

A
WORD
IN ITS
SEASON

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ASSEMBLY CHARACTERISTICS DEVELOPING

WHAT ONE MAN CAN DO

THE CHIEF INTEREST OF CHRIST

FOLLOWING THE LORD IN "THE WAY"

THE CHILDREN'S UPLOOK

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ASSEMBLY CHARACTERISTICS DEVELOPING

Acts 2: 46, 47; 9: 4, 5, 31; 13: 1, 2

E.C.B. I wondered whether it would be profitable to observe how light as to the assembly develops in this book. While of course things overlap to some extent, it seems to me that in chapter 2 and in chapter 9 the assembly is presented as a sphere of salvation. Verse 31 of chapter 9 shows that the assemblies were brought to rest -- "The assemblies then had peace " -- and I wondered whether that was in a sense the culmination of the presentation of the assembly as a sphere of salvation and of peace, and whether Paul did not find his entrance into the assembly as a sphere of salvation. But in chapter 9 something else begins to be introduced, just hinted at but developed later in Paul's ministry - "Why dost thou persecute me?"

Persecution of the assembly had arisen on the occasion of the martyrdom of Stephen, and Saul was in that, but in chapter 9 Jesus refers to the assembly as "me", thus introducing something that is not the same thought as a sphere of salvation; it is the church which is His body. I alluded to the verses in chapter 13 because there is the sense of the assembly at peace, as we had in chapter 9, but things have now taken on a new direction, that is that they are ministering to the Lord. It seems to me as if the truth and experience in the assembly has moved from being a sphere of salvation for men to being a sphere in which the Lord or God is going to be served. This is developed, of course, a great deal in the epistle to the Ephesians, especially in chapter 3 where the assembly is no longer described as a sphere of salvation but as the entity through which the service of God proceeds unto all generations of the age of ages. I was rather led to this by noticing remarks of Mr Taylor, sen that the pristine church is not the same as Paul's church. It is the same material and, of course, the whole substance was there when the Holy Spirit came and filled the house where they were sitting; but initially the need was for the knowledge of the assembly as a sphere of salvation. Then it develops, especially through what the Lord gave to

Paul, into what is known to be Christ's body and that in which ministry to the Lord proceeds. Do you think that?

J.L. It sounds very interesting and instructive. Do you think the assembly as a sphere of salvation relates to the provisional time, whereas what the assembly is as the vessel in which there is glory to God is eternal and related to the purpose of God?

E.C.B. I think that is right. It seems to me that the things that develop in chapters 4, 5 and 6 relate to the assembly as a sphere of salvation; they do not relate to it directly as a vessel for the service of God. Outward persecution brings to light that the assembly is a sphere of salvation. Issues such as Ananias and Sapphira arise internally and need judgment, which brings out that the assembly is a sphere of salvation, and the administration that was entrusted to Stephen and six others because of the complaints about the widows also relates to the assembly as a sphere of salvation. That is the place into which Saul, as needing salvation, is brought. It is not that we obtain eternal salvation through the assembly - we obtain that through the work of Christ - but we need a sphere in which salvation can be enjoyed. It seems to me that that character of things runs up to chapter 9 at which point other things begin to be developed. That is why I read in chapter 2 that "the Lord added.... those that were to be saved". That is, He had here a place into which His saved ones could be brought.

F.H. Is it a sphere too that is marked by unity of thought? "With one accord", they are all thinking the same thing and doing the same thing.

E.C.B. Yes, that is a characteristic of salvation, that the assembly is a sphere of unity. There is a reference in the Psalms to being hidden "from the strife of tongues", Ps 31: 20. The assembly should be known as a sphere of salvation from that kind of thing, so that it becomes a place where peace and rest are enjoyed. The suggestion that there was no salvation outside the assembly is, of course, a thing that has long been contested because of the special claims that Rome made in relation to it, saying that there was no salvation

outside the church and implying that you could not be saved eternally outside the church. That is not what is meant by the assembly as a sphere of salvation; it is a sphere of protection and enjoyment and of safety at the present time where, according to Acts 2, the Lord puts His saved people. He takes them up and puts them into the assembly, adds to the assembly those who are being saved.

J.M. Would it be particularly so for the young people today? I was thinking of all that they are exposed to and what it is to be in a sphere like this where there is the knowledge of God and His things.

E.C.B. I am sure that is right. I think that chapters 4, 5 and 6, as fitting into the history, bear on that and support it because they show that, if there is external opposition, there is a protected place; if evil arises, there is a place where people will deal with it and there is protection from it; and if there is murmuring, which bears on what Mr Hepburn said as to unity, there is the skill and capacity to deal with that; and the murmuring is not dealt with by argument but by faith and the Holy Spirit and wisdom and power. I think we should seek, not only to encourage our young people that the assembly is a place of safety, but that we should demonstrate to them that it is.

Ques. Is the main thought the breaking of bread?

E.C.B. Well, it says "Every day, being constantly in the temple with one accord and breaking bread in the house"; that helps to suggest to us that what belonged to the assembly was now being separated from the temple, because the breaking of bread was now proceeding in the house. What belongs to the assembly is not the remodelling of something that has preceded it to fit another day; it is entirely new. So the breaking of bread does not proceed in the temple, but in the house and that shows the detachment of the assembly from surrounding things. Then as we are together for the breaking of bread we prove in a very special way, I think the salvation that is there. Because, after all, at the Supper every opposing thing is excluded. If you do not feel safe at the Supper there is doubt about your relations with the Lord. But then, if your relations with the Lord

are right, you will enjoy the place of salvation that you find at the Supper.

J.L. Is this really like rest and protection in the wilderness, as in Numbers 10, the ark taking the initiative, going into the lead, dealing with every opposing element, and "when it rested", as if the Lord would give us to experience conditions of rest in wilderness circumstances.

E.C.B. I think that is right: the assembly is provided for us as that.

We, of course, have not the whole assembly available to us, but all the assembly truth is available and the thing is to hold to that in a broken day. In a broken day you do not give up things because the day is broken, you cling the more tenaciously to the substance. And while we are not able to speak boastfully of anything, let us at least cling to the truth. The Lord has provided and maintained a place of salvation, as you say, in the wilderness where ultimately rest is enjoyed. Do you feel it is right that that is what Saul was brought into. He was not, in Acts 9, brought into the assembly in which there would be glory to God to all generations of the age of ages. He needed a place of salvation and he was brought into it. After all, he was surrounded by people who owed him a grudge, to say the least.

J.L. Yes. Do you think that most of us, having been brought up in households where Christ was loved and where the gospel had a place, found a sphere of salvation, and is baptism in that connection? Then the assembly is greater than that, a link, as you say, with the Lord's supper and what that means.

E.C.B. Yes; of course, when we are baptised we are not conscious of what is happening and, therefore, if we have households and have our children baptised, it behoves us to maintain our household in relation to a sphere of salvation and as a sphere of salvation in itself. The things that are prescribed for the elders and the overseers in Timothy indicate that these are men who would, wherever they were, preserve a sphere of salvation. I think it is one of the initial aspects of the assembly by way of teaching, but not one that we actually arrive at first in experience. So that the attitude of a young soul

converted and desiring to take the Lord's supper - and it would be good if they do desire to take the Lord's supper and they should be encouraged in it - would be responsiveness to Christ and to God.

Their first attitude is ministering Lord and, after that, they find that it is a salvation, but historically the sphere was brought out first. Do you think that is right?

J.L. I think that is very fine.

A.J.W. It would be a place where you would find relief from much that may be on your spirit in the way of pressure?

E.C.B. That is why I thought that the verses at the end of Acts 9, that the "assemblies then throughout the whole of Judaea ... had peace." show that there was a place of salvation now known practically and everyone in the assembly was in it. Saul represented what presented physical insecurity to them, and a good deal of mental insecurity and restlessness no doubt, but the Lord had operated to convert him and then He brings to light that the assembly is a place in which peace is known. I am sure that that is what it should be to us. Do you think that?

A.J.W. Yes, I think it is very encouraging, especially in a day of such outward weakness and breakdown, that these things should be learned by way of experience by us. The assembly is practical experience, is it not?

E.C.B. Yes, if it is not, we are not really touching it. The assembly is not exactly a number of people together in one place, although that is an aspect of it, but the assembly is an inward experience. I thought Acts 9 showed that the Lord had a sphere here in which He could bring into the experience of salvation the man who had brought the reverse of salvation to so many people. He is really converted and given a place where he himself will be safe. The first thing is he will be saved from himself. Do you think that?

J.M. Yes, that is very encouraging. It goes on to say "Being edified and walking in the fear of the Lord". They were in fear of Saul at one time. Would "in the fear of the Lord" bear on this side of salvation?

E.C.B. Yes, very much. We need to maintain it amongst us and to demonstrate that it is a thing that is maintained. The fear of the Lord would be marking us because it is to Him that we are gathering whenever we come and we expect Him to be there; therefore we would be together in His fear. This helps us to maintain ourselves in the spirit of salvation.

J.L. I think the fact that Saul would have the brethren tell him what to do shows how he is saved from himself. He comes under direction.

E.C.B. Yes, it was the best kind of protection too. The Lord had met him on the way and he had had an experience greater than any of us has ever had. But he goes into Damascus and a man greets him and says "brother". This is someone who in the previous chapter had been persecuting men and women; "Saul ravaged the assembly, entering into the houses one after another, and dragging off both men and women delivered them up to prison", Acts 8: 3. He goes into the assembly and a man says to him "brother", which suggests that salvation is actually known there and that Ananias lived as if the assembly was a sphere of salvation. So while he had said to the Lord, 'I know all about this man', when he is actually confronted with him he greets him as if he is not afraid of anything: he is not afraid that Saul is going to take him to prison, he says "brother". That seems to me to suggest normal relationships in the assembly which help to give us the assurance we need that it is a place in which we are safe.

F.H. Then is salvation linked with teaching - edification? We are taught that the assembly does not teach or preach. Say something as to the side of teaching in the assembly.

E.C.B. The assembly is a sphere in which there is teaching. As Mr Darby says often, the assembly does not teach, it is taught, and the assembly is subject to the teaching of Christ and of the Spirit. It does not itself teach, but it is the place in which teaching and preaching proceed. The assembly does not preach but the preaching is enriched by going out against the background of the assembly.

These things we need to understand and to be developed in. For

instance, on a practical point that has arisen in one or two places, the assembly does not publish ministry: a brother may publish it. A brother might say something to someone who was doing it. If there was error the assembly might come into it. The assembly has no part in teaching, it is a taught vessel and an edified vessel.

J.L. Nor does it own property.

E.C.B. No, hence it follows that property can hardly be owned on its behalf, for instance, by "trustees". It shows that the man who loved the nation and built a synagogue was a man that was right. We resolved that problem locally by several brethren together owning the place, but they are not trustees for it, it is their room.

I think it is helpful to us to see how the Lord first established that the assembly was a place of security before He began to develop things in it which were on a very much greater and more intimate level, as if He would secure the base and, having secured the base, He was then free to develop things. So there is no real liberty to speak to people about the church being Christ's body if they say 'Where can I find it; if I go to such and such a place I do not know what is going to happen, everything is all over the place, or something like that. It seems to me that the establishment of salvation in the assembly is needed so as to give people the security from which to proceed into the deeper aspects of the truth.

J.L. So there were eight souls in Noah's time carried through the deluge, and on the renewed earth you find the burnt offering. I was thinking of what you have suggested, the place of safety and salvation.

E.C.B. We may need to be revived in the sense that the assembly is the place of salvation. It helps us to find our place in it and to desire our place in it. You might say the assembly is here anyway and, since I am a believer and have the Spirit, I am of the assembly; and nobody could deny that. But the assembly known as a sphere of salvation demands its practical expression and my participation in it.

It has been gracious of the Lord to provide a safe place for His people in days of very great difficulty.

A.J.W. So it is the administration publicly worked out in the way of protection. As the chapter proceeds you find the brethren (they are disciples) letting Paul down in a basket. How they would endeavour to protect him!

E.C.B. Yes exactly; they do not turn him out, as it were, into the street where he might fall into someone else's hand; they show that there are people characterised by care for one another because they belong to what is characteristically a place of salvation. They are trying to save Saul; "and he escaped their hands" as it says.

A.J.W. I think what you are saying shows us that the kind of administration we proceeded with for a long time was not this. It was really an administration of death.

E.C.B. Yes; administration in the assembly should never produce fear except the fear of the Lord. If administration is producing fear of men it shows that Christ characteristically is displaced in the company.

J.L. Would not the experience of many young persons have been that the fact that they are committed to the Lord and are breaking bread forms a great bulwark against the overtures of the world. The very fact that they are calling on His name, that they belong to the assembly, having the Spirit, forms a great protection against overtures that the devil would bring in.

E.C.B. I am sure that is right practically. We do not always see what kind of effect being at the Supper has on the young people. We can tell more as to the young brothers because they take part, but you do not know what is actually going through the experience of the young sisters; but if you follow them through the week you might discover that more had been effected than you thought. And, as you say, the fact of taking the Supper in itself works out for protection in the external circumstances. Do you not think, that if you have taken the Supper on the basis that you are showing forth His death until He come - that is really that you are standing here for His rights until He takes them up Himself - you are bound to go through the week as if you owned His rights over you and nobody else's rights. "Other lords

than thee have had dominion over us" (Isa 26: 13) is a word that should apply only in the past tense to someone who is taking the Supper.

I thought in regard to chapter 9, having established these things and brought them out explicitly in chapter 2 and then by the examples of what happens in the intervening chapters, the Lord in what He says to Saul indicates that He is ready to disclose greater things about the assembly. The Lord does not say to Peter in chapter 2, This is Me; He does not bring that in immediately the Spirit came and filled the house. It waits until there is full understanding that there is a safe place here in which people can be. It was there in chapter 2, but you are given experience of salvation first. Now the Lord says to Saul, "Why dost thou persecute me?", and this, as we well know, shows him that the Lord's view of the assembly was that it was His body. But that is not brought out until, at least as it seems to me, the experience of salvation is mature. The Lord just suggests it here, but the fulness of it waits until Paul writes the epistles, especially that to the Ephesians.

F.H. Say something as to the comfort of the Holy Spirit coming in at this juncture.

E.C.B. I think that the Spirit is fulfilling the function that Jesus had said He would fulfil - "I will send to you" another Comforter, John 15: 26. I do not think this is just in the sense that the Holy Spirit was consoling, telling people to be at rest and at peace, and that kind of thing; I think the comfort of the Holy Spirit here involved that He was now fully taking up the service that Jesus had foretold in John 14, 15 and 16 - "He will give you another Comforter, that he may be with you for ever, the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it does not see him nor know him" (chap 14: 16), and "He shall guide you into all the truth... and he will announce to you what is coming. He shall glorify me", chap 16: 13, 14. I think it is these things that are bringing increase into the assembly. Do you think that?

F.H. I think that is helpful. It is a confirming sort of expression.

E.C.B. Exactly. Verse 31 has many suggestions in it as to the way in which we might expect increase at the present time - the assemblies were increased, they were "edified and walking in the fear of the Lord, and were increased through the comfort of the Holy Spirit". That suggests that people were now being added on the basis of spiritual substance in themselves. This is not the Lord adding three thousand souls or counting numbers; it seems to me to be increase in quality. It may well be, and probably was, that additional people were brought in, but I think what is in view here is increase in quality. But you do not get increase in quality unless you first arrive at experience of rest in the assembly. Quality does not go alongside of tension.

Rem. In the experience of the assembly is there heavenly help in the sphere of salvation?

E.C.B. I am sure that the assembly should be a place where what is heavenly is experienced now. It is the only heavenly entity on the earth. There had never been a heavenly entity on the earth till the assembly was here, save for the Lord Jesus. Even when He was here He said "The Son of man who is in heaven", John 3: 13. After He had gone back to the Father the Spirit came, but the only vessel that there has been that is heavenly is the assembly. It continues and will continue, and when it comes out in display after the rapture it will still be the vessel of heavenly influence on the earth. We should find in it now opportunity for heavenly experience, outof-the-world experience. These things are often common in our language but they need to be more in our practical experience and objective.

A.J.W. Is that why you referred at the outset to the assembly in her pristine beauty and the assembly in Paul's ministry?

E.C.B. Yes, I was struck with what Mr Taylor sen said as to that, that the pristine assembly is not the same as Paul's assembly. Of course the same material was there, the same Spirit was there, the same truth was available for it. But the queen in Psalm 45 is brought to the king in raiment of embroidery, and I think that is what Paul brings in. So what was all there potentially at the beginning is not brought out

in fulness. You do not actually get the assembly as the sphere of glory to God unto all generations of the age of ages until Paul 's ministry is at its highest level. What do you think?

A.J.W. I wondered if you had in mind how Paul's ministry came out to the gentiles and out of them the assembly was formed.

E.C.B. Yes, that is true. That helps us to see how the assembly is brought to light by the breaking of new ground; it is not something old transformed but something new brought in and established to be here for God. It is here as a sphere of blessing for men and women, but its ultimate purpose is what it is to be for God.

J.L. Saul's first impression of how great the assembly was - the "me", the mystery of the body of Christ - must have been a very great impact on Paul's mind; his first impressions of what the Lord was forming here by the Spirit. those few brethren who were persecuted.

E.C.B. Yes; quite a different impression from what he had been going on with before. I have no doubt that in all the piety of a strict Jew he was persecuting the assembly as something that replaced what he was devoted to. Now he discovers that there is a glorified Man who is devoted to the assembly that he was seeking to ravage. There is a hymn that refers to the church as 'by schisms rent asunder by heresies distressed'. That is not a view of the body of Christ because the body of Christ can never be rent by schisms or by heresy; it subsists whatever the external situation may be. The question of fellowship arises separately, really because people are not faithful to what relates to Christ's body. But 'Me' in the scripture, "Why dost thou persecute me?", transcends every breakdown that has come in. It shows that there is some thing here to which Christ is devoted. Would that more believers were devoted to it too.

J.L. It is Christ, the Head, described in the body. Here it would be in the care and protection that Saul found as coming into it.

E.C.B. I think that, and that if you looked at His body you would expect to find it in the same conditions of rest that He is in Himself.

You cannot, after all, think of the Head at rest and the body all over the place. I think that that is why, in the history of things, the

assembly as a place of salvation is brought out first in order to bring out a realm of security and peace so that greater truths may be developed. It is only in that kind of rest that you can understand what 'Me' as His body is. Certainly it is the only circumstance in which you can experience union.

A.J.W. After Saul was protectively struck down he must have received some impression of salvation from the Lord when He said "Why dost thou persecute me? ".

E.C.B. He would find immediately, especially as he was obedient to what the Lord said, that he was now in a place of safety on earth. Of course we can understand from other scriptures how he arrived at some sense of his safety eternally. I think it is an interesting expression you used, that the Lord is acting protectively in regard to Saul, even in saying to him "Why dost thou persecute me? ". because the effect of that was to divert him from a course which could really only have led to the loss of his own life.

A.J.W. Did Mr Raven say that the Lord had a tender plant in that soil?

E.C.B. Yes, I think He had, but He had a suitable place in which to put it, a place where it would not be exposed to every stormy wind that blew. He had a place where it could be nourished and at rest, where there were men that watered the plants.

J.L. Would that be an important matter in the preaching? You do not divorce it from the truth of the assembly.

E.C.B. Yes, Mr Stoney speaks about that with the very greatest severity; the divorce of the truth of the assembly from the gospel he regards as one of Satan 's greatest triumphs. It is making things that are for the benefit of man of the first priority rather than what is for the heart of Christ. The truth as to the assembly is ministering to the heart of Christ. Salvation and forgiveness of sins are ministering to the need of man. It is often a test for us; and it is a test in Christendom, you can see it, as to what is the order of priority.

J.L. So that Acts 13 brings that home; "they were ministering to the Lord and fasting".

E.C.B. Yes, we are not told what particular kind of meeting was going on - it was clearly a meeting, because the assembly was there and things were proceeding - but it says "they were ministering to the Lord". (I was not so concerned about the fasting although much could be said about that.) Although they were praising God in chapter 2 - "praising God, and having favour with all the people" - it seems to me that in chapter 13 the assembly has become a place in which the Lord has become the object of those who are gathered.

Now that is what characterises the assembly in Ephesians 3; and it is something that was not really established under Peter but under Paul.

J.L. Say more as to the link with Ephesians 3.

E.C.B. "To him be glory in the assembly in Christ Jesus unto all generations of the age of ages" is ministering to the Lord. I am not sure whether "the Lord" here in Acts 13 just refers to Christ or is intended as a name of God. But in any case it shows that divine Persons have become the objective and that therefore persons in the assembly have passed from apprehending a sphere of salvation which would be for their blessing, to realising that the assembly has another purpose, that is to minister to the Lord. This involves the satisfaction of God I think.

Rem. In Matthew 11 the Lord speaks of taking My yoke upon you and finding rest. It seems that, as we get in contact with Christ, we continue to find rest there, where we found it first of all; and it is a sphere where the Father is known.

E.C.B. I think that is right. In Matthew the Lord speaks of finding rest to your souls in chapter 11 some time before He speaks of building "my assembly" in chapter 16, as if He sees from His side the need to bring in conditions of peace and rest before what is related to the assembly can really be apprehended. I am sure it lies in the experience of the brethren that assembly truth is not really apprehended in conditions of disturbance. In fact, whenever

disturbance comes in, it seems to destroy assembly experience. But the assembly is characteristically a place where things proceed in the peace of which Jesus spoke when He came in among His own. He left it there, and I think that the assembly known as a place of salvation is to set everybody at rest. It protects them and takes care of them, but it sets everybody at rest; then as at rest, they can enjoy greater things that belong to the assembly.

F.H. Are not these conditions then becoming increasingly precious to us?

E.C.B. I am sure that that is right. And I think we are finding that, with the saints substantially united together as to their outlook on things, much greater progress in the truth is possible.

A.J.W. Do you not think we are getting back to a state of things that must have been found at the beginning of the revival? The Lord would revive us before the end. It was not anything in relation to the need of men they were engaged in. There must have been a state that considered for the Lord and ministered to Him.

E.C.B. I am sure that that is right. It is very interesting to follow some of these things through the history of the recovery. At the beginning the cry was "Behold, the bridegroom; go forth to meet him", Matt 25: 6; that is what is for His satisfaction. But after a time brothers who are generally described as the 'evangelists' got a great deal of thrust behind them in a service that is needed (because the gospel has to be preached, the service of the evangelist carried on) but when that became the objective one result was division because there was a turning to what was for the benefit of man instead of the meeting of the Bridegroom. I think that the Lord and the Spirit, especially in the last days, would revive us very much in regard to the meeting of the Bridegroom.

S.M. Should ministering to the Lord be a feature that should characterise all our assemblings? It does not say here it was the Supper but they were together. I am thinking about what you said as to conditions of rest: if there are suitable conditions each occasion would afford divine Persons something, do you think?

E.C.B. I am sure of that. We should have that in mind when we come to the meeting. No doubt we all expect to receive something as we come, but the real purpose for which we are together is that the Lord may get something from it. If the brethren are edified it is intended to enrich what the Lord will get at another time. But the two thoughts that relate to "me", that is the assembly which is His body and ministering to the Lord, are really the distinctive characteristics of Paul's ministry. The first is brought out in Ephesians 1 and the second in Ephesians 3. They are the highest points of Paul's ministry. He can use the truth of the body in a different sense in Corinthians in order to bring in correction locally, but it is not the same thought as in Ephesians 1. The body is related to Christ as Head in Ephesians 1, the head does not "say to the feet" there; in 1 Corinthians 12 the head might be out of place, because Paul is using the figure of the human body related to the company of the saints.

But "Why dost thou persecute me?" is touching the character of the Christ in relation to the body and it is in Ephesians 1 - "Gave him to be head over all things to the assembly, which is his body" - and on the level of Colossians as well. Ministering to the Lord fits into Ephesians 3; but both these things seem to me to require as a firm basis that the assembly is known as a place of security. The Lord would give us that and then show that He is able to develop things in it.

J.L. While we would not claim to be the assembly, yet we would covet to walk in the light of it and reflect the features proper to it in our gatherings, so that there is some practical answer to it.

E.C.B. I am quite sure of that. We would say on the one hand that we would not claim to be the assembly, but we should get into a very poor way if we ceased to say that we hold the truth of the assembly, because the surrender of everything lies down that channel. And to use weakness as an excuse for weakness is ultimately to surrender everything. What is needed in the situation of weakness is men who will stand, not boasting in being everything but standing for everything.

F.H. Does the Philadelphian recovery express just what you say: kept the word of His patience and not denied His name? That is the assembly where brotherly love is.

E.C.B. I think that is helpful, and we should be finding these things amongst us. You get the sense developed in localities, I think, of a net that does not break, because relationships are well understood and are all secure, every knot in the net will hold. You come into your own locality and you know that you could test every knot in the net and every one would hold. That is, when I meet you and you meet somebody else, the knot would hold at all these points. The net does not break because it is not man's work, it is the work of God.

A.J.W. The assembly is His own providing at the present time for Himself.

E.C.B. Yes. I think it is very important to keep that aspect in mind, that while the Lord has provided the assembly as a place into which He brings those who are being saved, yet it is something for His own heart. All this increases our desire to be fully in it and available in it. We have, I think we can say, rich experiences at the Supper. Would that we were more up to what we have then! What is at the Supper is available for all who are the Lord's if they would walk consistently with the truth that underlies it.

Ques. Is there any link between Solomon's palanquin which he made for himself and what you are speaking about? It is paved with love by the daughters of Jerusalem (see Song of Sol 3: 9,10).

E.C.B. Yes, I think that is very helpful. There is what Solomon made for himself, but then the daughters of Jerusalem contributed to it by way of affection. No doubt they brought in something material, but what they contributed to it was affection. It shows that Solomon was their object, they were not their own object in it. That is what I think we need to hold to in regard to the assembly, that Christ must be its object.

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29 July 1973

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WHAT ONE MAN CAN DO

D.J.Hutson

1 Samuel 14 1, 6, 7, 14, 15; Revelation 2: 7 (first clause)

I am encouraged by the commencing hymn (No 284) to bring forward this impression one has been carrying because, as our brother said in prayer, it relates to what the Lord Jesus said to the Father about His own, that "They are not of the world, as I am not of the world", John 17: 16, speaking there of the disciples as individuals. The assembly, of course, is not of the world, being heavenly in its origin and destiny, but it is composed of persons, and there are times when we need to be reminded of the effect of the activities of one person on the assembly. I did not read in Joshua because we do not want to be occupied with what is negative, but we all know the way in which the Israelites suffered that set-back when Achan took of the accursed thing; and the word to Joshua was that "Israel hath sinned", Josh 7: 10. What was introduced through the activity and failure and sin of one man is charged to the whole assembly, and the whole assembly suffers as a result. That would be exercising to us as to our comings together and, if ever we feel that there has been a lack of power in any sense, it would be a searching matter for each one of us. We are not onlookers, not spectators, as to what is proceeding in the assembly. So if we make any comment as to any apparent lack of power at any time, we say it to our own shame, and it is a searching matter for us as to what we ourselves may have introduced. We may feel we are insignificant persons, perhaps sisters or some of us who have but a small part in things audibly and publicly, but nevertheless our very presence here means something. It is either furthering the occasion and making way for the word of God and the powerful operation and manifestation of the Holy Spirit and the presence of the Lord among us, or it is hindering that. But as I say, I do not wish to dwell on negatives, but to point out that the appeal in Revelation is to the individual - "He that has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the assemblies". We cannot identify the assembly of God in a place

at the present time, but there are still, thank God, individuals walking in the light of it, and so the word still applies. Thank God, the blessed Holy Spirit in His service is still speaking to the assemblies, the Lord Jesus is still serving the assembly in that uninterrupted service of His; as it says, He "loved the assembly, and has delivered himself up for it", Eph 5: 25. The service of washing of water by the word in view of presentation to Him self, which is so near, still continues, and as we walk in the light of the assembly we are able to prove the blessedness of that service, coming from the Lord Jesus Himself in the power of the Holy Spirit. So the word to us is "He that has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the assemblies". It is open to each one of us, for the letter is addressed to the angel - "To the angel of the assembly in Ephesus write", and similarly to the seven assemblies - the angels are addressed, that is, those responsible in the assembly. which indeed all really are as the note tells us (note to Rev 2: 20). So that whether we accept it or not, the call is to us to hear as taking on responsibility in relation to what is the current mind of the Lord and what He is leading in at the present time. We remember the words which we have had of recent months, which remain with us, and I think of the word we had as to Moses and his desire: "make me now to know thy way", Exod 33: 13. Have we yet discerned, beloved, the way in which the Lord is leading at the present time in view of the closing up of this wonderful dispensation and the final presentation of the assembly to Himself?

So the call is to the individual walking in the light of the assembly and holding the truth: and, insofar as we are able according to the principles set out for us in the word of God, holding the ground and thus coming into all the gain of the present service of the Lord Jesus on high and the Holy Spirit here. The word is "He that has an ear, let him hear", so we should each be attentive to what the Lord would say.

I just read as to Jonathan because it shows what the committal of one man can do in a day of some confusion, when there has been failure in one who had his place in leadership among the people of God. You might say the whole history of man is related to what one

man can do; think of it coming in the teaching of the gospel in Romans that "by the disobedience of the one man the many have been constituted sinners, so also by the obedience of the one the many will be constituted righteous", chap 5: 19. How everything depends upon the one Man, Jesus Christ - everything for God has depended upon Him! In that sense He is absolutely unique; we always guard the person of the Lord Jesus in the uniqueness of what He has accomplished which none other could do. So we might have read of David and what he did in the slaying of Goliath the Philistine, when there was the challenge "Give me a man" (1 Sam 17: 10) and David came forward, and the deliverance that was wrought. But then as we think of that our hearts and our minds go to the way in which the Lord Jesus has come in Himself: 'His be the Victor's name, Who fought the fight alone; Triumphant saints no honour claim, His conquest was their own' (hymn 24). He came in and "through weakness and defeat" has won the meed and crown, in the way that He has gone Himself where no other could go, and has wrought such deliverance, a glorious Man, the Man Christ Jesus "who gave himself a ransom for all", 1 Tim 2: 6. Everything, I say again, depends upon Him; He stands out alone and unique, without compare, in all that He has accomplished for God; and in securing such results for God it has involved, in wonderful grace, the blessing of such as you and me.

So as we turn to Jonathan we are not thinking of what could be said to be unique as relating to a type of Christ, but of a man who felt the condition of things in his day and who made a resolve that he would do something about it. It is very interesting to see the way in which the matter proceeds. This is a secret resolve. It says "he did not tell his father". How much is there in this room by way of secret resolve? Thank God for it, we would credit one another with secret resolves in relation to the holding and securing of the ground for the Lord Jesus in the scene of His rejection so that the testimony might be maintained in power and the service of God sustained in freshness. Here is a secret resolve with one man and he confides in his armour-bearer, but he confides above all in Jehovah. He says

"Perhaps Jehovah will work for us". There is no assumption there, he just puts himself in the way of being available to be used of God.

God is working through persons all through the Old Testament. By certain persons He came in by way of deliverance. Jonathan would have known the history of the judges and the way that persons were available so that deliverance was wrought for God's people, and without assumption he says "Perhaps Jehovah will work for us"; not exactly 'work with us' but "work for us"; that is, it must be God's work and then Jonathan would be able to follow in relation to what He was doing, "for there is no restraint to Jehovah to save by many or by few". What a comfort that is today, beloved brethren, when there are many places where there are but few walking in the light of the assembly and cherishing these things and seeking to hold the ground and to overcome the onslaughts of the enemy and the assailing of hades' gates in relation to the assembly. So long as God has one person available to Him in such circumstances, what cannot be done?

And so "there is no restraint to Jehovah to save by many or by few". Then what an encouragement! The armour-bearer says "Behold, I am with thee according to thy heart". So we can be encouraged, as we make these resolves and committals to the testimony, that the Lord will surely support us Himself, there is no doubt of that. Then, as we share these things with others, He would give us to see that there is support for us, not only from Himself above and the presence of the Holy Spirit here, but He would also give us a brother born for adversity. So that as Jonathan goes up he has another with him who says "I am with thee according to thy heart". In those inward links according to his heart, Jonathan has one who understood what his feelings were in relation to the testimony at that time; and as he confides, not in Saul, but in such a one, then there is this resolve to go forward with him and strengthen his hand in what he has before him.

So this slaughter is effected. It may not seem to be anything spectacular but think of what it says, "as it were on the half-furrow of an acre of land" and what that would speak of, all the potential that

was there for fruitfulness for God. The furrow is there, ploughing, labour; work is involved as we have in Timothy -- "if any one aspires to exercise oversight, he desires a good work", 1 Tim 3: 1; and then there is "the work of an evangelist", 2 Tim 4: 5. So in these things, whatever we are committed to, labour is involved, the ploughing is there, as it says, "the half furrow of an acre of land". What Jonathan does in meeting the enemy has in view that this part of the inheritance, hitherto unfruitful as being held by the enemy, might be held in relation to the truth and bear fruit in view of what should be available in the service of God. Then as he works in this way, as Jehovah is working for him, "there was trembling in the camp, in the field, and among all the people; the garrison, and the ravagers, they also trembled, and the earth quaked; for it was a trembling from God." From this small beginning, may we say, this resolve of Jonathan's, as it went forward and as this result was secured, God came in with His approval as to what had been done - "a trembling from God". God came in with a manifestation of His power. Even on an occasion like this we can prove the power of God coming in among us. Would that we knew more of it; but thank God for what we do know. We can just speak without assumption of the fact that we do experience the power of God with us at such a time, as we seek to hold the ground and hold the portion of the inheritance that it might yield for Him.

One's burden however is that this depends on the resolve of one man. Let us not put it off to others. Jonathan did not put it off to others, thinking that they might be more able for it than he was; but he committed himself to it and went forward with it and the Lord encouraged him as he went forward. In result something was secured which would yield for God, and God Himself came in with a manifestation of His power. All this is open to each one of us in such a day as that in which we are; and I would just stimulate the dear brethren, even as I feel the need of stimulation myself, to see what can be done through the resolve of one man in relation to the inheritance. In the name of the Lord Jesus.

LONDON

4 December 1973

THE CHIEF INTEREST OF CHRIST

A.A.Brown

Genesis 2: 21- 23; John 20: 19 - 23

I have an impression as to the time that we are in, dear brethren, that we should have an appreciation of what is proceeding and what the chief interest of Christ is. It goes without saying, of course, that that is the assembly; but as we make much of the assembly we make much of Christ. This scripture in Genesis 2 is well known and we would stir up our pure minds in looking at it because this is the deep sleep that falls upon man; this is what God does. It refers to the death of Christ; it says that "he slept". It would bring in something of what Christ Himself did through this great operation. It does not emphasise, as we know, the side of suffering so much as the assembly as the fruit of the purposes of God. It is well to remind ourselves that this still obtains, that the assembly according to the purpose of God remains and it goes through. We know that here there is no past history and that so far as God is concerned (we would say this reverently) the matter was completed here. It says "he took one of his ribs and closed up flesh in its stead". It would appear that this that is out of man comes before man for identification. I wonder if in how the Lord comes to us, as He manifests Himself, we are conscious of something of this. Man says "This time". We think of all the ways of God in the history of the truth, we think of the prophets and of all those who have gone before, but what is "This time"? It is the assembly time. This is the time in which we are, beloved brethren! Are we aware of it and of what it means?

Do our interests centre on this time, on what God is doing at this time? We know that the glad tidings goes out, and we know what God's grace is and how it flows to all men; but this time is the assembly time. I speak of this because some of those who are younger, and older too, may come across this in their pathway as

they speak to other believers. While it is right that what is evangelical should continue, it would not be given up at all, the primary thing is "this time" - "This time it is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh". What is next to Christ's heart is the assembly; and what should be next to our heart is the assembly, first in its local expression; what the brethren mean, what they mean to Christ, what they mean to the Father. What does the local company mean to me? What does it mean to you? Is it your greatest interest? Is it mine? I believe something of this could come home to our affections and stimulate our interest, because it is interested persons who come in for the blessing. It is not persons casually occupied but interested persons, persons who have this nearest to their heart. Mr Darby speaks of it in his hymn: 'Nor what is next Thy heart can we forget' (No 160). These are real things; they stimulated those who have gone before us in the recovery and they are intended to stimulate us still.

Then it says "This shall be called Woman, because this was taken out of a man". It is like identification; and we would understand something of what the assembly means in this because, in these dark days through which the saints have passed, how much there is of breakdown. But we must ever keep this before us, beloved brethren, just what the assembly is for the heart of Christ and what it is in the purpose of God.

Now I read in John. There is something distinctive here as to time; we have now the distinctive day of the week, the first day of the week. This is distinctive to Christianity. It is the Lord's day but it is the first day of the week. This is the day when this message was conveyed by Mary to the disciples. What a day this was! How this would remain in the affections and the minds of these persons! And it is intended too to remain so for us, what the first day of the week means - this time. It is the prime day, it is how things begin, how things are set forward. I understand that Mr Stoney wrote to brethren gathered for meetings at Quemerford giving an impression he had received on the Lord's day and that that impression gave colour to the series of meetings. These are things that are not just

recent happenings; this is the principle on which these men of God lived and on which we are intended to live, of receiving divine impressions through the Lord's manifestation of Himself. So there is something distinctive here: "it was evening on that day, which was the first day of the week". Certain things are taking place, the doors are shut. Do we not learn that? I suppose it is something that we have to learn, how to shut out certain things from our minds, and particularly, I suppose, when we are young we can say like the words of the hymn 'No infant's changing pleasure is like my wand'ring mind' (No.51). The mind has to be in control. So it is a calling of Him to mind. By the Spirit the mind can be controlled. It is the renewed mind, of course, but the secret of it is having Christ in the affections.

So when He comes in it says "He came and stood in the midst". As the brethren know, in the midst is what is universal (not simply universal administration, although that does obtain) but what is universal as the Lord comes in and manifests Himself to each company. There is something that is communicated. How wonderful these things are! That has never been left aside, that has not broken down with the breakdown, that still obtains, beloved brethren. Is it our interest? I think it would be the interest of those persons, because He stood in the midst and says to them "Peace be to you". So when the Lord comes in He says something and He conveys something, and He conveys just what is needed at the time. They needed peace and He gave them it, a wonderful consideration. What a One we have in the Lord as Head! He gives just what is needed, and it is for Himself. How can we serve Him if there is any restlessness of mind or any crossing of affections? "Peace be to you". It would settle us in these conditions.

Things then are taken on; manifestations, things conveyed are taken on, with no disruptive element. We can say in all humility, can we not, that these conditions obtain, and we would seek that they continue. We would not take these restful conditions for granted, beloved brethren. What the Lord has graciously given us we would value, and maintain them through exercise and committal too to the

assembly, to Christ's first interest. These things can be disturbed by any taint of selfishness on your part and mine, but let us value these conditions and see that they are maintained. So "He shewed to them his hands and his side".

It would speak, of course, of Genesis 2. He would remind them, in a sense, of just what they were. They were disciples, but they were His brethren according to the message given to Mary.

When He "shewed to them his hands and his side" we would understand something of the Lord's own feelings as coming to a company prepared by this great message. And there is preparation with us too. How much preparation has gone before? Are we interested in the ministries of the recovery; or the teaching of Mr Taylor sen as to the ornamentation of the assembly? I speak to the young men particularly; these are valuable things and they are a preparation. Do we value them? Are we interested in them? Has the ground been prepared? We want to have prepared hearts so that when He comes in we are ready and are sensitive as to what He says. So it says here "The disciples rejoiced therefore, having seen the Lord". I think we would take that home as to the bearing of it, that no matter what may be communicated, what is greater is the One who communicates. We would know something of this joy in our places, but this is what is taking place universally - in *the* midst.

Then it says He "said therefore again to them", as though this has to be emphasised; these peaceful conditions we understand have come from Him and are to be maintained, for Himself and for the enjoyment of these things; and also even for administration, because in the breathing we have the blessing; the remission comes first, as we know, it is blessing. But there is peace for that. If we have these conditions, all I would like to emphasise and seek to understand more in my own soul is that, if the Lord has graciously brought in these conditions, they are to be diligently maintained. Everything we do is to that end. This is not simply a matter of the care meeting, this is the administration of blessing, what is proceeding from the Lord as Head, and it is diffused because they are sent. What this must have meant to these men! It says "as the Father sent me forth, I also

send you". I believe, beloved brethren, this is the basis of all service. If any would seek to serve the Lord Jesus and commit themselves to His interests here, to the assembly locally, to what is universal, then this, I believe, would be the secret. We have been hearing from our brother as to Jonathan, what can take place through one person committing himself, and in this way each one of us would be available, ready to be sent. So the emphasis is on "send" in Isaiah 6: 8. Not *send* me, but send *me*, as under His direction. So we would go out from this meeting, not as we came in, but with fresh direction, as to His interests and our committal to them; and each of us, in secret, committing our selves afresh in the way of a vow that would be fulfilled for His glory and for the advantage, we would say; of the comp any. How wonderful these things are! We would lay hold of them afresh, beloved brethren, tonight. May the Lord bless His word.

LONDON

4 December 1973

FOLLOWING THE LORD IN "THE WAY"

C.Hammond

Mark 10: 17- 21; 32-34

Our brother has reminded us of the need of laying hold of the purpose of God in relation to Christ and the assembly, and that inside position, as we may say, will have its bearing in a practical way upon the path of testimony and any part we may have in it. It is called here "the way" and was so because the Lord was in it. I suppose we are all clear that there is only one way, testimonially, that is accredited by God.

It is as well to get that clear. It is not a question of assumption or claim; it is a question of fact - that there is only one testimonial way that is accredited by God. Whether we are in it, of course, would be another consideration. Most of us, I suppose, have had the advantage of being brought up in the area where the truth is, but there comes a time, I believe, in the history of all, if we are to be serviceable to the Lord, when we realise that faith is required to pursue the path. It is a faith system, and we are to discover, as sensitive, where the Lord is in any matter and where He is to be found active, with the close co-operation of the Holy Spirit, amongst the saints. As the Lord went forth into the way, "a person ran up to him"; that was commendable. It does not say exactly that he ran into the way, but he ran up to Him. What a thing it is, dear brethren, if in any committal to the saints of God, the Lord is recognised as being there and He is the object of faith to us; but whether we have been sustained in that would be a challenge for us all to answer. This man (he is said elsewhere to be a young man (Matt 19: 20)), evidently was a reasonably rich man, a ruler. You do not need, dear brethren, to have a big bank balance to be rich! We find that in the testings of the way the Lord discloses to us what may be a hindrance to going on. We are in the presence of it now, as our brother prayed, there are some who could have been here and are not. We feel what they are missing. We think often of so many dear brethren that

we have known over the years, but they have missed their way.

Perhaps we should be more accurate in saying they have missed the way, for that is the truth. There is the way, the Christian way.

Well-meaning believers will tell you that there are many roads to one goal. Well, if we are thinking of the rapture, yes; although there is only one basis for the saints being raptured, and that is that they are amongst the redeemed.

But meantime, dear brethren, we have to consider the way, and whether we are in it. It is not positional, though I thank God for where I am found and the help I receive. You can get on in years, but still you can learn, for the truth is so great and our understanding so small; we still need to go on learning and to keep fresh in our spirits. What affected me about this incident, and that is why I selected Mark, was the Lord's affectionate feelings for this man.

Think of its being recorded that "Jesus looking upon him loved him". There was a certain amount of integrity with him. "All these things have I kept from my youth", and yet still there was a secret hindrance and the Lord knew it. Though he had been a good attender at the meetings, so to speak, he had done everything that he thought was required of him, there was something hindering full committal. Jesus looked upon him and He loved him. You can sense the Lord's feelings as he went away. Think of the Lord's grief as any, who having come into the way where He is, who have been in the presence of the Lord's activities, yet are not prepared for the challenge that the way involves. So He says, "One thing lackest thou, go, sell whatever thou hast and give to the poor and thou shalt have treasure in heaven". He does not leave it at that, but says "Come follow me". Why is it that in the first critical situation that occurred in the church, in Acts 5: 14, the Spirit of God says that "Believers were more than ever added to the Lord"? Because the simple truth is that if we are added to the Lord we shall be safe. If we are merely added to a position, we may not be; even if we are where the truth is held the knowledge of the truth itself will not necessarily hold us; but "Follow me". That is the word!

So in the next section of this chapter the disciples, though they were amazed and afraid, it says "they followed" Him. Think of the apprehension in their minds! I do not think they regretted following the Lord, but just an inward sense that a climax was coming. They wanted to be faithful, but alas! it says, "All left him and fled", Mark 14: 50. What testings there were, and yet what recovery as Christ as risen appears and has to do with Peter, for instance, and with Mary and others. What compassion He shows! What grace! What understanding, dear brethren! Even if we have failed Him at any given time there is His grace to bring us back into the path, a path that is designated in the Scripture, "*the way*". Even if at times we are amazed and afraid, we should still follow Him.

So the Lord tells them what was to befall Him, the Son of man. "They shall condemn him to death, and shall deliver him up to the nations; and they shall mock him, and shall scourge him, and shall spit upon him, and shall kill him". We might think this could well cause despondency. You hear some say at the present time, I just could not stand another division. Well, supposing it is so? Supposing following the Lord involves just that? I do not know. I am not wishing to be negative, for I am assured that final victory is coming. "And after three days he shall rise again". That means, dear brethren, that the ultimate will be moral victory testimonially.

So in Acts 9 you find there is one who is brought into "*the way*"; a most unlikely man, as most of us are, I suppose, whether we are brought up amongst brethren or not. Saul is persecuting those "who were of the way". It is a suffering way. Think of the sufferings through which the saints have passed the last few years, the declension of those near and dear. Think of the brethren that you loved and had fellowship with. Do we feel these things as the Lord feels them, dear brethren? I am sure He feels them but if He feels one who turns away as this ruler did, I think we can read also into it the Lord's pleasure in some who seek to follow Him in the way. The way will be where the Lord is. You may say, That is oversimplification. Yet it is basic to the position, that we locate where the Lord is; and if we have been side-tracked at any time let us go back

and trace where we have missed the Lord's movements and then ask ourselves *why* we missed them.

So we need to be sensitive, and whatever the way and whatever the claims of the fellowship and the testimony may be, dear brethren, let us follow Him. Ananias was a little doubtful about Saul, as no doubt the brethren at times may feel a little doubtful about us, dear brethren. Thank God, we have a gracious High Priest and Shepherd who is able to help us through in these matters. So He says "This man is an elect vessel to me... for I will shew to him how much he must suffer for my name".

So we find in Acts 19 "the way" is spoken against. It says that Paul spoke persuasively in their synagogue for three months. Think of listening to Paul for three months! Think of his persuasive appeal, not in emotional persuasion but in the power of the Holy Spirit. Yet it says, "Some were hardened and disbelieved". That seems a stronger word than unbelief. Paul says that the Lord had mercy on him because of his unbelief, see 1 Tim 1: 13. In what he did, he thought he was doing God a service, but it was in ignorance. The fact is, dear brethren, we can have integrity and be wrong. We may believe that the path we are treading is a right one but we may not be sufficiently near the Lord to discern His movements. So what does Paul do? When they hardened their hearts and disbelieved and spoke evil of the way (and that would include those in it) he separated the disciples. How long was he in the school of Tyrannus? Two years at least, *daily* teaching. How does this teaching go on? Do we confine our consideration of the truth and the Scriptures, and what has been recovered to us, to our assemblies together? What was the word that Paul gave to Timothy? "Give thyself to reading", 1 Tim 4: 13. Dear young brethren "Give thyself to reading" - prayerfully. You have a heritage that many believers, I am sure, would be thankful to have. We have the Scriptures and the ministry. I am concerned about the value of referring householdly to the Scriptures, and if necessary finding some expression of your feelings in the singing of hymns. Let it be done. It is not duty; it is because you find pleasure and profit in it.

So he "reasoned daily in the school of Tyrannus". Well, what happened? All in Asia, Asia Minor that is, "heard the word of the Lord". Well dear brethren, the testimony is going through. "The way" is still here. If we claim that we are it, we may miss it, but please God we may be morally qualified to have our part in it; and I say the secret of it all is "Follow me, taking up the cross". Where the Lord is, we may be sure things will go through to ultimate victory.

The testimony is going to finish in power and triumph. I believe there will be a collective testimony; I believe there will be disciples who continue, so to speak, in the school of Tyrannus, under the teaching of the Lord. The Lord left that last touch with His disciples to encourage them to endure to the end, for it says "He that has endured to the end, he shall be saved", Mark 13: 13. May the Lord encourage us. The counterpart, as I have said, to the privilege side that our brother has referred to, is in our desiring to be found in the way. It is the Christian way, the way that every Christian should be in, and please God there may be more recovered yet. There is room for all, dear brethren. Some may want a broader path, but if the path is even more straightened it will lead to life (see Matt 7: 14). If the Lord is in it, dear brethren, it is all that will really matter to us. May we, like the disciples of old, be added to the Lord; then we shall be safe.

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4 December 1973

THE CHILDREN'S UPLOOK

A man whose name appears in chapter 5 of Genesis could have said, in the later centuries of his life, that his great-grandfather had never been born and his great-grandson had never died! This is not only interesting but also instructive.

Cainan no doubt learned from Adam that God had created him, Adam, as quite different from other creatures and as a full-grown man. He had never known childhood and it must have seemed strange to him to see plants, trees and then children growing up.

But, great as Adam was, he disobeyed his Creator and sin came into this world through the serpent. Satan now tries to make us believe that this is just a fable, so if you are taught that at school you must remember that God's word is truth.

Cainan's great-grandson was Enoch who lived as many years as there are days in an ordinary year. Scripture says that he "walked with God", which means that he pleased his Creator in his daily life. Then God took him to Himself and by faith he knew even long before Adam died that God was able to set death completely aside.

There are at least two simple lessons to be learned from the history of Enoch whose name probably means 'teaching'. Firstly, it is possible for us to give God our company just as we might go with a friend for a walk. Then also we know that, without a trace of death's power, we may be taken at any moment to be "always with the Lord".

Whether, as we expect, we shall be translated as Enoch was, or whether we should die, we know that we have been redeemed by the precious blood of Christ. Do you learn more each day what a happy thing it is to be the Lord's?

J.C.Evershed