

Revelation - Commentaries by Paul L Johnson

Conference: 1979, John A Model for Us (1:10)

Address—P.L. Johnson

And so the first thing we have is that he hears a voice behind him. And that would suggest in my mind that John had John was looking, as it were, in the wrong direction. He had to be turned to look in the right direction. That's the first step, you might say, in the, in the adjustment of John in communicating something to his brethren. And before I go on, I'd like to say this that one might feel that. John can't be a model to us in this way. For John is going to write something to these seven churches and how do we fit into that? We can't sit down and write these letters to churches. And, and one might say I'm a sister and I, I can't even take part in the meeting that is verbally. And one might feel that he has nothing verbally to communicate in the meeting, even a brother, a young brother perhaps. But there is a sense in which each one of us communicate something to the assembly. We communicate something. We either communicate. Of God are we communicate what is of the flesh, we can communicate a spirit of devotedness and of loyalty. We can devote, we can communicate a spirit of faithfulness. Or we can communicate to the assembly a spirit of indifference, carelessness. You see, we're all communicating something and I believe that. I believe that's something to think about. One may feel that you're you may think that you're an insignificant member in the church or assembly, that you really don't count, but every member affects the others. If one member suffer, then all suffer. And I believe that even refers to the spiritual state. Of individuals, one may think that you're communicating nothing to the assembly, but you can help to communicate a bad state. You can help to contribute to a bad state. You can help to contribute to a good state. We are all communicating something and we may not all write letters like John. We may not all communicate something verbally, but we are communicating by our attitude, by our spirit, by our state of soul, by our associations, by our walk, and by our ways. We are communicating or supplying something in the assembly, good or bad. Well, John is going to communicate and he needs to be properly adjusted. And the first thing in that adjustment is. If I may be allowed to use the word orientation? Maybe that's the word I ought to explain. He needs to be properly oriented. That is, he has to be looking in the right direction. Now I know that in the United States, I can't say about Canada, but the Army. Uses that expression orientation. They when one joins the army. They, they go through a series of orientation lectures or something of this art and the object is this to Orient them to, to look at things from the military standpoint. No longer as a civilian, you know, they say you're, you're not a civilian anymore. You're a military man and you have to look at things from the military viewpoint. That's orientation. Well, that's used even in in civilian circles, I know to properly. One means that they're looking in the right direction. That is you. You get them in the frame of mind to look at things in a certain, in a certain light and in a certain way. And so it is with the John here he was looking in the wrong direction and he heard a voice behind him. And you'll notice what it says. In verse 12 and I turned to see, now that's the thought of orientation. He had to turn and look in the other direction. Well, why is there this great need of being turned and looking in the right direction? I'll tell you why. You see, we all have the flesh in us. We have that human nature is born into this world, and it is only human. It is a characteristic of human nature that we look at things in human eyes and in a human way rather than looking at things from the divine side. And oh, I think this is very, very important, to look at things from the divine side, to look at things from God's side. You say, well, how can I do that? Well, that's the importance of this word. It's the word of God that gives us to see things from his viewpoint, and things may not.

Always look the same. We can look at things through human eyes, and then we look at things through the Word of God and we see them from God's side and they look entirely different. And in the assembly we need to be properly oriented so that everything that comes up and arises in the assembly should be viewed from God's side, that is. Are we looking at it from the side of what God has shown us in the Scriptures and what is for His glory? And for what is the honor of His beloved Son? Or do we take them up merely according to human feelings and human thought? And human philosophy and things of that nature, it must be looked at from the divine side. Well, that's the first thing. But now notice in verse 12 what he saw. When he turned he saw 7 golden candlesticks and the last verse of this chapter tells us what these are. At the end of verse 20 it says the seven candlesticks which thou sawest are the seven churches. The seven churches. Now you will notice. That he doesn't see one Candlestick or lampstand. The word property is lampstand. He doesn't see one, he sees 7. And someone says, well, I thought there was only one church. And if these if the lampstand represents the church, why isn't Why wasn't it just one instead of seven? Well, there is in Scripture the truth of the one church. The Body of Christ, the one Church on earth, composed of all believers, indwelt by the Spirit of God. For by 1 Spirit are we all baptized into one body. That's true, but when we view the church in its responsibility. And when we view the Church as a responsible light bearer, it has to be taken up in a local way. In other words, the one Church, the body of Christ, never convenes. You know what I mean? Now, I know that in in Christendom they think it does. They try to have an ecumenical council that represents the one Church. And Rome thinks so too. But in Scripture we do not have the one Church on earth composed of all believers ever. Or assembly. What we have are the members of that church in each locality Assembly. The Church of God, which is at Corinth assembled, and those that are in Ephesus assembled. We read in Acts 11 That Paul and Barnabas assemble themselves with the church there in Antioch. It was the believers in Antioch. And if there were believers in Lystra, Derby, Iconium, wherever they were, they assembled and you we find in Scripture that responsibility lies with the local assembly. The local assembly when Paul wrote to Corinth. About the difficulty there in that assembly. He did not call upon Ephesus to do something. He called upon Cornup. They were responsible there. And when he sets forth in the Epistle to the Corinthians the ardor that was to prevail in that assembly. How that the spirit dividing severity to every man as he will when they came together. And they came together to remember the Lord and that there was liberty for prayer and praising. And there was even opportunity for an open meeting where the prophets might speak two or three, and all of these exercises, you might say, of the service of God. When the assembly came together, he gave the order that was to prevail in that assembly at Corinth. You see, he didn't give that order to the whole church, but he gave it to that assembly. Well, does that mean then that that all of these seven churches or assembly are separate and distinct and unattached and independent one of another? Not at all. But what it does mean is this, that each one is responsible. For maintaining the light and the testimony in itself and its own locality. The Saints gathered to the Lord's name here in Vancouver. We would not arrogate the title of assembly to such a company. That is, we wouldn't take the ground of saying that we are the whole church here in Vancouver. No, we know they're true believers. But we would be on the ground of the assembly here and walking in the light of the assembly

so that the assembly here is responsible to act for the glory of God and to act according to the due order that is set forth in Scripture. The assembly in Seattle and wherever they were Saints gathered. To the Lord's name, walking in the light of the truth of the assembly, they too are responsible.

But not independent one of another. Turn back to Corinthians. I want to show you how that the apostle, while he lays upon the Corinthians, the church at Corinth, their responsibility. And This is why I believe there were seven lampstand scenes, because each assembly was responsible itself. But we cannot use that to deny the unity that existed between those seven assemblies. We see that in Corinthians. Notice in the first chapter in verse two he writes under the Church of God which is at Corinth. So he localizes it. You see, he doesn't write to the Church of God over the whole earth. He's not writing this epistle to the one church composed of all believers on the face of the earth. No, he says, I'm writing this to that assembly and current that local assembly sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be Saints. But now notice with all that in every place, call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours right from the outset. He says while I write these. Instructions to the local assembly in Corinth. It's for all the Saints everywhere. It's it applies equally to those who call upon the name of the Lord in every place. It's not restricted to Corinth so that the unity that exists between them is that what is what Corinth is responsible for in their area. The other assemblies in their area were responsible for as well. Now the several times turn to chapter 4. Several times the apostle links up. His instruction to the Corinthians with the Saints elsewhere. Verse 17 for this cause have I sent unto you Timotheus, who is my beloved son and faithful in the Lord, who shall bring you into remembrance of my ways, which be in Christ as I teach everywhere in every church. You see, it wasn't left for this assembly to choose how they wanted to meet and how they wanted to conduct the service of God and then it was left to. To to act according to their own as men speak, to dictate to their conscience and so forth, and to carry and to meet according to what they thought was right. Paul says no. It's what I teach everywhere in every church. What Timothy is going to bring down there to you, what I'm bringing before you is what I teach everywhere in every church. The same set of teaching everywhere. Now turn to the 11th chapter. And we see that the Corinthians were seeking to introduce something that was unscriptural. That sisters would appear in the presence of the Saints. Where the Word of God was read or spoken on and where prayer was made without a head coverage. And he's correcting that error and he ends up by saying in verse 16. But if any man seem to be contentious, in other words, he has presented the argument, you might say are presented the case for wearing a head covering on the part of the sisters. Now he says if there are those there that that still want to be contentious, if you want to contend about this thing, let him know this. We have no such custom, that is we apostles. Neither the churches of God. He reminds them that all of the Saints, all of the assemblies everywhere followed this order, and if they were going to have another order, they were out of line and out of step and out of unity with their brother and elsewhere. You see how he's emphasizing the fact that while each assembly is responsible in their locality, they're not independent of their brethren gathered elsewhere. They're not independent of assemblies. Elsewhere there is a unity that links them together as members of the body of Christ. That's why there's that unity. They are all, they are the members of the body of Christ in this locality, this locality and that locality, and they're all governed by the same truth. And in the 13th chapter. Or rather the 14th chapter. And verse 34. Let your women keep silence in the churches. Or rather verse 33. For God is not the author of confusion, but of peace. As in all the churches of the Saints, then he says, Let your women keep silence, and know that he had been speaking about the ardor that was to prevail in the assembly. There was not to be confusion. Everything is to be done unto edification, and everything is to be done decently, in order and under the direction of the Spirit and according to spiritual understanding. Now he says.

That as in all the churches or assemblies. Of the Saints, he reminds him again that if they do not follow this order that he is setting forth, they're out of step with their brethren elsewhere. They're acting independently of their brethren. And this is not according to the mind of God. God's mind is that while there is local responsibility. Yet we are not independent of our brethren elsewhere. We're all acting. You might say on that principle of the one body, we are all acting as those who are united together as members of the body of Christ, though it's carried out in a local way. Well, back to chapter one. I'm not going into great detail in all of these things, but just to point out some of the things that I think are most important in regard to being properly adjusted. In supplying or communicating something to the assembly, we need to see assembly responsibility. And that's really what this vision is about, the fact that these assemblies were responsible as light bearers. That's why they're seen under the figure of lampstands. They're not seen under the under the figure of the body of Christ, under the figure of the House of God or the bride of Christ, but under the figure of lampstands. For they are responsible as a witness for Christ. And in fact, the Lord Jesus presented here as being in the midst. Is in the midst, not ministering blessing to His people. We know He does, and we know He is in the midst of that. He's not in the midst. To give authority, but he's in the midst to make an assessment as to how they have. How they have maintained the responsibility that was theirs locally to maintain the light for Christ. He's there in the midst, as judge, in the midst of the assemblies. And so we need to recognize the fact that there is assembly responsibility. And the Lord Jesus takes account of it. But at the same time, and I want to impress this, that independency is not taught here. The fact that there were seven different lampstands does not mean that each assembly of the Lord's people is independent of the other, but it merely brings out the fact that each one has its own responsibility. But as we've seen in an in Corinthians, they are united together as members of the body of Christ. Well, now notice these lampstands in verse 12. Are spoken of as being golden. I suppose that most of us, in reading the scriptures, have discovered that gold is a type of that which is divine. That which is divine, being a precious metal it is, speaks of that which is divine. And so John was to see it that these assemblies were not just groups of brethren, if you want to use that expression. Not just a gathering of Saints, but it was that the assembly. He wanted to impress upon him and upon you and me that the assembly is a divine institution. That's why Paul writes to the Church of God, which is at Corinth. You see, the Church of God is more than just a title. You can have a building and you can put a sign out front and say Church of God, but that isn't what he's talking about. It's God's church. It means that it's it's not a human institution. It's not a voluntary association. You see, man can. Man can have a voluntary association. Even Christians, they can band together, they can say, well, we believe in in the the missionary activity. So they band together and form a a missionary group for the furtherance of missionary work. But that's just a voluntary association. Now, I'm not going to say that there hasn't been some good done from by these things, but that's not the assembly. All sorts of organizations are have been farmed by men and and God has used some of them in his sovereignty. But the thought is that the assembly is a divine institution and we we don't farm an assembly. The Saints in a locality can't farm an assembly even where the we know that.

As we sometimes speak of a new gathering being farmed, it isn't that we have farmed a new assembly. It is that the Saints in that locality have learned that they are a part of the assembly which God is already established. They have learned that Christ has a church and that they're of it. They belong to it, you see, And so they withdraw from all of the organizations of men. They gather simply to the name of Christ on the ground of the one body, owning that they're a part of that assembly which God has set up in this world, that assembly which Christ that I will build. They're a part of that Church of God. And they seek to function and to and to walk in the light of that. And to carry on the

service of God in connection with that. So we want to look on it as a divine institution. And if we do, I believe this thoroughly, and one can never anticipate what we might do. And I'm not going to say I can anticipate, but I do believe that if we really hold firmly in our heart and conscience that the assembly is a divine institution, we won't be too quick to leave it. We won't just get up and leave it over flimsy things and flimsy reasons because we recognize that it's that which God himself has instituted. Now, again, I'm not saying that. Any gathering of the Lord's people today can arrogate to themselves the title of being the Church. In the sense of including all believers, but I do believe it is the privilege. Of those who have faith, to act upon it, to gather on the ground of the Church of God, and to walk in the light of the Church. And act according to the principles of the assembly. And those who do so, I believe are held responsibly by God to act for the church and on behalf of the Church of God. And it is our privilege to view the actions of such as having God sanctioned and the sanction of Christ as being his assembly. Again, we never want to exclude those who are true believers in our thoughts. And we know that if those, all of those who were the Lords. Were on the right ground, they would all be gathered to the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. That's where He would have His people be. We know that well, we want to look on it as a, as a divine institution, not just a group of Christians that meet seeking to carry out certain truths or principles, but we're we're seeking to carry out what is of God, divine. Well, I've already anticipated the Lord in the midst as a judge, because when John sees the Lord, he sees him not as the head of the church or as the Son of God, he sees him. Son of Man in the character of a judge with the his garment right down to the feet. Not the garment was not girded up for service because the Lord here is not seen in his wonderful care of service of his Saints. No, the garment is down because he's in the under the figure of a judge and even his affections are as it were restrained with that girdle about the pact we read with a golden girdle that means that he he is not here now to. Display all of his affection for the church. But he's here to to take account of how the church is fulfilled its responsibility how each local gathering has fulfilled its responsibility as a responsible light bearer. And I'm sure all of these figures of his head and his hair is white like wool. Perhaps Speaking of maturity and his eyes is a flame of fire would speak of of discernment penetrating discernment feet like a debris. We know that brass is a type. Of divine righteousness and dealing with man and responsibility. Because you see, if the Lord takes an account of things and however He judges of things, his judgment is going to be righteous. And again, we want to look at things from the Lord's side, and in a sense, you might say if the Lord is seen in this character taking stock of the state of the assembly, this is the way in which we we should too. We should have some maturity of judgment, we should have some spiritual discernment, and we should have that ability to judge things righteously. And then we read that the voice of and sound of many waters, that perhaps dignity. And majesty. And then we see that responsibility is in His hand with the seven stars, and He judges everything according to the Word. He has in His hand a sharp 2 edged sword. And we know this refers to the scriptures. The Word of God is spoken of as being sharper than any two edged sword. So you see, everything is judged according to scripture, according to what He has set forth and the Scriptures. Now notice the attitude of John.

And here he's a model for us. John falls at his feet, is dead. What does that mean? I think that is a figure of self judgment in other words, instead of judging. Others. The first action of John is to judge himself, judge himself in a spirit of self judgment. And so John gets the comfort and power of the Lord. The Lord lays his right hand upon him. That's the hand of power. Because the place of power is the place of self judgment and loneliness and humiliation, and in the right hand of power is placed upon him. And the Lord says, fear not. You see, he gets that comfort and he knows that he has the Lord's support, and I feel that this is a moral principle. If we're going to have the support of the Lord with us, we need to take this attitude and spirit of self judgment, knowing that the Lord is in the midst and he's in the midst here discerning everything. He knows everything that's going on. He knows all about the state of everything. He knows every heart. He knows every bit of progress we've made. He's know He knows every bit, everything that hinders and all, everything about us, everything going on in the assembly. And so we take a low place. Judgment and humiliation, and then we have the sense of His power and His support. And he will put forth his hand, right hand of power, and he will support those who take that place. But if we, if we're insensible to his being in the midst to discern these things, and if we're careless and indifferent, we'll lose that sense of comfort, that sense of support and that right hand of power that he gives. Well, what a model John is, is for us. Not only as we had the other night, but as we have him here now. In this vision of the Lord and taking the right attitude, falling at His feet as dead, and to have that wonderful experience of the Lorde support and the Lorde power and the Lorde comfort, even though we are made aware of the fact that He observes and knows everything. Well may we be those who communicate what is according to the mind of Christ and the assembly and supply that and that we see things. Right perspective from God's viewpoint and see the assembly as it is a divine institution. And be on that right attitude of self judgment before the Lord.

Toledo Conference: 1980, Hold Fast (3:7)

Address—P.L. Johnson

General Meetings. Toledo, November 1980. Open meeting. The hymn that was given out and brought before me. The little word to Philadelphia in Revelation chapter 3. Revelation chapter 3. Verse 7. And to the Angel of the church in Philadelphia, right these things, that he that is holy, he that is true, he that hath the key of David, he that openeth, and no man shut it, and shut it, and no man open it. I know thy works. Behold, I have set before thee an open door. Passed a little strength, and has kept my word, and has not denied my name. Behold, I will make them of the synagogue of Satan, which say they are Jews, and are not, but do lie. Behold, I will make them to come worship before thy feet, and to know that I have loved thee because thou hast kept the word of my patience. I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation which shall come. All the world to try them that dwell upon the earth. Behold, I come quickly, hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown. Now, it wasn't my exercises to speak in detail on the verses that we have read. But verse 11 was especially what I had before me. Behold, I come quickly. Which is, we've been reminded, even in these meetings. That we are. Are in expectation of the soon return of our Savior, the Lord Jesus. Behold, I come quickly. And I'd like to say in passing that the real ground for our expectation of the Lord's soon return is His own word. Behold, I come quickly. That's really the ground of our expectation. Of his soon return. Behold, I come quickly. I'm not going to say anything in regard to events that one might take an account of that are going on in the world, but I do feel that the word, the words of the Lord Himself, should be that which really gives us the expectancy of His soon coming. Behold, I come quickly. Now in view of that, he says, Hold that fast which thou hast. Well, our brother yesterday gave a very good illustration, which was, as he said, a true experience of one who held fast, held tenaciously, that which had been committed to him, even though he lost his life in the process. But he held fast that which he had, and I have no doubt about what the reason for it. Was that he valued that. He valued that. And what I had before me is to speak a little in regard to that which has been brought to us. In the grace and goodness of God, in his beloved Son, through his beloved Son, the Lord Jesus, and that into which we have been brought to. That we might value. The precious truth value that which God has.

Revealed of his heart and of his mind, and of his will. And I believe that if we truly value these things, and as we have indicated here in the church at Philadelphia, these precious things once given by God by divine inspiration through chosen instruments of old. Those things have been recovered and restored to the people of God. I believe we can say that those of us who are living at this particular time in the history of man on the earth are the most privileged of all people who have ever lived.

We are those who have the fully revealed mind of God. We have all of the accumulated, you might say. Understanding and revelation of the ways of God with His people. Think of all that we have available to us in this precious book that God has given. And not only that, but we're living in a day when these truths have been unfolded. By the Spirit of God, through vessels that he has taken up and used. We're living in days of great light and great privilege, but the question is, do we really value that which God has given? This is what always impresses me when I read the Epistle to the Hebrews. That the Spirit of God there would want to impress upon them the value of that into which they had been brought, and that which God had brought unto them, so that they would not turn away, so that they would not give it up, so that they would not want to have it corrupted and altered in any way. Turn back to the Epistle to the Hebrews chapter. 11. I made a statement as to our living and privileged times. And I want to read a verse that would bear that out, I feel. Verse 39 of Chapter 11. After God had given these wonderful witnesses. To the path of faith. And very worthy they were. We read that these all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise, God having provided some better thing for us. That they without us should not be made perfect, Well, no doubt that being made perfect here would refer to. They're being brought into the glorified state. The glorified bodies, they are those spirits of justice men. All of these Old Testament worthies we know are with the Lord. They are the spirits of just men. They're not yet made perfect because they do not have their glorified bodies. They will receive those bodies of glory when we receive hours at the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. But meanwhile it says God having provided some better thing for us. Oh that to think that these men of faith. Faithful men and women as well brought before us in this chapter, and when we read this chapter, we are made to feel how far short we fall from these who have walked the pathway of faith here. And we feel that they have been. They have honored the Lord, perhaps. More than we have. And yet God has provided some better thing. For us, some better thing, and that's what we find all the way through this epistle to the Hebrews. These better things, the good things to come. Well, it isn't because of our worthiness. We know that there are better things because God is now, has now made known the fullness of his heart and his mind and his will, as we've had before us in our readings. That that baptism, that he was to be baptized with the Lord Jesus says now having been accomplished, the floodgates are open and God has brought to us wonderful blessing. He has unfolded things to us that was never known before, and he's brought us into a position that these who were faithful in Old Testament times never enjoyed a place of nearness. A place in association with his beloved son. A place before him as his children and as sons too, and with His Spirit indwelling us. And as I've already said, the whole revealed mind of God made known to us in this precious book. Well.

Perhaps the danger with us is somewhat like the Hebrews, that we do not value it. This is what was given by God in the beginning. Turned back to the book of Acts chapter 20. A verse that I often refer to. But it's really a striking statement. Paul in verse 26 of Acts 20 says. Wherefore I take you to a record this day, that I am pure from the blood of all men, For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the council of God. All the counsel of God. I wonder if we really appreciate the fact that we are in such wonderful light of having all the council of God. God has held nothing back. When Solomon dedicated the temple, he had to speak of God as dwelling in the thick darkness. But now God has come out in the light, so to speak. He has come out in light, and he has made known. All his counsels. We read in our reading. Of the of that book. Lo, I come in the volume of the book. It is written of Maine, and it was pointed out that that book contains the purposes and counsels of God. And now in Christianity God is unfolding those purposes and councils, those things that come out from His heart, from his. Own innermost being, as it were. I have often thought that if we were allowed to have a an intimate conversation with the President of the United States so that we would be assured that he would speak what was really on his mind and in his heart and tell us what his thoughts were and just spoke to us. In a very, very intimate way, revealing himself. In a way that he wouldn't dare to do, you might say publicly. Why we might say that would be very interesting, how we would like to be able to have a conversation like that. Well, I wonder if we've ever thought that we have, in this precious revelation that is so easily accessible to us, what comes forth from the very, very heart and mind of God. And we know, of course, that in the Old Testament it's chiefly a record of God's dealings, God's ways with his people and his dealings with men generally. And when we come to Christianity, the subject of the New Testament, it's more the unfolding of those purposes and counsels of God, the great light. That has now been brought in well in this very book of Acts I'd like to refer. Back in chapter nine, first of all. In the experience of Saul of Tarsus. As he later of course becomes the Apostle Paul as the one. Who was used of the Lord to make these things known? The experience he had on that road to Damascus would perhaps indicate something of the light that God has now brought out to us from himself, the light of Christianity, which is. Greater than anything that God has ever brought out before. Now I just used a word that reminds me of something we have the subject of the Gospel of John. You remember when Nathaniel is brought to the Lord Jesus? And he confesses him to be the Christ, the Son of God. No doubt that was an Orthodox Jewish confession, as we have in the second Psalm.

As the King, as the Christ, the Anointed One set upon his holy hill of Zion, and he's also spoken of as his Son. But the Lord Jesus says to him that thou shalt see greater things than this. Greater things, and I believe we have in the Gospel of John those greater things brought out. We find that when he speaks to Nicodemus in chapter three, he speaks first of the earthly things and then he says, now I'm going to speak to you about heavenly things. And he brings out the truth of eternal life, the truth of eternal life, the heavenly things. Earthly things were known in Judaism, but now the heavenly things are brought out. And even in that second chapter, it was said there that the best wine was kept until the last. Well, I know that perhaps that might be applied to the to the coming day of the Millennium, but I think in principle it applies even today that the best has been kept until the last. And we find all the way through in John's Gospel the greater things brought in now in connection with the Son of God. Who has come down from heaven? From God? The one who is in the bosom of the Father, and he declares. The father, Well, those are some of the greater things. Well, now in the experience of Saul of Tarsus. When he is stricken down on that road to Damascus, as we read here in Chapter 9. Verse Three. And as he journeyed, he came near Damascus, and suddenly there shined round about him a light from heaven. A light from heaven. This is what characterizes. Christianity. This is what characterizes that better thing that God has. Reserved for us, this is what characterizes those greater things. This is what has been brought to us. And the person of the Lord Jesus. And what we've been brought into the heavenly light, that which has come down from heaven, and we are now those who are associated with heaven. Heavenly things. Well, I mentioned this because I feel. In myself and I find with the Lord's people generally that there is a tendency to drop down to an earthly level now, not necessarily a worldly in the sense of going out into all of the the worldly amusements and pursuits that the world goes after, but just earthly dropping down into. An earthly state of things and an earthly mindedness. But we find that the truth that God has brought us into, the truth that God has restored, is of a heavenly character. It is that which opens up heaven to us. It is that which not only assures us of being in heaven, but puts us in touch and contact with heavenly things even now, as the apostle says, while we look not on the things that are seen. But on the things that are not seen, well, those things that are not seen are the heavenly

things. We know that before the work of the Lord Jesus, his sufferings on the cross. His resurrection and ascension to heaven and the descent of the Holy Spirit. Why it was necessarily occupation with things that are seen and earthly things. But now God has introduced the heavenly. And this is really a part of the testimony that God has committed to us. That which thou hast. Which has been committed of the whole purpose and counsel of God. What has been unfolded and now is available to us here. He says it's a light from heaven, the heavenly things and we know of course that the not only do we find a tendency to drop down to an earthly state of things, but we know that this world. Resists the heavenly things.

I have no doubt but what? That which aroused the enmity of this world was the fact that the Lord Jesus, as He said that He was from above, they were from beneath, they were of this world, but He was not of the world. And this aroused their animosity. As I said in the readings this morning, it was not the useful deeds that the Lord Jesus did. It wasn't that He was that He went around doing. Healing those that were oppressed of the devil, that aroused the animosity. It was because he was that heavenly one, the one who came down from heaven, and he was not in, he was not in consort with this world in any way, but he was heavenly. Well, that's the light that has been brought to us, as he says here, a light from heaven. Now turn over to the 22nd chapter. As he recounts this experience, the. In chapter 22. Verse 6. And it came to pass that as I made my journey, and was come nigh unto Damascus about noon, suddenly they're shone from heaven a great light round about me. Now you notice here a little change in the wording. In the 9th chapter it was said it was a light from heaven that would emphasize the heavenly. Features. Found in the truth of Christianity. Now we read here that it is. He refers to it as a great light. A great light. Well, this is in keeping with what I've said in regard to the Epistle to the Hebrews, as well as the Gospel of John bringing before us that light, that it is greater and better than anything that God has ever given before. A great light round about me. Well, I know that. Actually, literally that he's referring to that light that shone down from heaven, but I believe we can see in this a little away in anticipation. Of the ministry of the apostle Paul as the one who was used of God to bring out as he says in Acts 20. All the counsel of God. Do we really look upon it as a great light? You know, I'm satisfied that. Whatever thing is that we value, it may not be something of great value to others, but if we value it, we're going to hold on to it. And if it's something that is important to us, we're going to continue in it. I believe we all recognize that, and I would want to impress upon each and everyone of us the greatness. Of what God has brought us into in His precious truth, and what He's brought to us. Through his beloved Son, all that we have that through the work of the Lord Jesus Christ, as members of the body of Christ, as those who form the House of God, as those who are in the family of God, as those who have been set apart to God, sanctified and set apart to God. As those who are not a part of this world delivered from this present evil world. As those who are pilgrims and strangers passing through or one could go through. The whole length and breadth and height and depth of that into which we've been brought and what has been brought to us. Do we look at it as something that is great? Do we feel how great it really is? And what a privilege it is to have such light from God? A great light. And God would impress us, impress our hearts with the greatness of it. Now it may be. That those who. Have not been brought into the light. Those who are still in the darkness may not think much of it. And may not consider to be very great. And I just wonder as I'm saying these words here this afternoon, if there would be any in our midst.

Does not feel the greatness of what God has brought out now in Christianity, the greatness of the light from God concerning His beloved Son, in the work that He's accomplished and the blessings that result. Does it mean nothing to you? Or it would be sad that there would be any in our midst who has no appreciation of His life? Well, of course, one would doubt if such would be really the Lord's. No doubt, if one is a true believer on the Lord Jesus Christ, he will have in some measure at least, an appreciation of that light which is not only heavenly, but great. But my exercise is that that appreciation might be increased, that enthusiasm for it, that desire to retain it. And now turn to the 26th chapter of this same Acts of the Apostles. Again, the apostle is recounting his conversion. And he says in verse 13. At midday, O King, I saw in the way a light from heaven. Above the brightness of the sun. Not only a heavenly light, a great light, but here he says it's above the brightness of the sun. The brightness of the sun. Well, what would that perhaps suggest to us? I believe it would suggest that it is light that is beyond the creature, so to speak, beyond created things. The sun is the greatest light in the this created immediate universe of ours. It's the great light that God has put into the heavens. But it's a created thing now, this light that has come down to us, this light that we have received. Is above the brightness of the sun. It is above and beyond the creature. It did not emanate from the mind of man, but it came forth from the mind and the heart of God Himself. We read in First Corinthians 2. I have not seen nor ear heard, neither has entered into the heart of man the things that God has prepared for them that love him, but God has revealed him unto us by His Spirit. See, it's beyond the eye of man to see, and his ear to hear, and his mind to conceive, but God has revealed him unto us by His Spirit, which would suggest, of course, that if one has not the Spirit of God, he does not have the capacity to enter into this light. And consequently, of course, he would have no appreciation and value for this light. But those of us who have received the Spirit of God, having believed the gospel of our salvation, our hearts having been purified by faith, God has given us his Holy Spirit. And so his by the Spirit, we're able to enter in to these things that are beyond. The mind of man. Because it comes forth from the mind and the heart of God above the brightness. Of the sun, how great are these things, how wonderful this light. Well, now I'd like to say a little word in regard to. The privileged day in which we live. If you'll turn back to Revelation again. Chapter 3. And I want to refer to a word that he said to Sardis. In this chapter. Verse 2. Be watchful and strengthen the things which remain. Ready to die, for I have not found thy works perfect before God. Now we've had this word perfect before us in our readings. And I don't know that I would want to undertake to give a definition. You really have to take it in its context each time it's used. To understand what it is referring to. Here the thought is, I have not found thy works complete.

Something was missing. I have not found thy works complete. Now what is this referring to? Those of us who are familiar with these letters to the seven churches in Asia. Know that we have here the history written. By God, the moral history of the Church in its responsibility as a light bearer in this world. The Apostle Paul was used of God to establish the church. Now not established on the day of Pentecost, but to establish it in its practice, in its doctrine, its teaching, and in its function in a practical way. It was through his ministry that it was established, and it was through him that it was endowed with the great light that God had for his people. And then he leaves. As he says in the 20th chapter of Acts, he was about to depart. And he was leaving them. And they were left with this great light, They were left with the whole council of God, this heavenly light, this great light, this light above the brightness of the sun. They were endowed with that. Now they were responsible to maintain it. Walk in the light of it. To value it. To know the practical power of it. And we know that after the apostles left the scene, that soon, it had to be said, thou had fallen to the church. It fell, it left its first love, it dropped down from that elevated place in which it had been placed through the goodness of God in the ministry of the apostles. And we know in these 7 letters to the seven churches, as I say, we have the moral history of the church. And we see the downward course from Ephesus. Right down to Thyatira and when we come to Thyatira. Its darkness and not light. That heavenly light as it were, had been extinguished. That great light, that light above the brightness of the sun. Now that is not to say that it did not exist in the word. It did. It is never perished, but in a practical way it was lost to the people of God. It becomes submerged. It had become, as it were, a light hid under a bushel or under a bed. Was not shining, and God worked in his goodness

to recover. And to restore in a practical way, and for the enjoyment and blessing of the people of God, that precious truth, that heavenly light, that great light, that light above the brightness of the sun. And as He began to affect this recovery, we find that Sardis is the result of the first effort. And the first stage, we might say. In the recovery of that light that had been lost, but there was not a full recovery. It was only partial. And I have no doubt that what it has referenced to what God recovered at what we call the Reformation, there was a certain amount of recovery of the Christian truth that with which the church had been endowed. But it was not a full recovery. And that's what he's referring to here when he says I have not found. Works perfect or complete. It wasn't a complete recovery. Philadelphia represents, I believe, that full and complete. Recovery so that the truth has been brought out again the light. Has been restored and recovered. Now we live in a day. As I've said, the most privileged dispensation of all of the dispensations of God. We live in a day when the. Council of God has been revealed and also in a day when that has been recovered. And restored. The light has been recovered and restored. Perhaps that's what's referred to in verse 7.

When the Lord says there that he has the key of David. And he speaks about opening. And again in verse eight I have set before thee and opened. It should read OPENED. And open the door, indicating that the door had been shut. Now it is open. It's an open door. The door is now open. The light has been restored and recovered. Do we value it? Do we steam it? With the proper estimation or is it something that we. Take for granted. Is it something that we have become so familiar with in a way? I'm speaking now as to knowledge that we do not really value it in our hearts. Well, we know that just as the light was lost in the beginning, that was left thy first love, that those. Whom the truth has been restored and recovered can also let it slip away. If there's not the real valuing of it, recognizing the better things, recognizing the greater things, and I feel that there is always the danger of flipping down to the level of the religious world around about. Because the religious world round about us has dropped down to that level of the mixture of Judaism and Christianity. As we had before us that ordinances of divine service in a worldly sanctuary, seeking to combine those elements. Dropping down to a level in which the human mind can operate and function, in which the flesh can be comfortable and at ease and take part. Dropping down to the level whereby the man in the flesh can be accommodated. And recognize, but you see the light, that heavenly light, that great light that had been brought out, that light above the brightness of the sun is above all of that. It's above all of that. It's in connection with the 2nd man, the Lord out of heaven. And we read as is the heavenly. Such are they also that are heavenly? We have a connection now with the 2nd man and the heavenly man, the one who had come. Out of heaven, the Lord out of heaven no longer associated with the one who is of the earth, earthy, the 1st man. Well, this is what was upon my heart, that we might heed the admonition. Behold, I come quickly. Hold that fast which thou hast what God has revealed. That better thing, the greater things. They were in the scriptures all the time ever since they have been revealed of God. They have been available to the people of God, but in a practical way it was lost and now it's been restored and recovered. There's been a full recovery. The Lord, as it were, has used that key of David, which perhaps have has reference to what do we have in the book of Isaiah in regard to Hill Kyle replacing Shebna, who was the treasurer of the House of God. And if he said of Hilkiah that he would be? But placed upon him the key of the House of David. And so it was in connection with being the treasurer of the House of God. Those wonderful treasures that God has for his people, they are opened up now, the Lord Jesus using the key of David, as it were, to open them up. And minister them to his people. Well, may we value these things, the better things. The good things to come, they have come. Now there are hours to enjoy. Here, while we're here in this scene, as we pass through this world, not only we, we don't have to wait until we get to the glory. We can enter into them now and value them and walk in the light of this precious truth that God has made known to us and recovered to us that which thou hast. Hold fast.

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