

VERILY, VERILY (3)

—J. van Dijk

John 5:19, 24, 25

In two previous articles, we saw, first, that God has a Man, and secondly, that the natural man is incapable of seeing and understanding this Man of God. Now we come to the third occurrence of these words, "Verily, verily." Once again, there are three closely connected remarks of the Lord in John 5.

In verse 19 we find the words: "Verily, verily, I say to you, The Son can do nothing of Himself save whatever He sees the Father doing: for whatever things *He* does, these things also the Son does in like manner." These important words have often given rise to controversy. The great opposer has led some to misuse these words in their efforts to disprove the equality of the Father and the Son, arguing that the words indicate the Son to be inferior to the Father — the very opposite is true. Let us take a closer look at this.

No Christian would maintain that he, or anyone else, is not dependent upon, and inferior to, God. This is a helpful starting point in seeking to understand the truth of this verse. We can pose the question: Who among men can claim that he can do nothing of himself? Man's history, from Adam onward, is full of acts done in independence of God. Independence caused man to fall. There is also abundant proof that man is not equal to God. In a mere six days, God brought order where chaos was found, whereas man's independent actions, after six-thousand years, have only created havoc where there was once order.

Now here (v. 19) is a Man, who says that He cannot possibly act in independence of the Father, that all He does is in complete harmony with God's plan. He is the only One who brought order amid chaos, not least when He reconciled sinners to God. Knowing what inferior and independent men like ourselves do, can we claim that One who acts in entire harmony with the Father, who *cannot do otherwise*, does so because of inferiority? Such accord can only be manifested by one who has the *same essential nature as the Father*; if nothing else, we are proof that this must be so! (Just in passing, I would like to mention that Satan is another proof: able to act independently of God, what harm *he* has done!)

But we still need to answer the question: Does dependence mean inferiority? At times it seems so. Pets are dependent upon us, and they certainly are inferior. Children are dependent too — at least for a short time. As long as they are dependent they seem inferior, but this obviously stems from a lack of experience, and not from any inherent inferiority, dependence in this case is not so definitely linked to inferiority. Different again is a father and son running a business together: the father is the president while the son holds a lower, responsible position. Is this because of inferiority? Not at all! A father with good business sense would not assign an inferior son to a responsible position, where he wants someone who knows his thinking and who is able to act on his behalf when he is absent. The father is pleased when the son is in every sense as capable as he is (the dream of every good father). They hold their positions by mutual understanding and agreement. Any apparent dependence on the son's part does not at all flow from inferiority.

Now that we looked at this from the negative side, let us observe the positive. Would two persons who are entirely in harmony with each other, a husband and wife with a good relationship, for instance, act independently of each other? Certainly not! The moment this would happen, the harmony would be gone. As soon as there is evidence of two distinct wills, there is disharmony and (although not necessarily severe) conflict. Only where complete oneness of mind exists will there be peace and harmony. If we look at either person in such a relationship, we would say that he or she is dependent on the other. This dependence may seem to be similar to the dependence of an inferior on a superior, but only to those who are not well acquainted with the situation.

The above examples are not to be compared with the relationship between the Son and the Father; they only show us the lack of relationship between the ideas of dependence and inferiority. Inferiority leads to dependence, but so does harmonious equality!

The Son is dependent upon the Father, but it is dependence flowing from a *complete harmony in mutual relationship as equal Persons*. This scripture is in complete harmony with those expressing the deity of Christ. Only One who is God Himself can have such a harmonious relationship with the Father. When the Lord Jesus became Man, He did so to honour God by walking as Man on earth. To do so, He had to take the lower place — but He took it (if we may say so reverently) by mutual agreement between Him and the Father, not because of inherent inferiority. "For in Him all the fulness [of the Godhead] was pleased to dwell," and "in Him dwells all the fulness of the Godhead bodily" (Col. 1:19; 2:9).

The import of these words then is the self-declaration of that Man whom we met in our previous studies: He is none other than the incarnate God. By the words before us, the Lord declares His deity and His divinity. This Man is *God Himself!* That is why we find these words in this context. In the previous verses, His equality with God had been called into question. In the verses that follow, the Lord amplifies the relationship He has with the Father. With whom could God have such fellowship? Upon whom could God convey such authority? Who is capable of judging but He who is God Himself?

Now we come to our next verse: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, that he that hears My word, and believes Him that has sent Me, has life eternal, and does not come into judgment, but is passed out of death into life." The Lord had said to Nicodemus that one needed to be born again to be able to see and enter the kingdom of God. Nicodemus was warned that he needed to be changed, but there was little he could do about it. The Lord told him further that one could receive eternal life by believing in Him (Jn. 3:16). Now the Lord repeats Himself: one needs to hear the Lord's word and believe on His Sender. It is essential that we believe that the Lord Jesus is the eternal God, and that His Sonship is not a matter of inferiority. In John 3 He spoke of believing in the only begotten Son of God; now He speaks of believing in Him who has sent the Son as being the mark of those who have life eternal. Besides this, they must take in what the Lord has spoken. We can see how important this is in John 8:24: "Unless ye shall believe that I am [He] (the name of Jehovah), ye shall die in your sins." He is God from everlasting; to deny it brings eternal death in separation from God. It would be well if all who claim to believe the Lord's Word would take these words of Jehovah, the *I am*, to heart. There is no eternal life for those who deny the divine and equal nature of the Son of God — God's Word says so.

Those who believe, the Lord says, will not come into judgment. This is different from not coming into condemnation — the word used in the King James Version. "Not coming into condemnation" gives certainty to believers that they will not be condemned when they stand before the judgment-seat. This would indeed be a great assurance, but the Greek word used here (*Krisis*) is the same as used in verses 22 and 27, where it is translated "judgment." If we read it this way (and to be consistent, we should), our blessing proves to be even greater: we are not only safe from condemnation, but we are even exempt from the judgment.

The words immediately following explain why this is so: We have passed from death into life! Before the Great White Throne, the *dead* are judged. Long before this judgment takes place, we will be changed in the twinkling of an eye and, having put on incorruptibility, be with the Lord (1 Cor. 15:52). True, we will have to appear before the judgment-seat of God (Rom. 14:11) and of Christ (2 Cor. 5:10), but the latter verse clearly shows the reason for this: we will there be manifested. This is not a matter of judgment, but a matter of receiving (or failing to receive) rewards; we already possess eternal life.

This realization has a great impact upon each spiritually sensitive mind. All things in our lives not worthy of a reward have added to the load of sin our Lord had to bear on Golgotha, and, besides this, they diminish the crown we may put at His feet. Our eternal position, however, is not there at stake; at that time we are already glorified, for even today we have passed from death into life, and possess eternal life. For those to whom this is a new thought, it may be good to add that our day of judgment has passed. It is most important to have a good understanding of this: our day of judgment was when Christ bore our sins in His body upon the tree (1 Pe. 2:24). God does not judge the same sins twice. To maintain (contrary to the teaching of Scripture) that we too must be judged is to show a lack of appreciation of the reality that Christ took (this is best put personally) *my* sins upon Himself. All my deeds *have* been judged; consequently, having passed from death into life, I will not come into judgment.

The next remark follows immediately and is rather similar: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, that an hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and they that have heard shall live." Again the hearing, which, just as in the previous remark, is not merely physical, but carries with it the sense of taking in, accepting in faith, the truth of what is said. But now the Lord says, "The dead shall hear." We were in death and have passed into life; we were dead and now live. This explains why those who are not born again can neither see nor enter the kingdom: they are dead; Ephesians 2:1 bears this out as well. But the hearing brings new life — those who hear are born of God. That the Lord does not speak of the physical resurrection in this verse can be seen from verse 28. There the Lord says that we should not be amazed about the

tremendous remarks He made in verse 25, for one day He will speak and there will be a physical resurrection. Those in the tombs will hear His voice and go forth. The Lord contrasts verse 25 with the resurrection referred to in verse 28.

The Lord adds the words: "An hour is coming, and now is." This shows that the words of the Lord took immediate effect. It was not something that was to be some future time; those who believed would then and there possess eternal life — they would no longer be dead. The Lord used the same expression with the woman in Samaria: "The hour is coming and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth" (Jn. 4:23). These two remarks show clearly that the term "the hour" is not to be taken as "sixty minutes." Its significance is rather that of an extended period, during which this will be so. We make this observation in order to deal with a side issue. We just quoted verse 28 which, with verse 29, speaks of the resurrection of life and the resurrection of judgment. These two resurrections are separated (as can be clearly seen in Rev. 20:45, where the resurrection of life is called the first resurrection) by at least a thousand years. Those who do not believe in the Lord's coming for His saints often mention that John 5:28 speaks of "an hour How then," they ask, "could there be a thousand years between these two?" If we accept their argument, the time of salvation must be passed, for in the Lord's days on earth He said that the hour of hearing His voice was then — not 2000 years later. Similarly, the time of worship would be passed, for that hour was midday on a weekday hundreds of years ago. It is plain to see that this argument cannot be maintained. Although this touches our subject only indirectly, it has its bearing upon it: only if we distinguish between these two resurrections can we understand that we will not come into judgment. Ours is not the resurrection of judgment but of life. Praise be to our Lord! His work has become the basis on which we have received life.

From the Lord's remarks we now know who He is, what we were before we knew Him and what we have received when we accepted His word and believed in God. We have received valuable instruction regarding our position and with joy can sing:

Death and judgment are behind us,
 Grace and glory are before;
 All the billows rolled o'er Jesus,
 There they spent their utmost pow'r.

To be cont'd

OUTLINES FOR BIBLE TEACHING (3)

5. NOAH AND THE FLOOD—Genesis 6, 7, and 8

Outline

| | | |
|----|------------------------------------|--------------------|
| 1. | The cause of God's judgment | Gen. 6:1-5, 11, 12 |
| 2. | God's patience | Gen. 6:3, 6-7 |
| 3. | The Lord's grace toward Noah | Gen. 6:8-10 |
| 4. | The specifications for the ark | Gen. 6:13-22 |
| 5. | Instructions for loading the ark | Gen. 7:1-9 |
| 6. | The rain | Gen. 7:10-24 |
| 7. | The waters subside, raven and dove | Gen. 8:1-14 |
| 8. | Noah's exit from the ark | Gen. 8:15-19 |
| 9. | Sacrifice and promise | Gen. 8:20-22 62 |

Explanation

1. Man became corrupt and violent. God is longsuffering (Ps. 103:8), but in the end He punishes and judges (Prov. 29:11; Ps. 73:27).

2. With grief of heart God said, "I will destroy man"; yet He gave him a warning-period of 120 years.

3. Noah was a just man. He walked with God. In the previous chapter, we saw that Enoch walked with God; here we find Noah walking with God (Gen. 6:9) and finding grace in the eyes of the Lord (Gen. 6:8). Noah, as Enoch, accepted in the Beloved, was a just man, "upright" (or "sincere"), in his dealings with his fellowman — in the midst of a corrupt and violent generation.

4. Because God was going to destroy the earth by means of a flood, He instructed Noah to build an ark for deliverance. Noah obeyed in complete faith.

5. Noah was instructed to enter the ark with his family. God brought seven of each of the clean beasts and two of the unclean.

6. The whole earth was covered and every living thing was killed. Only those in the ark were saved.

7. After the rain stopped, Noah sent out a raven, which returned several times, until the waters had dried. He also sent out a dove which returned twice, indicating that the waters were still on the earth. When Noah sent it out a third time, it did not return. They had been in the ark more than one year (Gen. 7:11 and 8:14).

8. Noah's exit was in fellowship with his God: he acted entirely according to God's instructions.

9. Noah built an altar and sacrificed of every clean animal and of all clean fowl. Remember, he had taken 7 of each (3 pairs and a single one) into the ark. God resolved never again to curse the earth.

Lesson

The flood is both a picture and a proof of the final judgment over the earth (Mt. 24:37-39; 2 Pet. 3:1-10). Salvation comes through obedience of faith (Heb. 11:7). The ark is a type of Christ (John 10:9; 14:6; Acts 4:12) as the refuge of His people from judgment.

To men there were giants, mighty men, men of renown on the earth; to God they were only wicked and evil. The sons of God mixed with the daughters of men (Gen. 6:2, 4). This corrupt generation did according to the purposes and desires of their evil hearts: continual violence (Mt. 24:37-39). Noah did according to all that God commanded him (mentioned twice, in Gen. 6:22 and 7:5).

6. THE COVENANT WITH NOAH; THE BUILDING OF THE TOWER OF BABEL — Genesis 9 and 11:1-9

Outline

- | | |
|--|-----------------|
| 1. God's governmental dealings with Noah | Gen. 9:1-7 |
| 2. God's covenant with Noah | Gen. 9:8-17 |
| 3. Noah and his sons | Gen. 9:18-10:32 |
| 4. The building of the Tower of Babel | Gen. 11:1-9 |

Explanation

1. When Noah stepped out upon the cleansed and renewed earth, he received from God the command to once again populate the earth — not a part of the earth, but the entire earth. God wanted man to spread out over the whole face of the earth. Noah and his sons, and thus their descendants, received the command not to eat blood. This command applies to: (a) all men in general, as being the descendants of Noah, but in particular to those who belong to God, (b) Israel (Lev. 17:10-14), and (c) the Church (Acts 15:20).

2. Man would not have to fear a second flood, for the Lord would remember His covenant (9:14, 15).

3. From Ham came, among others, the Canaanites and the African nations; from Shem came Israel; from Japheth came the Europeans. The land of Canaan was named after Ham's son, Canaan. From Shem's son Eber came the name "Hebrews" (Gen. 10:25). Genesis 10:32 and Acts 17:26, as well as other scriptures, show all men to be descendants from Noah. (Study Rom. 3:12; Acts 17:30, 31; Ps. 1).

4. The tower of Babel was to be a symbol of the unity and glory of mankind; God, however, made the haughty to fall (Luke 1:51; Prov. 16:18; 18:12; see also Prov. 3:34; James 4:6; 1 Pet. 5:5).

Lesson

Noah was a man; consequently, sin was found in him (Gen. 9:21). Nevertheless, he is an example for us (see Gen. 6:9). God's grace covered his sins and clothed him with the garment of righteousness. Ham, being alienated from God, had neither love nor respect in his heart. Shem and Japheth set an example of how we should act with regard to the sin and distress of our brethren. They received the blessings of God; Ham received God's curse.

Babel (or Babylon — its Greek form) is a city in the Old Testament, and a religious system in the New; both are used by Satan to resist God. For the end of the city, see Isaiah 14:3-8, and for the end of the system, see Rev. 17 and 18. "Babel" means confusion. The ruins of its tower can still be seen.

In judgment, God confounded the language, scattering the people and forcing men to do what they had refused to do in obedience.

God Himself, by His Holy Spirit, wants to form a unity, a spiritual house in Christ, among men. (Study Eph. 2:17-22; 1 Pet. 2:4, 5; Rev. 5:9, 10.) Even children who are saved belong to this building.

READERS WRITE

Dear Brother, In the April, 1981, issue of *Come and See* an article was published with the title: "*When Would You Leave Your Church?*" The answer given to this question centred around only one main point, the liberty of the Spirit in worship and ministry. In this respect, I feel, the answer was incomplete. For, as important as this point is, there are surely other very important criteria as to when a church ceases to be an assembly gathered according to God's Word.

Suppose a church or assembly professes to gather with full liberty of the Spirit in worship and ministry, and yet tolerates false doctrine with regard to the Person and work of Christ, or rejects the infallibility and inerrancy of the Word of God. Would this not be a reason for leaving such a church, and a reason as important or more so than the above? Now I am sure that both you, as editor, and the author himself, would agree with this second point, and yet it was scarcely mentioned in the article.

However, there is a third basic point, in addition to the above two, and that is the basis of the unity of the body of Christ. For an assembly to be gathered scripturally, it must be gathered on the ground of the one body, owning no membership other than that of the body of Christ. When it gets off this ground it becomes a sect. This is carefully set forth in J.N.D.'s article, *What Is A Sect?*:

"A sect ... is formally such when those who compose this particular corporation are regarded as being the members of it. It is to walk 66 in the spirit of a sect when those alone are recognized in a practical manner, without giving themselves out as properly members of a corporation." [*The Collected Writings of J. N. Darby, Vol. 14, pg. 364 — Ed.*]

In summary, then, there are at least three basic scriptural criteria for determining when you would leave a church or assembly:

1. When the liberty of the Spirit in worship or ministry is restricted ("through human organizational decrees");
2. When false doctrine concerning the essentials of our faith is tolerated — the Person or work of Christ, the Word of God, etc.;

3. When an assembly or church has a well-defined membership (either formally or informally) to the exclusion of all other believers (see the article "What is a sect?").

I would also like to comment on another article in the same issue of *Come and See*, "What Is The Significance of the Words: To Be Gathered Unto the Name..." Here, again, the author answers the question (as to which denomination a Christian ought to join) by appealing to one criteria, that of being gathered unto the name of the Lord (Mt. 18:20). My concern, again, is that this answer is incomplete. Nothing is mentioned about "gathering on the ground of the one body," nor about "gathering where the liberty of the Spirit is recognized." The Christian is directed to "that place in Christendom where believers are gathered together unto His name."

The problem is that there are many different groups of Christians, in North America at least, who claim to be "that place" or at least "in that place." How can we judge whether or not they are? We then have to bring in the other scriptural tests previously mentioned (and fully set out in the New Testament scriptures). Is the liberty of the Spirit recognized, or set aside by human decree? Is the truth concerning God's Word and God's Son upheld in all its purity? Is the unity of the one body recognized practically, or replaced with sectarianism?

I do not in any way set aside the very real guidance of the Spirit in matters such as these. But the Spirit guides according to the Word, and we must keep these truths in balance.

D. H.

Answer — This letter is an encouragement to us; it is good to exchange thoughts on principles and practices and test them against the Word of God. We concur with the writer's observation that there are additional points to be considered in answering the questions touched upon in the mentioned articles. Yet we do not believe that either the authors or we in our editorial capacity have failed here. In the Christian realm many questions are of a complex nature; it is not always possible to cover each question from all sides. What is essential is that the side which *was* covered was treated according to Scripture.

While we would not compare ourselves with the Biblical writers, we may still learn from James' Spirit inspired Epistle when he says, "Ye see that a man is justified on the principle of works, and not on the principle of faith only" (Jas. 2:24). We know from Paul (that is, the Holy Spirit through Paul) that there is much more to be said on this subject, for he wrote that "A man is justified by faith, without works of law" (Rom. 3:28). On the surface, these remarks by James and Paul seem to conflict; yet they were all written by the same Author, the Spirit.

We feel that this example from God's Word makes room for situations where a particular article does not fully cover all aspects related to the question at hand. It would still be different if the articles had claimed to say all there is to say on the matter.

In a similar vein, we would like to add another point to the ones contained in our correspondent's letter. We believe it to be essential that an assembly responds in a manner that shows Godly concern, just as Corinth did in response to Paul's first epistle. When moral evil was brought to its attention, it did (as it should, if truly gathered on a scriptural basis) put the evil away from itself in a mournful and sorrowful (not in a self-righteous) manner. A group of Christians failing to discipline evil could not be acknowledged as being gathered to the name of the Lord Jesus, without connecting the name of our Lord with unjudged moral evil.

Let me make some final remarks related to our writer's last paragraph. We selected these two articles after much searching for suitable material; while this left us, admittedly, pressed for time, we were still able to choose prayerfully. We normally receive very few expressions of received blessings referring to specific articles. Reaction to these same two articles, however, came from no less than seven sources: three said that much blessings and help had been received through them, two expressed appreciation, one mourned our carrying articles of this nature, and finally this letter which sought to supply what was considered missing. This constrains us to be even more in prayer about the selection of material: only the Lord knows what is needed, when, where, and in what measure. If we are guided by Him, there will be blessing. May we always seek to be dependent upon Him in this and in all things.

—*The Editor*

THE STUDY CORNER

After having missed one issue because of a Canadian postal workers' strike, we now present our third set of questions. The first responses have come in, and we are relieved that not all of our readers have participated yet. We would have been swamped. ~~There is time and room, however, for a few more of you to make an effort to win a free copy of *The Church of the Living God*. So why not try to answer the following questions? The fact that you did not send us the first answers should not hinder you from sending the new series. Remember, the deadline is January 31.~~ Here we go:

19. "We all" who are, by the Holy Spirit, baptized into the one Body of Christ, the Assembly, are called "believers." What do we believe that we should be called this?

20. Is the baptism with the Holy Spirit the same as baptism with water?

21. Who does the Bible say is the One that baptizes with the Holy Spirit?

22. The Lord Jesus told His disciples that after He had gone away, He would send the Holy Spirit to be with them on earth in a way that He had not been before. Quote a verse that tells us this.

23. Where did the Lord Jesus say the Holy Spirit would be when He came to earth, and how long would He abide with believers?

24. Quote a verse which tells us that believers could not receive the Holy Spirit until the Lord Jesus was glorified (that is, until He had finished the work of redemption, risen from the dead, and gone back to heaven as a Man).

25. At what point in the Lord's life did He command His disciples to wait at Jerusalem for the promise of the Father, and tell them that they would be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days hence?

26. What wonderful things happened at Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost?

27. We are told in Acts 2:47b that "the Lord added to the Assembly daily such as should be saved." What does this show us with regard to the Assembly?

28. What, precisely, Must people do to be added to the Assembly which Christ is building?

29. Expand on your last answer, quoting appropriate verses.

That is it for this time. I hope many of you will make an effort, even if you did not do so before. ~~Send your answers by January 31 to *Come and See* (address on inside of front cover).~~ May the Lord bless you.

—John van Dijk

A MEDITATION ON PSALM 119

—J. Slater

These meditations explore the significance of the twenty-two letters of the Hebrew alphabet, which are used to indicate divisions of this Psalm. All twenty-two divisions in this Psalm consist of eight verses, each beginning with the same letter.

1. Aleph — Verses 1-8

- a. Yoke-ox (not a wild ox) — Ps. 144:14; Jer. 11:19
- b. Guide, teacher, faithful tutor — Jer. 3:4; Job 33:33
- c. The number 1.

The God pleasing ideal set forth in verses 1-3 can only be accomplished when Someone else (v. 5) directs my ways. God's aim of creating worshippers will be accomplished only when I shall have been made to learn (v. 7) in His Presence. There is only one way and only one Person to help me walk in that way.

2. Beth — Verses 9-16

- a. House — Gen. 7:1; 28:17 (Beth-el); 2 Sam 7:16; Ps. 23:6
- b. Within, Inside — Gen. 6:14; Ex. 37:2; Lev. 16:15

In this second section, the saint realizes that like Joshua (Josh. 24:14-15), he has a choice (v. 10, 11), and that the best thing is to permit God to perform His work within the heart (v. 10, 11, 15, 16). This section does not specifically say where the way (v. 9, 14) may lead, but the presence of God in every verse strongly intimates that great blessing is coming.

3. Gimel — Verses 17-24

- a. Burden carrier, camel — Gen. 24:22, 63, 64; 1 Ki. 10:2
- b. To ripen and mature — Num. 17:8; 1 Sam. 1:24; Isa. 28:9
- c. Recompense — reward Ps. 103:2, 10; 119:17

Deal bountifully — "Be a camel for me" — Be my spiritual Burden Carrier to bring me into Thy very presence (v. 17, 18). I see the reward of the wicked (v. 21). His Word alone gives life, sustains and nourishes (vv. 17, 20, 23, 24). The real and true reward is from God only and is worth waiting for (v. 20).

To be cont'd