



Assembly Testimony



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**"HE IS NOT HERE: FOR HE IS RISEN,
AS HE SAID."**

Matthew 28. 6-8.

Then see them on the first day of the week
Draw near toward the sepulchre, to seek
The One they loved, Who they thought lay in
death—

The One who gave to all mankind the breath
Of life and Who, by ent'ring death's domain,
Abolished death and ended Satan's reign.

As nearer still toward the tomb they drew
They asked, "Who'll roll away the stone?"
They knew

Not Christ their Lord was risen indeed till they
In wonder saw the stone was rolled away.

And ent'ring in, in their perplexity
They heard two men in shining garments say,
"Why seek the Living One among the dead?
He is not here but risen as He said.

Remember How He spake in Galilee
To you and said, 'The Son of Man must be
Delivered up, and crucified by men
Yet on the third day He must rise again'."

Rememb'ring then those words in haste they
ran

Forth from the tomb, and to His own began
To tell what they had seen, and how their Lord
Was risen indeed according to His word.

For Him the pangs of death were loosed, He rose
The mighty Victor over all His foes.

He holds the keys of Hades and of death
And as the Risen One in triumph saith,
"I am the Living One." He dead became
Yet liveth evermore. Blest be His Name!

G. M. MUNRO

BRIEF MEDITATIONS ON THE OFFERINGS

by JOHN M. COWAN. Motherwell.

THE SIN OFFERING (continued)

WE have now dealt somewhat extensively with sin in the anointed priest, God thus indicating that the best of men are only men at the best and, as he so clearly states, that there is none righteous, no not even one. There is within each one of us that evil heart of unbelief, so very prone to sin, and, while God has delivered us from Egypt's dominion, there are still Egyptian desires which remain within us all. Let us then ever remember that, although we have been saved from the penal consequences of our sin, we are constantly exposed to the power of sin. **The Devil is the Prompter to sin: The World is the Provider for sin: and the Flesh is the Producer of sin.**

The Devil is the prompter to sin; he was its instigator and is constantly inciting thereto. The World is the provider for sin; it contains all that appeals to our fleshly lusts, all the attractions and allurements which so readily induce to sin. The Flesh is the producer of sin, that wilful wayward part of our fallen nature so easily induced to indulge itself in sin and which, unfortunately, we must carry with us to the end of our wilderness experiences.

We would not like at this point to be entering into an exposition of the Roman Epistle, but we would commend to each of our hearts a careful and prayerful study of the same. Paul, in his inimitable way, deals with the problem, in accordance with the wisdom given to him. Our weaknesses are not glossed over or excused; sin in all its exceeding sinfulness is exposed, yet thanks be unto God, the rich provision of His Grace, so readily available to us and so richly provided for us, is made known.

To enter into the sin question in any degree of its entirety would be outwith the scope of this present brief meditation. John in his epistle sums it up by saying sin is lawlessness and is the product of that rebellious spirit which dwells within. We are still the possessors of our old and evil nature; it has not been removed, but thanks be to God, it can be restrained: "For the Love of Christ constraineth us". Love begets love, and so there has been begotten in us a sense of profound gratitude, which sets the Lord Jesus before us as the object for our highest affection, our purest passion and our deepest joy, and has produced within us desires to serve him with unquestioning obedience, unswerving loyalty, and to give to Him alone our unreserved and unrestricted allegiance. "The love of Christ"—a term used only three times in the whole

of the New Testament Scriptures: in Romans 8. v. 35 its **Cohesion**, no separation; in Eph. 3. v. 19 its **Conception**, no limitation, and in 2nd Cor. 5. v. 14, its **Constraints**, no longer living to self. So then, as Peter puts it in his second letter chapter 1. v. 8. "if these things be in you and abound, they make you neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ", and as we grow in grace and in the fuller knowledge of Him, this shall be our safeguard from our sin.

The sin of the Priest, the sin of the People, either collectively or in its individual sense, with the sin of the Prince, sets before us the important fact of the extensiveness of the power of sin. There are no exceptions, so that, no matter what the station in life to which we belong, or the official standing we may possess, there are no exclusions and only one way of escape. Immediately the consciousness of sin becomes ours; "if we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness": "For the Blood of Jesus the Son cleanses us from all sin". This aspect of the blood has to do with **Defilement**. Sin is not only a plague, but is also a pollution, defiling all that it comes into contact with and only removed by the purgatorial application of precious blood.

The sin offering then has to do with persons—not persons sinning flagrantly with a high hand—but persons who, in unguarded moments or periods of unwatchfulness, when the state of vigilance has been relaxed momentarily, possibly when the mind has been distracted by conflicting events and the perceptive consciousness is not so keen. Yet, whilst all that may be true, there is no escape; in the judgment of God it is sin, and there is no excuse. But let him pass through the proper exercise, availing himself of the provision made, confessing his sin, and, because of the infinite value of Blood shed and applied, it shall be forgiven him.

All the fat is the Lord's: While Christ was the sinbearer, he never was the sinner. "He became sin offering for us", but ever remained the Holy One of God. He was manifested to take away our sins, and in Him is no sin. "He bare our sins in His own body on the tree": We rejoice in the truth of expressions such as these, but let us ever remember the intrinsic essence and excellence that was His, as seen in the fat that covered the vitals; those inward excellencies known alone to God and ever always appreciated by Him. The devouring fire of the fierceness of the wrath of God might and did burn up the sacrificial bullock outside the camp, but the fat, it fed another flame; "it pleased the Lord to bruise Him", so, on the altar of Burnt Offering, the fat was placed and, as the altar flame feasted upon those precious excellencies, there arose a fragrance which sat-

ified the heart of God. Ah, but sin has been committed, and before the sinning one can rest assured, he must identify himself in a further way with that which meets his need. "The bullock in its entirety, the skin and all his flesh, with his head and with his legs and his inwards and his dung, even the whole bullock shall he carry forth without the camp unto a clean place where the ashes are poured out and burn him upon the wood with the fire". "My sin, oh the bliss of that glorious thought, my sin not in part but the whole, is nailed to His cross and I bear it no more, praise the Lord, praise the Lord, Oh my soul".

Surely this should lead us to greater watchfulness and, in the deeper consciousness of God's Holy hatred of sin in all its exceeding sinfulness, seek grace from God to serve Him acceptably with reverence and godly fear.

It will be observed that no time should elapse for the anointed priest to become conscious of his guilt. With others their exercise began when it was known or when it came to their knowledge, supposing a time period should elapse ere a consciousness of guilt became theirs, but with the priestly one, constantly handling divine things, and having a constant contact and consciousness of the presence of God, there was that intuitive sensitiveness and immediate awareness of being out of touch with God. This painful experience was productive also of an immediate readiness to avail themselves of that which had been made available to them in sin offering character, in order that their sense of nearness and the joy of their communion might be restored.

"Oh for such a heart in each of us".

NOTES ON THE EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS

(Chapter 11)

by R. WOODHOUSE BEALES, Ipswich.

THE WORTHIES OF FAITH

COMMENCING again with Creation as in chapter 1 and establishing the fact that "believing is seeing" and not vice versa. It is faith that makes the unseen real, and this was evidenced in the lives that follow. Faith is the substance of things hoped for. It is the underlying and supporting reality. Things yet future assumed with Faith a greater reality than what these worthies could see around them; indeed those very conditions made God's intervention necessary in the way He told them. "Faith is to things yet future what actual substance is to present seen things."

The word "evidence" is elsewhere, to convict, reprove, rebuke, means to expose, a conviction of the unseen. Faith is the test or ordeal which exposes the false and establishes

the true. It is the office of faith (not blind credulity) to test and discriminate things unseen. "Faith is not an authority in itself, it is a judge applying the authority of the divine Word." (Cragg).

These men and women had but a spoken word about what was to be an entirely new thing with no precedent, such as the Flood, the Exodus, the coming Judgment. These things were REAL to them and made them act in the light of what was revealed. The Word of God had become a living and operative Word. Shall we test our own faith by this? Does it alter the whole course of our lives? Are the unseen things to us, eternal and do they become more real than the seen? These things made Abram leave his country and kindred and become a pilgrim, they made Noah turn from his generation and build the ark, they made Moses turn his back on the splendours of Egypt, and so we can see that this principle motivated all these men and women. Does it motivate us?

Again the word "ages" is used indicating that not only the material spheres were created by God out of nothing, but also the periods which govern their history and are interwoven into it. Scientific speculation is utterly useless in this God-revealed sphere, and is bound to go astray.

Then follows the history of eight men and one woman connected with the patriarchs (all in Genesis) and the same number connected with the nation and kingdom. It will be noted that though sacrifice is alluded to no question of the Aaronic priesthood is mentioned at all. This is a significant omission. Nor is the giving of the law mentioned. It will be noted that in this chapter 11 no mention is made of priesthood, sacrifices, nor giving of the law.

In them all faith was seen in action, it was tested and tried under the most extreme conditions, but faith is the salient point, all were characterised by it and nothing seemed impossible to the actors where it existed. Some were overcomers and others were overcome by persecution, some escaped the sword, others slain with the sword, some were victims and others victors, but all had the overcoming faith by which they lived and died, and obtained a good report and yet the promise was not received, except as a promise, just as Abraham "received the promises" (v. 17) and yet "received not" the things that was promised (v. 13) a seeming contradiction and enigma. So we too have received the promises and have embraced them and made them our own and yet await their fulfilment.

The world was not worthy of such (v. 38) but the next world is, and resurrection and the reward ("perfect", v. 40) await all such. Also this "better resurrection" (v. 35) is, we believe, a reference to the martyr's crown

and reward, and this throws light on Phil. 3. 11 and the difficult Greek word "out resurrection from the dead".

We must now consider this amazing chapter of these worthies of faith in more detail and the wonderful sacrifices they made, not representatively or on behalf of others but for the outworking of God's purposes, actions for which they had no precedent. It must be seen also that many of their lives were "typical" as were those referred to earlier, and their amazing faith puts ours to shame, as do in many instances their martyrdoms also.

It will be noted how large a portion is given to Moses and Abraham, as outstanding leaders who have claimed much of our attention already, but NOT Aaron. Neither he nor the priests are even mentioned.

It should also be noted that Christ is Prophet (in the past) High Priest (in the present) and King (in the future). The believer is related to Christ with regard to the latter two i.e. he is a priest and a king but not in the first. The cross of Christ stands in between. Not until after the cross can we be associated with Him in any way.

Some headings are now quoted from another writer, A. Paget Wilkes:

Abel and Enoch. Saving Faith (a) the atoning sacrifice (b) the living presence of God.

Noah and Abraham. Faith's separating power unto (a) death (b) life.

Sarah and Abraham. Fruitfulness of Faith.

Isaac and Jacob. Faith seen in "deathbed" scenes.

Joseph and Moses. One leader carrying the people into Egypt. The other taking them out.

This covers the history of Genesis and introduces us to Redemption in Exodus. Throughout the chapter we meet continually, Sacrifice, Separation and Resurrection.

In Abel, the first martyr, hated because of his acceptance by God, by way of sacrifice, the only way, mingling his own blood with that of his offering. By it he, being dead yet speaketh, would that we all could hear the message he brings.

In Enoch we have a long close walk with God which should follow, in the midst of an increasing wickedness of which Enoch spoke, see Jude 14, 15. and note the repeated word "ungodly". In the midst of such he must have suffered mocking and reproach. He also prophesies in giving his son the name Methuselah, "when he dieth it shall come" and when that longest life of all terminated then it did come ("The flood") on the world of the ungodly. He himself however escaped death and thus becomes a type of those who look for the Saviour to-day, before judgment falls.

(Those who dislike typical teaching should examine this

chapter, indeed this whole book again and see that these lives are mostly types.)

Noah also was a preacher of righteousness and walked with God previous to the flood, see references in the Gospels to this typical period and in I and II Peter.

Abraham is given two extensive references firstly vv. 8-12 and again 17-19. His call out of idolatry. His sojourn and pilgrimage. His quickening and fruitfulness. Then his faith in offering up Isaac and in the resurrecting power of God (note the "figure").

In Moses we have one who "refused" "choose" "esteemed" "had respect" "forsook" "endured" These activities of faith should be deeply pondered.

Then we get the miraculous passage of the Red Sea, the destruction of the Egyptians, the destruction of Jericho and salvation of Rahab the harlot, and all by faith, which engendered implicit obedience to God and involved voluntary sacrifice, and all obtained a good report through FAITH.

Paget Wilkes points out the character of Enoch's day in drawing attention to the Poem of Lamech as a sample of the literature of the day. Cain's sin of murder is portrayed as a deed of heroism not to be compared with the greater glory of Lamech whose wrath would be ten-fold. The poem is in praise of bloodshed and violence joined with indications of luxury and a life of pleasure. In such a society a man like Enoch would be hated and despised, but lived a long, close lonely walk with God, testifying of the evil all around him. No wonder the section is interrupted with a remarkable testimony as to the faith and faithfulness that pleaseth God, the rewarder of them that diligently seek Him.

(See also the interposition in vv. 14. 15. "they that say such things" "opportunity to return" "God not ashamed to be called their God" etc.)

NEW TESTAMENT ASSEMBLIES

A PLEA FOR DIVINE SIMPLICITY

by **ROBERT McCLURKIN**

4. Another feature of early Christianity was government. Bishops, overseers, pastors, shepherds, elders, are names given to the men who take the oversight in God's assembly. These godly men give leadership to the Lord's people and carry out discipline whenever called for. Christendom is a far cry from this Divine pattern. Some, who never bought the truth, are prepared to sell it for an easy religious life. They speak now of appointing a pastor for each assembly, meaning, of course, that he will become preacher and teacher as well. They are willing to pay a

good salary to a man who will do all the work for them. This is not just a change of method, it is an infringement of Divine principles and departure from the truth of God.

To-day we have acquired great organizational ability until many godly saints wonder if the Spirit of God will be organized out of business. We are convinced that the Devil is setting up machinery in many companies of the Lord's people that will make it easy for their return to Babylon and be swallowed up in the ecumenical spirit of our age.

5. Another distinguishing mark of the early saints was a faithful presentation of the Gospel. In their preaching, sin was exposed, sinners were convicted and God's remedy for sin and the sinner were clearly presented. Assemblies are compared to lampstands to shed the light of truth upon the darkened souls of men. Conversions were accompanied with repentance. Are we producing conversions to-day without repentance? Are we not too often satisfied with a wishy-washy, sentimental believism? In some places, with a programme of chorus singing and a "hurrah-boy" display, the whole thing is geared to attract only children and imbeciles. Let us "quit ourselves like men and be strong." The dignity of the assembly can only be maintained by an intelligence in the truth of God. The Bible anticipates every age, and, if rightly interpreted, is more than a match for its opponents to-day. Let us establish ourselves in its blessed truths and, with humility and courage, carry the battle to the gate of the enemy. Let us equip our young people with the truth so that they will not be ashamed, in the college, the university, or in the field of their profession. There is enough religious entertainment in the sects. Let the assemblies become in reality, "the pillar and the ground of the Truth."

6. Another mark of Divine simplicity was the autonomy of each assembly. Centralization, either of funds, government or teaching, is contrary to what is written. There is a fellowship of assemblies because we are sharers of the whole truth of God. We should refuse to adopt any silly methods in the work of God that would grieve and offend godly saints that are seeking to maintain Divine simplicity. But in government, every assembly stands upon its own base, responsible to the Lord alone. Therefore we must, in faithfulness to truth, set our faces against any attempt to centralize, whether in teaching, as in a Bible school, or government, as in a central oversight; or in funds, as in a missionary society.

Our path then is to walk apart from the religious world. Our aim should be to please our Lord alone and seek to reclaim a knowledge of the truth of God. Then when weary

souls, tired of the sham and confusion of Babylon, seek rest, they will find in the assemblies of the Lord's people little "Bethlehems" where there is "bread enough and to spare" without the mixture of the notions of men.

THE CAVE OF ADULLAM

by the late JOHN RITCHIE

Read 1 Samuel 22. 1-3; 2 Samuel 23. 8-21.

Rule, according to God then, is what we see in David, the man after God's own heart, the Anointed of the God of Israel, fair type of David's Lord and ours. He was the King of God's providing (1 Sam. 16. 1), and of His anointing (1 Sam. 16. 13). His was the crown and the throne of Israel, so far as the appointment of God and the fitness of David were concerned. But were the people of God in readiness to receive their king? Were they ready to submit themselves to God, in accepting the ruler of His choice? Alas! they were not.

THE CAVE OF ADULLAM

Our chapter opens with the Anointed of the Lord in a lonely cave, with a handful of the poor and needy in Israel around him. The mass of the people of the Lord were with Saul, although God had rejected Him, and taken the kingdom from him. He had rejected the word of the Lord, and the Lord had rejected him from being king.

But it does not always hold good that what is rejected by the Lord ceases to exist among men, or that when God turns His back on a person or a system, His people do so too, and allow it to crumble to the ground. Had it been so, Saul would have found himself deserted, and David surrounded by the thousands of Israel. But Saul still holds the throne and wears the crown, although forsaken of the Lord and possessed by an evil spirit. Strange that God's people should be found with him, yet such is the case, and ready to assist him too, in the persecution of the Lord's anointed. Such were the relative positions of Saul and David, and such the forms of rule they represent until the present hour. That which is of God is yet disowned; the claims of Christ as Lord and Ruler among His people and in His Church are still in rejection, while that which is of the world and even of Satan are highly honoured. Who and what are the mass of those who profess to be the Lord's following? Not David but Saul; not Christ but the spirit of Antichrist; not Scripture but tradition. Godliness and spirituality count for little in what professes to be the Church; position and patronage weigh heavily in the balance. To be respectable, and well-thought-of is—

much; to please God, to obey His Word, to follow Christ—little.

But it may be asked: "How comes it that the people of God were found to be in such a lamentable condition? Was it the result of some great delusion, or some blind infatuation?" Nay, verily. They reached it by easy stages of declension from God, and this is how apostacy is always reached. There was not a sudden drop from Pentecost to the dark days of Popery, but a gradual letting go of God's truth, every inch let go being supplanted by the traditions of men. And men do not give up God's truth, and turn their backs on His authority, all at once; the awful climax is reached by persistent trifling with truth and conscience. There is departure of heart and soul from God first, the other steps then quickly follow. The early chapters of this book reveal what these steps of decline were. We do well to solemnly ponder them.

THE DECLINE OF GOD'S PEOPLE

Chapter 1 is a Temple Scene. Eli, the priest is in the Temple—the place of priestly service, but his spiritual discernment has become so dim that he mistakes the outpourings of Hannah's broken heart for drunkenness. This is a bad omen. His was not only the dimness of the natural eye, but the defective spiritual vision. And need we wonder? In chapter 2 we learn that terrible evils had grown up in Eli's house. His sons are sons of Belial. They rob the Lord of His portion, and dishonour His name by their deeds. Yet Eli "restrained them not". He failed to judge the iniquity that he knew, and honoured his sons above the Lord. This is the root of failure—the first step on the downward road. Laxity in dealing with sin in ourselves and others. God's claims as to worship are lightly esteemed. His prohibitions of unhallowed unions are neglected. How often do we hear as from the very temple of the Lord, from those whose age and position give their words weight that, "it does not matter how, or where we worship, if only we are sincere," and what a demand from the same quarter there is for such charity as closes its eyes to sin! Such was Eli, and such men there are still, whose longsuffering with sin, and trifling with truth, has bereft them of their spiritual vision, and caused them to misjudge and misrepresent souls like Hannah, whose godliness exceeds their own. Eli's house is set aside by God, although Hophni and Phinehas still pretend to care for God's ark, and Eli to sit in His house. Then

SAMUEL IS CHOSEN.

For a time things seem to go rather better, and then Samuel fails. He appoints his sons judges over Israel (8. 1) without the call of God. First the old priest fails, and

now the old prophet fails also. The failure of Eli was in his laxity in dealing with sin in his sons; the failure of Samuel in putting forward his sons into a position for which they had not been fitted—evils by no means uncommon at the present time. Children of Christian parents find their way in among the people of God, and into places of service too, that they have neither grace nor gift to fill. They seek to occupy their father's place, without their father's grace or godliness. God alone can call and fit His servants, but if man attempt to do it he will fail. If saints would wait on God He would give them ministers, but if they manufacture them for themselves, they will suffer for it. Still, it has often been done; by Samuels too, and with the same result. Samuel's sons act unjustly and then

ISRAEL DEMANDS A KING.

“We will have a king over us that we may be like the nations, and that our king may judge us and fight our battles” (1 Sam. 8. 19-20) Jehovah had promised to go before them and fight their battles (Deut. 1. 30). This was to be their distinctive mark among the Gentiles (Exodus 33. 16). They were to be a special people unto Him, not reckoned among the nations (Deut. 14. 2; Numbers 23. 9). Their separation to Jehovah, and His rule among them was their national honour and glory. But all this was nothing to a back-slidden people; they prefer Saul to God, and in choosing the one they reject the other, and so God reckoned (see 8. 7). All this has been re-enacted often since then. First, truth is trifled with under the garb of charity, and sin is palliated under the name of long-suffering. Evils grow up within the church and are allowed to pass unpunished by holy discipline. The men who ought to be guides to the saints are often chief in sin themselves, or if personally free, they are so closely associated with those who are guilty, that they cannot testify against it. But if men do not judge them God does, and sets them aside. How many such priests there are still holding office in high places, but rejected by the Lord. God finds another instrument in the child Samuel and speaks by him. For a time evil is suppressed, then instead of waiting on God to raise up others to fill his place, he ordains his successor himself. The godly Samuel fails, as other of the Lord's servants have since failed. In thinking they can fill up vacancies in the Lord's service by their own appointments, irrespective of God's call, and the people think if Samuel can choose, so can they, and so demand a king. Thus, man-made rulers, and ministers chosen by the people, usurp the place of God and His Christ in the assembly of the saints, for although Saul could talk of the Lord (17. 37), he neither knew Him, nor

left room for Him to work among His people, and this is what the clerical position does its utmost to accomplish still. God is willing and ready to work, if only there was room for Him.

(To be continued)

THE TRUE CENTRE

by the late W. W. FEREDAY.

WE will not sit round till he be come hither" (1 Samuel 16. 11, see margin). So Samuel said in the house of Jesse the Bethlehemite. Jesse, head of the house, was there; the stalwart Eliab and six other sons, with the addition of Samuel, Israel's honoured prophet and intercessor. Yet the proceedings were at a standstill! David was not present, the man of God's choice. Despised somewhat by his own family, he was nevertheless God's man. In like manner, Christ is God's centre to-day. It matters not who else is present, whatever distinguished brethren are amongst us, if He be not present, the assembly cannot function. But, blessed be His name, He never fails His own. We are living very far down the dispensation, with nineteen centuries of failure behind us, but His words are true as ever, "Where two or three are gathered together unto My name, there am I in the midst of them" (Matt. 18. 20). To persons not born of God, religious pomp may suffice; to such it matters little or not whether Christ is present or absent; but to those who are Spirit-taught Christ is essential—He is everything. How happy to be able to say after any meeting, "We have seen the Lord" (John 20. 25)! The circle is complete when Christ is in the midst.

THE LAST DAYS

"FROM SUCH TURN AWAY" by A. M. S.:GOODING.

WE wish again in this issue to draw attention to the repeated use of our Lord's high-priestly prayer in John 17 as a basis for the clamour in our day for Church Unity. We have already shown that the principles herein contained do not really apply to the large part of the well-intentioned people who are advocating the Unification of the various parts of Christendom. The Lord was praying for His own—the majority of the advocates of the Ecumenical movement are not His own! How applicable the words of the Saviour to many in Christendom to-day: "Ye are of your father the Devil".

But let us examine the verses about "Unity" that we so often hear quoted to-day.

"That they all may be one; as Thou, Father, art in Me, and I in Thee, that they also may be one in Us: that the world may believe that Thou hast sent Me".

Three points are clear in this verse.

- (a) The "Oneness" prayed for is a unity in Divine Persons.
- (b) It is a Unity that embraces "those whom Thou hast given Me" and all "those who shall believe on Me through their word". The Lord prayed that they together would be one. Therefore the Unity here mentioned must embrace not merely all true Christians in a given locality, nor even all born again Christians in the world at a given moment of time, but every believer, not only everywhere, of whatever country, class, colour, or ecclesiastical label, but every believer from Pentecost to the Coming of the Lord.
- (c) That this "oneness of all His own" will cause the world "to believe that Thou hast sent Me". Therefore at some time the world will see this manifestation of oneness and will be convinced that the Father sent the Son.

Verse 23 follows the same course but adds "that they may be made perfect in one and that the world may know

- (a) That Thou hast sent Me,
- (b) And hast loved them as Thou hast loved Me".

One might ask the question: "Will our Lord's prayer be answered?" Undoubtedly it will! But it is not being answered to-day in a display of visible unity amongst God's People, and it will most certainly not be answered as a result of the compromises of the Ecumenical Movement.

Then, will it not be answered? It is of importance to notice that there is a unity of all God's people to-day, but it is invisible, not visible! It is spiritual, not a product of human organisation.

"There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus" (Galatians 3. 28).

It is noteworthy that in the visible sphere of human responsibility (often denoted by the expression "in the Lord") there still are National distinctions; there are bond and free, and extensive guidance is given to each class as to how to act in their respective spheres. There is also male and female and the New Testament gives instruction

as to how each should behave both in church relationship and in the home. Therefore this Unity (which excludes these distinctions) is not visible but spiritual; does not so much belong to the sphere of practical responsibility as to that of spiritual relationship. Thank God there is "One Body" composed of every believer—"The Church which is His body, the fulness of Him that filleth all in all".

But this invisible, spiritual unity of all believers does not convince the world that the Father sent the Son, neither that the Father loves "His own" as He loves His Son. Why, many of the theologians of Christendom deny the pre-existence of the Lord Jesus and the Virgin Birth, and believe that our blessed Lord Jesus was only a superior, extremely pious man. And as for the Father loving "His Own" as He loves His Son, this would be beyond their understanding altogether. Then, when and how will the world be convinced of these things? It must of necessity be a manifestation of Unity, a visible unity will be necessary to accomplish this! Here I would point out that verse 22 gives us a clue for it says, "the glory which Thou gavest Me I have given them". Therefore this manifest unity is connected with glory. Glory that belongs to Christ and which He has given to us.

From this consideration of the salient points in this section of the Word of God we conclude that (1) the Unity here is visible, (2) it is a Unity of all the saints from Pentecost to the Rapture, (3) It is connected with Glory.

There is one blessed moment when this prayer of our Lord Jesus will be abundantly fulfilled. It is the moment of the Appearing of Christ. "When Christ, who is our Life, shall be manifested, then shall ye also be manifested with Him in Glory". At the appearing of Christ, all believers from Pentecost to the Rapture will be displayed together—national barriers, racial barriers, class distinctions, ecclesiastical divisions all gone. The Church at last visibly One! The Church will be displayed in Glory—viz., "the glory which Thou gavest Me I have given them" (see 2 Thess. 1. 10). This will be "when He cometh with clouds and every eye shall see Him". Then, will they recognise "that the Father sent the Son!" Then will they see every blood-bought saint of God changed, transfigured, each one both morally and physically conformed to His image. ("When He shall be manifested we shall be like Him", 1John 3. 2). This will convince them that the Father has loved us even as He has loved His Son.

The prayer of our Lord Jesus will be absolutely and literally fulfilled. Did not the Saviour say, "I will build My Church and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it".

(To be continued)

ELIJAH—MAN OF GOD AND PROPHET OF FIRE

by ROBERT McPIKE

Scripture to read 1 Kings 19. 15-21.

The Prophet Meets a Ploughman.

Elijah had been courageous and jealous for his God. None doubted his sincerity, but he was smug in his complacency in that he considered himself alone in faithfulness to God. The Lord is about to teach him two things.

1. He was to anoint others to carry out God's purpose.
2. He was to give way to a younger man selected of God, who was among seven thousand who had not bowed the knee to Baal.

Having fled from Jezebel, the evil root of idolatry, whom he ought to have exterminated, he is instructed by Jehovah to anoint Jehu King over Israel, as the executer of His judgment upon that evil idolatress. Then he is instructed to anoint Hazael, King over Syria, who would be Jehovah's chastening rod, upon a nation who while paying lip service to Him were in their hearts far from Him. As another salutary lesson to his soul, he is sent down to Abel-Meholah to anoint Elisha, the Son of Shaphat in his room. In this journey he was to discover his successor, a young man, who was faithful to God, as well as he, in a day of national apostasy.

Eager to take advantage which the late rains had brought, Shaphat had sent all his labourers into the field. There are twelve ploughs at work and the last of these was being handled by Elisha, who as a son, had the place of honour, but thought it not beneath his dignity to be thus engaged. No servant of God should think it beneath his dignity to labour with his hands. It is a mistaken idea of our times that the Lord's servants should be men clothed in soft raiment. The whole teaching and tenor of the Scriptures refute such a notion. The Apostle Paul is a great example in this; speaking to the elders of Ephesus, at Miletus, he declares, "Yea, ye yourselves know that these hands have ministered unto my necessities and to them that are with me". "I have shewed you all things, how that so labouring, ye ought to support the weak" (Acts 20. 34, 35. See 2 Thess. 3. 8).

Elijah Casts his Mantle.

What thoughts surged in the bosom of Elijah we know not, as obedient to the Word of the Lord, he steps unherald-

ed into the field where Elisha was carrying out his daily task. He is about to anoint another man in his place. What wonderful grace on Elijah's part. No recriminations, no justification of his ministry, but the calm resignation to the Will of God. "The elder is to give place to the younger". No spark of jealousy to fan itself into a flame of hatred at being superceded, is found in the doughty old warrior. This had happened before in Israel's history, Moses is succeeded by a Joshua, Aaron by Eleazer, Saul by David, and it will happen in all our histories. How wonderful to be able to lay down the armour of a conquering life, like Paul, to a Timothy, of whom he could say "I have no man like minded". Only the carnal man finds his displacement a cause for vituperation and jealousy. The truly spiritual will find in it a cause for rejoicing that the service and witness of truth have fallen into hands chosen of God. That Elisha was the choice of God, was enough for Elijah; it should be enough for us too.

Moving toward Elisha, and who knows what the young man's thoughts were at the moment as he beheld the Prophet of God. In all probability Elisha was acquainted with him, having stood among that vast assemblage beneath the brow of Carmel, and watched with feelings of holy joy the vindication of Jehovah in the triumph of the Tishbite, and now the prophet casts his mantle upon him. He never utters a word, but passing on pushes forward as if some other duty called him. Elisha knew the meaning of this strange act, its complications were not lost upon him. Hereafter he was to be recognised as the PLOUGHMAN—PROPHET of Israel.

The ceremony of this Oriental custom of giving the Master's Garment to the pupil, who thereafter was to be recognised as his Successor, was known to Elisha, and because he heard the voice of God calling him to leave father and mother, he ran after Elijah.

THE REQUEST OF ELISHA.

"And he left the oxen and ran after Elijah, and said, "Let me I pray thee, kiss my father and my mother, and then I will follow thee", and he said unto him, Go back again for what have I done to thee?"

Elisha only wished for one opportunity to say and give an affectionate farewell ere putting his hand to another plough, from which there would be no turning back. It was no idle excuse that he framed in order to delay or disobey the call, but rather the objective of severing all relationships that might tempt him to return. The man in the Gospels who said to the Lord Jesus, "Let me first go and bid farewell to

them which are home", seems to have been indecisive, and a waverer, (See Luke 9. 61, 62) and was in danger through family ties of deciding wrongly. Hence our Lord Jesus, looking back on this earlier scene used language borrowed from it, "No Man having put his hand to the plough and looking back is fit for the Kingdom of God".

THE CALL OF ELISHA FROM SUCH CIRCUMSTANCES FORESHADOWED THE NATURE OF HIS MINISTRY

How unlike Elijah he is; the prophet of fire had descended from the mountain fastnesses of Gilead with a thundering message of judgment, bearing in his first appearance the whole character of his ministry, while his family connections are hid from our view. Elisha, whose name means 'My God is Salvation', has his ministry summed up in his name. Here in Elisha's call is the answer to the experience of Elijah on Horeb—here is 'the still small voice' he had heard. A new period was being inaugurated in Israel's history, the day of lightnings and thunderings are past, and with Elisha's advent to the prophetic office a period of marvellous grace instituted. Instead of a voice shutting up the heavens, it is a voice bringing down the gentle dew of heaven, a season of loving kindness after days of judicial punishment. It foreshadows in a remarkable way the past dispensation of the Law, in the ministry of Elijah, and the present dispensation of Grace in the labours of Elisha.

Elisha was pre-eminently associated with family life, and was to bear this character in his ministry of grace to the families in Israel.

(To be continued)

HOW I WAS CALLED TO SERVE THE LORD IN T A N Z A N I A

by **PHILIP THOMPSON**

I was born and brought up in Manchester and although none of my family or relatives were Christians, the Lord awakened and saved me by His grace at the age of 16. Up to this time I had never heard the Gospel, but through the conversion of one of my friends, I was brought under the sound of the Gospel and afterwards led by the Spirit of God to put my trust in the Lord Jesus Christ.

During the last war whilst serving in H.M. Forces, through attending meetings connected with the assemblies of the Lord's people and through reading the Word of God, I saw my need to be baptized as a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ. In 1941 I was baptized and received into fellowship in Banbridge Assembly, N. Ireland.

The question may be asked, "What constitutes a call?"

How does the call reach one of the Lord's servants? When it comes does one know it unmistakably? Is not the command of the Lord Himself to go, sufficient in itself?" I would say that the call to service is the summons of God to your spirit for a special and specific service. It is the voice of the Lord by His spirit to man's spirit, and the spirit of man feels, understands, knows and responds. I had a deep interest in missionary work for many years and sought to foster the interest in the assembly. I was actively engaged in the spread of the gospel and took a keen and helpful part in the assembly activities. I would say here that the prospective missionary should prove himself as the Lord's servant at home before he attempts to go overseas.

I had a particular interest in Tanzania (then Tanganyika) for many years after Stephen and Mary Down went there in 1955, as Stephen and I had been in fellowship in the same assembly in Manchester. My wife and I often had missionaries staying in our home and whilst one from Tanzania was with us, the Lord spoke to me very definitely. It was not in the home, nor in a meeting but outside sitting in a car having my lunch at a quiet place, taking a break from my business during lunch hour. I had had deep concern and exercise for some time as to where and how I could give my life more wholly to the service of the Lord.

On this occasion the experience was different from anything which I had had before. The Lord Himself was saying to me, "Will you go to Tanzania?" I answered willingly, "Yes, Lord, I will go". This was a definite call to service, a special and specific service. The Lord was SENDING me, as He does His servants according to Matt. 9. 38. Paul said "The Lord sent me . . . to preach the gospel" (1 Cor. 1. 17). The Lord Himself was asking me, like Isaiah, "Whom shall I send. Who will go for us?" "The Lord said I, Here am I, send me". This was as much a definite experience as when the Lord saved me. I can go back to the time and the place.

The word of the Lord to Moses, Isaiah, Paul, Philip and others was very clear and definite. The Lord said unto Elijah, "Get thee hence to the brook Cherith", so he went. "Arise, get thee to Zarephath", so he arose. So in obedience to the Lord's call, I acted upon it. Then I considered that some years earlier in the tropics whilst serving in H.M. Forces, I had had a severe illness caused through a brain haemorrhage. Although I had been perfectly fit since, I needed to make sure that it would be all right for me to go. I sought the advice of a well known doctor in the Belfast assemblies. He said things were not easy going out to a foreign country among strange people, with a trying climate and a language to learn; maybe the Lord wanted me to stay

in Northern Ireland and serve Him there. I replied, "If that is the Lord's will for me, I am happy to stay here". However, he suggested I sought further advice at the R.V. Hospital, Belfast, as to whether it would be all right for me to go to Tanzania. When the day came for the appointment, I knew that what I would be told would determine whether or not I would go to Tanzania. I told the Lord, "I am in Your hands, I am Your servant and I am ready to do what You want me to do". That day I was told it would be quite safe for me to go to Africa, that there could be no recurrence of the trouble.

I then made known my exercise to the oversight of my assembly who then commended me to the work of the Lord in Tanzania. As the days passed by, the Lord gave my wife and myself words of assurance from His Word and we made preparations to go to Africa. Do we ever regret the step which we took in obedience to the Lord's call? No, never. The Lord has been faithful to us and provided for us, and has enabled us in this new path of service for Him.

We know that the words of the Lord of the Harvest are true in this present day—The harvest truly is plenteous, but the labourers are few. I would throw out a challenge from the Word of God, 1 Chron. 29. 5. "Who then is willing to consecrate his service this day unto the Lord". Are you? The words of the martyred missionary in South America, Jim Elliot, are true, "He is no fool who gives to God what he cannot keep, to gain what he cannot lose".

EDITOR: A. M. S. Gooding.

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