gravitate amongst the saints in that way, because that is where we find our Christian experience.

DAB Yes, I would say that a lot of my communion, meditation and so on has been by myself - commuting to work for example. But I think I would be right to say that I have always had the sense that, whatever I

was thinking, anything the Lord gave me, or the Spirit gave me to think about, was something I shared with other people; even if they were not there. So when I came among the people of God, it seemed to be the place where what I had been enjoying belonged. But that is just how my experiences worked, and that is how the truth is worked out together. It is not something that you have to keep reminding yourself about, but you will have the sense that the things the Lord has given you to enjoy you share with others; and, more blessedly, you share them with Him as well.

DJW So it is quite practical actually: what I am taught at home is confirmed amongst the saints. So, the two go together. I think it is a great thing when you find that what your Father has said to you is confirmed amongst the brethren.

DAB Yes, well that is the hem; it runs right round, and everywhere I find myself there may be a bit of the hem; and it is all part of that one whole. I find my life there because something is flowing down.

Now if we can just move on, my thought is it also flows up. I think it is very precious that, as far as I can see, it is the Lord Jesus that speaks of it. It says, “I Jesus have sent mine angel to testify these things to you in the assemblies. I am the root and offspring of David, the bright and morning star. And the Spirit and the bride say, Come.” So the Lord is hearing this upward response from this circle, into which He has brought all these spiritual blessings. It is eternal life, and it is unity. Then, out of that circle comes this answer of bridal affections.

KDD There is a line of a hymn that says,

O circle of affection all divine (Hymn 207).

It gives you the idea, does it not, that it is not only what we enjoy but it is the upward flow? The smell of the offerings would go up.

DAB Yes.

The foretaste of eternity's bright scene.

That is what I like about this. It can be enjoyed down here. The Lord is taking account of His bride here, with the Holy Spirit; and something so powerful is rising from this circle that it has the power to summon Him.

MJK So what happens to the dew when the sun comes up? It goes up,

does it not? It evaporates.

DAB Yes, it returns to its source; it is a cycle. I have two impressions from this passage, and I do not know which to give more weight. The first is that there is something going back up in response to what has come down, which the Lord savours. The other is that there is something flowing out, as we shall come to. You cannot speak of a bride who does not know union. There have been brides who have been 'stood up' at the altar, as we say, but everyone knows that is a tragedy. The bride knows union and is in the enjoyment of a fresh living experience of it - humanly speaking, it is a new experience of it. And it is out of that union, not only in the Christian circle but between those in the circle and the Head, that this supply is drawn up.

GMC I am wondering if an example of that would be the two on the way to Emmaüs at the end of Luke, because at the end of Jesus making Himself known to them their affections are so stirred in them they go back *up* to Jerusalem, Luke 24: 31, 33.

DAB They do, yes. And they had seen the Lord. What a precious thing that is, and, "as they were saying these things, he himself stood in their midst", v 36. Now that is a wonderful thing. He manifests Himself once this upward movement is under way. You might say He connects with it.

DJW I would like you to say more as to union because I do not think I really understand it.

DAB Well, there are two aspects to union but I am going to say something about one of them. There is a personal side to union and, if you want to know more about that read Mr Stoney, since there is not time to explain it now. "He that is joined to the Lord is one spirit" (1 Cor 6: 17) speaks of union individually; but the relationship that we are speaking of is collective. The relationship between the Lord Jesus and His assembly is unique. In natural things it is not allowed, or wise, for people who have a close natural relationship to be in union with each other. So in natural affairs a union, a marriage, is a convergence: two people who are not one become one. The relationship between Christ and the assembly is not convergent; it is derivative - that is, that she is of Him. She is the fruit and product of His death. She has no other origin. My father used to say, 'She is of Him, and therefore like Him, and therefore with Him, and therefore for Him'. What is united to Him must be of Him. There is no uniting with incompatible materials in a union of

Christ and the assembly. It is something that is derived from Him that is united to Him. The figure of it is Adam and Eve. There has been no other marriage like that, nor could there be.

DJW It is not a physical thing; it is a spiritual bond. It is like feelings, like affections, like thoughts.

DAB Yes, that likeness derives from the assembly's origin in Christ. The more it is true that a thing is *of* something, the more *like* it it will be. In material things, you can establish whether anything you find belongs to something else by establishing how like the thing it was. There is a perfect unity between the Lord Jesus and the bride that derives from her being *of* Him. That is a glorious divine conception. It is not to be understood as merely an analogy with the natural order that is of God. The relationship between a man and his wife is of God; it is set out in Genesis 2, where it says, "Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and cleave to his wife", Gen 2: 24. Now that very statement demonstrates that they would not have been one before. But God was contemplating a union (between Adam and Eve) where they were one before, because the rib was taken out of Adam.

WSC Therefore the marriage of the Lamb is display, is it not?

DAB Yes. The marriage Supper of the Lamb is display. Union has been known already. It must have been. I say that for the simple reason that, if there was not union, we could not celebrate it as we do in the service of praise. So, there is a union between Christ and the assembly already, but it is not in display. And the reason it is not in display is very simple: she does not seek her glory before He has His rights publicly accorded to Him where she is. Now, in the day of display, there is a supper, and that is the celebration of a relationship that already exists. It is the opposite way around to what we do in nature, where we start with the wedding. The wedding is in the day of display but the relationship exists already. And it is an active responsive relationship according to this passage.

LPC "The Spirit and the bride say Come". Would you say that it is the Spirit that leads the bride to say "Come"?

DAB There is a sense in which that is true: we draw on the analogy from the servant and Rebecca in Genesis 24, and it is the Spirit's service to bring the bride to Christ. That is an experimental, practical way of working out of it. There is also an abstract view of this in which there is no distance to be brought through. And maybe that is more the

impression here in Revelation 22. The Spirit is in unison with the bride, but He is not having to correct the bride, or close any distance.

JKK In line with that, I was just wondering if there was something in mind in relation to transportation. The Spirit and the bride say “Come”, but it is in view of a different place.

DAB Yes, it is. In Genesis, she says, “I will go”, (chap 24: 58), and that is the other side of this. The bride does not want to stay here. Her only motive to be here is that it will be the scene in which Christ's rights will be displayed. And she holds the world, and her place in the world for that. She understands clearly that her place is with Him. And she understands clearly too that He is coming to take her. He is not coming back into the circumstances in which she been. If He comes, she goes.

TSO I was wanting to draw attention to what was mentioned because I wondered about the Spirit's place.

DAB Well, the Spirit's place is essential. There is what flows down from the Headship of Christ, and what the Spirit does I think is in perfect accord with that. There are those twin lines of supply: one is from above, the other is out of an indwelling, the Spirit here. He dwells in the assembly. So there is what influences the bride from heaven and there is what influences the bride from within.

SWS It is rather remarkable really, “the Spirit and the bride say, Come”. It is not necessarily the Spirit leading the bride to say “Come”, but “the Spirit **and** the bride say, Come”; one in perfect harmony. It goes on, “And let him that hears say, Come”. Could you just say a little bit more about that exhortation?

DAB It is the other thing I was impressed with in looking at this. All this flow could be considered to find a kind of receptacle in the Christian circle. But in our meetings yesterday we were speaking about the abundance of grace, and the free gift of grace. And the divine supply overflows, and what I find very striking is that the first expression of that is in the individual. It is not exactly presented that the assembly overflows, but the individual overflows. I trust you do; I trust I do. Once I have stood under the fountain, then I would appreciate, that I must speak of it to others; and the aim is not simply their relief, although that would be included, but that the circle might include them.

MN Does the repetition of the word “Come” bring in a sense of unified desire that flows upward?

DAB Yes, and to pick up what we are now saying, at all levels. So there is not just a corporate “Come”, but a personal individual “Come” as well. And that is a wonderful thing too, because you could say that this individual - “him that hears” - is in perfect accord with the assembly itself. We are not leaving this to the spiritual people to say; anyone of us could say it, and anyone of us would say it. Have we heard? Have we understood or have we the heart for this? “Him that hears”; it is anyone.

DJW Is it not significant that nothing is added to the word? Almost as if there is complete harmony with the Spirit. Everything that He will come into and He desires finds its place.

DAB Yes; that links with what we have been saying. She knows what He is coming for. He is coming for her, but He is coming for His kingdom. It is a glorious thing to think about that, in the world in which it is, the assembly longs for her Lover to have His rights.

IMS Does John add his own voice personally at the end, where he says, “Amen; come, Lord Jesus”?

DAB Very good. Yes. It is not an apostolic “Amen”, is it? Maybe that is what we need to arrive at: could we all say “Amen” -

Now in accord with the homage of heaven (Hymn 4).

Now in accord, in harmony, in tune, with what is going on there. What the assembly is caught up in!

I just wanted to have a touch about “him that is athirst”. We live in a thirsty world. We live in a world of unsatisfied desire and people looking for satisfaction for their desire in things that will only make them more thirsty, but the Lord has left a fountain of living water; and it is in the assembly. It is in this circle. And this is where anyone who is thirsty needs to come. I am not speaking ecclesiastically: I mean where these things are proved and felt. And we should be concerned to provide those conditions, but also to be sure that we are providing the access. As a matter of interpretation it is Israel that is “a spring shut up, a fountain sealed”, Song of Songs 4: 12. We should not be like that. The more touched we feel by the blessing of heaven, the more exercised we should be about the thirst that there is with others. And that led me to think of this woman who touched the hem of His garment. I suppose we would say, ‘All we need is a touch from Christ’, which would be true. But what if someone touched *me*? What if they came into *our* meeting? What if they came to a household that knew this? Would they be

healed? Would they? If I could make one negative comment, it is a tragedy if people come to harm in a Christian circle. It is a desperate thing, and my desire is that it should never be. My desire is that people who come with insoluble problems in their souls should find in this circle, where all this privilege and all this blessing and all this flow, and all of this activity is going on, that they will be immediately healed.

GMC It says in Psalm 23 that “my cup runneth over”, v 5. That would be the idea, that you have something to share; is that right?

DAB Exactly, yes. And that is what is happening here. And the Lord had given us something to share by design. He says at the end of the feast of tabernacles, “If any one thirst, let him come to me and drink”, John 7: 37. That is the invitation here. Well, there is no doubt they would have had to come. They had to come to Him. He says, . “Out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water”. Well, waters flowing out of you are not to satisfy *your* thirst, are they? They go out of you because your thirst is satisfied already, and they are for the benefit of others. Now the Lord has placed that fountain in the assembly according to this passage.

JKK So Peter in Acts 3 says, “Look on us”, v 4. That is a testing statement to make but that would be in line with what you are thinking.

DAB Yes. I got a touch from Andrew Martin about that. He imagined that poor man collecting coppers. If he got through the day with a pile of coppers, he would have been quite happy. Peter says, 'I do not deal in coppers. I do not even deal in silver or gold'. He pitches that man above the level of his expectations. If the man had received a gold coin he would have thought that would have been a lucky day, a red letter day for that man. Peter says, 'I am not even going to give you a gold coin'. But he says, “rise up and walk”, v 6. And he held Peter and John. He came became part of the hem. He was holding them. There was this secure, ordered relationship now. It was manifested in testimony; and then when they came eventually with that man, who had never been before, it says, they came to ***their own company***, (chap 4: 23) which was now his company. It was not just Peter and John's company. He becomes part of this.

WSC There were bells there too. He became a worshipper. “Walking, and leaping, and praising God”, chap 3: 8.

DAB Yes. I remember my father pointed out that the story of that miracle was the longest story of a miracle that we have in the Bible. It

covers two whole chapters, and that should make us think. And the result was that the man who had lain every day at the gate of the temple became part of “their own company”, chap 4: 23.

DMB I was thinking of the woman in John 4. Many of the men of the city believed on Him because of the word that she bore witness to, v 39.

DAB Yes, and then in the next stage they say, “It is no longer on account of thy saying”, v 42. They had got the fountain in them now. They had all drunk of that living water,. At first they had not realised that they needed it: only she had come. But they all found a new source of supply.

NJP I was thinking about the living water and this woman; it reminds me of the river in Ezekiel 47 that flowed out. It says of the trees that they were there for food and medicine, v 12.

DAB Yes. Wherever the double river came; if the double river did not come there, there was death. But wherever the double river came, there was healing, v 9. “He brought me out” (v 2): perhaps the Spirit would do that in an inquiry like this. He would lead us to the water. It raises questions with us about what it is for. Is it just for my satisfaction, or is this too good to keep to myself?

MN Would you say something about “thy faith has healed thee”? Do we need faith to maintain this unity that we have been speaking about?

DAB Yes, you do, and you need a lot of practical exercise, but it is remarkable that there is someone who is outside this circle who has faith in its potential. Now that is a remarkable thing: someone might look at you going into your meeting in Ormond Beach, and they might think, ‘I could get some help if I went there’. They have not seen what you are going for; it takes faith. They have not touched it yet, but what a thing that would be, to come into the circle of the brethren and find you were connected to a power of life.

WSC The four lepers said, “We are not doing right; this day is a day of good tidings, and we hold our peace”, 2 Kings 7: 9.

DAB Yes, quite; we used to hear preachings about that quite often. I cannot remember when I last heard that spoken about. The brethren would remember there was a famine and the lepers decided that they might as well go out. They thought were probably going to get killed by the enemy or die in the city and they went out, and they found that God

had driven the enemy away. And they said, "we are not doing right". 'We are not doing right keeping this to ourselves'.

DNM In connection with your last remark, she says, "If I should only touch ...". Do we have to be touchable?

DAB Yes. Well, that is the exercise I have begun to carry, and when I talk about exercise, it is something I was made to do by opportunity, because I do not naturally do exercise; but we pray every week in our prayer meeting for recovery. We do not - or we did not used to - pray every week for the ability to receive. And when you are presented with an opportunity, it is not enough to pray. We expect a person to get help: we will watch and see if the penny drops with this person. To reach out to a soul who has got away from this circle is a skill. It is not gift exactly, because I think anyone could do it if they were exercised about it. It would involve heartache. It would involve exercise. It would involve a readiness to listen. It would involve a readiness patiently to bear with things that you do not really feel are very helpful. But, as you say, are we touchable? Is there a greater thing than to draw someone into this circle?

TSO I have often wondered about it being recorded that she came from behind. I am just fitting it in with what you are saying. We might think that people should come through the front door. I mean this is not necessarily expected nor is it necessarily something that may have been a public great thing to which attention is drawn. She came from behind and yet there was a result from it.

DAB Yes. Well, let us take the woman from John 4 as an example of the point you are making. The Lord takes the ground of being more needing than her, because after all she did have a vessel for this water, and He did not. He lets her start the conversation. He lets her change the subject, He lets her move away from difficult questions, and He lets her raise the question about worship and say something that was not even true. And He won her! She realised that He was a prophet. She knew that she was in touch with the Source of Life and for the first time she found security for her affections. But she did not come in an orthodox way. She was not an orthodox person.

MJK You will allow me a moment to draw on our own experience in relation to that. I think one of the things that has been most affecting is that when someone comes in like that to remember the analogy of a child. We expect in one year the growth of a twenty year old. I do not

think we grow a whole lot faster spiritually than we do naturally and sometimes, even if the thing has started to proceed, we want it to be a lot further along than it is: 'If you have been in fellowship for a year you ought to know this, and you ought to know, and you have got to know this'. But I think if we consider it, in a child it takes over a year even to speak.

DAB Yes, and if this circle is functioning properly there is resource for maintenance. Alan McSeveney spoke at one of our three day meetings about the way that popular evangelists run campaigns where hundreds of people come forward - what a blessing that is. And then the preachers go away. But our brother showed that you cannot go away. You have changed that person's life; when you preach you are taking the responsibility for the after-care, however long. "Whatsoever thou shalt spend more", the good Samaritan said, Luke 10: 35. That man would have been in this circle. That is what the inn represents.

HJG Luke brings in this case in a different setting, with the man and the woman and the child. But here we just get this simple setting of the hem. The Lord made her come forward and confess what she had need of. But here that is not touched; it is simply the hem. She touched the hem and she got it.

DAB Yes, the other gospels present the transformation of that woman. The woman who hid became a servant of Christ. *He* did not say what He had done to her: *she* did. It was a remarkable transformation in that woman, but I just wanted the point about the touch here.

KDD I was just going to say what you said about the touch. It was desire on her part, was it not, that she said, "If I should only touch"? It was not, 'If He touched me I would be fine'. There was desire on her part to have something that she was missing.

DAB Yes. Well, that shows how precious faith is. As was said, you take account of faith and you might think, 'Well, if it was real faith it would be more than this; they would see things clearly'. But the faith that generated that desire is a precious thing. She seems to be the only person in that crowd who had it. I doubt she was the only one that had need, but her faith shines like a light, and it manifested itself in desire.

SWS He does not take her up on the basis of what she may or may not agree with. It says, "she said within herself". He took her up on the basis of the faith that was there. I was thinking of faith, "the substantiating of things hoped for" (Heb 11: 1), and I wondered if that

would be helpful to us in relation to others. What is it that they are hoping for? What is it that God is working in their hearts: can we link ourselves with that? You refer to “a different priest” and it is that priest that introduces “a better hope by which we draw nigh to God”, Heb 7: 19. That is ultimately what we should be looking for, would you say?

DAB Well, the Lord knew what she was saying in herself, and He did not tell it out. There were other occasions when He did. It must have been quite disturbing actually: He knew their thoughts. But He let her express something that manifests a new life and a new power. She did not express what was old. She did not express the doubt and questions, the dissatisfaction with the medical profession and all those things. She expresses what she found. It might be initial, she might have a long way to grow, but this was a manifestation of new life in this woman.

RNH She desired to have something that she did not have. In Acts 3 Peter says, “what I have, this I give to thee”. I was thinking of the reference in Revelation, “Let him that hears say, Come”. Is there a need really to possess something that we can make attractive to others? And it is on the basis of hearing, is it? John's gospel begins that way. They heard and then they carried on and Andrew found his brother, chap 1: 41.

DAB Yes. We were reading this morning at the table about the feeding of the five thousand. There will always be more if it has come through the hands of Christ.

GMC We spoke yesterday of twelve things to which grace is connected and I was wondering if that was any link with these twelve years here, that she had to go through.

DAB Well, I will just add to that that, of course, the girl who died was twelve as well. And that is a sober thing. This woman knew she was ill; life was ebbing away gradually. And there are cases of people who decline like that and it is a sad thing; cases arise and other people do not notice. But then with the girl everything appeared to be fine. I expect she was growing normally, a really nice girl; and then that life is going to end. Her position was actually worse than the woman. The woman might be ill but she is going to outlive that girl. So death strikes in an unexpected way, and the point I am making is that grace is needed for whatever the circumstances. But, underneath that, you are making the point that we cannot take anything for granted. The supply needs to

be maintained. We might get caught out by a lack of availability.

KAK Does grace come into expression here with this woman as she touches the hem? She was touching the priestly Man, which the law would not have permitted.

DAB Yes, quite. Just like they did not touch lepers.

KAK The importance of the hem being accessible strikes me, that we should be accessible in grace to others in the same way.

DAB Yes, quite. It is one of the infirmities of the Mosaic system where they had to have rules and barriers of that kind. They are not needed in a Christian circle provided we maintain something incorruptible in that circle. I am not saying that we want to be diverted by all kinds of ideas that people had, but at the same time there is a sanctity we were speaking about yesterday. Persons might be sanctified but accessibility does not mean to say that things become common. There was something very, very holy here, but in God's grace it had been made available.

SWS You referred to the Christian circle, and then the exercise that is upon your heart as to the effect that it might have on others. I think that is very helpful: is what is prophetic something that should come into all of this? I was thinking of one who was affected and would be led to say "that God is indeed amongst you", 1 Cor 14: 25. I wondered if it has to do with our conversation, and that there might be a prophetic touch in our conversations so that they might have that kind of effect upon persons?

DAB Yes. None of these scriptures mention that aspect, but this is a circle in which God is speaking. There is a living voice there and I know that that attracts people. That is why ministry is published. I know it attracts people and the reason I publish it is that what they are attracted by is theirs already. It belongs to them. It is not just mine - it ought to be mine, I hasten to say, but it is theirs too. And if any get away from it, I want them to come back for it as quickly as possible. Divine speaking, I agree, is an important part of this. There is no shortage of supply, if we hold this rightly. It is there but we might turn our own gatherings into something else. And all this life, all this power, this joy, this freshness, and this salvation would fade away. It has happened in the Christian profession.

Well, we can say, "Amen". John was in tune with heaven and

would be looking down to a time when some of this would not be valued. And he would say, 'I hope there will always be people who will drink this living water'.

Indianapolis

25th November 2013

Key to Initials: D M Bodman, Toronto; D A Burr, London;
G M Chellberg, Wheaton; W S Chellberg, Wheaton;
L P Chin, Wheaton; K D Drever, Calgary; H J Glass, Toronto;
R N Hesterman, Beachville ONT; M J Klassen, Aberdeen, ID;
J K Knauss, Indianapolis; K A Knauss, Indianapolis;
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K R Oliver, New York, N J Plant, Toronto; S W Selman, Aberdeen, ID;
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THE CHURCH AND OUR PATHWAY

Garth McKay

1 Corinthians 1: 9

Revelation 1: 12-16; 2: 1

Exodus 32: 15-29; 33: 7-11

2 Timothy 2: 19-22

I would like to say a few words about the church and our pathway in these days. I am aware that this subject may be a difficult one and in many cases a painful one; nevertheless, I feel the importance of an opportunity like this to say a few things clearly, if I can. It would be wise to say that I speak of principles, and do not intend to make any statement on any specific situation whatsoever. We speak of divine principles.

So I have started in 1 Corinthians 1 and, at the beginning of where I read, it says, "God is faithful". That is a good place to start. Much of the public history of the church deals with our *unfaithfulness*. It is a great comfort, I think, to see that God is faithful, and we start with that. He is also full of grace. History has shown that, but we stick to the scripture: it says that He is "faithful". We begin with God. He is faithful. There were many things in Corinth that Paul had to address that were not according to the standard as they should have been, but he begins with this: "God is faithful". Then he says, "by whom ye have been called into the fellowship of his Son". That is everyone. It is a thing to state clearly: it means everyone who has believed, *all believers*, every single one of them. This is the thing seen from God's side. That means that if you are a believer on the Lord Jesus Christ, *you* have been called into a collective position, the church, and it is God who has done it, and He might renew that call to us today. We have been called! Then he tells us what *it* is called: it is "the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord".

As far as God is concerned there is one church. You say, 'Well, there are many; there are hundreds'. There are not. There is only one and it is called "the fellowship of his Son"; it carries His Name, the name of "Jesus Christ our Lord", and if you do not follow any more that I say, you can maybe take that away to think about: there is one church. There has only ever been one. It was founded when the Spirit came at Pentecost. The Lord Jesus, having gone on high and been glorified, begged the Father and the Spirit came, and He founded that church. At that time "the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord" was formed, and you are called into it; we are all called into it.

You might think about when the many denominations were founded, when they began. You can find lots of actions of men and women, and many of them used of God. You can go back and you can find interesting details about the history of people active in the church, but they did not form the church; God founded it; and *there is only one*. I want to try to say these things as clearly as possible. Paul says, "For other foundation can no man lay besides that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ" (1 Cor 3: 11): one church; one foundation, which is Christ, one Lord; one Spirit, and one body; many members, but one body. These things are great divine truths.

The other thing is that there is a collective position, the church. Someone may suggest, 'Well, these things await another day'. I do not believe it is so: "ye have been called". This great entity, "the fellowship of his Son", exists today. It is empowered by the Holy Spirit of God Himself, and it is one body. You might ask who it consists of? I would go with the definition that we take from 1 Corinthians 12, that it is all those who have the Spirit: "For also in the power of one Spirit we have all been baptised into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether bondmen or free, and have all been given to drink of one Spirit", v 13.

It is not only called "the fellowship of his Son", but it is "the fellowship of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord". It has that name and it does not have any other name. I would not want to put any other name on it. I would not like to try to attach any other kind of distinction to it. It has distinction enough, and that is what I belong to. It is "the fellowship of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord", and that means that His lordship comes into it. In the church, Jesus Christ is Lord. That means He has rights over it. He is the Head of it; it has no other head; He is the one glorious Head of it; and He is the Lord, "our Lord". Paul claims Him; he puts possession into the title, "our Lord". Can we say that as a company here in this room? We could own that, could we not? It is a great thing to own Him, "Jesus Christ our Lord". What that means is that His rights have to be accorded to Him. That is true, is it not? You would like to accord His rights to Him?

I would add that the rights of the Lord have to be paramount, so that in any decisions I take, any moves I make, I put His rights above any other, especially my own. So if I have any thoughts about what might suit me better, what I might find more fulfilling or anything like that, I would say; *first* make the rights of the Lord paramount!

It is "Jesus Christ our Lord", and we have a picture of Him in Revelation 1. This is a picture of the glory of Christ, the great glorious

Head of His church. He is the One who has “eyes as a flame of fire; and his feet like fine brass,” - the note says 'shining', like 'shining brass' - “as burning in a furnace; and his voice as the voice of many waters; and having in his right hand seven stars; and out of his mouth a sharp two-edged sword going forth; and his countenance as the sun shines in its power”. It is a picture of the glory of the Lord. He is the One whose rights in His church have to be paramount.

What I would draw your attention to is that, in the beginning of chapter 2, He is the One “who walks in the midst of the seven golden lamps”. Have you thought about Him in that way? There are many things you can say about the Lord's position now: He is on high; He is seated on His Father's throne, a place of glory, of permanence, of power; He is also coming and coming to you; He is also the One “who walks in the midst of the seven golden lamps”. These seven lamps are the seven assemblies - a picture of the church left here in responsibility. That is the situation. The Lord Jesus has gone above and the church is left down here, responsible to Him. He has not turned His back on it; He has not left it to its own devices, not caring what happens to it. How could that be? It is the “pearl of great value” (Matt 13: 46) for whom He gave Himself. The Lord Jesus is the One “who walks in the midst of the seven golden lamps”, and nothing is hid from His gaze, and His rights need to be attended to.

In these addresses to the seven assemblies, you find that mixed conditions have arisen in the church; I speak now of the church as that which professes His Name. If you look at all the different denominations that there are, you will find the Name of Jesus professed there, and the whole scene is very mixed; and the Lord Jesus is walking in the midst of the lamps. This is the day we live in. The church publicly has failed “our Lord” in its responsibility, and we carry that, and we should feel it. It is not something that we are not part of. We cannot say, 'That applies to them over there; it does not apply to me'. We are part of the breakdown, part of this ruined situation. There is a picture of it in Exodus 32.

We have authority to apply the scripture in Exodus because the writer to the Hebrews quotes it in the New Testament: “therefore let us go forth to him without the camp, bearing his reproach”, Heb 13: 13.

The first thing here is the people say, “this Moses ... we do not know what is become of him!”, Exod 32: 1. Moses had gone up the mountain. It is like Jesus who has gone on high, and they say, “we do not know what is become of him!” I know where He is: He is walking in

the midst of the lamps, but they say, "we do not know what is become of him!" Do you know where the Lord is? Are you interested in where He is? Are you interested in His rights and what is due to Him, or do you think we just have to carry on and do the best we can without Him? He is available. He is living and present and interested and caring, sensitive to the state of things, and I think it is right that we should be sensitive too. They say, "we do not know what is become of him!" and so what they do is they take matters into their own hands. That is what has happened. That is what has happened in the public church. In the scene where the church is left in responsibility, men have taken things into their own hands. I do not make detailed accusations, but you can see it, persons going on with unscriptural things, teachings which might shock you being accepted. We can see it in our own history, the way we have come, things that should never have happened being allowed. That is what has happened. Things have been taken into human hands, and men have devised some kind of human arrangement to make do because they do not know where Christ is.

What happens is that the anger of Moses burns, and it says in verse 26: "And Moses stood in the gate of the camp, and said, He that is for Jehovah, let him come to me". The risk was that everything was going to be lost. When you read the chapter through, and read the history, it feels as if there was a danger that everything would be lost. God threatens judgment on the people, but Moses stands in the gate of the camp and he says, "He that is for Jehovah, let him come to me". There is a rallying call and, in His grace, today, there is still a rallying call from the Lord: "He that is for Jehovah" - or 'he that is for the Lord'. Could that be a call to you and me today? Are you for the Lord? Do these things matter to you? How much do you feel them? How much do you feel the fact that men in Christ's church have taken things into their own hands? Moses says, "He that is for Jehovah, let him come to me", and these people, the sons of Levi, "gathered to him". I do not say much about what they did. We are not called to take up arms in our conflict, but the point about this is that they were decisive; they were convicted. At the call they were convicted of the need to *do* something. I long for that more in my own heart, to be decisive, to be firm about where I stand in regard to these things. I believe the understanding of these things with us (possibly particularly those of us who are a little bit younger) is lacking and I feel that in myself. These sons of Levi were decisive in responding to the call.

Then the Lord does something. Moses, who is a type of the Lord Jesus here, took the tent of meeting, the place where God was to

be met, the place where the presence of God was to be enjoyed, and he pitched it outside the camp. It says, "far from the camp". The things that were going on in the camp were far from what is right, far from it. Moses knew that; the Lord knows it. He pitched the tent far away. So what was the call? The call here was that "every one who sought Jehovah went out to the tent of meeting". What does it mean? It means that we are called to follow the Lord. It means that we are called to leave every institution and arrangement which is of men and go out to Him. That is what it means. It is all of the Lord's grace that there is a provision for a day like we are in. The breakdown is so grievous, but the Lord's grace is active in this, and Moses moves like the Lord Jesus to make a provision. A provision has been made, a way has been made for us to find the true privileges that are to be enjoyed in the fellowship of His Son in 2013.

I know these things are not new to us, but they are so important. The Lord's grace is active, and the tent has been put outside the camp, and the call is to go out. Hebrews says, "therefore let us go forth to him without the camp". That is what we must do, and that is the ground that we take, and we need to understand it because things will come up that are difficult. Even some of the younger ones here will have questions like, 'When somebody says, what church do you belong to, what do I say? Why does it not have a name? Why do I not call it the local Manchester something or other?'. It has been said that, if we could find Peter and John today and we asked them which denomination they belonged to, their answer clearly would be, 'None of them'. That is the position. That is the pathway. As soon as I take some other name, I am making something else, something of man's devising. I do not want to make anything else. You can see in the context of this scripture in Exodus how ridiculous it would have been for the men and women who were faithful, who sought Jehovah and went out of the camp, then to proceed to make another calf. It does not make sense. They are leaving the camp to get away from that. That is what Henry VIII did: he made some comments about the failures of the church of Rome and the pope, and said he was leaving it all, but all he did was he made another church, and put himself at the head of it; and it was little different from the one he left. He did not leave the camp; he made another calf. We need to take care we are not making something else. We cannot leave the camp and then make another human institution. We need to take care that the Lord's rights in this are paramount.

I feel we need to be decisive in the ground that we take, about the place where we go and those we gather with, that you cannot find

the headquarters anywhere and you cannot find a hierarchy in it. You could not find the chairman or the CEO; you could not find it floated on the stock exchange; you could not find it involved with government affairs or with politics. You find that the Head of it is Jesus Christ and that His place is accorded to Him, that He has “the first place in all things”, Col 1: 18. You find that there is no written creed. At one time I thought it would be a great idea to write down all the things we believe. You would not do that if you had a living Head. We need to go through these things. The Lord Jesus has gone on high; He is walking in the midst of the lamps; the Holy Spirit is here; the Spirit is working in all the members. What would we need a written creed for? It is living. The Head of the church is available and leading it, instructing it, feeding it. Also the Spirit is free; the Spirit is given room to work with one and another. No one is put between me and Christ. It is a place that is “outside the camp”. Let us take care about that. Let us take care there is no invention of man in it, otherwise we may fall away.

I am not called on to make pronouncements about any other Christian company. If you said to me, 'How many people are there who have gone outside?'. I do not know. I have no idea. 'What is the boundary around the company?' I have no idea, but what we must do is we must know for ourselves that *we* have taken this step. You *must be sure* of the ground that *you stand on*. No-one is going to require of you that you pronounce any kind of judgment on anyone else, and I do not think the Lord will require that of you either, but He *will* require me to be sure *myself* that I have accorded Him His rights and taken up this blessed offer of grace, that He has provided a way, in the day of ruin, for the divine presence to be known. The reward is the assurance of the divine presence. Again I do not want to be misunderstood: I make no statement about where or how the divine presence may be felt or known by any person in any situation. I would not dare to state such a thing, but I can see that these steps to go outside the camp have their reward, in that the divine presence might be known, and there should be nothing more important to us in these days.

Moses says later on in verse 15 of chapter 33: “If thy presence do not go, bring us not up hence”. Would you go forward any further without the presence of the Lord? How empty it would be! That is what religion can become. We should long for the assurance of the Lord's presence with us, and I think there is a beautiful picture here of Joshua. It says he was a young man. He obviously took the step and he saw Jehovah, and it says that he “departed not from within the tent”. It is interesting that it says Moses went back to the camp. He is a type of the

Lord Jesus and He is working; and the way He will work is not mine to say, where He will go, what He will do. Who would I be to presume what Christ will do? He goes back, but there is a picture of the preciousness of what it is to have the abiding assurance of the divine presence in Joshua who “departed not from within the tent”. That was not available to him in the camp, but having got free of what was not according to the Lord's rights, the reward was the divine presence and there can be no greater blessing.

The verses in 2 Timothy are well known and have great meaning for us. The first thing is “the firm foundation of God stands”. It is a fine scripture: the foundation of God stands. It stands and it stands today as powerfully as it did in years gone by. It is still valid, and the first thing is that God releases me from the temptation (or burden) to sort out the whole of Christendom because Paul says, “The Lord knows those that are his”. What a comforting thing, what a gracious thing, what a powerful and majestic thing: “The Lord knows”! Some of these things we find hard to understand and cannot disentangle. “The Lord knows”. He will take care of these things. At the great assembling shout He will take away the barriers. The confusions will all be gone in a moment. The Lord Himself will do it at His coming. “The Lord knows those that are his”. And then, “Let every one who names the name of the Lord withdraw from iniquity”. Then it says, “If therefore one shall have purified himself from these, in separating himself from them, he shall be a vessel to honour”. The point about this scripture is that these are testimonial steps that we have to take as individuals. We are called on by the Lord to accord Him His rights, and take a step in accordance with those rights. It is important that we are sure, for ourselves, of the ground that we stand on. The scripture goes on to “pursue righteousness, faith, love, peace, with those that call upon the Lord out of a pure heart”. In the richness of the Lord's grace, if I take an individual step which is faithful to Him, the Lord in His grace will provide me with those that I can walk with, that I can go along the pathway with, and I think we know something of the blessing of it. It is another reward for taking a faithful step for Him. The very fact that there is a way now to work out our Christian fellowship is all of His grace. I am convinced of that: if we take the step, the great reward might be that, like Joshua, we have an abiding sense of the divine presence.

I feel the need of these things, and may the Lord bless the word!

Edinburgh

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THE PASSOVER

John N Darby

Leviticus 23: 4-22

The *solemn assemblies*, of which the name is the same as *summons*, are those in which God desires to surround Himself with His people. As we have seen previously, the first thought and the last result that God presents to us is His rest, and that of creation. The rest of creation having been lost, God desires to come to a rest of redemption. Until the coming of Christ, He tried man in every way. Jesus being rejected, the Sabbath, the sign of the covenant, fell with Him, and God renews by the resurrection the sure mercies of David, Acts 13: 34. It is God's rest in the last Adam, in the church and in the creation. We are in Christ, and with Christ in God, who finds His rest in Him and in us.

In this chapter, after the mention of the sabbatical rest, the Spirit of God indicates in figure by the solemn assemblies all that God has done to surround Himself finally with His people in the blessing which accompanies the rest. These feasts end with that of the tabernacles, the millennial blessing of Israel on the earth.

One does not find a new division until the end of verse 8, because the Passover and the unleavened bread are the great basis of the rest. In the two feasts which follow these [the first-fruits and Pentecost], we have the resurrection of Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit as the resurrection life of the church. These two things prefigure the present dispensation. The Passover represents the death of Him who is the foundation of all the other feasts, the unshakeable foundation of [God's] rest, because God has found His absolute rest in the accomplished work of Christ, on which all the subsequent work is established. In virtue of this work, God works and seeks souls, but He does nothing for Himself. The rest in the wilderness was connected with the manna; the conflict with the water of Rephidim; but the rest of God is connected to the Passover, to the death of Christ and to His work.

The great principle presented in the Passover is the blood of Christ offered to God. This blood, put on the door, was seen by Him not Israel. In exercising judgment, God would have smitten the people, because His righteousness makes no distinction whatever, but this righteousness required that the destroying angel should not enter where the sprinkling of the blood had been made; that would have been

unrighteousness. God sees the blood; it is this which gives rest. He desires to find the blood as answer to His righteousness, and this finds in the blood all that can satisfy it. It is a question between God and Christ; and the proof that He is satisfied is that His righteousness has raised Christ to His right hand. From then on, God is entirely *for* His people; He has found the blood, and every charge of righteousness is definitively settled. God may still have to reprove, to chasten, but He is for His people. The dominant thought here is rest, but the people must leave Egypt to enjoy it. They eat the Passover lamb and thus gain strength for the way.

The absence of all leaven prefigures Christ in whom sin is not. Israel had to remove all leaven from their houses, for they were supposed to be in relation with God *without sin*. In 1 Corinthians 5, the church has the same character: "Ye may be a new lump ... unleavened". "Purge out the old leaven". He that has died has done with sin, and the death of Christ is the demonstration of this fact. Up to His death and in death He has been tried by Satan, but He preferred to suffer all, bitter as the cup was, rather than not to obey God for one instant; thus He could commit His spirit into the Father's hands, in being absolutely without leaven. The church is placed from that moment on this footing before God; it is no longer a question for the church of a sacrifice for sin. The *offerings by fire* are a service without any question of sin.

Christ having died for sin puts the church in a position to be able to offer its praises and adoration to God without conscience of sin. All that is God's work, of which the foundation is on the one hand what Christ has accomplished on the cross; and on the other hand, the fact that He has entered into rest as perfectly agreeable to God.

If we do not have this rest before God, we cannot imagine what it is to be without leaven or what leaven represents. One can never have the idea of the absence of sin in looking to oneself. Rest, for the heart which loves holiness, is to know that we are without leaven in Christ. If it is otherwise, holiness becomes a law to the soul, and one is discouraged, or else one lowers the idea of holiness.

The people ate the Passover; their holiness began there. From then on, it was a question of eating the unleavened bread, of entering in the same way as Christ who has glorified God in a walk free of all sin, being tested even unto death.

Verses 9-14: Christ is raised the day after the Sabbath of the Passover. There is a new creation, and we belong to it if we are in Christ. Death has come in; Christ is now the Head of an entirely new order of things without the least connection with the old. When Israel will enjoy it, it must be that they come into it on the footing of grace.

The sheaf of ears which have not been crushed is Christ who has not seen corruption. Nothing can be acceptable to God as long as Christ has not been presented to Him as a risen Man. He is the firstfruits of those who sleep. Until this moment, nothing can be presented to God.

One sees at once the development of service and relationships with God. There is no sacrifice for sin with the sheaf of the wave offering; the thing is accomplished and now all is a sacrifice by fire, of sweet odour and joy. Christ Himself is the burnt-offering to Jehovah; the oblation is Christ; the drink offering is the joy of relationships with God, of a perfect communion with Him in Christ. We have Christ, the new Man, presented to God, and one finds only joy, without any question of death or sin.

Verses 15-21: The new oblation is not Christ but the church. It is no longer the un-crushed ears; the grain is kneaded with leaven and it cannot be offered as a sweet odour. In the church one still finds the principle of sin, whatever the power of the Spirit in her midst. So we find here the sacrifice of a goat for sin. The two loaves with leaven could not have been presented to God without that. There was nothing like that in the figure of the resurrection of Christ.

In verse 22, the gleaning of the harvest represents this dispensation where God sets forth His power in the resurrection of Christ in the midst of the ruin of the first creation. Christ becomes the source of life of a new race, fruit of God's power in the midst of death. To make that good in men on the earth, the power of the Holy Spirit, who identifies them with Christ raised, is needed.