

## GOD'S WAY OF TEACHING

*"And the dragon was wrath with the woman, and went away to make war with the remnant of her seed, that keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus." Revelation 12:17*

It might be a difficulty to some that a Jewish remnant should have the testimony of Jesus. But this should not be insuperable, because "the testimony of Jesus" in the book of Revelation is always of Jesus coming back again as the Heir of the world, and not of His relations in full heavenly grace that we know now. "The testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy," which shows clearly that it is a prophetic knowledge of Jesus. Thus the testimony rendered in this book, though equally divine, differs from the blessed way in which God unfolds Christ now to the Church which is His body. The remnant will have such a knowledge as the saints in the Old Testament times possessed — greater probably in amount, but similar, it seems to me, in kind. They will be waiting for Jesus to come. They will say, with penitent hearts, "Blessed is He that comes in the name of Jehovah." They will plead, "How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost Thou not judge and avenge our blood?" I do not deny that they may have the New Testament before their eyes; but there will be no power to apply the New Testament facts to their own souls, as far at least as present peace and communion are concerned. What a proof that not merely the Word is required, but the Holy Ghost to open it out, for the rest and enjoyment of the soul.

Some of us, even as Christians, have had no light as to certain truths, until in the grace of God He was pleased to remove the film from our eyes. And God does this ordinarily by specific means; for it is not His way to enable persons to take up the Bible and understand it, independently of His provision for the perfecting of the saints. God teaches His children, but in general it is through those He has given for the good of the Church, and, though never tied down to that order, He does not set aside the wise and gracious arrangement that He has formed and will perpetuate as long as the Church endures. Nourishment is ministered by joints and bands, and thus all the body knit together increases with the increase of God. What would enable us to do without one another is a thing that God never gives or sanctions. Supposing a person were cast upon a desert island, God would bless him in his solitary reading of the Word with prayer; but where there are other means and opportunities, such as assembling ourselves together for instruction, for reading the Scriptures, for public preaching, exhortation, etc., to neglect or despise them is the will of man and not the guidance of the Spirit of God.

—W. K. (*From: Lectures on the Book of Revelation, pg. 264.*)

## THE OFFERINGS (2)

—*Lectures by H. L. Heijkoop*

What did Adam become through the fall? First of all he saw that he was naked, and then he was afraid of God. "They knew that they were naked" (v. 7). They tried to hide it, that's what man always tries to do. But when they came before God, they still felt their nakedness. A man entering into the presence of God, always feels that way. 2 Corinthians 5:3 speaks of "being found naked," which has to do with spiritual nakedness. Adam and Eve stood before God knowing good and evil, in this they had become like God. It meant, however, that they had come under the power of evil. Since that time sin has ruled in them. That is why they were afraid of God, for they know that God saw what they had become. And that is the condition of each man who does not know the Lord Jesus.

In the verses 17 and 19 we find the consequences of the fall: "Cursed be the ground on thy account; with toil shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life; and thorns and thistles shall it yield thee; and thou shalt eat the herb of the field. In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, until thou return to the ground: for out of it wast thou taken. For dust thou art; and unto dust shalt thou return." And then, in verse 23, "Therefore Jehovah Elohim sent him forth from the garden of Eden."

This then was Adam's condition: naked before God, and afraid of God. He had to live in an environment that was cursed by God. Practically, he had become like an animal, "Dust thou art, and to dust shalt thou return." Between him and God stood the judgment, "And He set the Cherubim, and the flame of the flashing sword, toward the east of the garden of Eden, to guard the way to the tree of life" (v. 24).

Moreover, we read in chapter 5 that Adam "begot a son in his likeness and after his image" (v. 3). That does not refer to any deeds that have been done, but to the condition. Every young child is a sinner, not because it has committed sins, but because it has a sinful nature.

God is light and in Him there is no darkness at all (1 John 1:5). How could a sinful man appear in His presence! Man is darkness (Eph. 5:8), that is the condition of the generation of Adam. But could it remain this way forever? God's love did not want that. Satan could not have the victory, could he? For all appearances, he had. But it is a remaining truth: what Satan thinks to be a victory, is really a defeat, for God turns every apparent defeat into a victory.

That is the case here. God does not give any promise to Adam; fallen man does not receive promises. Abraham is the vessel of promises of blessings, for Abraham is the father of believers. For Adam, for the natural man, there is not a single promise. But God wants to reveal what is in His heart and He does this by announcing the judgment over the serpent, "I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; He shall crush thy head, and thou shalt crush His heel" (v. 15). Enmity is mentioned here between thee and the woman. The woman had put herself under Satan's direction and chosen him above God. She thought that Satan had honourable intentions and that God did not. But now, God pronounces judgment over the serpent, "I will put enmity between thee and the woman." And it is most beautiful that God adds to this, "between thy seed and her Seed; He shall crush thy head, and thou shalt crush His heel."

This is a remarkable expression: the Seed of the woman! At that moment not a single child had been born, Adam and Eve had never seen a baby; neither had Satan. But God said that the woman would have a Seed. The Word of God is very precise, it does not speak of the seed of Adam, but of the Seed of the woman, and the epistle to the Galatians applies this to the Lord Jesus (4:4). But how must this have rung into the ears of Adam and of Satan! Eve was the person through whom death had entered the world. And now God says that the woman would have a Seed and that her Seed would hate Satan's seed, yes, more than that: it would crush his head. And in the end this became true.

"And thou shalt crush His heel." That is a deep thought for us who know the truth of God! Adam did not possess the written Word of God, but his faith was able to accept it, although he could not understand in what way the Seed would crush the head of the serpent, even if this were to be effected through a path of suffering.

In chapter 4 we see that Eve conceived and bore Cain. She said, "I have acquired a man with Jehovah. And she further bore his brother Abel." When Cain was born, she thought perhaps of the words in Genesis 3:15, but then Abel comes. We know the meaning of the names: Cain means "obtained" and Abel means "vanity." Some have thought that Cain and Abel were twins, which is not impossible. Eve thinks of it that one of her descendants will crush the head of the serpent and she says to herself, "What a mighty man must that be!" And when Cain was born she thought: "Here is that mighty man!" But when she looked a bit closer and saw how insignificant this little being was, even less capable than the young of the animals, she gave to her second son the name Abel.

What must this little being be for Adam and Eve, and what for Satan! Satan saw for the first time a man in his complete powerlessness, the seed of the woman, that is to say: a child, and Eve thought to see a hero who would destroy Satan. But when Satan saw the seed of the woman for the first time, he knew — for Satan does not doubt God's Word, he knows that every word of God is true; a man may doubt, but he won't — he knew that the seed of the woman would crush his head; and he saw that this little creature was capable of nothing whatsoever.

Here we see how God would accomplish His work; not by human power. A man, the image of weakness, had to accomplish it. He would crush the head of Satan. We know that the Lord had to suffer for this and that He had to go through death; what kind of Man had He to be! "Thou shalt crush His heel," the lowest part of man. What Man had He to be to Whom death would not mean more than a crushed heel through which He would crush the head of the highest creature, the mighty prince of angels, the ruler of the authority of the air (Eph. 2:2)!

Adam did not possess the Word; we have it and we have seen the reality, for we have the Holy Spirit, Who causes us to understand the thoughts of God. Here we see God's thoughts on this subject. Even here God shows to man what this work would be.

In chapter 3:20 we see the faith of man, "And man called his wife's name Eve; because she is the mother of all living." He had heard what God had said to the serpent and to the woman and his faith accepted it, because God had said it. He called her Eve. Her, through whom death had entered the world, he called the mother of all living. He understood what God always does: calling life out of death. God confirms this in verse 21, "And Jehovah Elohim made Adam and his wife coats of skin, and clothed them." That was death. Coats of skin cannot be made without the slaying of an animal. Man did not do this, God put guiltless animals to death; they had to die, so that Adam and Eve could be clothed. And God clothed them, so that they might stand before Him.

Here is the first suggestion of what we find in the New Testament: God had prepared all beforehand, He had a Person, born of a woman, in Whom was life. And on the basis of His death, God could clothe man. We have been made acceptable in the Beloved. We have received clothes of salvation, and so, clothed by Him, we can stand before God without fear, although we are sinners by nature and we do not fear.

I would like to add a few words on chapter 4. "And in process of time it came to pass that Cain brought of the fruit of the ground an offering to Jehovah. And Abel, he also brought of the firstlings of his flock, and of their fat" (vv. 3-4). It almost seems that the thought first occurred to Cain. But Abel came too and we see, "And Jehovah looked upon Abel, and on his offering; and upon Cain, and on his offering, He did not look." Can we understand this? Yes, for Hebrews 11 gives us the key. What an amazing fact! The story was written about 2500 years after the events took place, another 1500 years later the epistle to the Hebrews was written, and the latter presents us the key. Cain comes with an offering that he had procured with the sweat of his brow, the fruits of the cursed earth. Abel comes with the firstlings of his flocks. We could perhaps think, "Cain had put in a much greater effort to enable him to bring his offering, but Hebrews 11:4 says, "By faith Abel offered to God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain."

Doubtless, Cain and Abel had heard the story of chapter 3. However, the natural man does not understand the thoughts of God, only faith can grasp them; and Abel did understand what we have seen in Genesis 3:21. He knew that God slaughtered animals to clothe Adam and Eve; his faith understood that he could not approach God unless he placed death between himself and God. Abel knew that he was a sinner and that death is the wages of sin. But he also knew God's answer.

When God saw Adam, clothed with his coats of skins, He saw an executed judgment and, therefore, He could leave Adam unjudged. Abel's faith understood and accepted this, and he puts death between himself and God. This does not concern sins, but the sinful condition. There is no doubt that Cain and Abel had sinned before, but of this nothing is mentioned to us; up to this moment we do not hear that they had sinned. Their parents had transgressed a strict commandment and of the sin of Cain we read only afterwards. The issue here is therefore not any sinful deeds, but rather the condition and, as we learn from this, death alone can protect us against the judgment. One can only have part in death through faith. Through faith we look up to God and then we learn how we can approach Him without fear.

These then, have been a few of the basic principles found in these chapters.

*To be cont'd*

## **DEMAS**

—R. M. Oving

In the Bible some persons are mentioned about whom very little information is given. Nevertheless the few available remarks are often sufficient to give a rather precise description of part of their lives. This is specially so when we pay attention to the persons by whom or with whom they are mentioned and the circumstances that accompany them.

One such figure we find in Demas. Demas had come to know the Lord and used his strength in the Lord's service. Yet later he denied his confession and unfortunately chose the wrong side.

Three verses mention something about him. In Colossians 4:14, Paul writes: "Demas... salutes you." In Philemon 24 Demas is counted amongst the co-workers of Paul, and in 2 Timothy 4:10, we find the last tragic reference to him; he has left Paul, having loved the present age, and has gone to Thessalonica. Only Luke stayed with Paul.

What sort of picture can we make up from these references to Demas? The letter to the Colossians and the one to Philemon were written during Paul's first imprisonment in Rome, when he lived in his own rented house (Acts 28:30). Perhaps Demas was converted during that time under Paul's ministry and his love for his Saviour was so great that he worked with Paul in the gospel. That is favourable news! It was written at a time when the circumstances of Paul, and consequently those of Demas, were quite tolerable.

During Paul's second imprisonment, his circumstances were considerably poorer; bound in chains (2 Tim. 1:16), he suffers as an evil doer (2:9) and under these circumstances it required really great spiritual strength to stay with Paul. The cruel emperor Nero persecuted the Christians fiercely which made it tremendously dangerous to be associated with such a

prominent Christian as Paul. Perhaps this was one of the reasons that caused Demas to leave Paul. Only Luke stayed with him.

But in the Bible another reason is given for his unhappy departure. Demas has learned to, love the present age. He was attracted by the spirit of his time. In the great metropolis of Rome he had plenty of opportunity to get acquainted with the spirit of that age. Wealth, fun, and lawlessness were its characteristics. This spirit was entirely different from the Christian one. The Christians lived out of an invisible world and in the expectation of Christ's return. The attractions of the world, "the present age," were visible and concrete. Christian self-denial contrasted with self-glorification, ambition and the desire for possessions found amongst those who represented this age.

The change can hardly have come all at once. Slowly it must have laid hold of Demas. Finally it became so bad that Paul speaks of "loving"; he uses the most noble and beautiful Greek word available for love. Demas makes a deliberate choice. He becomes unfaithful to his Saviour. He does not remain "in Jesus." The affections of his heart that first were directed to the future, are now smothered by the things that are near and attractive to the natural heart.

Had he been more occupied with his Saviour he would undoubtedly have experienced growth in his spiritual life. But there had been a standing still, and in spiritual life that always means backsliding. This opportunity is used by the devil to show him the apparent advantages of that age.

Demas breaks the tie that binds him to the small group of faithful ones and departs. He goes to Thessalonica. In that town one can find plenty of the joys of the "present age." It is a beautiful town but one of ill repute, full of worldly and evil pleasures, the centre of commerce and trade of that time.

Little wonder that Demas goes there. A Demas is always able to find his Thessalonica. But he, who once experienced the joy to his redeemed soul of knowing Jesus, must have become very unhappy in that town.

May God give that we are kept from the way Demas took. Or are we already a bit influenced by the present age? Are we also a bit absorbed by the apparent attractiveness of this world? Let us stay as co-workers with Paul and his little group.

It is much more difficult to return once we have arrived in Thessalonica. And this we can establish: no-one finds in Thessalonica what he hoped to find. There is no doubt that Demas has become most miserable in that town. We do not know how things went with him during the rest of his life, but of one thing we are assured: the Saviour will certainly have taken Demas into His loving arms when he came with true repentance to Him. And just as certain it is that the Saviour will accept us when we come in repentance to Him.

We may make one other comparison. Each Lord's Day we gather unto the name of the Lord Jesus. Perhaps it is only a small group, and the circumstances may be weak and even difficult, while around us, in Christendom, there are places that are certainly much more attractive to our religious flesh. But when we remain faithfully in our place around the Lord Jesus, we will receive blessings as nowhere else. If our hearts are somewhat drawn away, let us then with a perfect heart return to that place where we ought to be, and let us seek to serve others as co-workers. That does not need to involve some very imposing task; by our presence alone we are co-workers during the ministry of the Word.

May Demas' story be a warning example to us. "Remain in Me and I in you," says the Lord Jesus in John 15:4. That is the power that keeps us and enables us to persevere. When we remain in the Lord Jesus, He remains in us. Not a single wrong thought can enter our hearts when He fills it entirely. When this is our condition, it will enable us to recognize the seemingly attractiveness of this age (this world) for what it is and to distinguish it from the true happiness which is found by remaining in Christ.

## **JOSHUA AND THE LAND (2)**

—*J. van Dijk*

In the last issue we saw how God's Word on the one hand speaks of the land of Canaan as fully possessed and conquered, and yet on the other hand refers to it as not completely taken possession of. God will certainly cause His promise to Abraham, Moses and Joshua to come true in a future day. God's Word never fails. Further, many Old-Testament prophecies present the same thought.

But good as it is to know what God has done and what He will do in the future, this still is of little spiritual benefit for us today. What then does God have to say to you and me with these portions that we have considered? We will see that the apparent contradiction which causes scoffers to scoff, contains a most instructive thought for everyone who desires to find the spiritual applications of these events to his life. That we are expected to find such application is clear from 1 Corinthians 10:6, "*These things happened as types (spiritual pictures) of us.*"

It is not hard to see that Joshua is a type of the Lord Jesus. Hebrews 4:8 makes this clear. The two names also show it to us; the Hebrew *Joshua* is the same as the Greek *Jesus* — Jehovah is Saviour. Joshua brought the people of God into rest. But, says Hebrews, there really is a greater rest than the rest of Canaan. There is the heavenly rest of ceasing from our own works, into which our Lord Jesus will bring us.

Canaan is typically that place where we may even now enjoy the blessings which the Lord Jesus has obtained for us — all the blessings with which we have been blessed in the heavenlies (Eph. 1:3). They all lie before us, all are available to us now, we have only to lay hold of them which means we have to *know* them first, then we have to make use of them in our relationship with God, with our brethren and with the world. When we do this, they are really ours. The point is that we do not have to wait for a future heavenly day to enjoy them: we may enjoy them now.

Who is our enemy in our Canaan? Who is the enemy that has been dealt with by our Joshua? It is the devil! Christ has annulled him who had the might of death, that is the devil (Heb. 2:14). *Christ* has spoiled principalities and authorities. He has "made a show of them publicly, leading them in triumph by it" (Col. 2:15).

Is there anything left to be done that the Lord Jesus has not done for us so that we may possess our blessings? Has the devil been completely defeated? Most certainly! There is nothing left to be done.

Yet we find such verses as: "Resist the devil and he will flee from you" (Jam. 4:7). "Our struggle is not against blood and flesh, but against principalities, against authorities, against the universal lords of this darkness, against spiritual power of wickedness in the heavenlies" (Eph. 6:12). These verses *appear* to be in conflict with the ones we have quoted before. Did not the Lord Jesus completely defeat Satan? Certainly He did!

Here, in the spiritual application of our verses in Joshua, we have a complete parallel to the apparent contradiction of Joshua taking the land. Just as God had said that Joshua had taken the whole land and that He had given *all* the land to Israel, and yet the Israelites did not take possession of all the land, so in the application we see that God has given us all things and that Christ has completely defeated Satan, and yet we still have a warfare on our hands.

This contrast in both Joshua and the New Testament has its source in the same thing. It is God's grace versus man's responsibility. God in grace has given us, who believe, all things which relate to life and godliness (2 Pet. 1:3). Yet, as responsible men before God, we have to lay hold of eternal life (1 Tim. 6:12). But we read, "God has given us eternal life" (1 John 5:11). We thus see by these verses which at first appear so contradictory, that God wants to show us that, although He has given us all things, *it is nevertheless necessary that we in a practical way walk in the good of these things!*

We must *know* our blessings, if we are to *act according to* our blessings. Those who have come with repentance to the Lord Jesus, who *know* that they have died with Him (crossing the river of death, the Jordan), must then *learn to know* what God has given them before they can walk in agreement with those blessings. They must, so to say, put their foot on each separate blessing before it can have any practical effect on their lives.

Have all Christians really come to know all the blessings they have received in Christ? Have *we* all done this? We wish it were true of all, but it is not. As a result we see that even today, the enemy has much power in the lives of those who truly belong to Christ. When we consider this, it ought to humble us that we, in spite of the practical example of the people of Israel, are nevertheless so often entirely like them in our spiritual position. God has given us *all*, yet we possess so little in our daily practice. How true it is that these things (in the Old Testament) happened as types of us (1 Cor. 10:6). We are often ready to blame and condemn the Israelites for their failures, but we ourselves fail in a much more serious way. Theirs was a failure in things relating to the earth, ours is a failure in things relating to heaven — in spiritual things. Our Joshua gave His life to conquer our land; their Joshua did not go that far.

In conclusion, we have seen that what was an apparent contradiction in God's Word has turned out to contain a most important lesson for us. Where infidels start their mocking, a child of God starts searching and admiring. But we cannot understand these things by our own wisdom. We need the guidance of the Holy Spirit, Who takes the things of Christ and declares them unto us. How thankful we can be that *He* opens the Scriptures to us!

## A MEETINGS-RELIGION

—H. La Riviere

A meetings... — what kind of strange title is that? Could it be an error on the part of the setter? No, reader, it is not an error on the setter's part! Of the author then? No, it isn't that either — just be patient for a moment! Perhaps you got a bit scared when you read it? That is not bad; a healthy scare can be worth gold. If this article causes some to get a shock — let us hope that they wished to have been shocked years ago!

Further explanation is in order; but purposely I take a detour. A straight line may be the shorter route — nevertheless, it is not always the best one. If you descend from a tower via a spiral staircase, the route will be considerably longer (even a learned Einstein wouldn't deny it) than if you were to jump from its pinnacle; yet the first route is certainly the preferred one. So, why don't you give me a hand, so that the two of us may descend from our lofty position (of self-overrating?) to a lower and safer level.

Let's get going. But — wait! First I want to say something very clearly: it is according to God's thoughts, and for our spiritual well-being more than essential, that we miss *not one single* meeting (church service) — be it a regular assembly or a conference — *without necessity*; that much is beyond dispute. For the readers of our magazine it must border on an insult to be reminded of this. That I nevertheless do so, is because the character of that which follows *demand*s that from the very start all misconceptions on this point be radically removed.

I am going to pose a series of questions; they give plenty of material to think about, a good bit for self-testing.

Does the clause "*serv*ing the Lord" — the mighty word in the climax of Romans 12:11 — refer to some 4 or 5 hours of meetings every week, or to *all* hours of all days?

Are you aware that you can be present during *all* meetings during a year (some 52 x 3, or more) and *yet* live a life that is not in harmony with this requirement of Romans 12:11?

Is it your purpose in being present at these meetings (here I think — and note this well — more particularly of the ministry of the Word, Bible-readings as well as conferences, etc.) is your main purpose: the *increase* of your spiritual knowledge, or: the strengthening, enriching, and *deepening* of your spiritual life?

Do all such meetings have their main purpose *in themselves* or rather in that what *follows*, that is: the answer that is given by your practical life?

Does it ever occur to you, be it during or after a meeting, and do you ever think of it that *each hour* spent in such meetings increases your personal *responsibility*, and is taken into account by God when the time comes that He will make up the final balance sheet of your practical life (your life *for Him!*) ?

Does your righteousness exceed that of those who not only "loved the chief seats" but no doubt also occupied them faithfully (Mt. 5:20)?

And, now that I have come to the end of my detour, I can ask you without further explanation the final question: Is your religion anything more — much more — than a meetings-religion?

Much could be said about all these questions. I am *not* going to do so. Let everyone's conscience speak. Does not each of these questions for every attentive, honest and serious reader, carry the answer so to say implicitly in it?

Yet, these questions are not at all superfluous! Especially there, where there is so much occupation with *the truth* which is from above. Particularly in that place there is so often a rare thoughtlessness as to the *reality* which is here *below!*

One final remark: Suppose someone would ask you: "Does such and such a person lead a useful, effective life, a life that produces something?", and the answer would be: "No doubt, for he eats four times a day!" Such a reply would cause you to say: "Senseless, foolish, unreasonable!!!" and quite rightfully so!

But then you'd better be careful with your criticism, friend and brother. Is your *own* spiritual life perhaps at times not just such an unreasonable reply: meals without producing labour? Mountains of spiritual food are and have been consumed! Isn't there a terrible disproportion between all this food and the labour, the fruit, which was your original purpose if I am not mistaken?

Brethren, believe me, to write this is far from easy for me. How else could it be! To write about spiritual things is usually nothing short of passing one's own judgment. And yet... we must write; the necessity is put upon us. Even while writing this short word, I felt alarmingly clear: when God gives us a sword in the hand it is not meant to be a toy but a tool, a weapon, a weapon for battle. And the most difficult battle is *not* the one against the enemies outside ourselves, but against those inside ourselves, those that we so difficultly recognize, and which we so slow and cowardly face with a brave frontal attack.

May the Spirit of God, His grace, lead and strengthen us in our practical spiritual life, lest theory and practice conflict with each other, or a fatal exchange arise between *means* and *purpose*. Not in the least the *latter*!

If our eyes are not open to this, then, in spite of all commendable zeal in searching the Truth, our life could be such that this serious judgment over it would prove to be valid: A *broad foundation*, but... *no building*!