

WHAT IS THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE WORDS: TO BE GATHERED UNTO THE NAME... ? (2)

—J. Ph. Fijnvandraat

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4. *It does therefore not concern a particular meeting.*

As I indicated previously, "to be gathered together" is the result of a completed action. We also saw, that the expression "unto the name" gives us the basis of this being gathered together. This basis is *unchangeable* and *continuous*. From this flows the fact that they who are gathered together unto the name of the Lord Jesus have been brought together in a *permanent* way. In their practice of meeting they know to be *continuously* united together.

a. *The practical application of this*

Suppose now the situation wherein it *appears* to *some* of those so gathered together that there is a need for disciplinary action — perhaps even to the extreme — towards one among them. Others, however, are not (yet) convinced of this, although they acknowledge wholeheartedly that order and discipline must be maintained at the Lord's table. They therefore do not refuse *in principle* to maintain discipline, but they are not convinced that in the case at hand such far reaching measures need to be resorted to.

Through circumstances, they who oppose an action in this practical case are not present at a meeting on a certain day. Without consulting them, those who believe that such action is called for go ahead and decide to take it, in spite of the fact that they *know* that those who are absent cannot agree with it. After this they proclaim the decision as one made by the believers who were at such and such a time "gathered together unto the name of the Lord Jesus."

Well, here you have a direct denial of the *permanent* character of being gathered together unto the name of the Lord Jesus. For this permanence means that *all* who are gathered by the Lord upon this basis ought to be consulted. They have, by their action, degraded the "being gathered together unto the name of the Lord Jesus" to the arbitrary meeting of an arbitrary number of believers at an arbitrary moment for the purpose of making an arbitrary decision!

b. *But what if someone is absent for an extended period?*

Suppose that someone desires to partake of the Lord's table when a certain brother or sister is, for instance, out of the country for an extended period. Would an assembly not be able to make a decision in such a case? Normally, the absence of a believer who would have participated but who is now for some time absent does not give rise to problems. If the assembly is consulted and everyone present has liberty to receive the person concerned at the Lord's table, then this can be done without further complications. For it can be supposed that the Lord would not give the believers this liberty if the sister or brother who is absent would have serious scriptural reservations about it. Of course, it would be an entirely different matter if they *knew* that the sister or brother who is absent had such objections against the person. Then it should be realized that although this sister or brother is "bodily absent," she or he is nevertheless "present in spirit." Paul uses this same reasoning in 1 Corinthians 5:3-5!

If it concerns a sister or brother who has a proven record of spiritual discernment and it is known that this person would have objections, then action is allowable only after the assembly has thoroughly established that there is *not the least of reasons* for these objections and if the Lord has given to all who are present complete liberty for it.

However, to use the occasion to simply bypass the *known* objections of one who is absent is evil. It is a denial of the oneness of all believers. The hand says to the foot, "I have no need of thee." It is in conflict with the keeping of the unity of the Spirit in the uniting bond of peace.

c. *How does this allow for the leading of the Spirit?*

Some may say, "There will always be some who, through circumstances, will be absent. Taking the above argument to its logical conclusion, the Spirit could never lead a meeting where some are missing!"

Such a simplistic line of reasoning cannot be permitted!

A situation as described above is nearly everywhere a weekly reality. Those who, for reason of baby-sitting duties etc., must stay home are most definitely "present in spirit"! They would undoubtedly join in the praise, thanksgiving or prayers to the Lord, He wants them to experience the fellowship with the Lord, even at home. The Spirit leads therefore in spite of their absence.

However, when we are gathered together and desire to take action "on behalf of the assembly" in matters of which we *could know* that those who are absent could not agree with, then the Holy Spirit does *not* lead us in such decisions. *That* flows from the character of *permanency* of our being gathered together *with them* unto the name of the Lord!

5. *But what if we are not unanimous?*

a. *Being of one mind and unanimity*

No matter how sorrowful and difficult it may be when we are not unanimous, our lacking unanimity does not have to hinder our being of one mind. Occasionally I am abroad among believers gathered unto the name of the Lord Jesus, whose practice of baptism differs entirely from mine: our thoughts on this point are quite different. Nevertheless I know that we are of one mind, and I have indeed experienced how great a blessing this is. Things are just reversed: Our being of one mind is essential if the Holy Spirit is to lead us to unanimity! It is quite possible to seek the face of the Lord in oneness of mind regarding matters in which we lack unanimity. Then the prayers uttered *on behalf of all* must and will be formulated in such a way that all can respond to them with an "Amen" directly from the heart. Anyone praying in such a situation: "Lord, give that we all may come to see that this view is right," reveals himself as having a wrong attitude from the outset: he abuses the time of prayer, seeking to force his opinion on others! Under such circumstances, I would refrain from adding my "Amen" to his prayer, even if I would share his view of the matter.

However, we can ask the Lord together to make His will in the matter clear to *us*. Actually, this is so obvious that it is amazing to see how often we transgress in this!

As long as we — in spite of our being of one mind — cannot arrive at a unanimous decision, we ought to follow the golden rule: If in doubt, don't! This means that we should not make decisions under such circumstances. As long as an assembly is "exercised" before the Lord and *all seek the honour and will of the Lord* in a matter that is not very clear, it is right before the Lord. For the sake of "righteousness" and "holiness" one should not be tempted to resort to ruling over the consciences of others; one should rather wait for that which the Lord is pleased to work.

b. *An Old Testament lesson*

Even the Old Testament shows us (Leviticus 13) that in situations wherein the possibility of leprosy arose, a person was not simply declared leprous. If it was not a case of leprosy, the person would have been made leprous by placing him among the lepers. Because time was required to become certain of the matter, definite steps were not immediately taken. Well, such waiting can take place in oneness of mind.

c. *What about a lack of unanimity flowing from a lack of oneness of mind?*

When there is no oneness of mind, true power to act is simply lacking — how can an assembly discipline someone when the assembly herself is not right? In such a case the first thing to do is to confess and judge the lack of oneness of mind before the Lord — perhaps with fasting. Only then it is possible to speak about other matters.

Let me repeat once more that oneness of mind is something different from unanimity. If one believer is free to eat meat, drink a glass of wine, or anything of this nature, while another is not free to do so, their differing opinions on matters like these should not hinder them from being of one mind and seeking to promote together the interests of the Lord in this world. They should yet be able to wholeheartedly praise and worship the Lord together, or to remember the Lord's death

together. Their willingness to bear with the other's different insights regarding such questions touching the practical life of faith shows their oneness of mind.

IV. THE ASSEMBLY NOT "OUR WORKSHOP"

1. Separation is not isolation.

Some, confessing the unity of the body of Christ with their mouth, nevertheless exchange scriptural separation for sectarian isolation when it comes to practical things. They only have contact with believers in "assembly" circles. Their thoughts and sentiments are occupied with "the assembly and the testimony" rather than with *the Lord and His own*. Although they speak of the "Body," in actual fact they do not look beyond the "testimony." They live so enclosed within their own circle that, seemingly, outside of that, nothing seems to exist for them. When abroad for some lectures, I noticed that a few brothers who had overheard a conversation with a Catholic couple stood there with tears in their eyes. During the conversation the married couple had given an unusually clear testimony of their conversion, assurance of forgiveness of sins, and salvation. When I asked the brothers what part of the conversation had touched them so deeply, they replied that it was the discovery that there were true believers in their own town, even in Catholicism! Their amazement grew even larger when I told them that I could mention the names of a few dozen believers in my home town who are Catholics too.

Evidently, their restricted field of vision had led them to a conclusion similar to that of Elijah: We alone are left in this city.

2. From isolation to isolationism and sectarianism

Once someone has isolated himself this far, he will very easily make isolation his way of life and in the end establish it as a dogma! From such a person's viewpoint, anyone not sharing his isolationism is easily considered to be one who "has given up the path of separation" and who "obviously makes light of God's Word." We will now mention a few consequences of such attitudes.

a. Quickly judging others.

Although someone with these sentiments will never say this publicly, but rather deny it, he will soon consider himself as "more faithful," "more scriptural," "more on the path of practical holiness," etc., than others. This becomes readily apparent by the manner in which such a person judges others who do not share his narrow way of life. He will all too readily dub them: "brothers who, sad to say, do not understand the truth."

b. Reducing "the truth"

Years ago a believer who had fallen prey to this way of thinking shared with me his surprise about a conversation he had had with a certain Mr. Q. He had noticed that Mr. Q was a believer, but there was one sad point (so he confided to me), "Mr. Q did not understand anything of the truth."

How else could I react to this remark but by asking what "the truth" might be? It was not long until it was evident that in the thoughts of our brother the idea of "the truth" had been hollowed out to such an extent that nothing but the doctrines of baptism and separation remained. I had to point our brother to the fact that "the error" could not possibly have led Mr. Q to faith in Christ!

c. Identifying oneself with "the assembly"

Such isolation and such restriction in our spiritual awareness can easily lead to complete identification of one's existence with "the assembly." The whole "wherefore" of one's life starts to concern "the assembly." First of all, one identifies the interests of the Lord in such a way with "the testimony" that it seems as if outside it the Lord has no other work on earth. Then one identifies "the testimony" with the Lord Himself (that has happened time and again in the history of the Church — of this Rome is the prime example). Finally, while "the Church" occupies the central place in one believer's thoughts and feelings, "the testimony" or "the assembly" does so in another's!

For strong-minded individuals there remains only one further step before the opposite thing occurs: one begins to identify "the assembly" or "the testimony" with one's own line of thought and consequently (though sub-consciously) with one's own person. This type of thing can lead to what happened years ago in an assembly when an older brother (long since

with the Lord) said to a younger one: "As long as I am here you are silent; when I am not here you may speak." With these words he forbade the young brother to minister the Word — this older brother had taken complete possession of the ministry of the Word! (The fact that a group of believers who tolerate such a situation share in the guilt is something I will not expand on here.) It was a case in which one's own thoughts had entirely been made the yardstick for others. There is only a very small step from that point to intolerance and a lack of love. In this way we fall into a frustrated, narrow-minded, sectarian attitude.

3. Be ye different!

Let us set narrow bounds for ourselves, but have large hearts for our fellow believers. Let us live more in the spirit of: "If ye are any otherwise minded, this also *God* shall reveal to you" (Philippians 3:15).

As long as obvious, public evil, either in life or doctrine, is not in question, we must be able to bear each other in difference of culture, style of life, and practice of faith. If we had greater trust in what the Lord can bring about, and less in our own knowledge and abilities, there would be considerably fewer difficulties among believers.

It is not sufficient to sorrow over one's own faults, owning them and confessing them. Quite likely we would have been kept from these failures if we had taken ourselves a little less seriously. A little more humour towards both ourselves and others can be quite healthy, brethren! When, as a critical young man, I was annoyed with various things in the circle where I moved, the healthy humour I found with many of the "full-timers" helped to keep me (of course, it was not all that kept me, but the Lord used it for good) from "turning my back on it all." Among other things, the humour I found in the writings of Ironside and Kelly helped me to begin a serious study of the Bible.

4. A concluding word to parents

Lack of pointed humour has been the cause of much trouble in Church history. Humour also works in our marriages as a "salting salt."

Many married brothers have "slipped" because they were put on a pedestal and adored by their wives; it caused them to grow into potentates who could not err, and consequently they thought they never erred. "Father" could do no wrong — and therefore he was diligent in doing it! Sisters with stronger personalities, or greater capacities than their husbands were carried on the hands of their spouses and could go about their business without criticism. As a result there were "whisperings" about relationships among the believers, with all the ensuing discord and slander.

True love does not consist of being nice to each other, but (among other things) the ability to show each other (preferably with sound humour) our faults, failures and disagreeable traits. Marriages and families can be a source of blessing in the Christian company, but where relationships in the home grow crooked, the results will soon be evident in the circle of believers.

Let me conclude with a remark one "full-timer" made to my father when he was quite concerned about a certain development in an assembly: "The things you tell me, Jacob, sound rather bad - but I hope you don't forget one thing: the assembly is not *your* workshop!"

THE OFFERINGS (23)

—H. L. Heijkoop

Leviticus 5:1-13

Compared with the previous chapter, these verses show a difference. Although the sacrifices are here also called sin-offerings (vv. 6-12), yet verse 6 speaks of a trespass-offering. The true trespass offerings we find from verse 14 onward, but these first verses form somewhat of a transition. Reading carefully we will notice the distinction.

In chapter 4 the sins were, in general, transgressions of the commandments of God; the fact that it was sin was stressed while its character was not mentioned. It was a sin: something that ought not to be done. We could perhaps say it was something which the natural conscience realized was not good. This shows in what light God sees sin: man is a sinner and

these are all things which issue from the natural man — the flesh. This is the first thing God made known and He required that a sin-offering be brought for it. The sin-offering shows us especially that the Lord Jesus has been made sin for us. True, the fact that He bore our sins is also contained in it, but the first point is more particularly important for us: our old nature has been judged in Him upon the cross. We saw both these points in Leviticus 16.

But here in chapter 5 we find something new. Carefully described, the sins here are those generally not sensed by our natural consciences. For instance, it says in verse 2, "Or if any one touch any unclean thing," and then the passage continues particularly about touching an animal carcass. While no natural man would have seen this as sin, God, in His Word, prohibited His people to touch it: it was indeed a sin for them. Although it is not something that goes against the natural conscience, it was sin because God had said that it ought not to be done. This shows this sacrifice to be connected with God's government. God can never have contact with a sinful nature. "God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all" (1 John 1:5). In chapter 4 things that are against God's nature are dealt with. Chapter 5, however, speaks of disobedience, not so much of the conscious type, but of that of one who, having failed to acquaint himself with God's thoughts, has not taken them into account. In His government, God must judge such disobedience.

I will give an example. Every believer can understand nine of the ten commandments. An unbeliever with any moral sense will not steal or commit adultery, he can also understand that if there is a God, that man must love Him. But there is one commandment that not a single unbeliever can understand: "Keep the Sabbath." Why had the Jews to keep particularly the Sabbath, the Saturday, and not the Friday, as the Muslims do, or the Sunday, as we do? Plainly and simply because God had said so. Naturally, we know its spiritual significance, but that was not written into the law. The law said that the Sabbath had to be kept: God had said so. This commandment revealed most clearly whether or not someone wanted to be obedient to God. Therefore we see in the Pentateuch how God, while introducing a new commandment, frequently repeats the ordinance of the Sabbath. This is the character of things in chapter 5: God in His government must punish disobedience. It is also the true character of the trespass-offering (although any trespass proceeds of course out of man's old nature; therefore this offering is called sin- as well as trespass-offering).

The first four verses speak of four different sins.

1. "And if any one sin, and hear the voice of adjuration, and he is a witness whether he hath seen or known it, if he do not give information, then he shall bear his iniquity" (v. 1). First, let us look at the difference between "sinning" and "being guilty" (e.g., v. 2). According to the Hebrew the word "sinning" means: "departing from what is right." God had commanded, and it was righteous that the creature would do all that He had spoken. "To be guilty" is a different word in Hebrew which means: "to be guilty toward someone to whom we are responsible." The creature is responsible to the Creator: it must obey Him. If it does not do so, it is guilty. This is the principle of sin. 1 John 3:4 says, "Sin is lawlessness." All that man does without taking God's authority over man into account is sin. This we find in verse 1.

The government might ask someone to put himself under oath, when one has to be a witness for instance. The natural man then says, "if there is something that seems to go against me, I need not say everything that I know." But God says, "If you know something, then you must tell it." The Lord Jesus brought this into practice in Matthew 26 when He stood before the Sanhedrin. They asked Him many questions, but He did not answer. However, when the high priest asked Him under oath, when he put the question before Him in the name of God, the Lord answered. (This custom differs from those known in most western countries, there it is generally so that someone comes under oath by pronouncing the oath himself; but in God's Word the judge pronounces it.) Humanly speaking, that was not wise. If the Lord had answered the first questions, He could have defended Himself; however, He did not answer those; He only answered the question under oath. He did so in spite of the fact that He knew that it would result in His condemnation. We read why in 1 Timothy 6:13 (although that was before Pilate): "Christ Jesus who witnessed... the good confession." He said exactly who He was, although it meant His condemnation. But God says that we must acknowledge the authority; He has appointed the authorities, so when we are summoned in God's name to answer, we must answer. If we do not do so, then we are "guilty." That was especially so for Israel, because God Himself had directly appointed the authorities.

However, I believe that this principle reaches further. For us, it deals with testifying when we are called upon to do so; it means that we should not be silent when we are asked to testify. How often that happens in our lives! It makes me think of the time when I was in school. One of my chums asked me to go with him to the movies one evening and I said, "No." Then he asked, "Why not?" There you have the kind of case with which we are concerned. What should I have answered? I could have said, "Because I do not like to," dodging the issue. The true reason was, however, that the Lord does not like to see it. It was a typical question of adjuration. I should have said, "I will not go because the Lord Jesus is my Lord and He does not allow me to go there." That does not mean that we have to preach the gospel to everyone at every opportunity. But the Lord brings us into circumstances wherein we are obliged to testify and if we do not do so we are guilty. Now it says here, "He shall bear his iniquity." This is so serious that Scripture tells us that the Lord had to die for this. If I had not

done any other sin than that one, just once failed to testify when I should have done so, the Lord would have had to die for that sin. In this manner I learn to know the seriousness of that sin: if I have failed to testify, I am defiled.

2. "Or if anyone touch any unclean thing, whether it be the carcass of an unclean beast, or the carcass of unclean cattle, or the carcass of an unclean crawling thing, and it be hid from him, — he also is unclean and guilty" (v. 2). Here everything speaks of death, and death is something with which God has no connection. God is the living God, the Source of all life; John 1:4 says, "in Him was life." All that is separated from God is dead. The touching of a carcass is mentioned here: that means coming into contact with something with which God has no connection. It may be the carcass of several things: a wild animal, one of the cattle or an unclean crawling thing. There is a great difference among these; one could say, "with a wild animal I have nothing to do." But there is here also mention of domestic animals and of crawling things. All that speaks of death defiles us and we are responsible to not have any connection with it.

Romans 16:19 is a very important verse for us: "But I wish you to be wise as to that which is good, and simple as to evil." Most unbelievers are not so and, unfortunately enough, not all believers either. Often I heard brothers and sisters say, "You have to find out whether this or that is good." But God says that we should *never* come in contact with wrong things. Certainly we cannot avoid everything. When I am walking in the street to go home or to go to work, I will hear things which may defile me, but I cannot help that; I must go. There may be an advertisement or something else that defiles me and so, although I cannot help it at all, I still am defiled. Here, however, it deals with cases with which we should have nothing to do; we should be "simple" as regards evil: that is to say, we should avoid coming into contact with it if we possibly can. These verses do not only deal with gross things, but also with things which are represented by the domestic animals. These speak of "tamed" things: of things that are of service to man but which may nevertheless speak of death.

I will give you an example. Before the war I once spoke with a brother in Germany about the propaganda of Goebels. Goebels wrote nothing but lies; his principle was: a lie can never be too big to be successful, all you need to do is to repeat it again and again. If one looked his material over, not for its contents but for its style, it was a real joy to read his writings. The same holds true for much of today's literature; the worst books are often written in the most beautiful language. But before God there is no difference: all that is not of Him defiles the believer.

3. "Or if he touch the uncleanness of man, any uncleanness of him by which he is defiled, and it be hid from him, when he knoweth it, then he is guilty" (v. 3). Although this uncleanness issues from man, it nevertheless also defiles us.

4. "Or if anyone swear, talking rashly with the lips, to do evil or to do good, in everything that a man shall say rashly with an oath, and it be hid from him, when he knoweth it, then is he guilty in one of these" (v. 4). Here it deals with thoughtlessly spoken words. In connection with this I think of a German hymn which says, "I will give myself into Thy hands to be turned around and directed." That is to say, I will give myself entirely to Thee. Is it always a reality in my heart when I sing this song? Do I indeed long to do so, or do I just sing along with the others? The Lord says in Ecclesiastes 5:4 & 5 that if I cannot keep a vow, it is better not to vow (cf. Proverbs 20:25). The verse we have now before us says that such a thing is sin.

Let us think of Jephthah. He had spoken too hastily and we know what the consequences were. It is quite obviously sinful to speak so rashly. It is clear to every believer that we should never say *wrong* things, but here it says that we are not even allowed to say *good* things rashly. Many young brothers and sisters have, shortly after their conversion said to the Lord, "Lord, I will commit my whole life to Thee"; later the price proving to be too high for them. God declares such guilty. God does not tell us that we cannot promise Him things like these, but we must know what we are doing, and only say things we truly long to do and of which we are prepared to bear the consequences.

We also notice how things are mentioned which have been done subconsciously. Man often thinks: "I did not do it consciously, so I cannot do anything about it." True enough, as long as I do not know that I did do something wrong I do not *feel* guilty. Neither can I confess it before I know that I did wrong. But that does not mean that prior to that I was not guilty. At the end of verse 2 it says, "And it be hid from him, — he also is unclean and guilty." That is a serious thought for us: Ignorance does not preclude guilt.

This we see in the following verses as well. The Lord Jesus had to die on the cross for all these things. In His government God must punish all such things: thus the Lord Jesus has borne all these in His body on the tree. Once we become aware that we have done such a thing — and the Lord will work it that we become aware of it — or that something like this has happened to us, our fellowship with the Lord is interrupted and it will only be restored when we follow the path shown in verses 5 and 6.

In verse 5 we first find confession. That is the general principle. Several times already we have seen in this book that this is a main requisite for forgiveness, just as 1 John 1:9 expressly says. Every believer will be convinced of this when it concerns

serious matters. In chapter 4 this was perhaps not stated very emphatically, but it is so here, because to the flesh, our old nature, these things do not seem so serious. Was it really so bad for an Israelite to touch a dead animal? Is it very serious when somebody says something thoughtlessly and does not pay further attention to it? Don't we often say, "But I did not mean it that way," and then think that all is in order? But here we see that we must confess the matter and that we must bring a trespass-offering. That is to say, we must look to the cross and realize that the Lord has died for this matter also, small as it is in our eyes. Yes, He *had to* die for it. How serious then must these small matters be!

But God's *grace* is also revealed in these sacrifices. When someone was not rich enough to sacrifice what was normally prescribed, he could bring something less: that was grace. Every Israelite possessed an inheritance and thus should have been able to bring a large sacrifice. When an Israelite was poor it was his own fault, and so it is with us. As soon as somebody is born again and has believed the gospel, he is blessed with every spiritual blessing; the father in Christ has not received more than the little child in Christ. The difference is that the father in Christ understands his blessings better. One cannot expect a young believer to have studied the entire Word and seen all the wealth of it. But that may rightfully be expected of us older ones; we have had time to study the Word, discover the riches which have become ours, and absorb them into our hearts. Whoever has done so is sufficiently "rich" to bring a large sacrifice. Here, however, the grace of God comes to the fore, for when someone was not rich enough to do so, perhaps because he was too young, or even because he had been too sluggish to take possession of his riches, God was satisfied with less. It is not that we are allowed to tell God what we will pay. In chapter 4 we saw this in the anointed priest who had to sacrifice a young bullock: he was not allowed to bring less; a chief had to bring a buck of the goats: God could not accept less from him. Therefore we see that God takes the person into account; He knows everyone's wealth.

The normal sacrifice was "a female of the flock, a lamb or a young goat." That is the weakest thing that could be considered to be a sin-offering. We saw already that the female speaks of the position, simply showing that the Lord has been the sin-offering, without regard for the will-power by which He has accomplished the work. We have also noticed that a lamb was not the usual animal for a sin-offering (Leviticus 4:32). The lamb speaks of the Lord's meekness; as burnt-offering it was most appropriate. But God was satisfied when someone brought a lamb as sin-offering when he was too poor to sacrifice a goat.

"And if his hand be not able to bring what is so much as a sheep, then he shall bring for his trespass which he has sinned two turtle-doves or two young pigeons, to Jehovah; one for a sin-offering, and the other for a burnt-offering" (v. 7). We know that the fat had to be taken from the sin-offering to be burnt upon the altar. It spoke of what was pleasing to God: it was the connection between the burnt- and the sin-offering. But one cannot remove the fat of a turtle-dove; therefore two were required, one of which was to be for a burnt-offering. He who brought the sin-offering thought thereby of the value of the work of Christ for God. How accurately everything is described here! And since the blood of a dove cannot flow abundantly, the priest had to press it out at the foot of the altar, and so the blood was seen anyway (v. 9).

In verse 11 we have something else that is very beautiful: "But if his hand cannot attain to two turtle-doves, or two young pigeons, then he that sinned shall bring for his offering the tenth part of an ephah of fine flour for a sin-offering: he shall put no oil on it, neither shall he put frankincense thereon; for it is a sin-offering." We know that this speaks of the life of the Lord Jesus, not of His death. What grace of God, that He even accepts this as a sin-offering. It is true, God always sees the blood of the Lord Jesus. And because He always sees it, He can forgive sins. But for us, the sin-offering signifies that we come to true repentance and are cleansed through true self-judgment. If someone was so poor that he did not see that the Lord had to die for that sin, he was clearly not able to bring a blood-sacrifice. If, however, he realized that the Lord Jesus would never have done such a thing, God accepted that small sacrifice. Even here it says, "And it shall be forgiven him" (v. 13).

What grace of God! But how superficial believers can be, not even able to bring two turtle-doves! However, when somebody who realizes his sin and confesses that he has done wrong brings a sin-offering, even if it is but a handful of flour, he will soon become richer. When he sins again, he will be able to bring two turtle-doves; yes, in the end he will be able to bring a young bullock. And that is indeed God's purpose. He desires that we direct our eye continually towards the Lord Jesus, so that even the sins we have committed become an opportunity for increasing our wealth. All God's ways, even those which seem to be hardest to us, have the eventual purpose, the ultimate goal, to bless us. The more we act in accordance with His thoughts, the more it will be to the advantage of our souls.

To be cont'd

Under this heading we will, if the Lord permits, in every issue, present a number of questions dealing with the Church. Since all who believe in the Lord Jesus and His atoning work upon the cross are members of the Church, it is a subject that should be of interest to all our readers.

In spite of the desire of our Lord expressed in John 17, and the admonition by Paul in 1 Corinthians 1 and 3, Christianity is plagued by an innumerable array of denominations. Seeking to account for this fact, it seems that we can only ascribe it to one or more of the following three conditions, listed in ascending order of seriousness:

1. A lack of understanding of the Scriptures' teaching on the Church.
2. A lack of devotedness to the Lord and the things He values.
3. A simple lack of obedience to the Word of God.

We hope that this "Study Corner" may be a means used by the Lord to reduce the first of these conditions. We pray that the second one will be to some extent helped by the articles in our magazine. The third condition, however, is beyond us, as only the Lord Himself can meet this need. All we can do is pray that those who are His may indeed be obedient to the commands and desires of their Lord.

Now for the way we hope to go about things. In this and following issues of *Come and See* we should like to present a number of questions, the answers to which we will list only in a later issue. ~~This will give those who desire to do so an opportunity to mail us their answers, which should reach us not later than the end of the month following the publication date of the issue (i.e. answers to this issue's questions should be received by us not later than July 31st.).~~ Loizeaux Brothers, who originally published these questions and answers, have given us permission to use them in our magazine. For this we should like to express our thankfulness. At the close of the series we will publish the title and author of the source of these questions.

~~We will make a copy of the book *The Church of the Living God*, by R. K. Campbell available for the ten persons with the highest scores at the end of 1982 provided they have a minimum score of 75%. We trust that this will create some profitable interaction between our readers and ourselves.~~

Here then are the first eight questions:

1. There is only one place where we can get authoritative instruction on the subject of the Church; where is that?
2. In what part of the Bible would you look for Church truth, the Old Testament or the New? Why?
3. The New Testament has been translated into many languages and dialects. In what language was it originally written?
4. The English word "church" is from a Greek word which means "that which belongs to the Lord." This Greek word is never used in the Bible for the Church. What is the Greek word?
5. Cite an instant or two where this Greek word is used in the New Testament.
6. What is the Greek word translated "church" in the King James Version and most of today's modern translations?
7. What English word would be better than "church" in translation of the Greek word "ecclesia"?
8. Besides its application to the Christian Church, there are two other usages of the Greek word "ecclesia" in the book of Acts. What are they, and where are they found?

This is it for now, so try your best ~~and don't forget to send us your answers by July 31st.~~ Good bye until the next issue or when we meet in the presence of our Lord.

John van Dijk