

**THOUGHTS ON KINGDOMS (3)**—*J. van Dijk*

We looked at the beginning of Christ's kingdom, but we also read that His kingdom, being everlasting, will not be destroyed. So it might be good to look at the end of the kingdom, at least, if Scripture speaks of an end to this everlasting kingdom. For this we should look at the last verse we presented (1 Cor. 15:24), for this verse speaks of "the end, when He gives up the kingdom to Him [who is] God and Father." Indeed, an end is clearly spoken of here. It is similar to its beginning, for now the Son hands the kingdom over to God. Evidently, it is not destroyed as all previous kingdoms were, but given back to God in perfection. Man once received authority from God (Gen. 1:28), but it soon became apparent that man could only hand it back in chaos. The Son of man on the other hand will receive the kingdom in disarray, but when the time comes to hand it back to God, He is able to hand back a kingdom in perfection. "For He must reign until He put all enemies under His feet. [The] last enemy [that] is annulled [is] death." When all this is done, the Son hands back the kingdom to the Father. Does this mean that the Lord Jesus no longer reigns? Indeed, as Son of man He will terminate His reign by handing it back to God, just as He once begun it as Son of man when He received it from God's hand. But since He is also God, the Lord continues His reign for ever and ever, although in a different character.

These verses dealing with the beginning and the end of Christ's kingdom confirm that the manner of God's government is not always the same. The question now becomes: When will that period begin, when will this change in the character of God's kingdom come about? Some say it is already here today, and call this time the Millennium. Our task is now to establish from Scripture the character of Christ's kingdom today and to see if God's Word speaks of another character for a future day.

*WHEN WILL THESE THINGS BE?*

Let us see what help God's Word gives on the question when the actual period of the kingdom begins. In Matthew 28:18 the Lord Jesus said: "All power has been given Me in heaven and upon earth." No believer doubts it; God's Word is true. The Lord has received His dominion, but as we saw that is not necessarily the same as His kingdom. Let us see what the Lord Himself says on the subject of the kingdom: "A certain high-born man went to a distant country to receive for himself a kingdom and return" (Lk. 19:12). No one doubts that this high-born man is the Lord. But what to make of the details here? Are they just unimportant? Of course not! The Lord has left the earth to receive a kingdom and to return. When did He receive His position as King? The parable is simple: While in a far country. And where was His kingdom to be? "His citizens hated him, and sent an embassy after him (Acts 7:54-60), saying, We will not that this [man] should reign over us" (v. 14). His kingdom is on this earth. We are not, however, to deduct this truth from the parable, we must have other Scriptures to establish that these things are so. It is clear from Daniel that the Lord's kingdom will fill the earth after He has removed all other kingdoms. Does this not conflict with the Lord's testimony to Pilate? What did the Lord say? "Now My kingdom is not from hence." This is in full agreement, it is from heaven! There the Lord received it, in the far country. And when will He actually assume His Kingly position? For this we will need to look at some other scriptures.

Let us look at a Psalm often quoted in the New Testament, Psalm 110:1. "Jehovah said unto my Lord, Sit at My right hand, until I put Thine enemies [as] footstool of Thy feet." It is clear that the Lord Jesus is depicted here as sitting on God's throne until a time set by God. We find the same in Revelation 3:21, where the Lord says: "He that overcomes, to him will I give to sit with Me in My throne; as I also have overcome, and have sat down with My Father in His throne." This is where the Lord is now, seated on His Father's throne. Hebrews 8:1 depicts Him as the One "Who has sat down on [the] right hand of the Greatness in the heavens." All these verses show the same thing. God's throne is characterized by the providential character of His government, His general manner of reign we have seen since creation. Christ's throne will have its own character as we will see later. But that the Lord's sitting on His Father's throne will have an end is clear from Psalm 110, for it says "until." We find that also in the words of Peter in Acts 3:19-21. "Repent... so that times of refreshing may come from [the] presence of the Lord, and that He may send Jesus Christ, who was foreordained for you, whom heaven indeed must receive till [the] times of [the] restoration of all things, of which God has spoken." Again we notice how the Lord is expected to leave heaven and come to earth, here with the added information that His coming will be a time of refreshing. No doubt, not for His enemies but for those who love Him and for God Himself. What we see therefore, is not that the Lord Jesus is not King today, but that He, as King in exile, is temporarily seated on His Father's throne, and that not unexpectedly. God Himself, in the prophecies, had indicated that it would be so, and Peter guided by the Holy Spirit, realized that heaven had to receive Him until *the time* of the restoration of all things, which would be *a time* (not

eternity as yet) of refreshing. Which words, by the way, neither can be considered a description of eternity nor of the moment at which heaven and earth will pass away. The Lord waits in patience for God's appointed time. We notice that John in Revelation 1:3 expressed this by calling himself a "partaker in the tribulation and kingdom and patience, in Jesus." In chapter 12 this changes for there it says: "Now is come the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God, and the authority of His Christ." Patience characterizes the kingdom (and ought to characterize us) today, power will characterize it then.

We have now seen that indeed the character of Christ's reign will change when the Lord will exchange His Father's throne for His own. We have seen that Peter in the Acts spoke of this as a future thing, and also when John wrote Revelation it was a thing of the future: "You will sit with Me in My throne." And we have seen that the time of refreshing will come when God sends His Son to this earth. It is clear, the actual kingdom begins with the Lord's return to earth.

*To be cont'd.*

## **PSALM EIGHT (1)**

—*J. Redekop*

With this familiar Psalm as a base, we would like to look at various New Testament scriptures where this Psalm is referred to. But before we do, there are a few things we want to notice in the Psalm itself; two things in particular. The Psalm presents man in relation to creation: first, man as dwarfed by the greatness and vastness of creation; and secondly, man as exalted, high above creation, and creation dwarfed by man.

The first verse is beautiful "Jehovah our Lord, how excellent is Thy name in all the earth!" We are well aware that the name of the Lord is not excellent in all the earth today. It is so today to the heart of the believer, but in the world His name is trodden down and man despises and rejects the blessed name of our Lord Jesus Christ. It is particularly sad to realize that this so-called enlightened western society, the christianized world, is the very sphere where the name of the Lord Jesus is abused and used in blasphemy and profanity, as nowhere else. How must God look upon that?

But, nevertheless, this Psalm is prophetic and we can with joy and delight look forward to the day when this prophecy will be fulfilled. One day the knowledge of the Lord shall cover the world as the waters cover the sea. Then His name will be glorified and proclaimed everywhere in this very world where once He was rejected and still is to this day. This Psalm looks forward to that glorious day. Then, everyone will bow to Him, acknowledging His Lordship and His authority. What a blessed day that will be! There will be those who will bow in judgement, but all will have to bow in acknowledgement of the glory of the Lord, the glory of His Person. And notice the second phrase of that verse, the last clause, "Who has set Thy majesty above the heavens."

This is what we want to look at when we turn to the New Testament: His glory is set above the heavens. There that glory is displayed today, not as yet in the whole world. Today His name is not glorified and honoured everywhere. Those of you who go to school, you notice this too. You hear young boys and girls who seldom speak without taking the name of the Lord in vain. Yet, there is no other name like the blessed name of Jesus. There is salvation in no other name, the name of the One whom God has made both Lord and Christ, the exalted One. You will find the same language in the working field, whether with the blue-collared men or with the men behind the desk — if we make that distinction outwardly, for there is no distinction in the heart. Everywhere you find the same expressions of disdain and disregard for the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ. How do we react in the midst of that? I am sure for every new-born soul it is as a thorn, a prick. You feel the dishonour to the Lord, to the very One whom you, by the grace of God, have learned to love and treasure as none other. You cannot help but feel the pain that this must give to the One who is thus slighted and set aside. In spite of it all, we know that His glory is set above the heavens.

We know that verse 2 is quoted in the New Testament on the occasion of the Lord's triumphant entry into Jerusalem, when many cried out: "Hosanna to the Son of David; blessed [be] He who comes in the name of [the] Lord." Yet, others spoke against it, saying, "Hearest Thou what these say?" Well, if these would hold their peace, the very stones would cry out and declare it. "Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings hast Thou established praise."

Now I want to go to verses 3, 4 and 5, to bring out the two points I mentioned. The Psalmist is here as it were standing — we can almost picture it: David, as a shepherd, tending the flock by night, looking up — and saying, "When I see Thy heavens, the work of Thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which Thou hast established; what is man, that Thou art mindful of him?" He looks at the greatness and the vastness of the expanse at which man has gazed for centuries without having discovered the limit of the universe. The more he sees, the greater the view open before him that he has not yet

discovered; it seems to be without limit. And in the face of all that he sees, he becomes very small in his own eyes. This is David: "What is man that Thou art mindful of him." In relation to the vastness and greatness of creation, man is so insignificant. There he is placed, poor man formed of the dust of the earth and placed on this planet. Insignificant! Small, in relation to the greatness of creation.

But we know from the use of this Psalm by the Spirit of God, that He has not only the first man in view. For it seems as if, in the very middle of this verse, there is a change in thought, because the question continues: "And the Son of man, that Thou visitest Him?" There is even a difference in the two words translated "man" in this one verse. The first time — "What is man" — it is Enosh, which means feeble. "What is Enosh that Thou art mindful of him?" Then the second time — "And the Son of man" — the word used is Adam. "And the Son of Adam, that Thou visitest Him?" It is obvious that, whereas we might read, "What is Adam," in the sense of the Adam of Genesis 1, 2, and 3, we cannot think of him in that way when reading, "And the Son of man," for Adam was not the Son of Adam. It is someone else that the Spirit of God has in mind, and we know it is the Man of God's counsels. And then when he sees this One, the Son of man, he goes on, "Thou hast made Him a little lower than the angels, and hast crowned Him with glory and splendour."

Now we know that the Adam of Genesis 1, 2, and 3 was placed at the head of this fair creation. But that was only typical, figurative of One who was to come, the Man of God's counsels, the second Man, the last Adam. The Lord from heaven, He is the One coming, who truly answers to the words presented here as the one who is above all and is made to have dominion over the works of God's hands. Though we know that Adam had this, for it was given to him to have dominion over the works of God's hands, yet it was only figurative, typical of Him who was to come. We know that Adam failed quickly in that position; it was the place in which God had put him, but he sadly failed to really answer to that place. By man's fault, Adam's fault, this whole creation has sunk and become a groaning creation in sympathy as it were with Adam's sin. Adam fell when he disobeyed God, but in the plan, purpose and counsels of God there was another who would answer to this position and that none other than the Lord Jesus Himself.

Now we want to turn first of all to Hebrews 2:5-9, where this Psalm is quoted. "For He has not subjected to angels the habitable world which is to come, of which we speak; but one has testified somewhere, saying, What is man, that Thou rememberest him, or Son of man that Thou visitest Him? Thou hast made Him some little inferior to the angels; Thou hast crowned Him with glory and honour, [and hast set Him over the works of Thy hands;] Thou hast subjected all things under His feet. For in subjecting all things to Him, He has left nothing unsubject to Him. But now we see not yet all things subjected to *Him*, but we see Jesus who [was] made some little inferior to angels on account of the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; so that by the grace of God He should taste death for every thing."

Now here, most remarkably, we have a few beautiful additions made to this Psalm by the Spirit of God. The first one is at the end of verse 8: "But now we see not yet all things subjected to *Him*." While Psalm 8 looks on to a day that all will be subjected to Him, we do not as yet see this. The Apostle, quoting the Psalm hundreds of years after it was written, still had to say, "We see not yet all things subjected to *Him*." But we see...: Who? But we see Jesus! It is the Spirit of God telling us who is the One He speaks of in Psalm 8.

Psalm 8, speaking of this Son of man, goes right on to say, "Thou hast made Him a little lower than the angels." But here we read, "We see Jesus, who [was] made some little inferior to angels, — and then the second addition — on account of the suffering of death." From this we learn that when the Lord Jesus came down in condescending grace as God manifest in flesh — the great, divine mystery of godliness — all the angels came and bowed to Him. Was He lower than the angels when He came in incarnation into this creation? Man, as a creature, is of a lower order of creation than the angelic beings; the angels of a higher one. But when the Lord Jesus came in incarnation, He received the title "Firstborn of all creation" (Col. 1:15). His is the place of highest rank and highest order and angels came and bowed to worship Him. Do they worship One who is below them? Oh no, they recognized His supremacy. Even though He stooped down and came in incarnation here in this world, the angelic hosts gave glory unto Him. They came and worshipped Him and served Him.

We read of this also in Philippians 2; He "emptied Himself, taking a bondsman's form, taking His place in the likeness of men." But even as Man He stooped lower, for it continues, "And having been found in figure as a man, humbled Himself, becoming obedient even unto death, and [that the] death of [the] cross." There we see Jesus made a little lower than the angels for the sufferings of death. It was then, when He went into death, that He stooped down lower than the angels.

He stooped into that place, because we were found there, lower than the angels, under the sentence of death. He did so to deliver us, for from Hebrews 2:16 we learn that He took not "hold of angels [by the hand], but... of the seed of Abraham." And if He were to redeem the seed of Abraham, if He were to redeem us, who by sin had gone astray and who were at a distance from God, it was needful that He stoop down to the very place where sin had brought us.

Now we want to look at the beautiful expression, "So that by the grace of God He should taste death." Sin causes us to taste the sentence of death as the judgement of God. We came under its power, because sin brought us there; but the grace of God brought Him there, where sin had brought us. Isn't that wonderful? To think of Him, so great, so high, yet He would come down to take, by the grace of God, that place we were subjected to through our own fault; through sin we were under the sentence of God's righteous judgement. The day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die! So we see the first man through disobedience under the sentence of death, and then we see the second Man by the grace of God stooping down in obedience and tasting death. Wonderful grace of God!

Notice how we were mainly occupied with a little parenthesis, "Who [was] made some little inferior to angels on account of the suffering of death." But the primary thought that the Spirit of God is setting before us is, "We see Jesus... crowned with glory and honour." Oh Lord, our Lord, how excellent is Thy name in all the earth. Who has set Thy glory above the heavens. And this is where we want to trace our blessed Lord. As the One who stooped down He went to the lowest that any ever had stooped. Now He is crowned with glory and honour. And as Head over all things He has been given to the Church.

How blessed to know Christ in that place of glory. Do you see Jesus, do you see Him there? Only by faith we can see Him there, and it is important that believers see Him there. The epistle to the Hebrews presents in chapter one and two the Lord's Person and His work. But then He wants us to see Jesus, the very One who was perfect God and perfect Man, if we can use those expressions. He was God the Son (ch. 1), and yet, coming into this world, manifested in flesh, He became perfect Man, taking manhood into union with His Person. This is a mystery beyond the reasoning of the human intellect, but faith can bow in acknowledgement and worship. Then the Apostle directs our attention upward by saying, "We see Jesus." And in chapter 12 he is still looking, looking unto Jesus. There is nothing else to fill the view and the mind, the heart of the believer. This is what the Spirit of God would produce in our hearts.

The intervening chapters in this epistle bring before us all that we possess, our wondrous new position and standing before God, the access we have as a result of Him who has gone into the very presence of God. I don't know an epistle that so repeatedly tells us that He has gone and has sat down at the right hand of the Greatness on high. The very One, who stooped so low here, is there exalted. By faith we see Him there, and we need to keep our eye of faith fixed upon Him. Losing sight of Him in the glory will always result in spiritual decline in our life, in our pathway; individually and in the Assembly. Invariably decline sets in where there is not the practical and conscious enjoyment of Christ in the glory.

We also see Christ exalted in the epistle to the Colossians. The enemy is very subtle in his seeking to undermine the Christian faith and the Christian testimony. He does not deny what we have just been saying about Christ. Often he tries to do that too, coming out against it. But generally he seeks to undermine this truth and to rob us of our present, conscious enjoyment of it. He succeeds in this by bringing something in alongside, something that might look good and sound good in itself. This is what we see in Colossians, where all kinds of things were coming in alongside, some of which may even have sounded good: the worshipping of angels, mysticism, delving into the things of the unknown. These only allowed their reasoning mind, their intellect, to become occupied, rather than their faith.

But only by faith do we receive the testimony of God, and only by faith can we hold it, not by intellectual powers, nor by logic reasoning. Not that there is anything unreasonable about Scripture, but it is far beyond: it is revelation! Scripture is the unfolding of the mind of God, and if there be any attempt on our part to understand the infinite with our finite mind and our finite intellectual powers that God has given us, we will always stray. The finite can never discover, nor explore, nor enter into that which is infinite. A river can never rise above its source, we never find the end of the river higher than its source. And so, man is a creature, he is a finite being, he never can discover and know God. Man by wisdom knew not God (1 Cor. 1:21). The highest pinnacle that philosophers have ever reached, even the greatest that ever lived, is the conclusion: There must be a higher being, but we don't know it. They cannot, for this is where revelation comes in.

God has made Himself known, He has revealed Himself in the glorious Person of His Son, the Lord Jesus. The more and better we come to know the Christ of God, the better and more will we understand who God is in the majesty of His own Person, for the Lord Jesus is the express image of His Person, the effulgence, the unfolding of His glory. Nothing remains uncovered, unseen, unknown; all has been revealed in the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ.

And it is this One who came down in lowly grace of whom John could say, "We have seen with our eyes... our hands handled" (1 Jn. 1:1). Isn't that wondrous grace, God manifest in the flesh, become Man? And where do we see this Man, the One of whom they could say, "Never a Man spoke thus, as this Man" (Jn. 7:46)? We see Him today as glorified Man in the very presence of God, on the right hand of the Majesty on high. A Man in the glory! A most wondrous mystery! It is no less a mystery and glory than God manifested in the flesh. We see a Man, the Man of God's counsels of Psalm 8, exalted above all. That the Psalm speaks figuratively, we saw from the way it used the name Adam. And so it does when speaking of His having received dominion over the "sheep and oxen, all of them, and also the beasts of the field; the fowl of the

heavens, and the fishes of the sea, [whatever] passeth through the paths of the seas." In type it tells us that He has been exalted above all things in the heavens as we read in Philippians 2. All things have been subjected unto Him, our blessed Saviour.

*To be cont'd*

## **OUTLINES FOR BIBLE TEACHING (12)**

### **23. MOSES' BIRTH AND HIS FLIGHT — Exodus 1:1-2:22**

#### *Outline*

- |                                  |                |
|----------------------------------|----------------|
| 1. Oppression of Israel          | Ex. 1:6-14, 22 |
| 2. Moses' Birth and Preservation | Ex. 2:1 -10    |
| 3. Moses' Flight                 | Ex. 2:11-15    |
| 4. Moses' Stay in Midian         | Ex. 2:16-22    |

#### *Explanation*

1. God fulfilled the promises of blessing to Abraham: Israel multiplied greatly despite the cruel measures of a hostile Pharaoh (Isa. 8:10, Ps. 2:4).

2. God wanted to deliver Israel and in a wonderful way had the life of the deliverer saved and had him brought up. This preservation and deliverance was an act of faith (Heb. 11 :23).

3. Moses was a master of wisdom (Acts 7:22) and highly honored, but full of love toward his despised people, who were the people of God. He made himself one with these people (Heb. 11:25, 26). As he was not yet a humble dependent instrument of God, he did not act according to the thoughts of God (Ex. 2:12; Jas. 1:4, 20). After Moses killed an Egyptian who was persecuting a Hebrew, he had to flee the country in fear of Pharaoh who sought his life. Nevertheless, his flight to Midian was an act of faith (Heb. 11 :27).

4. In a 40-year session in the school of quietness and hardship in Midian, Moses learned to know himself and to know God (2 Tim. 2:5, 6).

#### *Lesson*

Moses is a type of Christ:

- In his rejection (Acts 7:27, 35, 52; Lk. 19:14).
- In choosing to suffer affliction along with the despised people (Heb. 11:25; Mt. 3:5, 6, 13).
- In gaining a Gentile bride just as the church, the bride of Christ, is taken almost entirely from among the Gentiles.
- In becoming the deliverer of Israel despite his rejection — Christ will also one day be Israel's Deliverer (Acts 7:37; 2:36; Rom. 11:26).

### **24. THE BURNING BUSH; MOSES' CALLING — Exodus 2:23-4:20**

#### *Outline*

- |                           |             |
|---------------------------|-------------|
| 1. Moses' Calling         | Ex. 3:1-22  |
| 2. Moses' Refusal         | Ex. 4:1-17  |
| 3. Moses' Return to Egypt | Ex. 4:18-31 |

#### *Explanation*

1. God called Moses to deliver the children of Israel from Egypt at His own time. There is no record of God's speaking to any man since Jacob's days, about 400 years earlier (Gen. 15:13; 46:2).
2. Moses refused to go — not from humility, but out of fear. He then had to share the honour of Israel's deliverance with Aaron, who became the spokesman.
3. God prepared Jethro's heart to give Moses permission to leave. God assured him of a safe entry into the land of Egypt. Aaron met him in the mount; and the people accepted their leadership for deliverance.

### *Lesson*

After Moses had been formed as an instrument in the back side of the wilderness, and Egypt as well as the Amorites in Canaan (the land Israel was to possess) had filled up the measure of their sins, the time of deliverance drew near (Gen. 15:13-16; Acts 7:17).

Although God manifested Himself in His holiness (the burning bush), God desired to dwell in the midst of the weak, sinful people of Israel, and to preserve them in His grace (Heb. 12:29; Lev. 26:11-12). God expressed His love for His people: "I have surely seen the affliction of My people... I have heard their cry I know their sorrows... I am come down to deliver them" (Ex. 3:7, 8).

God's name "I am that I am" (Jehovah or Yahweh) indicates that God is constantly the Same, the Unchanging One, who wants to fulfil the promises He made to the patriarchs.

God gave to Moses three signs by which he might prove himself to be sent of God. These signs cause Moses to be a type of Christ (Mk. 5:1-13; 1:40-45; 5:40-43; 1 Jn. 3:8), for he is shown to be lord and master over:

1. Satan (the serpent),
2. sin (leprosy), and
3. death (turning the water into blood).

*To be cont'd*

### **TO BE CHRISTIAN, EVERY DAY (7)**

—K. Rouw

### **Deuteronomy 22:1-12**

#### *Mixed Principles*

Deuteronomy 22:11. Thou shalt not wear a garment of mixed material, [woven] of wool and linen together.

One could well ask why a verse like this is put in the Bible, or what use a command like this might have had. We might well wonder whether it has often been obeyed and whether transgression of it has ever been punished (perhaps it was after Ezra, when the lawyers added their own petty laws to it and they finally, to save these latter ones, crucified the Lawgiver). It should, however, be clear to us that also this verse is written particularly for us!

But what have we done with it? Have we paid as little attention to it as the Jews? Then we are even more guilty than they! Have we profited from it, since it is written for us? So far all preceding verses in Deuteronomy 22 proved to contain important principles for us. It may be time well spent if we search together what God may have to say to us with this short verse.

It is important that in the previous verse, the one about the unequal yoke, there was mention of a clean and unclean animal. Here it speaks of woolen and linen, both of which are useful for God, each in its own place. Both materials have a deeper significance for Him. And God wants to teach us that they represent ideas which do not fit together — not for Him, and therefore not for us. If we wish to learn God's evaluation of these two materials, we must consider each of them separately as to their significance.

It is obvious that the nature of wool is entirely different from that of linen. While the latter speaks more directly of simplicity, and is often connected with service, the former gives warmth and protection and speaks of wealth. "Ye eat the fat, and ye clothe you with the wool" (Ezek. 34:3).

Wool reminds us of various things. A woolen fleece causes us to think of Isaiah 53. It makes us ponder a Lamb in the splendour of its seamless robe. What is left of a lamb after it is shorn? "And He was dumb before the face of its shearers."

Thus the Lord allowed all to be taken from Him. Isn't this Philippians 2? He was that woolen fleece, spread out by Gideon, on which all the dew, all the blessings of heaven, descended, while the earth was dry (Judg. 6). God's delight dwelled on Him alone. But then followed the three hours of darkness: "God did so that night, and it was dry upon the fleece only." Then the Lord cried out, "My strength is dried up like a potsherd" (Ps. 22:15). And its blessed result, "There was dew on the entire earth..." Good will towards man!

There is a great difference in the origins of wool and linen. Wool is a product of a sheep's nature, it comes from within, its fleece is its own glory. Naturally, with the perfect Lamb all that was seen was perfect glory, fully displayed on the mount of glorification. "His garments became shining, exceeding white [as snow], such as fuller on earth could not whiten [them]" (Mk. 9:3). With man all proceeds from his old nature, his pride, his efforts, and just as the fuller can whiten wool with lye (Mal. 3:2), so God can also cleanse us (Isa. 1:18).

For this reason wool is not used in the service of God. It is useless and forbidden in that sphere. We see this in the service of the new temple during the Millennium (Ezek. 44). The priests, the sons of Zadok, may approach, and looking back to the perfect sacrifice brought on Golgotha, penetrate deeper and deeper into its value while they present their sacrifices to the Lord. But during their priestly service "no wool shall come upon them" (Ezek. 44:17). Why not? "They shall not gird on anything that causes sweat" (N. 18). Every human effort is to be excluded. Not just in the work of atonement, to which we have not added anything, but even in the priestly service every human effort has to be excluded. We have the immeasurable privilege to perform our priestly service as a heavenly service or earth. But when we polish our singing to the point where we start to appreciate it for the flesh, to offer it that way to God, and when our prayers become a human effort, then we approach dressed in woolen. We surely are mistaken. We must not approach in wool that causes the flesh to work — worship is in spirit and in truth.

While wool finds its origin within a living being, linen is brought forth by the earth. This is why the "holy linen skirt," worn by Aaron on the day of Atonement (Lev. 16), speaks of the glory of the Lord Jesus in His humanity. The work of atonement could not be done by the priest in the clothing "for glory and for ornament" (Ex. 28:40), for in that character Aaron was a type of our High priest as He is now in heavenly glory with God. Christ became Man to do the work of redemption on earth. This could only be pictured by the linen skirt, which was nevertheless just as holy as, and no less glorious than, his other garments, although it represented another glory. Just as wool, linen can be prepared and bleached. So can men (taken out of, and belonging to the earth) stand before God as priests, cleansed and sanctified in pure linen. That white linen can even be expressive of the righteous deeds done on earth by the saints (Rev. 19:8).

Nevertheless, the priests who approach the altar in the millennial temple of Ezekiel 44, occupy another place than today's believers. We, as priests in our times (1 Pet. 2:5, 9), have received a heavenly, eternal service through indescribable grace. This difference is also expressed by the material of the priestly clothing.

For the coverings of the tabernacle, as well as for the priestly clothing, linen was used, both the normal and the fine linen. In Ezekiel 44:17, 18 however, the priests approach neither in wool nor in "linen" (Hebrew-*bad*), but in clothing of "flax" (Hebrew-*pishteh*). Obviously that should be translated "linen," but it actually says "flax." This word, which does not often occur, expresses always something brittle and tender. It is the smoking flax that is not quenched by the Servant of the Lord (Isa. 42:3). It is Samson's ropes which were "as threads of flax that are burned with fire" (Judg. 15:14). Leprosy was found in "flax," rather than in "linen" (Lev. 13:47-52), and it is a girdle of "flax" rather than "linen" which was spoiled and had become good for nothing (Jer. 13:1-7). The wife of the Lamb is clothed in fine linen (Rev. 19:8), as are the saints of the Old and the New Testament (v. 14), whereas the angels are clothed in "pure and shining flax" (Rev. 15:6).

This word "flax" is used in Deuteronomy 22:11: "No cloth of mixed material, woolen and linen together." These two words, woolen and linen, have before God each their own, deep significance and content, their own sphere of thought. It isn't a question of clean and unclean, for both are useful to God; rather, God in His wisdom and grace uses these materials to teach us discernment. Through them He instructs us that there are things which don't mix, although each may be good in itself.

If verse 10 spoke of the ox and the ass, verse 11 goes a step beyond this. How often have young people in their choice of a partner set aside the objections of their parents or older brothers with, "... but he or she is a believer..." and that was then the extent of their fellowship of faith. What sadness has resulted from such reasoning. Many years later there often came a returning to the Lord, but how many times has this reasoning been the beginning of a "following Christ afar off" if not of an entire falling away? But even if this is not the case, isn't it deeply tragic that two cannot enjoy together the most beautiful and highest experience in this life? When the one wants to speak of the excellent message, the other's thoughts are full of the wonderful Person whose train filled the temple (Isa. 6:1) and at whose feet the costly nard could be poured out (Jn. 12). It isn't a difference of clean and unclean, but a difference of thought about the most important issues, such as: security, unity, separation, baptism, and hope as to the future. A sister once said, "Please warn every young believer not to forsake the place of separation for the sake of marriage. I have experienced the sad results of doing so." Another said, "Only when you miss it, you start to appreciate what grace the Lord has given us."

When Abraham charged his servant to seek a wife for his son, his first requirement was that it was not to be a wife "of the daughters of the Canaanites," which means: it may not be an unequal yoke. Then the servant suggested: "Perhaps the woman..." of the family of Abraham, a woman serving the same God, "will not be willing to follow me to this land." Then Abraham's words ring in our ears, "Beware that thou bring not my son thither again." Abraham had departed out of his land and out of his kindred and received a special, separate place of God and with God. Would his son leave this high place for the sake of a wife... ?

So the question confronts especially young people: Are you aware what it means that our fathers went out, first out of Ur (the world), later out of Babel (the religious world). They did so, to be (though they were only a small and weak remnant) a testimony to God's name. It placed them outside the camp, but at the same time they could enter into the sanctuary. They were but a small part of the Assembly (the Church), yet not separate from — but rather in fellowship with, and on the basis of — the whole. To allow ourselves to be brought back to Babel (or worse: to Ur) is sad business. It results from the desire to put on a cloak of mixed material, mixed principles. Although it may not be an unequal yoke, it is certainly a yoke that is hard to be under.

Paul addressed a faithful companion as a "yokefellow" (Phil. 4:3). That can, as long as we have the same purpose. A very special bond united these two friends and co-workers. Even within God's kingdom we cannot be a yokefellow to every believer, although the question of an unequal yoke may not arise. We may know the other to be clean through grace, but we are aware that he does not discern the difference between linen and wool. Suppose a situation where one desires to approach God only in linen and the other quite freely puts on wool, something that causes sweat, in the service of God. The other gives place to the flesh and human effort, allowing thoughts and regulations that have their origin with man. How can these two serve the Lord under one yoke? The one contemplates a service before God regulated by men, whereas the other has seen that only God by His Spirit may lead in their service. Although we may be ever so weak in allowing the Spirit to lead in our midst, to set it aside, to replace it with wool that causes sweat, is to go against God's thoughts.

The Lord warns us in this verse for clothing, for an outward pattern of behaviour displaying mixed inner motives.

What a difference there can be among the servants of God! Both may be devoted. And yet, the one wears clothing of mixed material, and the other is "prepared for every good work" (2 Tim. 2:21), "cutting in a straight line the Word of Truth" (2 Tim. 2:15).

J. G. Bellett, writing about this, points to Jonathan. He loved David very much, yet he walked not with him under one yoke. The men of David, that troop — all having creditors or some such problem — caused David many problems; once they nearly stoned him. From Jonathan he received nothing but faithfulness, love, and joy. Yet, in his death Jonathan was separated from David; he didn't share in David's honour and victory. Jonathan wore a mixed garment. He was at the court of the by-God-anointed king, Saul; he was captain of the people of God; he honoured his father as father, but... the center of God's affection was at that time outside the court of Saul, outside the camp, even outside the religion of the people of God. The garment of mixed materials worn by Jonathan blinded his spiritual insight!

Similarly Obadiah was a fervent servant of God. During a time of draught due to judgment, when there was no water for Ahab's horses and Jezebel killed the Lord's prophets, Obadiah hid two companies of fifty prophets, and supplied them with bread and water at the risk of his own life. But at the same time he was at the court of Ahab and Jezebel, doing his work faithfully. As a result, the meeting between Elijah and Obadiah (1 Ki. 18), was a tragic event. It could have been a meeting of two men of God in this eventful period. But Obadiah had not the least insight in the ways of God. Trembling with fear he stood before Elijah, not daring to serve as messenger boy for God. "When I am gone... the Spirit of Jehovah shall carry thee whither I know not(!)... and he will kill me!" Was this the moment to tell Elijah that he had not sinned, how



much he had done, what Jezebel had done, how Ahab had looked for Elijah? What a different picture we see in Elijah: rest, God's power and majesty. Elijah was under one yoke with his God.

Obadiah too is characterized by a garment of mixed materials. Elijah is "a man in a hairy [garment], and girt with a girdle of leather about his loins" (2 Ki. 1 :8).

May the Lord grant us an undivided heart. "One thing I pursue," says Paul (Phil. 3:13). "One [thing] have I asked of Jehovah," says the Psalmist (Ps. 27:4). "Gird up the loins of your mind," teach the Scriptures (1 Pet. 1:13-KJV). And yet, how often do we allow our thoughts to be taken in by things that are "not really bad," but whereby our garment becomes one of mixed material? "One thing is needful," says the Lord, "and Mary has chosen the good part" (Lk. 10:42-KJV). May we follow her example.

*To be cont'd*