

THE OFFERINGS (24)

—H. L. Heijkoop

Lev. 5:14-6:7

This portion covers the trespass-offering. Chapter 4 dealt with the sin-offering, and so did most of verses 1-13 of chapter 5, although once the trespass-offering was mentioned there. The very names describe these sacrifices. The trespass-offering speaks of debt, of offense, so consequently it is said, "if anyone act unfaithfully." This shows that it is not just debt, but the special character of it. The word "sin-offering," on the other hand, indicates its relationship with *sin*. Chapter 4, as we saw, dealt with persons — not so much with what they had done as what they were. Of course sin is revealed through a deed, but that particular sin is proof of what the person is in himself; there the type of sin-offering to be brought did not depend on the misdeed, but on the person who had done it. A priest had to bring a different sacrifice than a prince, and someone from among the people had to bring a different offering again. Here, however, there is no distinction as far as the persons are concerned; it concerns debt (although that is also sin) while in chapter 4 it concerned the character of the deed, that it was sin, offending God's holy nature. Now the Lord Jesus has been made sin for us and has died. But He also paid our *debt* — and that is what we find here.

When we read 1 John 3:4, which tells us what sin is, we see that it encompasses all that is done without taking account of the Lord's authority over us. Therefore, it is to God the same whether I have an unclean thought or I say or do something bad. Both things are sin, and God's holy nature cannot have any contact with it. When we who are believers sin, our fellowship with the Father is broken. In chapter 4 and the first part of chapter 5, we saw how it can be restored.

But according to God's government, the *manner* in which I have sinned is not without significance, for it takes account of whether I have a debt toward God or toward man. In the first case found here, it is an unfaithful act in the holy things of Jehovah. Holy means "set apart." Therefore, holy things are those which have been set apart for God. The Bible mentions several things which belonged to God; for instance, the burnt-offering and part of the peace-offerings and oblations are His. But also the firstborn belonged to Him, as did the tithes the Israelite had to pay the Lord. When we sin in one of these things, not only does our old nature reveal itself, but we have harmed God: we have kept something from Him that belonged to Him, or we did not give Him His due. It is the same when I take something from, or do something against, others. Then it is not only a question between God and myself, but also between that person and myself. This we can see here in the trespass-offering; it is evident that this portion deals with a case in which we have done one or the other evil. Here we find the only way in which things can be made right again. The guilty one must bring a trespass-offering; he has to restore the damage he caused and add the fifth part to it.

That is *God's* way of acting, and how beautiful it is that the Lord Jesus has done this as well. When we considered the sin-offering in Leviticus 16, and even more so with the burnt-offering in Exodus 29, we saw that the Lord Jesus, in dying for us, restored what *we* had spoiled — but He did much more than that. Yes, He was made sin for us, and what is more, God's righteousness has been satisfied by it. But if the work of the Lord Jesus had not been much more than that, God would have suffered harm, for He had been dishonoured by the sin of man. However, the Lord Jesus did not only bear the judgment over our sins and sin, thereby satisfying God's righteousness, but He did more. In Psalm 69:5 He says, "Then I restored that which I took not away." However, He returned much *more* than we had robbed, and we know that *this* is the basis of our blessings. When He accomplished the work upon the cross, He glorified God to the fullest. We may say that the fifth part has been added to it; on the basis of this fifth part, God can bless us. God has raised Him from among the dead and given Him a place at His right hand, to which place He will bring us. All of us who believe, He has made His children, and later we will receive the full place of sons. (I do not speak here of the relationship of children, for that we possess already, but the place in the Father's house.) These things we find in connection with the trespass-offering.

This principle of the fifth part is also applicable when today's believers do evil. Three cases are mentioned here. First, a debt towards God. In verse 15 we read, "If anyone act unfaithfully and sin through inadvertence in the holy things of Jehovah, then he shall bring his trespass-offering to Jehovah." There had been a trespass, and we sense that it is not just a question of sin, but of a debt toward God in regards to the holy things of Jehovah: the things that belong to Him. There is no mention here in

what manner this may happen; it could take place in several ways. For instance, we may have eaten something that was meant to be for God, or we did not give Him His due. The last chapter of Leviticus speaks about this. Besides the tithes, which were for God, one could also separate something else for God. But if one did not give what one had promised, there had to be a trespass-offering, for one had promised God a gift.

I now think of an example in Luke 16, of what the Lord said of the steward whom He presented as a picture of man. Man is God's steward upon earth. God has entrusted everything upon earth to man, but only as God's steward; man has to manage the earth for God. But man has not acted accordingly: he has used the things entrusted to him for his own benefit. If we are not faithful in what belongs to God, and do not regard the goods which have been entrusted to us as coming from Him, the Lord Jesus asks how God will then be able to entrust to us the things that belong to us, that is to say, the spiritual goods. The Lord refers to anything in which we can be unfaithful: for instance, when we fail to give God of our possessions, time, or energy.

Another case may be our meeting together on Sunday morning. We come to worship the Father and to announce the death of the Lord Jesus. Does God not have a right to our praise, and does not the Lord Jesus have a right to our love? "You have been bought with a price," God says in His Word. Don't we keep something from God that is due Him when we come on Sunday morning with a cold heart and without praise, thankfulness, and worship in our hearts?

In these verses, only a few things are mentioned, but there are many others besides. God does not suppose that we do such things consciously: they occur "through inadvertence." But that makes it all the more sorrowful. In the following verses we see that when it concerns things we do to men, there is no mention of inadvertence, nor does it say that it can happen to us without our being conscious of it. In verse 17, however, we do find one who did evil without knowing it. Isn't that the character of our relationship with God? We are much sooner conscious of doing something wrong toward men than toward God: we think more of man's rights than God's rights. Yet, are God's rights not much more important?

The question then arises of how the matter can be restored. This portion tells us how: the guilty one must bring a trespass-offering; that is to say, he must return to the cross and acknowledge that he has sinned. The Lord Jesus had to die, even for things which are not sin to the natural man's conscience. When we see this, we learn how terrible our deeds were.

Now let us pay attention to what is added here. In the case of a sin-offering, one from among the people had to offer a goat, but he was allowed to select which one. So it was for a prince or an anointed priest: they also could select the animal they would bring as a sin-offering. While the *type* of animal of which they should bring an offering was prescribed, they themselves were allowed to select the particular animal they would sacrifice. God's mercy is without end, but He is also righteous. In His government, His righteousness must be prominent; therefore, we still have here an additional thought: in all cases it was necessary to sacrifice a ram as a trespass-offering, — in this there was no distinction. But man was no more free to select the particular ram himself than he was to choose the type of animal to be sacrificed. At the end of verse 15 it says, "a ram without blemish out of the small cattle, according to thy valuation by shekels of silver, according to the shekel of the sanctuary, for a trespass-offering." "*Thy* evaluation" is the evaluation of Moses. Moses is a type of the Lord Jesus: the Lord determines what we must bring as a trespass-offering. The value is expressed in money, after the shekel of the sanctuary. God's measure applies here: a serious thought for us. If we did not give God what is due Him, or if we took something that belongs to Him (later we will see that the same holds true when we have done something wrong toward man), it is not up to *us* to say how restoration is to be made. That is determined by God's measure, after the shekel of the sanctuary.

These shekels are made of silver, which, as we know, speaks of the price paid for our redemption (Ex. 30:11-16; 38:25-26). Every young man who had become an adult had to pay silver shekels to avoid falling under God's wrath. Silver speaks of the price the Lord Jesus had to pay for our redemption, His love, and grace. The trespass-offering had to be characterized by this. The Lord was not obliged to die for us. He did so out of grace and love, and what we sacrifice under such circumstances has to bear that same character of grace and love. It should, therefore, never be with us a question of with how little we can satisfy God; and when it concerns our neighbour, we should not ask how we can obtain restoration as cheaply as possible. The restoration ought to have that character of grace we see in the work of the Lord Jesus. When we sacrifice in this manner, when we see what love and grace God has shown upon the cross, we will be ready and able to accomplish what is commanded in verse 16: to return what has been robbed, or to give what has not been given, and to add the fifth part to it. That means not only to repay, but to add twenty per cent to it, so that things are settled in God's favour. *That* is the character of grace.

In the following verses we see that the same holds true regarding our neighbour. When we have sinned against our neighbour, regardless of whether or not he is a brother, the result should be that the offended person will only become richer through this. He does not just receive back what had been taken from him, but an additional twenty per cent. God also becomes richer, because He has received a trespass-offering. This is how grace acts. Even the person who did the wrong will become richer; he had to learn the lesson, see the grace of the Lord, take it into his heart, and act in the same manner; now he has fellowship with the Lord. This is the only manner in which things can be put in order again.

In verse 17 we have the second case. We notice how weak the heart of man is in things regarding God: "And if any one sin and do against any of all the commandments of Jehovah what should not be done, and hath not known [it], yet is he guilty, and shall bear his iniquity." "And did not know it" isn't that the first excuse a man gives? "I didn't know it! I didn't think of it!" he says and then he thinks that all is right. But that does *not* make things right. Even if we did not know it, we are guilty. If that were not so, God would not receive what is due Him. There is mention here of a trespass-offering, but not of returning or adding the fifth part. God says that it is unacceptable to Him for someone to say, "I did not know it." He *could* have known it; if he didn't, that in itself was already a failure. He had the entire Word of God in his hands; he could have known what was according to God's thoughts, and if he was not acquainted with it, it was a failure. So, even when he now says he did not know it, he is guilty. It is the manner in which things can be restored which is presented to us here. But if I am so poor that I do not know God's thoughts and simply say, "I did not know it," there will never be a complete restoration. This is what we see here.

In verse two of chapter six, we have the third; it regards our neighbour. We notice, however, that God sees this as a trespass against Himself. It says, "if anyone sin and act unfaithfully against Jehovah," although it has been committed against a man. Rather than covering these verses in detail, I will only point out that there is no mention here of the fact that the guilty one was unaware of it. Even our *natural* conscience tells us when we do something unrighteously towards our brother. True, it deals here with earthly things concerning Israel, but we may apply this to ourselves spiritually.

Let us take, for instance, the first case: the taking away of things that have been entrusted to us. Someone tells me something that concerns him personally. If I then speak with others about it, I sin against the confidence he has put in me. Such a case is mentioned here; they can also be somewhat different. For instance, if a brother has a gift but, since I am jealous of him, I deny it, I rob him of something. Or if I say something wrong about him, I rob him of his honour. These are a few of the cases that are mentioned here. God regards them as trespasses against Himself.

In verse 5 we find once more the way to restoration: all has to be returned and, besides that, the fifth part has to be added. This is a serious matter. If I have not given my neighbour his due, I have to return everything to him — plus an additional twenty per cent. Take, for instance, the love which we owe each other. God's Word says that we are obliged to love our brethren, which means that they have a right to our love. I don't say that they have a right to claim it from us - that is something else. God's Word does not give us the right to claim love from others, but the brethren have a right to our love, because the Lord has commanded us to love them. If I have not done this, what should I then do? I ought not only to love them, but, in so doing, to exceed the normal level of love: I must love them twenty per cent more. If I did not honour someone as I ought — I ought to consider others greater than myself — it is not then sufficient that I just start to honour him, but I must do so more than normal to make everything well.

In this portion of Scripture, we see how important these things are in the eyes of God. When it concerns Him, there is first mention of the trespass-offering, then of returning with an added twenty per cent; *then* it says that it will be forgiven him. When it concerns our neighbour, however, the order is different: one has first of all to pay back, adding the fifth part to it; *afterwards*, a trespass-offering needs to be brought, and finally forgiveness is granted. It is good for us to know what the only way to restore things in accordance with God's thoughts is.

Let us take a situation out of daily life. If I have sinned against a brother, I must follow the above path. Suppose that I have not been very friendly to him. If then I only say, "I did not mean it that way," I am not adding the fifth part to it. If I say to him, "It's not that bad, you shouldn't take things so seriously," then I again don't give him that fifth part — and I have failed to make use of the only way to restore things. That is why so many things remain unrectified among us: we are not rich enough to add the twenty per cent to it, and we try to restore things with as little effort as possible. We say, "I did wrong," and perhaps we add to it, "Will you forgive me?" and then, as far as *we* are concerned, we certainly have done what was right. But the one who is harmed has not received sufficient satisfaction, there hasn't been any compensation for the sorrow, and the matter is not resolved.

Let us have another look at the Lord Jesus. Yes, He took our sins upon Himself; He has been made sin for us and undergone God's judgment. But He has done much more than that. By dying for us on the cross He has glorified God, and in a way that God had never been glorified before. If we then think of His conduct towards us . . . ! Admittedly, in John 3:14 it says that the Son of man *had to be* lifted up, and when the Lord Jesus was revealed as Son of man, He *had to* die. But it was *grace* that He became Son of man and died as such. He paid for our sins. But He did much more than that; not only has He redeemed us from an eternal destruction, but He has given us a place in the Father's house; He has abundantly blessed us, and we have been blessed with every spiritual blessing. We possess these blessings because the Lord Jesus has become the trespass-offering. According to God's standard, *this* is the manner in which these things have to be done.

If we did this in our mutual relationships, all questions among us would be removed. How we would be of one heart and mind! Would such grace not bind our hearts more together? If I have sinned and am rich enough to act this way in grace, would that not open the hearts of those against whom I have committed wrong, so that our hearts would be bound together stronger than ever before?

To be cont'd.

THE STUDY CORNER

This is the second part of our "Study Corner." Perhaps you have realized that there is a curious man here, eagerly waiting for the response these questions will draw from their readers. At the time this issue had to go to press, however, it was too early to expect any responses to the first part. So, "patience" is our watchword.

Meanwhile, I would like to encourage all of you to give these questions a good try. I can imagine how some of you, who would like to use a concordance, but do not have one and cannot afford to buy one, are having difficulties finding the answers. Let me share with you a method I discovered one time during a Bible study. The exact wording of a certain verse was needed but no one had a concordance available or knew where to find it, although we knew its approximate wording. One thought the verse was found in a particular book, but it had some thirty six chapters. We were twelve persons altogether, so that meant that if we each read three chapters, we were likely to find the verse. Since one can quite quickly look through three chapters, it was not long before someone reported to have found the passage.

So if you are not so fortunate as to have a concordance available, share your search with some others and you will likely be able to find your answers. How good it would be if your wish to find the answers became the reason for starting a new Bible study group! I hope I will soon hear how you are making out. Here is the new challenge:

9. What expression did the Lord Jesus use which distinguishes the Christian Assembly from any other assembly?
10. If the word "assembly" gives the idea the Holy Spirit intended to convey when He used the word "ecclesia" (an assembly of called-out ones), why do many Christians use the word "church"?
11. What makes it difficult to use the correct word, "assembly," in a Quiz like this?
12. Is there a reliable English translation of the Bible available in which the Greek word "ecclesia" is properly and consistently translated "assembly"?
13. Give some of the wrong ideas people have of the "Church" (Assembly).
14. If someone should ask you, "What is the Assembly?" what could you say to them to start a scriptural discussion of the subject?
15. Quote a scripture which shows that the Bible teaches this.
16. How many heads has the Assembly, the Body of Christ?
17. Christ, the Head of the Assembly [who is now] in heaven, has how many Bodies on earth?

18. The Bible tells explicitly how the Assembly, the Body of Christ, is formed. Quote the verse and tell where it is found.

~~The deadline for the answers is September 30th. I hope that gives our overseas readers (more than two thousand!) sufficient time.~~ Good-bye for now; I commend you all to the Lord.

—John van Dijk

OUTLINES FOR BIBLE TEACHING

We hope in this new series, to present a systematic treatment of the Bible stories, designed to help teachers of nine to fourteen-year-olds in their personal search for the spiritual meanings which lie hidden in them. While some of this material may only be suitable for the instructor's personal benefit, most should be readily understood by the pupils. It is this ageless appeal of Scripture which makes these outlines fitted to COME AND SEE.

The material was originally written in German by Dr. E. Doenges, with assistance from Mr. O. Kunze. Later revised and translated into Dutch, it has been for blessing in both Germany and the Netherlands for many years. Recently Mr. Robert Balder (who went to be with the Lord in 1977) prepared the English manuscript. In its introduction he expressed the prayerful desire that the outlines, under the Holy Spirit's guidance, might become an attractive tool for many in their effort to bring the message of salvation to the children entrusted to them.

Although it will not be possible to publish all 160 lessons in COME AND SEE, we hope that the few selected will impress the readers with the value of these outlines, which, with the Lord's help, we hope to publish soon.

May the Lord bless the consideration of His Word to our hearts.

—The Editor

1. THE ACCOUNT OF CREATION — Genesis 1:1-31

Outline

1. The beginning Gen. 1:1-2
2. The first day Gen. 1:3-5
3. The second day Gen. 1:6-8
4. The third day Gen. 1:9-13
5. The fourth day Gen. 1:14-19
6. The fifth day Gen. 1:20-23
7. The sixth day Gen. 1:24-25

Explanation

1. To create is to make something out of nothing (Heb. 11:3). "The heavens" are the invisible worlds; "the earth" stands for the visible world. After the creation of heaven and earth in the beginning, God created in six days all things.

2. First day: light, the main condition for life.

3. Second day: the expanse, the atmosphere round about us, the second condition for life.

4. Third day: separation between earth and seas, the dry land and the waters; the third condition for life. Then followed the vegetable kingdom.

5. Fourth day: the lightbearers appeared — sun, moon, and stars. These are for signs (Mt. 2:2; 24:29; 27:45) and for the division of time into days, months, and years.

6. Fifth day: the creation of animal life and birds.

7. Sixth day: land animals and the creation of human life.

Lesson

God is almighty (Ps. 104:24) and wise. There is a parallel between the events in the week of creation and the conversion and salvation of a soul. There too, God grants first of all light (Eph. 5:13; Heb. 4:13; Jn. 8:12; 2 Cor. 4:6). New birth, the renewing of man, is referred to as a new creation (2 Cor. 5:17; Eph. 2:10). 17

2. THE CREATION OF MAN. THE GARDEN OF EDEN. — Gen. 1:26-2:25.

Outline

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|---------------------------------|---------------------|
| 1. The creation of man | Gen. 1:26-27; 2:4-7 |
| 2. God's blessing | Gen. 1:28-31 |
| 3. The day of rest | Gen. 2:1-3 |
| 4. The Garden of Eden | Gen. 2:8-14 |
| 5. God's commission and command | Gen. 2:15-20 |
| 6. Creation of woman | Gen. 2:18-25 |

Explanation

1. God spoke twice on the sixth day, the second time He did not say as before, "Let the earth bring forth . . .," but we are confronted with a special counsel of God: "Let us make man"! Man is formed as a body (out of dust) with a spirit (from God, immortal). "We are the offspring of God" (Acts 17:29). Man, the image of God, was created as a personal being with self-consciousness, intellectual capacity, a will, etc. Furthermore, having been created in the likeness of God, he had spiritual characteristics, was pure, and capable to have fellowship with God.

2. Man was allowed to fill the earth, to subdue it, and to enjoy its fruits.

3. The seventh day was the day of God's rest.

4. The garden was in Eden and was a garden of delight (paradise). The two rivers surrounding it were the Hiddekel (or Tigris) and the Euphrates, names which point to Armenia.

5. God gave a commission and a command. Man was to till and to care for the garden. Thus, since work was present before the fall, it is no curse (2:15). As his first task God asked Adam to name the animals. Man also was to be dependent upon God and to be in submission to Him (Ps. 139:14; 8:3,4,6). God wished to test man and forbade him to eat of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil.

6. God formed woman from Adam's rib as a helper to fulfill his needs. They lived together in innocence as God's example of purity in the marriage relationship.

Lesson

God loves man. He placed him, surrounded by blessings, upon the earth. His blessings and life, however, were assured only by obedience toward God and by abstinence from evil which, although it existed already, was not present in the just created world (2:17; Rom. 5:12).

Types to be found in this passage are:

a. Adam and Eve — Christ and the Church (the Assembly).

b. Adam's deep sleep — Christ's death.

c. Adam's opened side — Christ's pierced side from which flowed blood and water for the reconciliation of life of His bride (Eph. 5:32; Jn. 19:34). Only true believers belong to the bride of Christ.

To be cont'd

VERILY, VERILY

—J. van Dijk

Introduction

Suddenly these words struck me when I read them a little while ago. Something important was sure to follow, the Speaker being no one less than the Lord of glory. All words spoken by Him are of course, of vital importance, whether they have been spoken by Him directly (as in the gospels) or through others (the whole Word of God, the Bible). Yet, He, who is Creator and Upholder, considered it instructive for us to offset some twenty five remarks He made while on earth with these attention catching words: Verily, verily. All of them are found in the Gospel of John. It should prove profitable to have a look at the passages in which they occur.

John 1:51

Somewhat hesitantly Nathanael had followed Philip, curious who the One he was to meet would be. It seems as if the Lord hardly gave Philip an opportunity for a formal introduction. How else could it be? Who, but the Lord Himself can introduce Him to us? As Philip, we may speak to others about the Lord, but the Lord Himself will do the actual introducing: He will say who He is. He always does so, just as at that occasion, in a most personal way. I doubt that anyone has ever understood so quickly who the person was with whom he had just become acquainted. The Lord's words, seemingly so out of the blue, had accomplished this. The Lord knew Nathanael thoroughly. He knew the genuine desire of Nathanael to walk uprightly, for He Himself had worked that desire in Nathanael's heart. And, although it does not say so explicitly, I believe Nathanael mourned at the pretense so prevalent around him. Had he prayed about this under the fig tree? Had he pleaded with God that soon the Messiah might come to set things right? For us these remain questions, but we know that the Lord's remarks left Nathanael without a doubt as to who this Person before Him was. Here was the Son of God, the King of Israel.

No sooner had Nathanael come to recognize this great truth about the One whom he met, or the Lord spoke once more. We might ask, "What greater truth could one discover. What could be more important than Nathanael's discovery?" But the Lord's next remark proves us wrong; there is something greater than Nathanael's discovery. Then the Lord spoke the words we want to consider.

He said, "Verily, verily I say to you, Henceforth ye shall see the heaven opened, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man." These words remind us of Jacob's vision (Gen. 28:12-22). In grace, the God of heaven was occupied with man: even with a Jacob! Who would have imagined such a thing after what had occurred the previous days. Yes, this is what God wanted for Jacob and his offspring: God longed to have communion with man. And although God, looking forward to the work of Christ and its results, could from His side show such grace to Jacob, Jacob himself felt not the least bit at ease with such close fellowship. Jacob's reaction was: "How dreadful is this place! this is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven" (v. 17). Yet, Jacob was a true child of God, but since he did not live in the dispensation of grace, he did not — and could not — know God's heart as we may know it today.

Here is a matter of importance for us. As Christians we have both the Word of God and the Spirit of God and, as John wrote in his first Epistle, we "know all things" (2:20). That is true in principle (John always looks at things as they are in principle — it is good to remember that), but if we, each one for ourselves, don't acquaint ourselves with God's thoughts over us, we may not know much more than Jacob did. Perhaps we will, as Jacob, even dread to be in such intimate contact with God. That this is a great loss to us is relatively unimportant: God loses out, after He gave all He had, to bring about the beautiful Father-son relationship. True, God will receive His portion in the end, when He takes us to be with Himself in His house. But even now — or should I say, especially now — God longs to have this fellowship with those whom He bought with the blood of His own (Acts 20:28). We better not dwell here on the effect one's lack of enjoyment of the Lord's things will have on those surrounding him. I am afraid it is too devastating to contemplate. As a consequence he is to God as an invested capital that does not bear interest, if not worse. If you recognize your situation, it may be good for you to read Job 22:21-30 and get acquainted with the heart of your God!

But God has found a Man with whom He can have communion. The only Man with whom He can have it in perfection: the Man Christ Jesus, the Son of man. That is the contents of the Lord's remark. Nathanael realized that the Lord was the Son of God, the King of Israel of whom Psalm 2 spoke. But the Lord added to this that He is also the Son of man spoken of in Psalm 8. In Psalm 2 He is seen as King upon Zion, ruling from that place over the nations of the earth. But this King was rejected and in His rejection He made Himself one with the seed of Jacob, the faithful remnant. Therefore, the promise contained in the dream of Jacob is fulfilled in Him. His people may reject Him, only the babes and sucklings among them may praise Him, but God gives Him, the rejected but glorified Son of man, to rule over the universe. Christ did not receive this rule as Son of God, but as Son of man!

This caused the Lord to speak the words: "Verily, verily." Here is the turning point of all God's dealings with sinful man. God in grace has found a faithful Man in His Son, and with Him God could have the communion He longed for and had sought to have, but for which sinful man was not suited. There is little need to go further in reading the gospel if you fail to come to grips with this tremendous truth as to who the Person of Christ is, and what His relationship with God is. Yet, God can only reveal these things to a mournful heart, a heart that cries about the condition of man in general, but that cries even more about its own condition and its lack of sensitivity for what is suited to its Maker.

Jacob did not relish the thought of an open heaven. Perhaps he realized that if God acted in accordance with His righteousness, an opened heaven would bring judgment over sinful man, as it had in Noah's days. Then it had been a terrible experience to have the windows of heaven opened. Jacob *knew* the reality of his own path, and he did *not know* the forgiveness of God to those who believe in Him. It seemed he did hardly dare to think of God; the thought of an opened heaven did not appeal to him.

Yet, there is no other place from where blessings can be expected: if there is to be help for a world in need — for a man in need — it must come from heaven. The captain in Elisha's days (2 Ki. 7:2) knew it, but did not believe it to be possible. The world does not lack such captains today. Sad to say, in the day of blessing they will see it but not enjoy the fruit of it. Their unbelief will shut them out.

For the man of faith, however, an opened heaven is an entirely different experience. Stephen can tell us that (Acts 7:54-60). There he saw the rejected Jesus, the glorified Son of man standing at God's right hand. He experienced the truth of Psalm 8, the Son of man glorified. This had a profound effect on him. Under the most adverse circumstances he glorified God in acting as his Lord: committing his spirit to the Lord, he prayed for his enemies. What an effect an opened heaven has! But heaven can only be open in grace because of that one Man who pleased God and upon whom the angels could ascend and descend. The Man of communion and prayer ("but I [was] prayer" — Ps. 109:4).

John on Patmos saw a door opened in heaven, it was open for him. He heard the voice saying, "Come up here." He is a type of us. Soon we too will hear this voice and then we will go there, to be with Him who loved us. This is the best of all, but I wonder whether the open heaven is not to be a reality for us now. John says, "Even as *He* is, we also are in this world" (1 Jn. 4:17). Does that not include constant communion with God, who has become our Father in Christ? Not just angels, but the Spirit Himself has come down; not only *on us* but He even indwells our bodies. We have access to the Father and to the throne of grace; we may — how sad but how true that we often say, we should — pray without ceasing.

It really is no wonder that the Lord said to Nathanael that he would see greater things than he had seen so far. In a future day the remnant of Israel will see in a practical way what Nathanael saw and what we may see today with the eye of faith. It will

be the day of the Son of man and the words of Psalm 8 will be fulfilled. Christ will come with royal splendour. That day will be introduced with an opened heaven (Rev. 19:11), and the Faithful and True, the Companion (Fellow — Zech. 13:7) of God, will come with saints and angels in His train. Although His coming will be in judgment, it is to introduce blessing as never known on earth before. Then the time will follow during which there will be that full communion between heaven and earth for which God longed, but which was spoiled at an early date in Eden (Gen. 3). In that day the world will know that the Father has sent the Lord Jesus and that He has loved us as He has loved Him (Jn. 17:23). That is great! But what is far greater, God will be satisfied, God will rest, the longing of His loving Father heart will be fulfilled. The centre of the scene will be the Son of God, the Creator, who became Man, who, as Lamb of God, died and rose: He will be crowned with glory as Son of man, and admired in His blood-bought bride. Then we will sing in a new way: "God is satisfied with Jesus, we are satisfied as well!"

To be cont'd