

The Holy Spirit as seen in John's Gospel

John 1: 29-39; John 3: 1-16; John 4: 13-26; John 14: 15-27; John 16: 7-16; John 20: 17-23.

Reading with G. Davison extracted from "Precious Things" 1956-1990

Table of Contents

John 3: 1-16	7
John 4: 13-26.....	13
John 14: 15-27.....	19
John 16: 7-16.....	25
John 20: 17-23.....	30

The subject for our consideration is the Holy Spirit as brought before us in the gospel of John. We hope to take in almost the whole of the gospel by referring to the ministry of our Lord as given to us in the first twelve chapters, then His communications to His own in view of His departure, which cover chapters thirteen to sixteen, and lastly His breathing on them in resurrection as recorded in John 20. In this way we hope to consider the main features of the Lord's ministry and its ultimate effect on the disciples. In the section we have read we begin by considering the descent of the Spirit upon the Lord Jesus, marking Him out Son of God, thus confirming the testimony of John the Baptist, and showing the introduction of the new order which had its beginning in the ministry of the Lord as anointed publicly by the Spirit. Whilst this gospel especially keeps before us the fact that the Son of God was moving here to accomplish the will of the Father, yet He is seen in Servant character as giving effect to the details of the counsel of the Father, which involved the securing of a company capable of taking in the revelation He would give, and able also to answer to it.

Would there be some reason why the Spirit is seen here in the character of a dove, whilst in Acts 2 we have the character of fire?

Men of this world have adopted the dove as an emblem of peace, but we gather from the record of the dove sent forth from the Ark that Scripture uses it as an emblem of purity. It is well known that the first use of any type in Scripture determines its use throughout the Scriptures. The raven suggests what is impure, but the dove suggests purity. The day had dawned in which God was going to give the Spirit to others, but the One to receive it first, in this way, was the Son of God. We must remember that others would receive the Spirit while still marked by sin within, hence witness is borne that Christ was sinless and pure. With Him therefore the Spirit was seen in the character of a dove, but with others as fire. There was something in all others which was never found in the Son of God, hence the Spirit came upon *them* in a judicial character, dividing in them between the new nature and the old in view of the testimony.

Is this anointing of the Lord referred to in John 3: 34, "God giveth not the Spirit by measure unto Him"?

Not exactly! You will note that "unto Him" is in italics. It was of course true of our Lord, but not only of Him. It is rather the character of the order introduced by the Son of God, that those who are to share in it will also receive the Spirit. It is in contrast to Old Testament days when God gave a servant a measure of spiritual power to accomplish some work for Him, but did not give to any in that day the

indwelling of the Spirit. Today as the result of the work of Christ the Spirit is given as an indwelling power to every saint, and we hope to see later that He will be in our hearts for ever.

What is conveyed by "The next day"?

It is worth noting that in the section which we have before us two references are made to that day. First, the work of the cross by "the Lamb of God", then the incident of the two who followed Him. The first reference to "the next day" covers the pathway of our Lord to the cross, while the second event of that day rather suggests the result as seen in the two who followed Him. As often pointed out, it is the work to which prominence is given in the first reference, but it is the Person *Himself* who is in view in the second. Hence these two events, happening on the same day, give us a complete picture of Christianity from the coming of Jesus until a company is permitted to dwell with Him "that day".

What do we learn from the other two days?

It seems obvious from the events of "the day following" that the future call of Israel is in view. In the first day John is given an unmistakable sign from God and from heaven as to who this Person is, but in the day following it is the One "of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets, did write". Thus Israel will recognize Him in the future day, when the history of the first day has come to an end, which as we know, will be at the rapture. Just as clearly the third day of chapter 2 has the establishment of the kingdom in view, with the suggestion that Gentiles will then be included in the blessing; the mention of Galilee would indicate this. We may mention at this point that the three appearings at the end of this gospel are in line with these three days. We see that the Son of God will eventually take His place as Head over all, whether it be the Assembly, Israel, or the nations. We may add that this is in line with the indication of His work as "the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the *world*".

I suppose this section is suggested as having the Spirit in view, but does not the whole chapter cover the ground now being spoken of?

It does! For it opens with a reference to the Word before time began, and ends with the Son of Man in the kingdom in the world to come. In between these two points we have reference to the various families which will share in the blessing of the kingdom.

John seemed to know already that this Person Whom he was told to point out was Someone greatly superior to himself. Would he have this made known to him by God?

He must have done, although until the Spirit descended upon the Lord he did not know Him. In regard to John's knowing the pre-eminence of the Lord, it is interesting to see the bearing of the word "before" in verse 30. It is the first part of the word used later in the epistles for firstborn, and would indicate that the Lord was not only before John as a matter of time, but also in rank. No doubt the emphatic "was" has time in view, but here is One of whom John could testify "He was before me", and it seems to indicate His precedence in both time and rank.

Why was John given this ministry of baptism?

Baptism is indicative of death, and for those whose hearts were right it meant that they accepted the condemnation of God upon them because of the state of the nation. It is evident that only those who submitted to this baptism would accept the One whom John heralded. Ultimately they would come into the baptism of the Spirit mentioned in verse 33. John baptized with water in the way of preparation, and the consummation is seen in the Lord's baptizing with the Holy Spirit.

John bears record that he actually saw the Spirit descending upon Him, so there could be no mistake.

Five times in this chapter we read that John bore witness. First in verse 7 — this section runs down to verse 14 and is mainly occupied with the Lord's coming into the world. Then verses 15 to 18 mention another witness -which is mainly concerned with His pathway. In verses 19 to 31 we have his witness concerning the death of our Lord, and in verses 32 and 33 we have his witness as to the results of His resurrection. Finally, in verse 34, John sums up by affirming that the Person of whom all this is true, is the Son of God. In the section before us we have witness borne to both the death of our Lord and the effects secured for us in His resurrection, for baptizing with the Holy Spirit could only take place in resurrection. We have often heard that the outstanding effect of the coming into Manhood of the Son of God is finality, for He is the One who will bring all to fruition. He Himself is not a type of anything, but the fulfilment of every type, every promise, and every prophecy. This shows the importance of the testimony of John.

Referring to type and prophecy, does not the presentation of the Son as the Lamb of God bring Him before us as the One who would effectively deal with the question of sin?

Our minds turn instinctively to Genesis 22 when we read this section. How clearly we see there a foreshadowing of these verses when Abraham said, "My son, God will provide Himself a Lamb for a Burnt Offering; so they went both of them together". It is well to add the second half of that verse, for it brings out remarkably the community of interest between the Father and the Son, and would intensify the fact that sin was to be dealt with universally and for the glory of God Himself. We cannot doubt the Burnt Offering character of this presentation — "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world". He is the One who will so effectually deal with the outstanding question of sin that it will ultimately be removed from the universe and the whole scene filled with the glory of God. We often point out that it is not merely dealing with our *sins*, but dealing with the question of *sin in its entirety on the behalf of God* as well as on behalf of His creatures. Who but One who is co-equal, co-eternal with God could do such a work? It may be more literally rendered "Who beareth away" — the thought of sacrifice being in view. Abel's offering was doubtless a lamb, for he was a keeper of sheep, and here again we see the first occurrence of a type giving its full force throughout. Both Abel's lamb and the offering of Genesis 22 would leave no doubt as to the thought of that which is sacrificial.

Later we have the Lamb in Egypt and I suppose this would also be in view here?

No doubt! For whilst we stress Genesis 22 on account of the lamb there being for God, Exodus 12 would provide for the faithful in Israel a type of Him who would effectually meet their need. To use well known terms, perhaps Genesis 22 would have propitiation in view, and Exodus 12 substitution. Certainly we know both were accomplished by the Son of God when He dealt with the question of sin.

Why does John say twice, "I knew Him not"?

He was to have this knowledge given to him by a divine sign, not by some other means such as family links. That would be why he dwelt in the wilderness until the time of his showing to Israel. The Son was to be made known by the Father in the particular way indicated, and John says he knew Him not until this sign was given.

Is the descent of the Spirit here the sealing by God to which our Lord referred in chapter 6: 27?

It is! The Lord there was exhorting them to believe on Him as the One whom the Father had so manifestly indicated as the Giver of eternal life to those who believed on Him. He calls Himself there the Son of Man. It may be that when He speaks of Himself as *Son of Man* it refers to Him as here to carry out the will of God in relation to mankind; whilst as *Son of God* He carries out that will for the pleasure of God. It is recorded that the Spirit descended from heaven, and this would indicate that what

was being done had heaven in view rather than earth. It will reach out to the whole universe as we have seen, but heaven is in view first, and from hence the Spirit came.

Does the Lord receive the Spirit here with a view to giving it to others?

Not exactly at the outset! But that eventuates as the latter half of verse 33 suggests. First it would perhaps indicate that all the Son is doing is in the energy of the Spirit, as being here for the accomplishment of the pleasure of the Godhead.

Do we not have the Godhead seen in this connection?

Yes! It appears to be the first time the Father, Son and Holy Spirit are seen in unity, and the fullness of the Godhead is disclosed as being triune. It has been pointed out in this connection that the Father was heard but not seen; the Spirit was seen but not heard, and the Son was both seen and heard as in Manhood He made all things known. It involved the dwelling of the Spirit in our Lord as this passage clearly records, and had in view His movements here in Servant character for the accomplishment of the pleasure of the Godhead. The teaching of Colossians has primarily in view the reconciliation of all things by the blood of His cross, but it would appear to be at this point that each Person of the Godhead is seen in connection with the Son as here in Manhood.

We do not have the voice of the Father mentioned in John's account. Why is that?

What is in view here is to call attention to the Son. In the other gospels, where the voice of the Father is heard, it is to call attention to the fact that the Father found His delight in the Son, whether as the King or as the Servant, or as the lowly subject Man; but here it is right that we should note that attention is called to the Son as the One who would bring to fruition the counsel of grace which had in view the family of God being brought into blessing. This will occupy us in our further readings.

What is meant by this word "baptizeth" (v. 33)? Is it the same word as that used of the baptism of John?

It is the same word, but having something quite different in view. The word means "to completely submerge". We usually say of baptism that two thoughts are connected with it — dissociation and association. It involves in figure passing from one state to another. As a figure, the baptism of John severed the people from the guilty nation, and prepared them to receive the Lord as their Messiah. The baptism of the Holy Spirit brings us into a wholly spiritual sphere where that which is natural and fleshly cannot enter. This involves being born of God, a subject we hope to consider in our next reading.

This would be the outstanding proof that He is the Son of God, for who but One Who is Himself God could bring men completely under the power of the Spirit of God? I suppose this looks on to Pentecost.

It does! And so introduces the circumstances prefigured by the two who followed Jesus. We noticed the two events recorded on "the next day", and it is well to bear in mind that the two events are connected. If we take the two who followed Jesus as indicative of the introduction of Christianity by the Spirit at Pentecost, we see from this connection that what the Spirit brought to pass in the disciples was the continuation of that which came to light in our Lord while in this world. We know from the later chapters, John 13 to 16, that the Spirit was to be given to make good *in* them all that came into manifestation in our Lord when in this world. It shows how great this day is in which our lot has been cast.

Would not the very fact that in this second half of the next day John looked upon Jesus "as He walked", confirm what you say that it is the continuation of that which came to light in our Lord walking in this world.

I believe so! Note also that "John stood". I think it indicates that *his* ministry had reached its proper end, and he now stood whilst Jesus walked. hence it is right that the two who heard John speak should leave the man who is *standing* to follow the One who is *walking*. It would be the normal effect of the ministry of John, who later said "He must increase, but I must decrease", John 3: 30. There may be some point in the fact that in verse 36 it does not say "John bore record", but that he "saith", and they "heard him speak". His witness ended when he had indicated Jesus as the Son of God, but as has often been pointed out, it was the contemplation of his own heart which drew this statement from his lips. Someone called it a soliloquy, and the word used would allow for this.

Would it involve that if we, today, seek to follow Jesus as indicated by these two we, too, need to be occupied with Jesus "as He walked"?

While we have more brought to light today as the result of our Lord's ascending to the Father, we must ever remember that the nature, character and disposition of God came to light in the Son of God in this world, and not after He ascended back to where He was before. "He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father" was what came out *down here*, and we do need to contemplate Jesus as He walked if we desire to see this in all its fulness.

Would not the fact that He drew them aside, and into the place where He dwelt, involve the further light and liberty which could only be available after He went back to the Father?

I am sure it would! But we see how ready the Lord was to answer their request and draw them into the secret of His own enjoyment of the love of the Father. They were disciples of John; they had been prepared by baptism and obviously had been instructed by John, and in the normal leading of their own exercise they were ready for the moment of transfer from John to the Lord, and thus into the intimacy of the divine circle into which only He could bring them. Need we say again, only in His company can we have experience like this. Many saints of God move on with clear conscience and with simple faith and confidence in the Lord and yet seem to miss the greatest of all blessings — that of dwelling with Him in spirit in the place where He Himself dwells.

Is this open to all?

Surely it is! But we must remember it is only in the company of the Lord that it can be realized. They began by following, then they made this request of Him. It is open to us all to ask for further light and experience. There are two things in view, "*come* and *see*". The first would have in view abstraction from the circles in which they daily moved, and the second would involve occupation with the sphere into which He introduced them. So we read, "They came and saw where He dwelt". We must be free in spirit, in mind and heart from the one sphere of things, in order to be fully occupied with the other.

What is the meaning of this word, "Rabbi" or "Master"?

In this case it means "Teacher". They obviously had in mind that He could teach them something of which they had as yet no knowledge, and we cannot doubt that in the "seeing" they had something unfolded to them which confirmed them in the knowledge of Who He was. It so affected Andrew that he went at once to find Simon to bring him into the company of the Son of God.

What did they see?

We could not venture an answer to that! All it says is "they . . . saw where He dwelt"; just what was disclosed to them it would be difficult to say. Even in our own experience we get visions of things in our souls which it would be difficult to put into words, but these visions do deepen within us the sense of His greatness and glory and the desire to be more and more in His company. This word "dwell" or

"abide", is a characteristic word in the gospel occurring about forty times. It ought to be our habitual exercise to keep in constant touch with The Teacher, and so be free to be led by Him into the presence of His Father. Later in the gospel we learn that this is the realm of eternal life, and these two were led into it by the Son of God at that moment.

Do you mean they would know what eternal life was and were in the enjoyment of it?

No! What was said was that *we so know it now*, but I do not doubt it was into that circle they were brought, though we do not know the terms of what they saw. To be secluded with the Son of God in His own sphere in the home of life, of light, and of love, is to know the three elements of eternal life. It is in this home we enjoy fellowship with the Father and the Son, and we know from the epistle of John that that is where eternal life has its relationships and enjoyments. We must ever remember that Scripture never severs these things from the sphere to which they belong. We are very apt to take up these things in a detached way, but they are set in attachment to Christ where He is, and we see the clear evidence of that in this incident. That is why we have the word "this life is in His Son". We cannot detach it from Christ, and can enjoy it only in communion with Himself.

What is indicated by "the tenth hour"? The margin reads "That was two hours before night".

It would appear that the marginal annotators were reckoning time by the Jewish method, which was the tenth hour from sunrise. The other three gospel writers use Jewish time, but John uses Roman time, counting from midnight and noon as we do. If this is not seen, a difficulty will appear in John 19: 14 where it states that our Lord was still in the hall before Pilate at the sixth hour, while the other gospels tell us that He was on the cross at that time. Other references in this gospel bear this out. Probably this "tenth hour" was ten o'clock in the morning. We understand that from ten o'clock until two was the time of the siesta. (A dictionary gives "siesta" as "the sixth hour"). It was the time when they retired from the heat of the sun during midday. Apparently Andrew still had time to go and look for Simon ere the day came to a close.

Would it not suggest that we, too, can draw aside into His company, away from the rush and turmoil of the day?

Does it not seem as though the Lord would indicate to us that we must be drawn aside from the busy life we are largely compelled to live if we are to be in a restful state to contemplate the unfolding of the things which belong to the Father and the Son? How much more in this increasingly active world we are compelled to live in. Few of us have time to be drawn out of the vortex of this busy world to sit in His company and, like Mary, to hear His word. However, the fact remains that if we *do* desire to be there, we must make time and allow the Lord to lead us in Spirit into that circle "where love's treasures are displayed".

When the Lord turned He did not ask them "Whom seek Ye?" but "What seek ye?"

Perhaps they were more occupied with the place than the Person. No doubt they were quite sure of the greatness of His Person, but desired that this wonderful Person might lead them into the circle where He dwelt. It would again intensify the fact that only such an One as He could lead us into that circle.

There can be no doubt, either, of the effect it had upon these two. If we do not know in terms what they saw, it so impressed Andrew that he went immediately to find his brother Simon to bring him there as well. Surely if we dwelt there more we, too, should be more anxious to bring others to where they also could obtain such blessing.

We may add that John also in his epistle presses that very point when he says, "And we have seen and

do testify that the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world" (1 John 4: 14). Dwelling in communion with the Son will add power to our testimony to Him, and would have an effect upon those to whom we speak, for the testimony would be in the warmth of divine affection.

Just one more question ere we close. Do these two who followed Jesus suggest the Assembly? We often hear it spoken of as a nucleus of the Assembly, whatever that may mean.

The word nucleus really means a centre around which other things revolve, though some have used the word when they mean a beginning. Christ is the Centre of the Assembly, not any two disciples. We may however speak of them as the beginning of the Christian company, for from this point others began to gather around our Lord. The change of Simon's name to Peter would have this in view, but it will be well to keep in mind in our readings on this gospel that John does not speak of the Assembly as such, nor of the various features of the Assembly, such as the Body of Christ, or the House of God. The body could only be formed after Christ was in glory, and the truth of it is taught in the epistles by Paul; but we do have suggestions both of the Assembly and the House in the other three gospels. John rather deals with the family and the flock of God.

What of John 12 where "they made Him a supper"? Have we not often heard that taken up as the Assembly responding to the Lord at the Lord's Supper?

It certainly is a lovely picture of loving hearts responding to the Lord. What we are dealing with at the moment is not applications but the teaching of this gospel. That the family and the flock are both composed of the people who form the Assembly is known to us all, but it is well to keep each feature in its own connection. Life, light, and love are the features which mark the company as presented by John, not administration and discipline as in the Assembly and the House. We cannot separate these things, but we can indicate the main teaching of any book or epistle. We shall see as we proceed in these readings that John speaks of divine life and nature made available through the incarnation of the Son, and we all need to be brought into the living gain of it.

John 3: 1-16

In our reading yesterday we were occupied with our Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, as anointed with the Holy Spirit in view of His service for God in this world. As thus anointed He revealed God in His nature, character and disposition as a God of love bent upon the salvation of His creature. This involved the Son of God's going to the cross as the Lamb of God to deal with the question of sin, in view of ultimately clearing the universe of its every trace. In the coming into Manhood of the Son of God both life and light were seen to be in Him, and both became available to men as a consequence. Thus the kingdom of God was revealed in Him; but although it was fully revealed, man in his natural state was unable either to see it or enter into it. In this gospel, the state of man as both dead and in darkness is emphasized. As morally *dead*, he does not want God, and as in *darkness* he does not know God. If men were to enter this kingdom an entirely new work of God must take place in their souls. This work is variously referred to as "born again", or "born of water and the Spirit", or "born of God". This work of God is the subject we are now considering. The opening verse of this chapter stands in contrast to the closing verse of chapter 2. Many believed on Him when they saw the miracles, or signs, which He did; convinced by these miracles they would have followed Him, but we read "But Jesus did not commit Himself unto them, because He knew all men, and needed not that any should testify of man; for He knew what was in man" (John 2: 24, 25). There is no moral or spiritual foundation in the soul of any man to which God will commit His spiritual blessings; all need to be born of God.

Do these verses suggest that Nicodemus was in some way different from those persons referred to at the end of chapter 2?

They do! For the chapter should really open with "*But* there was a man". This is in line with John 1: 11, 12, "He came unto His own, and His own received Him not. But as many as received Him", etc.. These were distinctive persons, of whom we are told in the next verse that they were born of God.

Is the Lord meeting Nicodemus on Jewish ground?

The necessity of being born again was pressed on the Jews lest they should think that they had right to the kingdom as of the stock of Abraham. The phrase "born again" does not appear to be used in reference to Gentiles. Of course, we need to be born of God if we are to see or enter the kingdom, but "born again" has special reference to Jews as such. It is doubtless on this account that the three negatives are brought into John 1: 13. "Which were born, not of blood" — that is, not of the nature of man, "nor of the will of the flesh" — that is, flesh was not the agent used to bring it about; "nor of the will of man" — that is, man was not the source of it. What is insisted upon in the verse is "Which were born . . . of God".

Was Nicodemus speaking for others as well as for himself?

It appears to be so! For the Pharisees were convinced that our Lord was the Sent One of God, as He could say to them, "Ye both know Me, and ye know whence I am" (John 7: 28).

What are the effects in the life of a person when new birth takes place?

New desires after God, coupled with the sense of having sinned against Him, which lead one to seek the forgiveness of sins and desire to be in possession of salvation!

Is there a difference between being "born again" and "being saved"?

One is preparatory to the other! In this chapter the two outstanding blessings of the kingdom are salvation and eternal life, but we could neither see nor desire these blessings till we were born of God.

Is being born of the Spirit the same thing as being sealed by the Spirit?

No! But the one leads to the other. There must be the initial work of new birth in our souls, and this appears to be enlarged as we go on, but *it must be there first*, as our Lord said, "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God". This word "again" means "anew", or "from the outset", and is the initial work in our souls, sealing would be its completion.

Is there not such a thing as instant conversion?

The work of new birth must be there first, however short or long the period may be before the one born anew enters the kingdom. The point here is not as to any length of time but the absolute necessity of this work in the soul if one is ever to see the salvation offered to him in the kingdom. I doubt if any man thoroughly understands that he is lost before this initial work takes place. Men may have the sense that they are not right with God, but to have the deep conscious knowledge of being *lost* is one of the first effects of being born of God. It was this which gave each of us to see our need of salvation; we knew we did not possess it, but we kept on until we found it. Then, after receiving salvation, we were sealed by the Spirit, which would be the completion of the work. Let us never think that when God begins a work He will not finish it, but it is the *beginning* which is in view here, and it leads on to believing in the gospel of our salvation.

We had no more to do with this new birth than we had with our natural birth.

That is very evident here! Indeed, one has grown to be very thankful that it was *all of God* in His sovereign love. As being all of Himself, it is bound to be perfect and abiding.

Would you enlarge a little on the thought of the sovereignty of God? Some have thought that they were born again *after* believing the gospel.

How could that be when our Lord says they could not even *see* the kingdom until they were born anew? Paul evidently had some such thought in mind when he said, "For God, Who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts" (2 Cor. 4: 6). All began with divine intervention, not by human appropriation.

Do any other New Testament writers speak of new birth?

Yes! Both James and Peter refer to it. James perhaps uses the stronger terms, and leaves us in no doubt that it is sovereign. "Of *His own will* begat He us with the word of truth" (James 1: 18). It was not when *we* willed to be saved, but when *God* willed. Peter has more before him the thought of agents -the Spirit and the Word; while John has both the source, as in James, and the agents, as in Peter, but also adds what it is as seen in result. "That which is born of the Spirit is spirit" (v. 6). If the kingdom is spiritual, then we must have a new spiritual nature in order to enter into it.

Why did our Lord speak of seeing the kingdom in verse 3, and then of entering it in verse 5?

Seeing was the initial effect in us, and led us to accept the Word of the Gospel, but I have come to regard entering the kingdom as being sealed by the Spirit. Both the water and the Spirit were necessary in order to bring about this work, but how could anyone be in the kingdom before being sealed by the Spirit? This may not be generally held as the meaning of this verse, but I have come to regard it as being so, and offer it for consideration. There is obviously a reason for the change from *seeing* to *entering*, and this involves the reception of the Spirit, for as in the kingdom we are in possession of salvation and eternal life. Could we have either apart from having the Spirit in our souls?

The persons mentioned at the end of John 2 saw the Lord as a worker of miracles only. The spiritual kingdom manifested in Him was beyond them. All they could see was the great effect of these works; what was spiritual was utterly beyond them although it was demonstrated before their eyes.

That is why we are told that both light and life were brought into this world by the Son of God as coming into Manhood. Men were both morally dead and in the dark, and needed to be born of God so that they might both see and live. Unconverted men do not believe they are blind, and certainly do not believe that they are dead, but we know that we were in such condition before the work of God in our souls.

Say a little more about the agents which God uses in this work — the water and the Spirit.

Water is a well known reference to the Word in its cleansing efficacy. Whenever we have water in *movement* in the Old Testament the Spirit is in view, as in the smitten rock and in the springing well. This is referred to in John chapter 4. When water is used in its *cleansing* character, as in the laver and in the water of separation, the Word of God is in view. Hence these two agents would suggest that the Spirit uses the Word to cleanse us in the springs of our being by begetting a nature which sin can never defile. So much so that John in His epistle speaks of the believer as one that cannot sin. We know he is viewing this work in an abstract way, but the new nature in a believer cannot sin. We see how the Word is typified by water in our Lord's own words to His disciples, "Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you" (John 15: 3).

When the thief on the cross said, "Lord, remember me when Thou comest into Thy kingdom", was he

thinking of this kingdom?

Not in the aspect which is in view here. The kingdom is spoken of under at least ten different titles, and no doubt the malefactor had the kingdom of God in its earthly display in the world to come in mind. In John 3 the Lord was speaking of the heavenly and spiritual side of the kingdom. It is of course the same kingdom, for there is only one, but it is not always viewed in the same way. This kingdom is now established in the power of the Spirit, and has the character mentioned in Romans 14: 17, "For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost".

Speaking again of the word which the Spirit uses, can we always be sure when that word was spoken, or when it was received by us?

I am sure we cannot! Someone has said the Word of God is productive, referring to the Sower with the seed, but it is only productive in an honest and good heart, and such a heart is found in one born of God. Some Word of God has entered our hearts, it may have been in our early days. This gave us an honest and good heart, and the time came when we believed the gospel, but it was God who had prepared our hearts for its reception.

Why did the Lord say that Nicodemus ought to have known this? To what was He referring?

It is generally understood to be Ezekiel 36: 25-30. Indeed, had we mentioned that point earlier, we should have seen the import of the water and the Spirit, for both are referred to there. The sprinkling of the clean water in the day to come will be through the prophetic word of the remnant. This the Spirit will use to prepare them for the reception of the New Covenant, and along with that they will receive the gift of the Spirit, and will thus receive power to walk in the good of the spiritual realities mentioned. Whilst it was that chapter which the Lord had in mind in speaking to Nicodemus, the Spirit and the Word are with us today, not to prepare us for a place in the land under the New Covenant, but to bring us into the present enjoyment of eternal life in fellowship with the Father and the Son. Nicodemus as the teacher in Israel ought at least to have known of the necessity of such a work if man was to be blessed of God.

In line with what you are saying, were the Old Testament saints born of God?

They were! But they did not see the things which we see. You remember that the Lord told His disciples that very thing, for this was an aspect of the kingdom the Jews knew nothing of, nor did they know the greatness of the Person Who brought it in.

Does not John in his epistle speak on this line?

You have in mind his reference to Abel as the first of the line of those born of God. He is used by the Spirit to indicate the three salient features of those born of God. They are righteousness, obedience, and love. He speaks of new birth some ten times in his first epistle, thus indicating the features of the family of God, and he mentions Abel as the first of the children of God. Need we add again that while he was one of the children of God he did not know what we may know, nor did he possess the blessings that are available to us. Yet he was certainly born of God, as all who stood in divine favour were.

When do you think Nicodemus entered the kingdom?

I would not venture an answer to that. He is referred to three times in the gospel, in chapters 3, 7 and 19. Perhaps the first feature of the children of God was seen actively in him in John 7 when he said, "Doth our law judge any man, before it hear him, and know what he doeth?" (v. 51). *Righteousness* was beginning to assert itself in him. Later when he came out definitely on the side of the Lord and assisted in His burial, *love* was in evidence. Can we doubt that he was then in the kingdom? We must of course

remember that all was in prospect when the Lord was speaking to him in John 3, for the blessings bestowed upon those entering into this kingdom could only be true of them after His resurrection, and by the gift of the Spirit. Nevertheless the teaching is here, and it is certainly seen functioning today.

Would Nicodemus be looking for the kingdom in the same aspect as that in which the thief on the cross was viewing it?

He must have been! And perhaps thought of obtaining a place of eminence in it. So far as the earthly side was concerned he was of the right birth according to flesh, but he was favoured to hear of the kingdom in an aspect greater than that presented by the prophets. He had to learn that flesh could have no part in this, however good and of the right generation that flesh might be. No one can transmute flesh into spirit, and hence he has to learn that in order to enter this kingdom he must be born again. We might have pointed out earlier that this word "again" is the same word as that translated "above" in verse 31, and has the thought of being something entirely new from an entirely new source, and not derived from "our father Abraham", however much Nicodemus might have prized it as such.

If new birth is a sovereign work of God, why do we continue to preach the gospel?

Let us hear what Peter has to say on that matter! He tells us, "Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the Word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever . . . and this is the Word which by the gospel is preached unto you" (1 Peter 1: 23, 25). Again, we have the Lord's own word, "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth; so is every one that is born of the Spirit" (v. 8). So we go on preaching the Word, and the Spirit continues to use it, although we may not know how or when He does so. The effect is evident when the gospel is believed.

It may help to point out that the word "ye" in verse 7 is plural, and others as well as Nicodemus were in mind; that would confirm what was said as to Israel, who are undoubtedly in view in Ezekiel 36.

Would it be right to preach new birth in the gospel or rather to preach "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ"?

Why contrast these things? If the Lord spoke to Nicodemus about new birth why cannot we do the same? We have often contrasted this with what was said to the woman in the next chapter, but what the Lord said in both chapters is right in its place. Surely we may preach from this chapter, not from design as the Lord did, but because it is laid on our hearts to do so. We should not hesitate to tell people that they need to be born again. In any case, they do need to be. Nicodemus was doubtless making a move towards God, and he was told by the Lord that entirely new conditions were necessary before he could receive the blessing which He had come to offer. The fact that Nicodemus did not understand it did not make it any the less a necessity, and it is just as essential today if men are to be brought into blessing.

What do we receive upon entering the kingdom?

Liberation from the bondage of sin, which is salvation; and the conscious knowledge of relationship with the Father and the Son, which is eternal life!

What about the forgiveness of sins?

There is no doubt that we have forgiveness, but it is not the teaching here. Salvation is an absolute necessity if we are to enjoy eternal life, and that is why it is spoken of here. We do not have the word forgiveness in this gospel, although remission is once referred to. That truth was given to the apostles to administer in the laying of the foundation of Christianity. The last word the Lord said to His disciples ere turning in mind to the Father was, "I have overcome the world" (John 16: 33). In John 17:

2 He says, "that He should give eternal life to as many as Thou hast given Him". Comparing this with 1 John 5: 5, we read "Who is he that overcometh the world?", and then the apostle goes on to speak of the three witnesses in order to assure us that we have eternal life. Does it not seem to show that if we are to enjoy eternal life we must overcome this world? I am not speaking of the *possession* of eternal life, but the *enjoyment* of it. No doubt that is why salvation is spoken of as being a necessity if the other outstanding blessing of the kingdom is to be enjoyed, for as another has said, "eternal life is an out-of-the-world condition of things".

We sometimes sing, "Thou dost make us taste the blessing, soon to fill a world of bliss", Is that what we have now in the kingdom?

The kingdom of God is the sphere wherein the will of God is supreme, and as having bowed to His will the benefits of the kingdom are ours!

So that everything in the kingdom is spiritual?

As presented here, yes! We have already quoted Romans 14 in confirmation of that.

Why does the Lord go on to speak of the Brazen Serpent?

New Birth is a work done *in* us, and the Brazen Serpent speaks of a work done *for* us. The work in our souls would not have availed to bring us into that kingdom, had not the question of sin been settled at the cross. That work gave God the liberty to bring us into blessing, and accomplish His will righteously. Have we not often heard these two truths put together? "*Ye must be born again*", and "even so *must* the Son of Man be lifted up". We are born of God by the work of the Spirit, and are brought to God by the work of the Son. Consequently we have salvation and eternal life.

Do you consider eternal life to be a heavenly matter?

I do! For the Lord spoke of it after referring to what is heavenly. New Birth will yet prepare Israel to enjoy eternal life on the earth in the world to come, but we have been born again to have eternal life in heavenly conditions and relationships. That is why the Lord speaks of eternal life after telling Nicodemus He was going to speak of heavenly things.

The Brazen Serpent was introduced at the end of the wilderness journey, not at the beginning. Would that have a bearing on the Lord's speaking of it here?

I am sure it would! The Brazen Serpent came in to prepare them to cross the Jordan, and it was the new generation that went over, so we come in on the line of the new generation and go in to possess the heavenly inheritance which is seen here as the circle of divine life, and light, and love. In type, the Brazen Serpent was the judgment of God on the root — sin. As a result, a new nature is formed in us, and in this we are in touch with God, and by it we live in the enjoyment of all that Christ has brought to us. It was first revealed in His life in this world, then He went to the cross to deal with sin, so that we might be brought into the circle where love's treasures are displayed.

At the beginning of this meeting you distinguished between new birth and salvation. Now you are distinguishing between salvation and eternal life. Could we put these together in this order, first new birth bringing us into salvation, and as the result of salvation we are brought into eternal life?

In the well known verse, John 3: 16, "should not perish" is certainly first stated, then "but have everlasting life" follows. I would suggest that instead of one being the outcome of the other, they all stand together as the complete effect of the work of the Spirit in our souls and the work of Christ upon the cross, to bring us into the kingdom and thus into these blessings. It is right to distinguish these

important truths one from another, but it may be dangerous to separate them.

We get in verse 15 the words "eternal life", and in verse 16 "everlasting life". Are these different, or do they mean the same thing?

They are both the same word! We may add that eternal life is the power by which we live in communion with the Father and with the Son, but while it is of this character it is nevertheless everlasting, that is, it will never end. Salvation delivers us from the power of this world, and eternal life empowers us to live in a new spiritual world. New of course to us, but not new in itself, for it is the realm in which the Son has ever lived in unbroken communion with the Father. We have now been brought into this realm, where we are enabled to live to the Father and to the Son in the power of the Holy Spirit. May we know what it is to live there continuously.

John 4: 13-26.

We have already seen that the Spirit working in our souls is the only power by which we can enter the kingdom of God. We further saw that the matter was not complete until the sealing of the Spirit, when the fruit of what is fundamental is seen in a new nature capable of apprehending the things of God, and ultimately, based upon that foundation, we find ourselves at liberty and at home in the divine circle. It is as sealed by the Spirit that we enjoy the blessing and liberty for which new birth prepares us. In the section which we have read, the *gift* of the Spirit, as additional to new birth, is brought before us leading us, as we shall see, into the full enjoyment of eternal life, and into what is perhaps the highest point of our calling today — the worship of the Father in spirit and truth. The chapter itself is well known to all; we have selected the portion relating to the Lord's dealings with the woman of Samaria, and that which came to light as a consequence.

It is apparent that this incident is outside the confines of Judæa.

I think so. We may wonder, and yet not wonder, at the way the Lord speaks in chapters 3 and 4. To Nicodemus (whose name means "Champion of the world") who was "the teacher of Israel", the Lord opened up the question of new birth; whereas to this woman, who was doubtless much further down morally than Nicodemus, He speaks of the blessedness of worshipping the Father in spirit and in truth. If we look at these incidents from the divine standpoint, we shall understand the divine wisdom manifested in dealing with them. The fact that this question of worship was raised in Samaria (which is distant from Jerusalem) indicates how detached the worship of the Father was from the system of Judaism.

The presentation of the Spirit in this chapter is that of living water. Again there is the assumption of some knowledge of Old Testament teaching. We read in Numbers, "Sprinkle water of purification upon them", and we have gathered from the types that where water in its cleansing efficacy is used, that is clean water, the Word of God is typified. On the other hand, where water is seen in a living or moving character, the Spirit of God is typified. We have that which answers to the Brazen Serpent in John 3, and the answer to the Springing Well in John 4. It is only when the complete setting aside of man after the flesh is realized that the introduction of that which is altogether spiritual can be appreciated. New birth entirely displaces man after the flesh, and the foundation that is laid in one born of God has in view the reception of the Spirit as living water.

Did you say that you connected this with the sealing of the Spirit?

It is really the gift of the Spirit, whether we view it as the Sealing, or the Anointing, or the Earnest. We are using the term "the gift of the Spirit" as referring to a divine Person resident in us. In new birth we

do not quite get the full truth of the Spirit as a divine Person dwelling in our souls; it is rather the work which leads on to that. The work is not completed until we have the Spirit as a divine Person dwelling within and that is what is before us in this chapter.

We are conscious of new birth, but are we conscious of being sealed by the Spirit?

When "sealing" is mentioned the Spirit Himself is referred to, He is the Seal. New birth is something that the Spirit of God *produces*, but the sealing is the Spirit of God *Himself* dwelling in each one of us as the Earnest of the inheritance. It has been said that the seal is a mark, but it is more than a mark, it is the Spirit Himself. We are sealed by His Spirit.

We read in Ephesians 1: 13, "After that ye heard the Word of Truth, the gospel of your salvation . . . ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise". Does that bring us to the point in Romans 8 that we see what entering into salvation really is?

In Romans 8 the truth is presented on our side for our deliverance and for liberty to walk in the things of God; here it is presented on the divine side in order to produce in us something for the pleasure of God Himself, the worship of the Father.

I can see from Romans that God moves towards us in grace for our blessing; here the Spirit is not only bringing us into liberty and the consciousness of blessing, but is producing vessels capable of moving here for the pleasure of the Father.

You do not think that any time elapses between the receiving of the gospel of our salvation and the sealing of the Spirit?

The Word is "After that ye have believed". How long after has often been debated. I doubt if we could know that our sins are forgiven apart from the Spirit of God, because it is the Spirit who gives us assurance as dwelling in our souls. It has been said that it depends upon *what* you believe. What Scripture simply states it, "After that ye have believed", and we are bound to agree that whatever may have been proceeding in our souls, liberty and enjoyment can only be known as the Spirit of God takes up His abode there.

These things may take place in us long before we are aware of them. When we read the Word of God we learn what God has done, and that He has given us His Spirit so that we may enter into these things. John 3 would show what the Spirit of God has been doing in us, but in this chapter we have Him as indwelling, and we are thus enabled to have our part in the service of worshipping God.

Three things are apparent in the verses we have read — Judaism in responsibility and what it was capable of producing; Gentiles in infidelity and what they had produced; and thirdly what the Spirit of God produces. It is not now a question of "this mountain", or of "Jerusalem"; there is a completely new order with a new divine centre.

There is nothing really for God except that which is produced in us by the Holy Spirit. Divine teaching gives us the light of what is ours, in order that we might more intelligently enjoy it and respond to it. The Lord gives it to us by the Holy Spirit, and then shows us from the Word what He has given to us by the Spirit.

There is one more point that may help. We understand food to be that which sustains; whereas drink has the imparting of satisfaction in view. So we have the Lord's Words, "whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again", it could not give complete satisfaction; "But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst".

The contrast is between material things and spiritual things; material things come very far short of satisfying. However much we may accumulate in the way of material things they cannot, in themselves, give satisfaction.

We have often spoken to one another of what we call "the region of satisfied desire". We reach that sphere as appropriating this living water which springs up into everlasting life.

Perhaps we spend too much time over the explanation of these truths instead of appropriating them in the Spirit's power. The blessed God is seeking worshippers, and He gives us the Spirit as the power which enables us to respond to His desire.

We cannot doubt that the gift of the Spirit is in view, although the word speaks rather of the effect. Verse 14 really reads, "shall become in him a fountain of water". That is what will be produced; it is not exactly a well, it is a *fountain springing up*, radiant, fresh, spontaneous, springing up into eternal life. The Spirit is *in* us, but He is here to lead us *into* something further, that is into the realm where the Father is known as revealed in the Son, and where we are brought into communion with both the Father and the Son. The object of the Holy Spirit is to attract and attach us to heavenly things.

We learn these things slowly, but we find that along with the many blessings presented to us in the New Testament, the objective sphere to which they belong is also mentioned. Take, for instance, the truth in relation to quickening; Scripture does not just say that we have been quickened, but adds that we have been quickened with Christ, which shows the objective side of the truth. We have spoken of being sealed by the Spirit, and the first chapter of Corinthians shows that in that sealing we are firmly attached to Christ. It is important to see the objective side of the truth, and that while we have the subjective power of the Spirit, it is that we may know the blessedness of being attached to this divine circle where the things of God are known in the Son.

Why do you stress the word, "it shall become in him a fountain of water"?

What is in mind is the effect that will be produced as the result of the Spirit dwelling in us. He would bring us into this wonderful circle of eternal life.

We might have Mount Gerizim on the one hand, or Jerusalem on the other, one a system where God is not known at all, and the other a system where God was but partially known; in neither place could there be known this wonderful light and life and freedom. It is ever the product of the Spirit of God, and enjoyed only in an entirely new position.

The fountain suggests life and refreshment, and that surely is what we need in a world where everything is marked by death and barrenness. True satisfaction can be produced only by the Holy Spirit who dwells in us, therefore do you think we should press the point of the Spirit being *in* the believer?

We often speak of the difference between what we *possess* and our *enjoyment* of it. The Old Testament speaks of a day to come when Jacob "shall possess their possessions" (Obadiah 17). These things of which we speak are true of every saint of God, but how many of us know them and enjoy them is another matter.

As having the Spirit we have the divine power within us in order that we might move intelligently in that spiritual sphere to which he would lead us.

Does the thought of springing up into eternal life suggest that heavenly things have been made available to men, and that a response in worship is secured to God? That is, they spring up to the source from whence they came.

That is why we introduced the thought of the objective side of eternal life; God does not give us anything in a detached way at all; everything that He has given to us is to attach us to the scene from whence it comes. That is surely true of all the blessings God has given to us.

As we consider further the details of the chapter, we see that there is much more involved than this woman's moral condition, and the way in which the Lord meets it, important as that is. The Lord is using the opportunity to present deeper things. Her state is manifested, and she realizes how unfit she is for what the Lord is making known to her. He was reaching her conscience as she says "I perceive that Thou art a prophet".

Apparently she had some desire for what the Lord spoke of. There seemed to be something that had won her heart to the Lord Himself.

Does the fifteenth verse suggest that she had perceived that the water the Lord spoke of was different from the water she had come to draw?

She is slowly learning, but her one desire at the moment was to find water that would so satisfy that she need not draw from the well again. What I like to take out of this verse is that the Lord had first of all created a desire in the woman's heart, and then He showed her how that desire could be satisfied.

Do you think the gift mentioned in verse 10 is the gift of the Spirit?

I thought it was! "If thou knewest the gift of God". Some may say that it involves the Lord Himself. We could not have the Spirit apart from the coming of Christ, but the gift here, as in line with the teaching, would doubtless be the Spirit of God.

We get both in the verse, "and *who* it is that saith to thee"; that is the Lord Himself. He is the only One from whom this gift is obtained.

It would seem that this woman was not entirely ignorant of God. Perhaps she knew something of a demanding God, but a giving God was new to her, as it was at one time to all of us.

We do not know the kind of worship which was practised in Mount Gerizim; we do know the kind of worship which went on in Jerusalem. It may be, as you say, that she had been accustomed to a system of demand which all were utterly unable to meet. Now she is in the presence of One Who has the supply of something infinitely greater, and He creates a desire in her heart for it. I feel sure, on the ground of what we saw in our previous reading, that a work had begun in this woman's heart which led her on step by step until at last she was found in the company of the Saviour of the world.

The desire is produced, and then the fountain is reached.

One of the first effects of being born of God is that we are awakened to our lost estate. Verse 19 shows that the word was reaching her conscience.

Is this a matter which involves having to do with the Lord privately as this woman did?

Indeed it is individual! That is the thought which runs through these chapters; Nicodemus in the dark alone with the Lord; here this woman is alone by the well with the Lord; and these are matters which none of us can truly learn except as alone with the Lord Himself.

Is it important to notice the change in the place of worship?

Yes! The two things that come to light in relation to worship are the change of place, and the change of character. A worship of God by the use of material means was seen in Judaism, but it brought no satisfaction either to God or man.

Why do you think it mentions in verse 21, "Woman, believe Me, the hour cometh", and in verse 23 it mentions, "the hour cometh, and now is"?

The Lord was speaking of what was coming, but in so far as He was concerned in His own person *it had come*. We know that this teaching had the day of Pentecost in view when the Spirit Himself actually came, but the new system was being brought into being by the Son of God Himself. He was the beginning of it.

The introduction of the name of Father would be a new thing to this woman!

It would! And referring again to what has been said as to worship by material means, we see today those who will go back to what is external ceremonial in the worship of God. There can be no satisfaction in it, either for God or for the saints.

True worship must be in the Spirit. There is no substitute for the Spirit of God.

There is not! And if we abandon what is spiritual we are bound to bring in a substitute, and it is useless so far as the worship of God is concerned.

"The hour cometh, and now is"; has that any reference to the two days the Lord spent there (v. 40)?

We have often connected the two, but I believe it covers the whole period we are in today.

The first two chapters of John are introductory, and the last two chapters are supplementary. The three days of the first two chapters have an answer in the three appearances in the last two chapters. You will find the dispensational setting in those chapters but in this day, which we can rightly call the Spirit's day, the greatest result is being produced by the Spirit in the light and liberty of the knowledge of God as Father, and in consequence true worship is produced.

In the ninth chapter of John the place in which the man who had been blind worshipped, was *outside* of Jerusalem.

Very good! He was outside the place of merely ritual worship, but he found the Person who alone could speak of worship which is in spirit and in truth.

Now it is important to see that the Lord did not introduce the subject of worship in John 4, it was the woman who introduced it. Her conscience had been reached, and almost instinctively it occurs to her that God ought to be worshipped. I believe this thought lies in some measure in the heart of every man, whether they respond to it or not.

We often meet those who talk about worship, but have no true idea of what it is.

The truth is brought to light by the Word; it is the Word that searches this woman, but it is not searching her merely to condemn her, it was to extricate her from the place in which she was, and bring her into something infinitely better. We can, each of us, thank God for the measure in which this is so with ourselves.

When the Lord confronted her with things that she would have liked kept dark, and told her all things that ever she did, she says, "Sir, I perceive that Thou art a prophet". That would be the result of divine revelation.

Yes! God is careful in His selection of worshippers. There must first be the removal of all that which would hinder, and we see this in the Lord's dealings with this woman. God's ways are wonderful.

Not only are worshippers in mind, but that which is to characterize *true worship* is coming to light. The word "true" means "*genuine*"; it is a word much used by John, the genuine Light; the genuine Bread,

and the genuine Vine.

It is sometimes said that the highest form of worship is in silence.

The conclusion most of us have come to is that worship does not necessarily consist in what is said, but in the attitude of heart. But if the heart is filled with a sense of worship we could hardly understand the lips being silent. Doubtless there is often with the sisters, who are enjoined to be silent, a very real spirit of true worship. In John 12 we do not read of Mary saying anything, but the whole house was filled with the fragrance of her appreciation of Christ.

In 2 Chronicles 29 there is a scene recorded in which "all the congregation worshipped" (v. 28); it ends with the whole company falling on their faces and worshipping. "The king and all that were present with him bowed themselves, and worshipped" (v. 29). They were filled with a sense of the glory of God.

It is an appreciation of the worth of the Person which produces worship. The woman said, "Come, see a Man, which told me all things that ever I did; is not this the Christ?" She appreciated who He was. The man in the ninth chapter when conscious of being in the presence of the Son of God "worshipped Him".

Two important things are brought together in this chapter — spirit and truth. There were those in the Old Testament on whom the Spirit came, but they never reached the height of worshipping the Father "in spirit and in truth". John in his writings often uses the word "truth". It is a word which would convey the thought of divine revelation. There are only three things, so far as we are aware, that are said to be The Truth. The Lord Himself said, "I am the way, The Truth and the life" (John 14: 6); then in John 17: 17 speaking to the Father He says, "Thy Word is Truth"; and in John's first epistle John 5 we read "The Spirit of Truth". These are the three things that are said to be "Truth", and they would involve the revelation of divine Persons.

We have been dwelling on the details relating to the woman, and how she was searched; do we not also see the way in which the Father is revealed to her?

Some contend that the Father only is to be worshipped, but is not the Son to be worshipped too?

We all agree with that! We see from John 5, that the Son is to be honoured as the Father is honoured. The man in John 9 fell down at the feet of the Lord and did Him homage.

It has been said that the Lord leads our praise to the Father. Can it be equally said that He leads our worship to the Father?

In the epistle to the Hebrews we have the true worshippers mentioned. We are, through grace, among the true worshippers who once purged have no more conscience of sins. We certainly could not be there except as in company with the Son of God.

My difficulty is this — you have One worshipping the Father who is equal with the Father; could the Son be spoken of as worshipping?

The Son abides in Manhood, and we read "In the midst of the church will I sing praise unto Thee" (Hebrews 2: 12).

In the temptation in the wilderness did not the Lord as in Manhood apply the word to Himself, "Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve" (Luke 4: 8)?

Is it not in relation to Christ in Manhood in connection with the Assembly, that we have the expression, "Unto Him (God) be glory in the church by Christ Jesus"? Does it not suggest that glory will always

reach the Father through the Son?

We are dealing with what is perhaps a rather difficult question. There are things connected with the Lord in Manhood which are beyond our finite minds; for instance, why should the Lord pray? But that marked Him here as in Manhood.

Would you not think that the Lord's present place in glory somewhat alters that? We cannot think of the Lord in glory praying for His own personal needs as He did on earth; His testimony in glory seems to have altered that, and personally I cannot see that the Scriptures support the thought that He worships the Father.

We have carefully stressed the point that the Lord *has come into Manhood*; He has taken a place in subjection to the Father that He will never surrender throughout all eternity, and hence when we see Him as identified in this way with the Assembly, we must note what Scripture says. In fact He says it Himself prophetically, and it is quoted in Hebrews 2, not in relation to Christ as in this world, but as in the glory, "In the midst of the church will I sing praise unto Thee".

Although I cannot explain the verse quoted from Hebrews, I would still hesitate to say that the Lord is a worshipper of the Father. He was the dependent, praying Man here, and His trust was in God. But I would not say that of Him in His present position.

The Lord does praise God as we see from Matthew 11, but perhaps worship is another matter.

We must make it perfectly clear that we are viewing the Lord in Manhood, not as in co-equality with the Father in Deity.

What is the difference between what we have in John 4 and Philippians 3, where we read "We are the circumcision, which worship God in the Spirit"?

Philippians stresses the contrast between the formal worship of Judaism, and the true worship which is by the Spirit of God. In our chapter the power that produces the worship is in view.

God whom we know as Father, is said to be spirit (verse 24) hence "They that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth".

And then there is one further point. The only One who could possibly make this known is He who said "I that speak unto thee am He". If when the Lord said "The hour cometh, and now is", it was at that moment only true so far as He Himself was concerned, yet the blessedness of it is to be known and entered into today in the power of the Spirit of God.

John 14: 15-27.

We saw in our first reading something of the greatness of the descent of the Spirit of God to abide on the Son of God for the purpose, no doubt, of the revelation in His perfect Manhood of God as Father. In John 3 we saw the work of the Spirit of God on our side, preparing us for the reception of and response to the truth that has come to light in the Son of God, and bringing us into a realm wherein we have salvation and eternal life. Then in John 4 we considered the Spirit in the character of "living water", an evident allusion to the springing well in Numbers 21. He, the Spirit of God, has the power to lift us out of man's world and its material systems and make us know what it is to live in that spiritual sphere where the Father and the Son are at home. In the section we have now read, where we have the last words of the Son of God ere He left this world, we have the Spirit brought before us as the Teacher, both in regard to that which came to light in our Lord while He was in this world, and also to the

further truths that could only be made known after He had taken His place in heaven above. Hence the Lord is here preparing His own for His departure, and for the coming of the Holy Spirit who would continue that which came to light in the Son, in order that it might be made good in the hearts of the saints.

Would the words "another Comforter" give us to understand that the Lord was going away?

Yes! The word "Comforter" is "Paraclete", which means "One that is alongside to help". The Lord had been with them visibly to instruct and guide them into divine things; when He left this scene another divine Person came, the Spirit of God not seen but dwelling in them, that He might continue the work that the Son of God had begun in them when He was here in this world.

The first fourteen verses of the chapter give the objective side of the truth as seen in the Son of God; the subjective side seems to be in view in the verses we have now read. The first statement is "If ye love Me, keep My commandments". That is, the proof of our love to Him is seen in a walk corresponding to His own desires for us. Whilst we often regard this special commandment as distinct from the ten commandments in Exodus 20, yet we must ever remember that His injunctions are binding upon us, and we are willing that they should be so. Love would always command such things as would not harm us, but would give us delight in the doing of them.

John in his epistle gives the double affirmation as to how we know Him, "Hereby we do know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments".

Is there any difference between the Lord's commandments and His words?

Yes! There are certain things that are communicated to us as divine enlightenment, and there are other things communicated to us by way of commandment that are binding upon us if we are to enjoy in its fullness the love and the blessedness of this divine circle. There must be obedience to Him and to what we know to be His mind, as well as the receiving of divine communications by way of enlightenment. We may seek to take the edge of this word "commandment", but if the Lord's love appeals to us as it ought to do, every request that He makes would be binding upon our affections. We may call it the compulsion of divine love.

The Lord had the disciples themselves before Him at this point; this was something new in regard to the things of God.

That is so! "I will pray" (v. 16) is the word used in John 17, where the Son is praying to the Father. It is not the word which implies the begging of a favour, but is rather the asking of a person of status equal to that of the one from whom he asks. "I will ask the Father"; it was something necessary for the fulfilment of divine counsel. The Lord is seen here as moving in the realm of the accomplishment of the Father's will, and with a view to that will being accomplished it was necessary that the Spirit should be given in the absence of the Son.

It is important to realize *Who* it is that asks. In verse 16 the "I" is emphatic; the Lord alone could introduce this new thing.

We see the absolute necessity for the coming of the Holy Spirit if what we have in these chapters is to be carried on in the power of God; it could not be done otherwise.

That would be why it says "That He may abide with you for ever".

It was a necessity so far as the Son was concerned that he should leave this world and go back to the Father, as we read in the beginning of John 13; but the Spirit abides with us in order that He may make

good in us that which came to light in the Son, and which could only be fully known after He had gone back to the Father.

Is it not in contrast to the Old Testament where David said, "Take not Thy Holy Spirit from me" (Psalm 51: 11)?

What marks the present day is that the Spirit has come to take up His abode in the saints in relation to an *external* condition of things. He is said to be "the Spirit of Truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth Him not". Men of the world are not born of God, hence they are absolutely bound to the material sphere. Whilst it does not say that we see Him, it does say we "know Him". There is already in our souls that which is the work of the Spirit, and as He takes up His abode in our hearts as the Comforter, we are conscious that He is there, we "know Him".

"He abides with you and shall be in you" (v. 17 New Trans.). Does that refer to the present time and does it also continue for ever?

The time would come when the Son would be in them, but that time had not then come; the Son could be in them only in the power of the Spirit. Nevertheless, the Lord does speak of the Father and Himself manifesting Themselves to the saints. Such words are not spoken of the Spirit, He is here in our hearts and *He is here to stay*.

When the Lord said "I am coming to you" (v. 18 New Trans.) it suggests that He is to be characterized by this attitude of coming to His own and making His presence known to them, as He surely does on occasions like the present.

One of the outstanding characteristics of the day in which we live is that the Spirit of God has come into our hearts and He will *never leave us*. The Lord had been in their midst, and He was about to leave them. In fact He is today in heaven above, but He comes into the midst of His own as assembled together, and that I understand is the bearing of the expression "I am coming to you".

The disciples did not actually receive the Spirit of God as indwelling until Pentecost, did they?

That is right in the corporate sense, but He did breathe on them in resurrection (John 20). What we have in our chapter is that the Lord was about to leave them. He said, "I go to the Father"; but having gone to the Father He would send down the Spirit and the Spirit would not leave them. I believe that in the power of the Spirit dwelling in their hearts they would become sensible as to visitations from the Lord. "I will not leave you orphans, I am coming to you". He is to be characterized a making these visitations.

Would such coming be realized in the power of the Spirit?

That is one of the great advantages we have in the gift of the Spirit of God, we are made sensible of the Lord's presence amongst us.

When would you say that this "I am coming to you" commenced?

I think it commenced in Acts 2. When they came together to break bread they had the realization of the Lord's presence with them in their midst. The coming referred to is, I believe, collective. Only in the power of the Spirit do we have the realization of the Lord's presence with us as we are assembled together.

In verse 19 we have the expression "Ye see Me", and also "Ye shall live"; and at the beginning of verse 20, "Ye shall know". There is no doubt that the disciples did actually see the Lord raised again from among the dead, and we also have received divine illumination in relation to the Lord's being so raised.

It is true that the Lord Himself comes to us, but it is only in the power of the Spirit of God that we realize that He is there. The Spirit is not here to draw attention to Himself, but to make us conscious of the Lord's presence. In that way He is here as serving the Lord, even as the Son was here as serving the Father.

We need to distinguish between the Spirit's dwelling in each of us individually, and His service in making us, as together, conscious of the Lord's presence with us.

God said to Moses, "My Spirit shall go with thee", he was to realize that God was present with him, although not visible to him. Paul on one occasion, when things were very dark, said "Nevertheless the Lord stood by me"; he was conscious that the Lord was there.

Those incidents relate to individual service and testimony, but what we have in this section is a company to whom the Spirit of God has come, so that in relation to that company the interests of the Father and of the Son might be maintained in the hearts of the saints.

Verse 21 would suggest that the gain of these manifestations is consequent upon our having and keeping His commandments.

Yes! There is what is collective in His coming to us, but there is also that which is individual. It is not *every* individual that gets a manifestation, nor is it *every* company that is conscious of His visitation. If we are keeping His commandments, and are moving in subjection to His will, assembling together according to His mind, then we shall be conscious of His presence with us, but not otherwise, although we still have the Spirit indwelling each of us as believers.

In verse 17 we have the introduction of the Spirit as the Spirit of Truth. The Spirit is thus seen in relation to the Truth in order to make it attractive and intelligible to the saints.

The things mentioned in verse 20 are available for our enjoyment today. Would reference to "at that day" suggest that what we enjoy now was not enjoyed by the disciples?

The fullness of it was not known at that precise moment because the Spirit had not yet come, but He is here today. "At that day" refers to the wonderful day which began at the coming of the Spirit as seen in Acts 2. Thus we have the preciousness of the three things mentioned in that verse, "I am in My Father, and ye in Me, and I in you".

How do we enjoy the presence of the Father and the love of the Father?

Because we are in the Son who is in the Father. It is the making good to us of all that has come to light in divine revelation. "In My Father" carries with it the thought of relationship. The Son would draw us into the conscious enjoyment of the Father's heart and the Father's own presence. We are in the Son Who is in the Father.

We have a very important clause at the end of the 19th verse, "because I live ye shall live also".

The expression "but ye see Me" would suggest that the disciples were able to realize what follows in perhaps a much fuller way, but we may thank God that the spiritual answer to every one of these things has been made good in our souls in the Spirit's power.

Whilst eternal life is not mentioned here we have it in substance, do we not?

I am quite sure of that! It would be conveyed in the words that we are in the Son, and that the Son is in us.

Verse 21 would refer to what is individual. The company would be in view in verses 15 to 20, and the

Lord's presence among them. They would be capable of realizing His presence by the Spirit dwelling in them. Now we have a further thought regarding the individuals who compose the company, and a further blessing is in view, but once again it is conditional. "He that hath My commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth Me". It has been said that if verse 15 is the *outcome* of love, verse 21 is the *proof* of that love. The one who keeps His commandments is the one who demonstrates that he loves the Lord, "He that hath My commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth Me". Then we have the additional word, "He that loveth Me shall be loved of My Father, and I will love him, and will manifest Myself to him". This is definitely individual.

At the end of the chapter the Lord Himself manifests His love to the Father by keeping His commandments.

There is something very blessed in these verses. In John 1 we have the two disciples who enquired where the Lord dwelt, and the Lord said, "Come and see", and they dwelt with Him that day. But here the result of loving Him and keeping His words is seen in the Father and the Son making Their abode with us.

The reference to the special manifestation mentioned in verse 21 raise a question with Judas (not Iscariot), "Lord, how is it that Thou wilt manifest Thyself unto us, and not unto the world?" The Lord answered "If a man love Me, he will keep My words; and My Father will love him, and WE will come unto him, and make Our abode with him". That is intensely individual, and it is clear that the gain of keeping His commandments as the proof that we love Him, is in those spiritual manifestations which we should not otherwise obtain.

Would you say that verse 23 is of deeper gain than verse 21? In verse 21 we have the Lord individually manifesting Himself, whereas in verse 23 both the Father and the Son are mentioned.

If the Son makes Himself known to us, He will also bring the knowledge of the Father with Him. We learn the Father only through Him. What we have here is not so much on the objective side, it is rather illumination in the heart of the believer who is in a suitable condition for the experiencing of this abiding, and for the conscious enjoyment of eternal life.

In chapter 15 the Lord says to His disciples "For all things that I have heard of My Father I have made known unto you".

There again we have the objective side of the truth.

If we consider the chapter before us, how much enlightenment have we in relation to it?

The truth is there for everyone of us. Are we close enough to the Lord and walking in subjection to His will, so that these things may open out in illumination to us as we enjoy communion with the Father and with the Son?

We must emphasize that the disciples needed to have their feet washed and Judas had to go out from the company!

We must agree with that! It was when Judas went out that the Lord began to open out these wonderful things. There must be the right conditions, otherwise we certainly shall not know the blessedness of these manifestations.

Was Judas at this feet washing?

Apparently he was! But it was after he went out that the Lord began to open up His mind. Feet washing was useless to a man like Judas, but it is an absolute necessity for us.

I am a little concerned lest we suggest that what the Lord promises here cannot be accomplished unless we are in a right state.

Can we think that believers, in whatever condition they may be, perhaps linked in practice with the ungodly things of this world, will receive these spiritual manifestations?

I am speaking of that which God will do; I have discovered that whatever God wants from me He Himself provides. If it is a question of love for the Lord, He sheds abroad His love in our hearts by the Holy Spirit which He gives to us, and thus enables us to be found in a state to which he can manifest Himself.

The word of the Lord in verse 24 is clear, "He that loveth Me *not*"; He is speaking to the Christian company, not to the world. Then on the positive side He says "If a man love Me, he will keep My words; and my Father will love Him". We must accept these statements in their reference to us in the condition in which we may be found.

It is evident that we cannot enjoy these things except as being in the Spirit, but we must also remember that this is a positive statement, "If a man love Me, he *will* keep My words".

Do "commandments" and "words" convey the same thought?

One involves the other; there are the communications of divine thoughts, but when we allow them to govern us in our affections and we walk in subjection to them, then we get further enlightenment, the conscious sense of the company of divine Persons and a fuller realization of eternal life. The slow progress made in the apprehension of these things is often because we are not sufficiently obedient to the will of God.

The Lord was addressing men whose affections were toward Him; Judas had gone out, and true-hearted believers were evidently in view.

There is the emphasizing of the fact that it is "He that hath My commandments, and keepeth them" who will enter into the *enjoyment* of these manifestations.

In Corinth the saints were in a very bad condition, yet there is no suggestion that they had not received the Spirit; and there is no suggestion that the Spirit would be taken from them; whatever may be the state of the saints of God, the Spirit of God still abides with us, but in order to have the gain of His presence we must be in a suitable state.

We read in verse 26 "But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in My Name". We have often noticed that in John 14 the Father sends the Spirit; in John 15 the Son sends Him, and in John 16 He comes of His own volition. This again shows how divine Persons work together. Here it is the Father who sends Him, but He sends Him in the interests of the Son, "in My Name". "*He* (emphatic) shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you". The Lord said to them, "I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now". There were things that could not be made known until the Son was in glory; but whether it was what did come out in His life down here, or that which is administered from the glory, the Spirit brings "all things" to our remembrance, as divine enlightenment.

We do well to notice that this divine Person is so often spoken of as the *Holy Spirit*. This would guard the fact that the Spirit of God can operate in the way this chapter speaks of in holy conditions only. He is never poured out upon the flesh of man. The Spirit is here to produce the character of Christ in the saints. There are many ways in which the Spirit is described, but He is always the same Holy Spirit of God.

The Spirit will produce the conditions of which we have spoken so much.

Yes! That is the reason for His being here, conditions in which He can minister these precious things and make communion with the Father and with the Son a blessed reality to our souls. It is not merely a question of knowledge, there are many simple souls who make little progress in knowledge, but they may have a very warm love for the Lord, and as obedient to the light they have they may get precious manifestations of Himself.

What we long for is to see the effects of the work of the Holy Spirit in the people of God. These results cannot be reached on the line of natural effort, they are promoted by love.

It is blessed to realize that in spite of the public failure amongst the saints of God, and the perilous condition in the world around, it is possible for us to enjoy the presence of divine persons in the power of the Spirit *now*; it is one of the highest privileges that we have as we journey to the glory. Thus, as we read in our last verse (27), we can go on in peaceful conditions in the enjoyment of the love of God. "Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid".

The Lord had to go away but another divine Person, co-equal with the Father and with the Son, now dwells in our souls for the accomplishment of the Father's will.

John 16: 7-16.

In John 14 we considered the service of the Holy Spirit as the Teacher bringing us into the power and blessing of the realm of eternal life in communion with the Father and the Son. In John 16 the Spirit is again brought before us as the Teacher who produces in the saints a testimony in this world where Christ has been rejected. In chapter 14 He would lead us into the knowledge of these divine things so that we might have them in power in our souls in relation to the divine circle; whereas in chapter 16 it is that we might bear witness to them in this hostile world that has crucified Christ. The disciples were doubtless feeling that they were going to suffer a great loss when the Lord left this world, and so He would assure them that instead of His going away being a loss to them, it would be a gain. "It is expedient (or, profitable) for you that I go away; for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you".

In what way was the coming of the Holy Spirit more profitable for them?

They could not have had apprehension and enjoyment of these things apart from the Spirit's work in them. Had Christ remained with them, the truth concerning Him must have remained objective, but it would be made living and real in their souls by the Spirit indwelling them. In the power of the Spirit they would understand in a far deeper way than before what the Lord had said to them while He was with them.

In John 14: 26 we read, "He shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you"; and in John 15: 26, "He shall testify of Me". Then there are the additional things that the Lord made reference to in our chapter, which could only be established and become known by the disciples after He had gone back to the Father (vv. 8-12).

We sometimes hear perfectly godly people say that they wish they had been here when the Lord was on earth; but such have not grasped the power and blessedness of the things that are to be known in relation to a risen and glorified Christ by the power of the Spirit.

It is well to see the importance of what the Lord says here. He is not merely sending the Spirit, but the word is, "I will send Him *unto you*". A vessel was in view to which the Spirit would come. He dwells

in believers today, and nowhere else is this divine teaching known.

Why is it that the first statement in connection with His coming relates to the world (verse 8)?

As we have said, in chapter 14 His coming is more to keep the saints in touch, we may say in simplicity, with the *inside* circle, whereas here His coming is to give them power for testimony in the world where Christ has been rejected. The world is very much in view here, because there are two sides to the Christian calling — identification with the Son where He is, and representation of Him where He has been. Hence we need to see the Spirit's attitude in these verses.

It has been pointed out in regard to this passage, that it is not quite that the Spirit of God bears testimony, but that the fact that He *is here*, and Christ *is absent* is in itself a testimony to the truth that the world has rejected Him. The Holy Spirit does, however, dwell *in believers*, and if conviction is to be brought to the world it must come through them. Hence, as believers, we occupy a very privileged but very serious position.

The Lord said in John 5, "My Father worketh hitherto and I work". Now the time had come when His work was completed, and the work of the Spirit of God was to commence.

That is a most important verse. "My Father worketh hitherto", covers the history of the Old Testament; "I work", was the testimony of Christ in this world; now the day of the Spirit has come and His movements characterize the day in which we are now living.

Again, in John 5: 43 we read, "I am come in My Father's Name"; then in John 14: 26, "The Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in My Name"

In the thought of the "Name" we have the interests of the Person who bears that Name, and as the Son was ever here in the interests of the Father, so the Spirit is here altogether in the interests of the Son. It is a most precious thing to see one divine Person serving Another, and that the Spirit is here in the character of a Servant.

If the Spirit of God is to bring conviction to this world — and obviously it is through the Christian company — is it not of vital importance that we should be intelligent in these things?

Could not the Acts of the Apostles be called the Acts of the Holy Spirit?

I think so! It is a divine Person who is moving here on behalf of the Godhead; for if we speak of the Son serving the Father, and of the Spirit in the capacity of Servant in relation to the Son, we can be perfectly sure that it is the pleasure of the Godhead which is being effected.

We must avoid underestimating the activities of divine Persons.

Do you think it is possible for a person to be convicted without human agency?

We are not safe in putting limitations upon God. I quite agree there is a danger of our doing it. We read in Romans 2: 14, "For when the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves; which show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the meanwhile accusing or excusing one another". Paul is referring to the Gentiles who had no law whatsoever, and yet had the testimony of creation. Apparently there were those who evidenced the work of the law written in their hearts, although they had never heard of the law which was written by Moses.

Is there then the testimony we are reading of here through the believer in the power of the Spirit, and also the testimony of creation?

I think so! There may be thousands of people in this world today who have never heard of the name of Moses or of the Name of Jesus. Are these people to go into perdition because of that? There may be those reached in a way which is beyond our understanding, and it would appear that Romans 2 has this in mind.

"The heavens declare the glory of God . . . There is no speech and there are now words, yet their voice is heard" (Psalm 19: 1, 2 New Trans.). Thus the testimony of creation, in the goodness of God, goes "to the extremity of the world", whilst at the moment *we* have the testimony of the Holy Spirit to the work and the resurrection and ascension of our Lord Jesus Christ. This is the greatest day in which one could possibly live, the day of the Spirit. We have the greatest of all testimonies carrying with it the greatest of all blessings.

Do you think that the Spirit sometimes works in the conscience without human agency or a knowledge of the word?

That may be, but it would not be normal in a favoured land like this, where the testimony in the gospel is rendered.

There is another important verse in the first of Romans, "For from the world's creation the invisible things of Him are perceived, being apprehended by the mind through the things that are made, both His eternal power and divinity — so as to render them inexcusable" (v. 20 New Trans.).

Is it suggested that the world is affected by the demonstration that is given in the power of the Spirit?

This world is bound to be affected; this town is bound to be affected by the fact that there are believers living in the place.

How does this demonstration "of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment" come about?

The Lord Himself tells us in verse 9, "Of sin, because they believe not on Me". The Spirit is here to bear witness to this; His very presence here bears witness to the fact that Christ is rejected, and when we contact unconverted people in this world we also are aware of the fact that they have not believed.

There is a sphere in which the testimony of Christ is being rendered in the world into which Christ came, and from which He was cast out. A brother once happily said, 'before Christ left this world He formed a world of His own', and it is to that circle that the Spirit of God has come in order to continue a testimony which is a rebuke to the world.

Why do you think it is that unconverted people are unhappy in the company of even one believer?

God in His mercy is offering untold blessing to men, and the devil is blinding the eyes of those that believe not lest the light of the glorious gospel should shine in and they should be saved; under his influence they resent the truth. True believers are marked by loving righteousness and hating iniquity, and that is very quickly detected by men of the world, and it is a rebuke to them. The men of this world put Christ upon the cross, and in their thoughts the matter is closed, but to their dismay the testimony to Christ is here in His people and God will maintain it in the power of the Spirit.

Would it be true to say that the greatest sin today is unbelief?

It is! Man will not be judge merely because he did not believe the gospel, but unbelief is nevertheless the greatest sin of all. At the judgment of the "great white throne", the word is not "whosoever was not found written in the book of *works*" but, "whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire".

Would you say that men will be held responsible as to whether they accept or reject the testimony of

the Spirit, even as they were judged by their attitude to the testimony of the Lord in His day?

I think so! In this very gospel, which was written some time after the Lord had gone back to heaven, we read "he that believeth not is condemned already".

Now the second thing mentioned is that the Spirit brings demonstration of righteousness, and the Lord says, "Because I go to My Father and ye see Me no more". The world would not have the Son, so the Father takes Him out of the world back to the glory. And how right it is that this should be! The testimony now is to a glorified Christ.

Why does it say, "*Ye* see me no more", not "*they* see Me no more"?

His interest was in the company that had moved with Him. He says in verse 16, "A little while, and ye shall not see Me; and again, a little while and ye shall see Me". That refers to the short period of His life here after resurrection. Then He left the world entirely, and they were left to bear witness to the fact that the One the world had crucified had been raised from the dead. They saw Him as thus raised; they also saw Him go up to heaven, and afterwards they saw Him no more.

What are the things that they could not bear at that time (verse 12)?

The truth as to the Lord's present glorified condition, the unfolding of the full revelation which came out through Paul including the truth that a vast company of sons, all conformed to His own image, will surround Him in the glory of God for ever.

"Of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged". We need to include in our testimony to men that this world is under the judgment of God, and the only escape is by faith in the One whom the world has rejected, but who is now in the place of power at God's right hand.

It mentions that "the prince of this world is judged".

This world has come under the domination and rule of Satan; if he as ruler has been judged, what is the portion of those in his kingdom of darkness but judgement too? The Lord's words are "Now is the judgment of *this world*; now shall the *prince of this world* be cast out" (John 12: 31).

These would be the leading features of the testimony. We do not suggest that the Spirit *says* these things, but *His presence here demonstrates them*, and because of this demonstration by the Spirit, we have the light and the power to bear witness to them.

Nothing could be more valuable in separating us from the world than the consideration of such Scriptures as these; there is always a tendency for us to be drawn back into the world, and when we see the solemnity of these verses we feel thankful to God that we have been delivered from it.

That is the impression we get when reading the book of the Revelation; if this is the judgment that God will bring upon this world, we do well to let this have its due effect upon us, leading us to view the world as a judged system *now*, and thus detaching our affections from it.

Mr Darby's hymn shows us the way in which we arrive at this:

"'Tis the treasure we've found in His love

That has made us now pilgrims below."

The more we are led to value the divine circle where grace has set us, and the more we know the power of divine things, the less shall we want to do with this world, or with any of its affairs.

Verse 13 commencing with the word "Howbeit", would bring the *positive* side of the truth before us.

"When *He*" (the word "He" is emphatic) "the Spirit of truth is come, He will guide you into all truth". The judgment of God lies upon the world, soon to be executed; but if we are not being formed in the positive truth of the divine circle we shall not bear an effective testimony.

The truth of what we have been considering so far would detach us from the world, whereas what we have in verse 13 onwards would attach us more definitely to the things of God.

We do well to consider the power and resources of the Spirit of God as the One Who guides us "into all truth". There is no feature of the truth of God into which He is not capable of bringing us.

In John 14: 26 we read that the Spirit will teach us "all things". In John 16 we have "He will guide you into all truth". It appears that progress in these things is not automatic, we need teaching and guidance. Then we read "For He shall not speak of (or, from) Himself". Even as the Son did not speak from Himself, but whatsoever the Father gave Him to say He said it, so also the Spirit does not speak from Himself "but whatsoever He shall hear, that shall He speak and He will show you things to come". These wonderful things are beyond our comprehension, but the blessed facts are there. The Son Himself was here serving in love, and now the Spirit comes with precisely the same objective in view.

The Authorised Version gives the idea that He would not speak *about* Himself; that is quite incorrect, for He speaks much of Himself. The word conveys the meaning that He would not *speak of His own accord*".

The fact that the Spirit has recorded these things involves His speaking about Himself, but He had come to glorify Christ, "He shall glorify Me, for He shall receive of Mine, and shall show (or, announce) it unto you".

At the end of verse 13 it says, "but whatsoever He shall hear, that shall He speak; and He will show you things to come". Much has been revealed to us in the apostolic ministry since the Lord went to heaven; is that what the Lord had in mind in saying this?

It has been said the words "Bring to your remembrance" would perhaps refer to John's gospel; "He shall take of Mine", to his epistle; "Show you things to come", to the book of Revelation. But of course we cannot confine these statements to John's writings; the Spirit's teaching is seen in the ministry of all the apostles.

In regard to the various activities of the Spirit — His teaching, His guiding, and His showing — there is the need on our part of submission. To be guided we must follow the Guide, and to be subject to the Guide involves that we have teachable hearts.

Also we must give Him time to teach us. If we speak from hearts which are in the enjoyment of His leading and teaching what power there will be in the testimony! One of the greatest dangers today, and doubtless Satan is behind it, is that we do not find time to sit down and read our Bibles. We have a thousand and one things to do, and that 'one thing' for which the Lord commended Mary is often missing. That is why we made the suggestion that we should give the Spirit time to teach us these things.

The disciples had the benefit of the Lord's being with them, and the Lord is now preparing them for His departure and tells them of the activities and services of the Spirit of God. If we were acquainted with the resources we have in the Spirit, and availed ourselves of them, other things would be displaced.

In verse 15 we have a most wonderful statement — "All things that the Father hath are Mine". This would show the immense resources which are available to the Spirit in His ministry to the saints.

We see something of the wonder of the position into which we have been brought. "All things that the Father hath are Mine; therefore said I, that He shall take of Mine, and shall show it unto you".

In the last verse in our section we read, "A little while, and ye shall not see Me" — He was going to the cross; "and again, a little while and ye shall see Me" — they were going to be witnesses of His resurrection; and thirdly, "Because I go to the Father" — they were going to be witnesses of His ascension. They had seen Him in this world; they were to see Him in resurrection, and they were to see Him going back to the Father. This is the company to whom the Spirit of God would come, giving them power to be living witnesses of these matters. They could bear first hand witness as having actually seen these wonderful things.

What follows shows that the disciples did not grasp the significance of the Lord's words. In verses 19 and 20 He graciously explains that their time of sorrow and weeping, which they experienced when He was taken from them in death, would be "turned into joy". As empowered by the Spirit they would bear witness to what they had seen before His death, witness to what they had seen when He came forth from among the dead, and witness to the fact that they had actually seen Him ascending to the Father.

John 20: 17-23.

In these verses we have the last mention of the Holy Spirit in the gospel by John, and they will thus provide suitable consideration for our final reading in this series. We have considered the truth of the Spirit in relation to the incoming of our Lord in testimony for God in this world; we have also thought of Him as the Teacher and Guide in relation to the things that are ours now that Christ is raised from among the dead. In the verses now before us we see the Spirit in connection with the imparting of new life to the disciples, associating them with Christ as raised from among the dead, that life flowing in the company, uniting them in what is perhaps the first picture of the saints of God as seen standing in the blessing of what Christ had secured. We hesitate to suggest that they formed a nucleus of the Assembly, for John does not speak of the Assembly, of the Body or of the House. What we have here is rather the family of God, and the brethren of Christ. Yet it is that company which had its beginning at that moment to which, in the goodness of God, we belong today.

Our attention has been drawn to Mary at the tomb, in her sorrow at the thought of having lost her Lord. In one sense that was perfectly true; she *had* lost Him in the way in which she knew Him previously, but she is about to find Him in an entirely new way as brought into relationship through Him with the Father. This could never have been known before.

Why did the Lord allow the women in Matthew to hold Him by the feet, but did not allow Mary to touch Him?

Mary was to learn that a new relationship was being established, something much more blessed than that which she had so much enjoyed before Christ died on the cross. The women in Matthew's gospel had tangible proof that the Lord was raised from the dead. Indeed we know that He said to Thomas, "Reach hither thy finger, and behold My hands; and reach hither thy hand and thrust it into My side". These were highly favoured people, they had had links with the Lord prior to the cross; but He was now unfolding to them eternal relationship which could not have been known before. We have never known links with Christ before His death, but we can thank God that we know something of the blessedness of these eternal links.

In verse 17 the Lord said, "I am not yet ascended to My Father".

Yes! It is not now His place in the midst of Israel in which Mary had rightly apprehended Him, but it is

the new place He would occupy in which He would attach His own to Himself. We are reminded of what the Lord said in John 12, "Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone". Mary knew Him as "Rabboni" (her Lord or Teacher); He was indeed that, but now she is to be brought into a sphere where she would know Him in a deeper and more intimate way, as in association with Himself in entirely new conditions.

Seeing that the Lord had not yet ascended to His Father, and the Holy Spirit was not yet given, how could He speak of His disciples as "My brethren"?

We read in Hebrews 2, "He that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one; for which cause He is not ashamed to call them brethren". The work being accomplished, redemption having been wrought, and God having been glorified, He can now take account of His own as in the value of His redemptive and sanctifying work, and can address them as "My brethren". All needed to be made good in their souls by the Holy Spirit, but the ground had been established by the work of the cross.

The Lord retains His own unique relationship with the Father in saying, "My Father, and your Father; and to My God, and your God"; He does not speak of *our* Father and *our* God. There must always be that relationship between the Father and the Son which is peculiar to Themselves.

Why does it say in Luke, He was "carried up into heaven", whereas here He Himself says "I ascend"?

Luke regards the ascension as the answer of the Father to that lowly life of absolute perfection; He would exalt Him. In John it is more the dignity of His own Person that is before us.

Whilst the ascension is in mind throughout John, yet we do not get the historical record of it, why is that?

It has been pointed out that the two gospels which do not give the details of the ascension are Matthew and John, Matthew has in view the establishment of the kingdom, whilst John deals with the realm of eternal life into which we have been introduced.

The word which Mary conveys to the brethren indicates wonderful balance of thought. There is the blessed intimacy of knowing God as our Father, but there is also the holy reverence due to Him as God.

We understand that when the name of Father is used in the gospel it speaks of His counsel of grace in relation to the children, whilst as God He must ever be the Object of our adoration and worship. We have been brought into relationship with God, and we bow before Him, and own His rights over us. Yet the God whose claims we own has graciously revealed Himself to us as Father.

The expression "counsel of grace" has been used. Do we get *grace* spoken of in John's gospel except in the first chapter? Is it not *love* all the way through?

The meaning of the word grace is "free favour". The love of God is behind any favour that He bestows upon us. It is true that love is more prominent in this gospel; grace is more connected with Paul's ministry.

Mary Magdalene, having received this wonderful communication from the Lord, carried it to the disciples. The word to her was "Go to My brethren". We do well to preserve in our minds the dignity of these expressions, and not to fall into the careless way in which some speak of the Lord as "our Brother" etc.. We can never be wrong in seeking to maintain the true dignity of the things of God.

Could we have a little more on this matter of brethren? The Lord says in Mark, "Behold My mother and My brethren; for whosoever shall do the will of God, the same is My brother, and My sister, and mother" (Mark 3: 34, 35).

The Lord is indicating the formation of new relationships, not now relationships to Him after the flesh, but in regard to a new sphere that was coming to light. I think the Lord uses the term "brethren" there in a moral sense. They were drawing attention to natural relationships and, using the thought that was in their minds, He calls attention to the fact that something new was coming to light. In Matthew 13 the Lord speaks of "the children of the kingdom"; this would refer to the new relationships He had been speaking of.

Elsewhere the Lord spoke to His disciples of their heavenly Father; what we have in John 20 would be something quite different.

It has been said that God takes that name in relation to the kingdom, because the kingdom of heaven involves the acceptance of the rule of heaven which is centred in God the Father in heaven. It is connected with the rule and will of God. But the thought in John 20 is much more intimate, and refers to a relationship with Christ in the power of His life as risen again from among the dead.

The message carried by Mary, and the subsequent coming together of the disciples, seem to indicate a new starting point in their movements. "The same day at even" would suggest that the old order had passed and an entirely new day had dawned, "the first day of the week" — a day coincident with the resurrection of the Lord. It is on this entirely new ground that they assemble together, having a knowledge of God in the new relationship which had been made known by Mary's message to them.

What is emphasized here is "The same day at even". It was the first day of the week, but it was the *same day*. That is, whatever is coming to pass is related to the resurrection of Christ out from among the dead. It is this completely new beginning of things that we have today in Christianity. There were, of course, the forty days in which the Lord moved among His disciples, but it is this entirely new era to which we belong. What we have here would perhaps link with Leviticus 23, where they were to count fifty days from the waving of the sheaf; that which came in fifty days later was directly linked with the morning of the wave sheaf which typifies the resurrection of Christ out from among the dead. It is spoken of as the "new meat offering", and here we see the beginning of the "new meat offering" — the new Christian company.

We may regard this first coming together as being more on family lines, although we sometimes refer to it as a picture of the saints gathered on a Lord's Day morning. There is no objection to that, because it is those of the family of God who gather together on such occasions.

The Spirit is not regarded here as having come down from heaven, as we see in Acts 2, but rather as the in-breathing of life from Christ is resurrection, directly associating the disciples with him in the power of His own life.

The name of Father is seen in various connections. For instance, we have the expression "the Father of glory".

That would suggest origin or source. The Father is the Source of all. We have already sought to distinguish between the term "heavenly Father" — referring to the position God occupies in the Kingdom as the One in supreme control — and the name "Father" — referring to the relationship which we now have with Him in the power of the life of Christ, which is obviously the bearing here.

Is it right to use the expression "Heavenly Father"?

It depends on the connection in which it is used; but there is a higher thought in our chapter. I see no objection to addressing God as Heavenly Father, but it is not the height of John 20. For instance we could have no objection to using the so-called Lord's prayer within certain limits and in a proper

connection, but we could not use it as coming together in assembly; it is not an assembly prayer, but everything therein can be used in its right place.

The Lord Himself speaks of His Father in heaven on more than one occasion.

But not after His resurrection surely? It would imply the thought of distance; whereas we know God now as our Father in nearness.

The term "Heavenly Father" or "your Father which is in heaven" does imply that I am still on earth and that He is in heaven. The thought of distance is there; it may not be any moral distance, but that we are on earth and the Father is in heaven and we are here in relation to His will. But John 20 suggests our being introduced into present conscious nearness of relationship with God as Father.

We do not have the term "Heavenly Father" in the epistles.

No! That is why we say it is not in connection with the Assembly; we are associated with Christ in glory, and any thought of distance between ourselves and heaven has been entirely removed. The Lord, moving here subject to the will of God as the Messiah in relation to the kingdom, used terms designed to impress the disciples with the need of reverence and recognition of the fact that they were dwelling on earth, and the Father was in heaven. When the Lord used those terms it was at a time when it was a question of the establishment of the kingdom *on earth*; now the matter is reversed, "I ascend unto My Father". Man is to be in association with Christ *in heaven*, and we see from the John 14 that we shall actually be there. We must always remember that any thought of man's going to heaven awaited the accomplishment of the work of Christ. The truth of that does not come out even here, it is in relation to the mystery that the truth of man's being destined for a place in heavenly glory with the Son is seen.

We read in verse 19, "The disciples were assembled". Who were they?

I think it was the eleven; there may have been others there. Luke records "the eleven gathered together, and them that were with them" (Luke 24: 33).

Would not verse 23 refer to the eleven only?

That verse is definitely apostolic. Whilst there may have been others present, it was obviously to the eleven that the Lord said those words.

Why did the Lord make brief appearances only? We might perhaps have thought that He would have remained with them for the full period in order to strengthen them.

It has been said that He was in an out-of-the-world condition of things although actually still in this world. Those brief appearances were the witness to them that He was raised again from among the dead. His links with them were no longer earthly but heavenly.

It is good to see that the Lord's first word is "Peace be unto you"; that would set them quite calm in their spirits.

It is important to see who was present on this occasion in view of what was committed to them.

From the other gospels it does seem that there were others in the company at the moment, but whether all took place on the same occasion may be questioned.

The matter of the remission of sins (verse 23) makes the question as to who was present of vital importance.

Doubtless that was limited to the apostles. I do not think it was transmissible. On the day of Pentecost, after the Lord had gone to glory, Peter stood "with the eleven"; it does not say that he stood up with the

one hundred and twenty. Doubtless they were there, but he stood up with the eleven, hence we conclude that verse 23 is limited to the apostles. This was not restricted to Pete alone. We do find Peter exercising this authority in the case of Ananias and Sapphira, but Paul also speaks of committing one to Satan. It is purely apostolic authority which the Lord gave to them, but it was certainly not limited to Peter. Matthew 18 would show that in some measure this feature is in the assembly administratively today.

With regard to the Lord's breathing on them and saying, "Receive ye the Holy Ghost", would that be the only way in which the disciples could have any part with Him in resurrection?

The life in which the Son of God was as raised from the dead, was the life in which He had ever lived, but it was now made available to the disciples as He breathed into them. It was a new life *so far as they were concerned*, but not a new life in itself, it was the life in which the Lord Himself had ever lived. It is the eternal life that was with the Father, breathed now in the power of the Spirit into the disciples.

What was the life that the Lord Jesus laid down?

We are now touching rather difficult ground. The life that the Lord laid down was that in which He lived here in subject responsibility in Manhood, a life that He did not take at all in resurrection. Eternal life could never be given up at all, hence the two sides are given to us, one in John 6, where we read "Which I will give for the life of the world", and then in John 10, "I lay down My life, that I may take it again". The latter we have here, and this spiritual and eternal life was breathed into the disciples by the Lord Himself. This is a matter which was dealt with most fully by J. N. Darby in his tract "A man in Christ". It is one of the most difficult passages in John's gospel. The life that the Lord lived in flesh and blood condition was given up at the cross, but the One Who gave up that life did not give up His own personal life, He carries that through death and it has become available to us in resurrection.

Was this in-breathing provisional?

It was the quickening voice of the Son of God bringing them into direct relationship with Himself, not now as Messiah but as raised again from among the dead, it was the quickening voice of the Son of God in relation to new conditions.

Had they any more in their apostolic position than we have now?

In Acts 2, we have the anointing of the Holy Ghost in regard to the testimony and then in the verse in 1 Corinthians 12: 13, "By one Spirit are we all baptized into one body". That, I think, is additional to this in John 20. We too have come under the quickening voice of the Son of God, and the gift of the Spirit links us with the Christian company to which we belong.

Would you explain why you speak of "life in resurrection", but not "resurrection life"?

It is to guard the fact that the life of the Son of God, of which John speaks in his epistle, "was with the Father, and was manifested unto us". It was seen in the life of Christ down here, and it then became available to the disciples in resurrection. I am really quoting a letter of Mr. Darby in which he said resurrection life is a short enough term because we understand what we mean by it, but it does infer that this was some kind of life that came into being in resurrection only. But it was the life in which the Son of God ever moved and lived, and it now becomes available to His own in resurrection. We can only derive it from Christ because He is raised again from among the dead, but it is His life that we have, it is a life which was laid down and taken again — laid down in one condition and taken up again in this new condition, and made available to us in our day.

In John 11 the Lord says, "I am the resurrection, and the life".

That is what He is in His own Person, He demonstrated it in His resurrection from among the dead and it is made eternally good for all who belong to Him.

"Receive ye the Holy Ghost"; is that the same thought as "the Spirit of life" in Romans 8?

It is the only new life that we can possibly have; it is of course quite new to us, and the only way that we can have this new life is in the power of the Spirit of God in our souls.

In 1 Peter 3: 18, we read that the Lord Jesus was "put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit".

I think we must guard the fact that death does not touch anyone's personality, much less that of the Son of God; the person does not die, it is the condition in which the person is. This is one of the most difficult things to explain or understand. Perhaps the most helpful remarks on the subject are found in a footnote to John 11 in Mr. Darby's Synopsis.

"It has been pretended that these thoughts affect the divine and eternal life which was in Christ.

But this is all idle and evil cavil. Even in an unconverted sinner, dying or laying down life has nothing to do with ceasing to exist as to the life of the man within. All live to God, and divine life in Christ never could cease or be changed. He never laid that down, but in the power of that, laid down His life as He possessed it here as Man, to take it up in an entirely new way in resurrection beyond the grave"

We must guard the fact that when a person goes into death, that person is as much alive in *another sphere* as he had been in the previous sphere, otherwise we shall arrive at the annihilation of the soul completely. Paul could say, "To depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better". He would be very much alive as with Christ, but the condition in which he had lived down here would be ended.

In speaking of these things in relation to our Lord we feel we are on delicate ground, and one hesitates to say too much, but I believe that the condition into which He came was given up by Him at the cross, and was not taken up again; but the *life in which He lived in that condition* He did take again, and that is the life imparted to His own in this chapter.

With regard to the statement "whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them", there is no suggestion of persons confessing their sins to and receiving absolution from the apostles?

This is administrative, and not the forgiveness that only God Himself can give us. I do not think it refers to the eternal forgiveness of our sins before God. We must remember that there was a special administration in the hands of the apostles, none could be converted without listening to and believing their testimony.

Matthew 18 shows that there is an administration in the hands of the Assembly today. If a company of saints is desirous of maintaining the truth as to true Christian conduct, it is responsible before God to exclude any who walk contrary to the truth.

In regard to any excluded in such a way, mercy was to be shown in view of their recovery.

We have been touching a very delicate theme, and we cannot pretend that we understand much about it, but we believe all is based on the fact that the chapter shows a company in the life and power of the Son of God as raised from the dead, a company capable of things it had never been capable of before.

Would you say a word on verse 10 — "He showed unto them His hands and His side"!

Would it not be the evidence that the One they knew in resurrection was the same blessed Person Who had died for them upon the cross? It would surely bring His love before them, and a completely new order being opened out, but it is the same blessed Person Who is opening it out.

It certainly had a most wonderful result, "Then were the disciples glad, when they saw the Lord".