

WHY DO OUR CHILDREN SO OFTEN GO ASTRAY?

—Adapted from the Dutch.

There are many cases in which children who have been the subject of much prayer and sincere godly upbringing become the cause of deep grief for their parents, an irritation for Christendom, and a plague for mankind.

What Went Wrong?

Who is able to correctly establish what mistakes have been made? Who can do so without coming into conflict, either with God's being faithful to His promises, or with the faith and hope of those who desire to bring up their children so that they will walk in the proper path (Prov. 22:6)?

Observations

Our observations and considerations over many years, covering hundreds of families (some more regularly than others), have given us some definite thoughts on this subject.

The chief cause of failure in Christian upbringing has been this: *Parents have failed to insist on an unconditional subjection to their authority.* Obedience to parents has not been made the established norm; it has not been made into a habit. Or the means and influences used to achieve subjection have not been such that the youngster could subject himself with joy and in a carefree manner, feeling that this was just (Col. 3:21). Consequently the resulting peace and joy which would have ensured a true and wholehearted subjection were lacking. We believe that this is the very beginning of all these unfortunate cases in which the hopes of the parents have been dashed to pieces and the saddest irritations have been identified with Christianity.

We have studied self-willed children during their young years when they were under sound and godly influence. We have seen how they were mightily convicted of sin. They told us of their terrible struggle, their conscience feeling the pressure of the obligation to repent. In many cases they have asked us for the reason why repentance seemed to come so easy to others but to them it was so extremely difficult (Prov. 29:1). More than once we have asked, "Have you ever known what it is to give up your own will and to be happy about it too, even more so than if you persisted and succeeded in having your own will and way?"

In all these cases we received a negative reply: "No, I never subjected myself joyfully to my father's or mother's will. Either I obstinately and daringly maintained my own will, or I came to an agreeable compromise which spared me the anguish of giving up my own will."

The first time we heard this it seemed a wholesome response. But when we heard it again and again, and when it became more and more clear that this was the uniform response of those who could not subject their own will to God's — who, consequently, could not find anything reasonable about God's demand for repentance — then we started to get a different view of parental upbringing. It started to take on paramount importance in the sphere of human relationships. It forced us into research: How is it possible that there are so many of these cases, even in families in which the Bible is revered and the parents bring up their children with honest intentions, seemingly in the nurture and admonition of the Lord?

We gladly share the results of our research and our observations with you.

Busy Parents

Mr. A and his fine wife, Mrs. A, are taken up with all kinds of things. This means that every day there are a number of hours that they know neither where their children are nor what they are doing. If on occasion they hear something about their children getting into mischief, they either find it too hard to believe or know too little about the matter to be able to

deal with it properly. The matter is not likely to receive sufficient attention to be wisely dealt with and cleared up anyway, since the parents have little time, driven as they are by other duties. Ill moods and wrong-doing will go unnoticed (Prov. 13:24). Parental love is put in a bad light when, after noticing that others complain about their children, parents refrain from applying their (normally sound) judgment. Soon they will count it to be their special duty to defend their children about whom so few are able to say good things. Such children are never thoroughly understood by their parents; their wills will never be subject to parental authority.

Weak or Raging Parents

Apart from those occasions on which they fly into a rage, Mr. B. and his wife are never determined and firm in directing their family. When their child becomes shameless and violent, they get excited and take hold of the matter in an abnormal way, usually with extraordinary zeal. But discipline meted out in rage only makes the child furious (Eph. 6:4). It takes a long time to eradicate the feelings of injustice which remain with the child. It would be much better to suspend discipline than to use it when one is so unseemly excited.

Divided Parents

In Mr. C's family, father uses the rod and mother the kisses. She deplores his severity; he condemns her ruinous leniency. This is why, even if father would be wise and without one single failure, mother makes it practically impossible that the conscience and heart of the youngster should be touched (Prov. 29:15). It would be nothing short of miraculous if — given their radically different approach to directing the family under their joint direction, the goals of responsible leadership in the family would be achieved.

Failing Judgment

Mr. D. is theoretically well grounded in the art of family leadership — at least where it concerns the subjection of the child's will to the father's. He is determined that this must be achieved at any cost. If there is no tangible wrong which must be opposed to work with, he takes up a matter at random (if he can find one) and embarks on the task of training (Prov. 15:2). Unfortunately he cannot possibly touch the child's conscience, making its subjection — morally at least — worthless. (it might not be so bad if his method were ineffective rather than inept.) Poor Mr. D. may be well grounded in some points, but what he needs is a good dose of wisdom in applying his knowledge.

Careless Parents

Mr. E. and his wife are well-meaning, but they look at things rather casually. There are times that they put their foot down and say, "This is how it's going to be!" but they soon forget about the matter. The result is: no obedience! (1 Sam. 2:23-24, 29; 3:13). The child takes good notice of this initial failure to carry out what is threatened, and it is imprinted on his memory. It has taught him that if he waits for the right moment he can — by careful stalling or clever disobedience — avoid authority, so that he can do as he pleases. If there happens to be an exceptional case, father being seriously insistent, well, then he finds it more prudent, for the sake of peace and safety, to go along. It is clear that this is far from the principle of general obedience. It can rarely be said that he even considers it. There is only obedience in special and difficult situations, and then only because there is no alternative. Obviously, the moral effect of true obedience *as a principle* will never be realized in this way.

Most parents who fall in the category of Mr. and Mrs. E. would feel offended if an attempt were made to teach them the rudiments of leadership and instilling subjection into the hearts of their children. Would their children then no longer seek to do their own will, once they have set themselves to do so? Maybe, but if all was well, they would simply not think of having their own way, though the desire to resist might be present (Prov. 22:15). If the principle of obedience had been established, obedience would come easy, for a wink would suffice.

Wise or Foolish Love

Parental love must be wise. it should always make a concerted effort to find the best available means and to utilize these to the well-being of its dear ones. Special care needs to be taken that parental love does not lead to impulsively permitting the child to do things which later are regretted (Prov. 23:13-14). God expects wiser conduct than this from parents whom

He has fitted with understanding and insight. This of all roads is the one that leads to so many pitfalls in which the hope of parents are trapped; it is the ruinous path of foolishly-loved children.

Parents need to have true love to train their children — even with the pressures and care of work — to have patience, to make all tasks cheerful, and to relish every challenge. But it is essential that such love is tempered with tact and guided by sound wisdom. Parents need to be careful that their love for their children does not degenerate into a blind "charity," which would prevent them from seeing failures and believing, even upon the best testimony, that their young ones have done wrong. Such "charity" causes the parents to be unfit to render leadership or perform even the most simple duties connected with upbringing and care.

Start Early

Returning now to the subject, how we can assure a truthful submission to parental authority, starting early is best. The best time to start is before your words can become arguments, when your determined eye and firm hand are as yet the only interpreters of your will and the only needed instruments of power (Prov. 22:6). Be gentle, but firm and determined. Do not seek to scare, but take care that your will is understood — and when it is, that it is obeyed. You will need to have discernment. It is disastrous to press a matter when you are not certain that your desire is understood. But as soon as your will can be understood, and you can notice that it is, then don't lose time in establishing your authority. It is much easier to do so now than later, and it is more effective. If this principle is established early with wisdom and determination, it can be maintained with less effort than when it is begun later. The results too will be incomparably more satisfying.

God's Gracious Provision

God has provided wonderful conditions for the early subjection of the child's will and its early training by which the child may become used to the principle of unconditional obedience. Think how long God has made the period in which the child remains weak and dependent, and how slowly they grow into adulthood, the time of independence and self-confidence. Animals reach this stage with leaps and bounds from their initial helplessness. Those "born of women" move very slowly over many of the richest and most precious years of human life.

Who would doubt that God has a purpose in all this? Who could deny that His purpose is to give parents adequate time for the most important task ever performed in a lifetime, the molding of a child and a child's soul to obedience and virtue? This is a great work, for much depends on a careful and thorough parental upbringing (2 Tim. 3:15). Seen in this light, the long years available for it are not too many and do not pass too slowly.

Parents Representing God

We would like you to pay attention to the remarkable fact that during the first development of the child's moral awareness, the parent, in relationship to the child, takes the place of God in many areas of vital importance. For the time being, the child's mind cannot as yet know God. His ideas of a higher power do not go beyond his father or mother, so there they remain. His impressions of a higher, charitable love, which is to become the basis for all good, reach this far and no further. The Omnipresence for him is that of the parents. God has so far not revealed Himself to the child's spirit in any other way. During this time, his sense of obedience and his budding idea of a just authority need to be developed.

In light of these things, we may discover how very important it is that his parents, as well as the nature of things allows, demonstrate the notion of the true God to the child's spirit (1 Ki. 9:4). Let there be no wrong deed or spirit with the parents, who act in God's stead; let there be found not one thing that is not from the outset brought into agreement with the notion the child may have of a heavenly Father (adapted, of course, to his level of perception).

The Principle of Obedience

It is important that the question of leadership be solved in precisely the same manner as you would like it to be one day between your child and his God. The solution to this question has been placed entirely in your hands. All essential points connected with it can be found in the relationship between the child and its parents (Prov. 1:8-9). God gives you the greatest possible opportunity to establish that principle. It is your task to see to it that disobedience to a just authority will

never become a principle; it should never obtain the power of a permitted thing. Not simply should one never allow it to blossom into a *habit*, but one should not allow it to pass even once without punishment and correction.

Conversion to God

If subjection to parental authority rests on its true foundation, it is the beginning of piety (Prov. 2:1-9). It provides the surest basis for it and the best means for a true turning to God, after which the requirements of God can be understood. Once obedience to parents has been established upon the basis of its intrinsic righteousness, the thought of resisting the known requirements of God will hardly occur to a child. We believe it to be true that in the majority of such cases the heart is gladly rendered to God once His demands have become clear. Set stubbornness — so natural with those who have never given up their own will for a higher one — does not develop spontaneously! This accounts for the experiences of those who seek to save souls; they provide many proofs showing that children which have been brought up well will gladly be brought to Christ (Prov. 12:1). It seems for them the most natural thing to love goodness and to render their own will to a pure and just authority. On the other hand, it explains why incorrigible, unmanageable cases, those where neither fear nor demonstration of love avail to move the child to obedience and repentance, are frequently (if not always) those who in the lower realm — in the relationship to their parents have never obeyed.

TO BE CHRISTIAN, EVERY DAY (4)

—K. Rouw

Deuteronomy 22:1-12

The Father's Responsibility

8. "When thou buildest a new house, thou shalt make a parapet for thy roof, that thou bring not blood upon thy house, if any one should in any wise fall from it."

Once on a summer's day, grandpa and grandma celebrated their thirty-fifth wedding anniversary. In the afternoon, the entire family was enjoying the garden, when suddenly everyone froze in fright, looking up: five meters above us stood Johnny, all of three years old, at the edge of the roof. From that time on I realized that this verse out of Moses's law is as valid for us as it was for Israel: if your roof is flat and can be reached by merely climbing through a large window, you ought to put a railing on it! You're responsible for it!

But God has more to say to us in this verse than this literal application. It is a beautiful verse for a young couple when they set out on their wedding day to "build a new home." One good piece of advice is this: put a flat roof on it. What I mean is, take care that there is room to *pray*. Peter prayed on the roof. He had a clear view of heaven, and could taste the heavenly atmosphere. The confidence that "as for me and my house, we will serve Jehovah" (Josh. 24:15) begins with establishing a link between our home and heaven.

To be together as a family before God, to come into God's presence as a family, to read the Word of God together (in addition to the times we do this at the dinner table), and to kneel together as a family... how many men of God and "mothers in Israel" have grown up in families that took time to do so. But when in building your house you have reached the roof-level with your wall, bring the wall up a little higher, make a ledge or a rampart around the edge of the roof. That way the view to heaven will be unobstructed, while the view to the world will be.

We are so easily distracted. "The lust of the eyes" is an uncomfortably great danger. The Bible says that "Faith cometh by hearing" (Rom. 10:17 — KJV), but many evil things have come about by seeing! Even Eve's fall began by seeing "that the tree was good for food, and that it was a pleasure for the eyes." (There is so much in creation that may be beautiful to behold.) But what followed ("and the tree was to be desired to give intelligence") was simply not true. That is often the case with things Satan presents to us. Lord, "turn away mine eyes from beholding vanity" (Ps. 119:37).

Don't we wish that David had had a two-meter-high ledge around his roof; then he wouldn't have seen Uriah's wife. And don't forget the eye of the little ones: "Oh be careful little eyes what you see," we teach them; then let us also protect them from the world. How many parents have made a hole (anywhere from twelve to twenty-six inches diagonally) in the bastion as "a window on the world?" And how many children have fallen through it to their spiritual death?

Today the world is presented to us through many "picture windows," The illustrated weeklies in our living rooms, even the "objective" newspaper creates its own atmosphere. Is not the greater part of the reporting of our daily news in the hands of those who serve Satan, and are thoroughly politically oriented? Often those who rail against authority are given an opportunity to have their views aired. Let us build a wall, beginning with our own house (Neh. 3:23).

Lot was a man who looked around himself to the earthly things, and he failed to distinguish among Sodom, the garden of Eden, and Egypt (Gen. 13). How he slipped away: no longer was he a witness; his wife became a picture of unfruitfulness; and he himself became the father of the enemies of God's people.

Although many things are introduced "for the children," aren't *they* often the victims of the resulting worldliness? But where today can one find worn-out Bible-story books? What is the final picture they see before they go to the "roof"? Were mother's last words to them about the Lord Jesus, or about Mother Goose, or something even less helpful?

How many teenagers have been estranged from their parental homes due to the lack of a Christian environment: no longer did they sing together, no longer was there the silence conducive to a confidential discussion.

Let us gird our loins and our homes, keeping things together by the bond of fellowship with the Lord. "All that [is] in the world... is not of the Father... And the world is passing, and its lust, but he that does the will of God abides for eternity."

To be cont'd

THE HOLY CITY, JERUSALEM (3)

—H. L. Heijkoop

Revelation 21:9-22:5

"The foundations of the wall of the city [were] adorned with every precious stone" (v. 19). Each of the twelve foundations gives expression to a particular glory of God. The order of the various stones is not the same as on the breastplate of the high priest in Exodus 28:17-20; even some of the stones mentioned are different. The precious stones in Exodus are an expression of the glory of God, insofar as it is expressed in the practical living of the people of God. There the first and the last one are the same ones mentioned in Revelation 4:3, but the order is reversed. So while it is evident that all sides of God's glory are revealed in the life of His people, yet it remains weak, and is not always in God's order. In Revelation 21, we have the glorified Assembly without weakness; and while the figure here is of creatures' work (the Holy Spirit's figure — 1 Cor. 3:10-11; Eph. 2:20), God's glory is nevertheless revealed.

When someone builds a house, it is rather immaterial to him whether the stones for the foundation are beautiful or not. As a youngster, I worked for 10 years in the sales office of a group of brickyards, and I can assure you that little attention was paid to the outward beauty of the foundation bricks, so long as they were hard enough to withstand the action of groundwater and frost. But here we see how the foundations of the Holy City are adorned with the glory of God. All the beauty of these precious stones can be found in these foundations. The multi-faceted glory of God finds its expression in the foundation. What a certainty and security does this give to the Assembly! But how else could it be, after the Lord Jesus has told us in Matthew 16 that He Himself, as Son of the living God, the Source of all life, is the foundation of the Assembly. We saw this in 1 Corinthians 3 as well. How could the Assembly ever totter or fall, having such a foundation? As God the Son, the Lord is the foundation of the Assembly. As the Man Christ Jesus, He is the Head of His body (Eph. 1:22-23) and the Bridegroom of the bride (Eph. 5:25-32). How precious must the Assembly be to Him, that He has united her to Himself in such a fashion!

"And the twelve gates, twelve pearls; each one of the gates, respectively, was of one pearl" (v. 21). Does this not cause us to think of Matthew 13:45-46? That pearl typifies the Assembly as the Lord Jesus saw her in God's eternal counsels (Eph. 3:8-11). Her value was so great to His heart that He sold all that He had as Man to obtain her, including His right to the throne of Israel, and the right to rule over the entire world as Son of Man. "Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that for your sakes He, being rich, became poor, in order that ye by *His* poverty might be enriched" (2 Cor. 8:9). All the glory which the Assembly had for the heart of the Lord Jesus in eternity, when He came to earth, when He went to the cross to die for her, will then be seen in the glorified Assembly. All that enters into the city and all that goes out of the city must go through the gates and see this glory while passing through it. Therefore all must be in complete harmony with it, the things that enter the city as well as those that exit from it!

"And the gates twelve angels" (v. 12). These were created before man (Job 38:6-7) and had a higher place than man (Ps. 8:5). On God's behalf they had brought the law to His earthly people (Acts 7:53), but they will be satisfied with the position of porters at the gates of the glorified Assembly. In the Millennium, they will serve the Assembly by examining all that enters and exits from her.

Colossians 1:15 tells us that the Lord Jesus, as Man, was the Firstborn of all creation. That is because He, although He became Man, was Creator. He has created all things in His own power and for Himself. But when the Creator enters His own creation, even when He is willing to take there the lowest place, He nevertheless remains the Highest One, the Firstborn! He truly became Man, was born of a woman, and occupied the place of a creature — although He never became a creature! He could not cease to be the Creator. This changed the order of creation, so that this Man became the Firstborn of all creation. And since He has made us (the Assembly) one with Himself (Eph. 1:23), we share that place with Him. We are now above the angels, so Paul could write: "Do ye not know that we shall judge angels?" (1 Cor. 6:3.) For the same reason we see in Revelation 4 that the four creatures, which are an expression of the principles of God's judgment, are seen in the midst of the throne, surrounded by the twenty-four elders. From the descriptions given in Isaiah 6 and Ezekiel 1-10, we understand that the creatures of Revelation 4 are angels. But no sooner is the Lamb seen as the Conqueror (Rev. 5) than the four creatures are made one with the 24 elders and the angels are seen in a circle around them. Could the Head of the body (of Christ) be exalted above the angels while His body is below them? Impossible! Those mighty angels will be satisfied to be porters at the gates of the Holy City, Jerusalem, to watch that nothing unclean can enter it and that all that proceeds from the city is in agreement with its glory. For all in the city is in complete harmony with the glory of God, by which it is marked.

After we have so frequently seen the glory of God, we have once more in verse 21: "And the street of the city pure gold, as transparent glass." This verse in particular shows us that these descriptive words are types. There is no gold that is transparent as glass. Elsewhere I have indicated that gold in the types in Scripture speaks of divine glory and righteousness. The street (singular), on which traffic flows, is marked by divine glory and righteousness. Our walk too will be marked by this, and nothing hidden or unclean will be found in it. Then it will be as it is for God today: "All things [are] naked and laid bare to His eyes, with whom we have to do" (Heb. 4:13). This is said to us today to warn us that God sees all things that are wrong in our hearts and lives. In the Holy City, however, it will only show that all is in complete harmony with the glory of God, and that there is no uncleanness hidden in it.

What will be the relationship of the Assembly to God in that time? "And I saw no temple in it; for the Lord God Almighty is its temple, and the Lamb" (v. 24). The temple is the place where God dwells and in which He is served. But it is also the place where He dwells alone, separate, even from His people that surround Him. The priests in the Old Testament were allowed to serve in the Holy place, but after the service they were outside, and there was a wall between them and God. The people were never allowed to enter the Holy place, and even the priests were never allowed to enter the Holy of Holies where God dwelled between the Cherubim. But in the glorified Assembly there will be no separation between God and those who belong to the Assembly. The entire city, the glorified Assembly, is His dwelling.

Notice that although names of God are mentioned here, the name of God which speaks of our relationship with Him is not mentioned: the name *Father*. In Revelation we find the place of the Assembly in creation, and here, from 21:9-22:5, her place in the Millennium in connection with creation. Perhaps we can call this the highest place when we think in terms of position, but it is not her proper dwelling place, the place that is so precious to her heart, the place which is hers by virtue of her intimate connection with the Lord Jesus and the Father. In John 14 the Lord speaks of that place: "In My Father's house there are many abodes;... I go to prepare you a place;... where I am ye also may be." And in John 20 the Lord Jesus, after He is risen from among the dead, says, "I ascend to My Father and your Father" (v. 12).

The Father is the eternal Father and the Son is the eternal Son. The house of the Father, in which the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit have dwelled from eternity, is therefore outside of the creation, being eternal. That is the place which the Triune God has prepared for us who belong to the body of Christ. The world will never see that glory. Isn't this the highest blessing and the highest place for our hearts? In John 17:24 the Lord Jesus, God the Son, says to God the Father: "Father, [as to] those whom Thou hast given Me, I desire that where I am they also may be with Me, that they may behold My glory which Thou hast given Me, for Thou lovedst Me before [the] foundation of [the] world." The world will not see this, for it is not the same as our coming with the Lord to earth (Rev. 19:14), but it is His bringing us into the house of the Father, where He is. There we will see Him as the world has never seen Him, and shall never see Him. We will see Him in the glory which he had from eternity, from before the world's foundation! That is our particular portion, our highest part, to see Him in His own eternal glory as the Son, in the eternal house of the Father.

The world cannot see all this, and thus it is not described in the Revelation, which concerns itself with *creation*, the earth and the created heavens. Whenever it speaks about the Assembly, it does so as seen in its relationship with the earth, with creation. Therefore, the glory described here is her glory in this creation. And without dispute this is the greatest

glory that ever has been seen or will be seen in creation. The Lord Jesus speaks about it with the Father in John 17:22-23, where He says, "The glory Thou hast given Me I have given them." It is the glory He asked for in 17:4-5 as reward for the work that He has completed on earth: the revelation, and therefore the glorification, of the Father (1 :18). Could there be a greater glory than the glory which the Father gave to the Son on the basis of His wondrous life and death on earth, wherein He revealed the Father in all His glory? And that glory which the Son thus obtained, He has given to us! It is so great that the world will say when it sees us so glorified, "The Father has loved the Assembly as He has loved the Son!"

As King of Israel, and as Son of man, the Lord Jesus will rule over the entire creation (Ps. 2:8; Heb. 2:5-9; 1 Cor. 15:24-27). Naturally, the Father Himself will not be subjected to Him, but neither will the Assembly, for she is His body, and joint-heir with Him. In Ephesians 1 Paul, after first having said that according to God's counsel all things will be headed up in Him, says that we have also become heirs in Him, and that we will reign with Him over the universe — not merely over the earth, but also over the created heavens and the angels (1 Cor. 6:3).

In John 17:24, however, we have the house of the Father, the uncreated heavens. We will be there as the Father's own children, and as the brothers of the Lord Jesus. The Lord Himself calls us such, and therefore we are such. But He remains the Firstborn among many brothers (Rom. 8:29). But His Father will also be our Father, and we too will dwell eternally in what was eternally His Father's house — what has now become our Father's house too! This was God's counsel. "Because whom He has foreknown, He has also predestined [to be] conformed to the image of His Son, so that He should be [the] Firstborn among many brethren" (Rom. 8:29).

"And the city has no need of the sun nor of the moon, that they should shine for it; for the glory of God has enlightened it, and the lamp thereof [is] the Lamb" (v. 23). Here too we find the glory of God. The sun and moon are the lights which God gave to the earth (Gen. 1:14-18) to give light to the earth. But the heavenly Jerusalem has no need of these assistants. God's glory enlightens her! The Lamb is the One through whom the glory of God can be seen. He is "God ... manifested in flesh" (1 Tim. 3:16). The glory of God is, and will be, revealed in the Lord Jesus. And that glory will be the light of the Holy City, Jerusalem — the light of eternity, of the God who dwells in unapproachable light. That God is *Himself*, Light, and in Him is no darkness at all (1 Jn. 1:5).

To be cont'd

OUTLINES FOR BIBLE TEACHING (9)

17. JOSEPH AS SLAVE AND PRISONER — Genesis 39, 40

Outline

1. Joseph in the House of Potiphar Gen. 39:1-19
2. Joseph in Prison Gen. 39:20-23
3. The Cupbearer and Baker's Dreams Gen. 40:1-23

Explanation

1. Joseph's master was captain of Pharaoh's body guard. God prospered Joseph (Ps. 34:8, 9). According to the counsels of God, Joseph was to be exalted, although Satan wanted to ruin him. He was tempted to do evil by Potiphar's wife.
2. He suffered in prison. All this only served for the carrying out of the plans of God (Rom. 8:28).
3. Prophetic dreams were interpreted by God through Joseph.

Joseph was a type of Christ:

- (a) in enticement and testing (Mt. 4:1-11).
- (b) in the unjust verdict of a Gentile (Potiphar and Pilate).
- (c) in rejection: Joseph in the dungeon; Christ upon the cross (Acts 2:22, 23).
- (d) in being between the butler and the baker: Jesus between the two malefactors (Isa. 53:12).

Lesson

Joseph, the beloved of the father, was brought to Egypt as a slave. The Lord Jesus, who was eternally with the Father (Jn. 16:28), was brought into this world as a slave (Phil. 2:7). For "God was in Christ, reconciling the world to Himself" (2 Cor. 5:19-21).

18. JOSEPH'S EXALTATION — Genesis 41

Outline

1. Pharaoh's Dreams Gen. 41:1-24
2. The Interpretation Gen. 41:25-32
3. Joseph's Exaltation Gen. 41:33-57

Explanation

1. Egypt was made fruitful every year by the overflowing of the Nile. If this did not happen, there would be drought and famine.
2. Joseph had proven faithful, and through the cupbearer's and Pharaoh's dreams God prepared everything for his exaltation.
3. The signet ring bore Pharaoh's name, and decrees were signed with it. The white robe indicated that Joseph had been raised to the priesthood. The gold chain was the mark of royal dignity. Joseph, being thirty years old, was made ruler of all Egypt as a reward.

Lesson

Everything was against Joseph's being exalted: he was a stranger, a shepherd (the Egyptians had a strong sense of caste, especially against shepherds), a slave, an apparent transgressor; he was even hated and sold by his own brothers. But God was for him and filled the whole earth with his glory.

Joseph was a type of Christ in His exaltation (Phil. 2:9-11) and millennial glory (Ps. 99:1-5; Rev. 19:15, 16; 20:4d).

Just as Joseph was the sustainer and dispenser of blessing for the whole earth, so also is Christ. Joseph's bride, a Gentile, is a type of the Church of Christ, taken largely from the Gentile nations.

God demands subjection to Christ: "Bow the knee!" (v. 43). He blesses and saves through Him alone: "Go to Joseph" (v. 55 — see 1 Sam. 2:7, 8).

To be cont'd

VERILY, VERILY (9)

—*J. van Dijk*

John 14

In the twelfth verse of this chapter the Lord says, "Verily, Verily, I say to you, He that believes on Me, the works which I do shall he do also, and he shall do greater than these, because I go to the Father." This is certainly not a simple verse. What does the Lord mean? A tremendous change must be at hand; how else could the Lord make such an astounding statement? To think that a disciple would do greater works than the Lord had done!

It may be well to first establish that we should understand the Lord's remark from man's point of view. It is beyond dispute that before God the work on the cross, so faithfully performed by the Lord Jesus, cannot be equaled; it is beyond comparison. The Lord cannot have spoken of God's evaluation of His work as compared to the work of the disciples. But in man's estimation, things are different. The Lord's death on the cross, as seen by man, was not an accomplishment; the Pharisees saw it as deserved punishment, while the disciples saw it as an undeserved and unfortunate martyrdom.

The Lord's words indicate that His going to be with the Father is of the utmost importance. But what (in our context) could be so important about it? Did the Lord, while He was on earth, not have all the power to do what He desired? Could He not have done any work, no matter how great it was? Yes, if it had been only a matter of ability. But God establishes for Himself a certain framework of time, and cause and effect within which He acts. Although God could look forward to the cross, He nevertheless did not bring about things that morally required the crucifixion, resurrection, and glorification of the Lord Jesus.

John 7:39 says that the Spirit was not yet (abiding on earth with the believers) because Jesus was not yet glorified. That glorification took place when the Lord went to be with His Father. Then, as He had promised in John 15:26, the Lord would send the Comforter, the Holy Spirit; He would empower the disciples to do greater things than their Lord had done. He would "bring demonstration to the world, of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: of sin, because they do not believe on Me; of righteousness, because I go away to [My] Father, and ye behold Me no longer; of judgment, because the ruler of this world is judged" (Jn. 16:8-11). This would be the work of the Spirit, and the disciples would be instruments in God's hand through whom the Spirit would work. This way God would perform greater works through them than He had done through the Lord Jesus.

When the Lord had gone on high, a whole new era began (formally, after the Spirit was sent), for now a Man dwelled in Heaven (the Son of man), and God (the Holy Spirit) dwelled on earth in the believer. This was such a radical change in the order of things that it gave rise to altogether new and greater things.

To know what these great things done by the disciples were, we have to read the book of Acts. Did the Lord ever lead so many in such a short time to repentance? The immediate, practical, visible impact of the Lord's life on earth had been minimal. The leading of so many to repentance needed not only the conviction of sin — as John the Baptist and the Lord Jesus had preached — but also the preaching of the good news that God was satisfied with the sacrifice of Christ, evidenced in God's glorification of Him at His right hand. We can see this from Peter's address in Acts 2: God has made Him to be Lord and Christ. On the hearing of Christ's glorification and God's offer of forgiveness to those who repented, a greater work followed than had been seen in the days when the Lord walked on earth.

Is this really a greater work than the Lord had done? We believe so. The greatest deed the Lord had done (again I say, as seen by man) was the raising of Lazarus. This work had only a temporary and short-lived value on earth; Lazarus died again. But the work done by the disciples, in bringing so many to repentance, had, along with its eternal value of adding members to the body of Christ, an impact on the events of this earth that is still felt today. Their work was accomplished by virtue of the Lord's ascension to the right hand of the Father. It is no wonder that the truth of the resurrection, of which the ascension of the Lord Jesus is an essential part, is so strongly defended by the Apostle Paul. Even today there are those who seek to make this event nothing but an experience of the heart. "But if Christ be not raised, your faith [is] vain; ye are yet in your sins... If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are [the] most miserable of all men" (1 Cor. 15:20).

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