

THOUGHTS ON KINGDOMS (4)

—J. van Dijk

REVIEW

We have seen that there are indications in Scripture that the character of God's dominion over this earth will change. More particularly, we have observed that the Kingdom of the Lord is spoken of as a matter for a future day. Although our Lord received the dominion as Son of man from His Father at the time of the resurrection, God has told Him to sit down on His (i.e. God's) throne until a future day. When that day comes, it will be a time of refreshing for those who love God, introduced by God's sending the Lord Jesus. No longer will it be the time of patience but the time of power.

JUDGING THE LIVING

When the Lord was taken up into heaven, the angels told the disciples that the Lord Jesus would return in the same manner in which they had seen Him depart (Acts 1:11). From Revelation 1:7 we know that His return will be a great, public display. When the Lord ascended, He was only seen by His disciples, but He will return publicly, all will see Him then. There are two New-Testament passages which speak of the beginning of the Lord's reign, the one is in Matthew 25, the other in Revelation 19. Both speak of the Lord's introduction as King into this world, when He will set Himself on His own throne; they speak of His dealing with His enemies and the nations according to Daniel's prophecy. In Matthew we read that "when the Son of man comes in His glory, and all the angels with Him, then shall He sit down upon His throne of glory, and all the nations shall be gathered before Him." It will be the time of the judgment of the nations. Although in different terms, Revelation 19 describes the same period. The word from His mouth is presented as a sharp two-edged sword, "that with it He might smite the nations; and He shall shepherd them with an iron rod... And He has upon His garment, and upon His thigh, a name written, King of kings, and Lord of lords." Then, the mountain that fills the whole earth, replacing all other dominions, is introduced.

It is essential that we read these passages carefully, for only careful consideration will make it evident that these two passages don't speak of the judgment before the Great White Throne, as many believe they do. Revelation 19:20 and 21 make it clear that at the time it speaks of, the Lord still makes a difference between His enemies. The beast and the false prophet are put alive into the lake of fire, into hell; the others are slain by the sword of the Lord, by His word. We don't read here that these others are immediately assigned to hell, but that they are put to death. We know that after death there remains for them only the judgment of the Great White Throne (Heb. 9:27), where we find them later, in Revelation 20:11-15. During the interval, there is no more opportunity for them to change. Comparing this with Matthew 25, we notice that it too describes the judgment over the nations, but there it is expressed in terms of their final destination. Revelation 19 and 20 show us the details of the judgment: first death, then the inevitable final casting into hell at a later time.

Although there is a difference in these two records, it is a difference of detail, not of essence. Only a difference of the latter kind would preclude the possibility that these two passages describe the same event.

PROPHETIC AGREEMENT

Some might object that we make this last observation only because we have a preconceived notion of a Millennium. If all we had in Scripture were the verses in Matthew 25 and Revelation 19, they might have some reason for such a reaction. But it should not be forgotten that there must be a time during which the Lord's kingdom replaces all other kingdoms and fill the earth (Dan. 2), and that the Lord's coming must introduce a *time* of refreshing for those who love God (Acts 3:19-21; 2 Th. 1:5-10). Moreover, the Lord's reign is characterized by His putting down His enemies, the last of these being death (1 Cor. 15:26).

Nevertheless, in view of this objection let us see whether Scripture speaks in terms that would allow us to consider Matthew 25 to give a description of the Great White Throne. First let us do this in a general way, looking at prophecy at large, then by comparing the details of Matthew 25 with those of Revelation 20.

At the introduction of the Great White Throne, we read, "And I saw a great white throne, and Him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled, and place was not found for them. And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne" (Rev. 20:11-12). There is no doubt that Daniel 2 speaks of Christ's kingdom filling the earth. If the Great White Throne of Revelation 20 described or preceded the throne of Matthew 25, there would be no earth left for Christ's kingdom to fill, unless we would equate Christ's kingdom with the eternal condition and consider that the new earth will be filled with His kingdom. This idea, however, introduces the difficulty that if Christ's kingdom is the eternal state, how can He then hand back the kingdom to God at the end of it? (1 Cor. 15). For in the eternal state there is no more change. Another conflict would be the fact that death is the last enemy destroyed in Christ's kingdom. This means that the Great White Throne, where death is cast into the lake of fire, can be the end of Christ's kingdom, but not the beginning. Yet the throne in Matthew 25 is clearly spoken of as being at the beginning of His kingdom. These definite difficulties arise from other prophetic passages when we assume Matthew 25 to describe the Great White Throne.

DIFFERENCES

The greatest difficulties, however, flow from a detailed comparison of Matthew 25 with Revelation 20. A few questions will accentuate them. Who are standing before the throne of Christ in Matthew 25? The nations. Who are standing before the Great White Throne? The dead. What causes the nations to escape judgment in Matthew 25? Their treatment of the Lord's brethren. What causes one to escape judgment in Revelation 20? One's name written in the book of life. In Matthew 25 we read of some who enter the joy of their Lord and of others who enter eternal fire. In Revelation 20, however, we only read of those who enter the lake of fire.

These are very definite differences. It is evident that the various prophecies preclude the possibility that these are two descriptions of the same event but what is more important, also the recorded events surrounding these thrones do not agree in any single aspect, apart that both speak of a throne on which the Lord sits.

In passing we mentioned that we only read of the condemned standing before the Great White Throne. It may be good to take a closer look at this. The reason for it is found in the earlier verses of Revelation 20. All those who had faith will be raised and will no longer be dead. And only the dead (by that time only those who have not believed) appear before the Great White Throne. This is entirely in keeping with the Lord's words in John 5 when He said that, "He that hears My Word, and believes Him that has sent Me, has life eternal, and does not come into judgment" (We know that the KJV gives "condemnation," but if you care to look it up you will note that the same word is elsewhere translated "judgment" and it should have been so translated here, for there is another word for condemnation).

THE JUDGMENT SEAT OF CHRIST

The obvious question now arises, "Don't believers have to stand before the judgment seat of Christ or of God (Rom. 14:10; 2 Cor. 5:10)?" Although this question falls outside a study of the kingdom, we regard it of sufficient importance to give a few lines on it. When we read the two mentioned passages, we will notice that neither of them speaks of judgment. The issue is that believers must give account and be manifested, not that they enter into judgment. Believers have been judged in Christ on the cross, but they remain accountable for all they do and will not receive a reward for things done without faith (Rom. 14:23; Heb. 11:6). All their deeds, even those that were hidden on earth, will be manifested. This event will take place before the marriage of the Lamb, for then they will be dressed in fine white linen (their righteousneses, Rev. 19:6-10), no longer in garments not suited for the wedding (their deeds that were done without faith) which will be burnt up (1 Cor. 3:12-15). But the marriage of the Lamb precedes the Lord's return (Rev. 19:11-21), reigning with Him in His kingdom (Rev. 20:4-6), and the Great White Throne (Rev. 20:11-15). But we must return to our subject.

THE MILLENNIUM

We now have come to the Millennium itself, the actual time of Christ's kingdom, for which so many have prayed over the ages. But didn't the Lord Jesus say that the kingdom of God was already present when He was on earth? It is true that the Lord spoke a few words that many have interpreted this way. But what did the Lord say? First of all He spoke of the kingdom at hand (Mat. 4:17). But then He also said, "The kingdom of God does not come with observation; nor shall they say, Lo here, or, Lo there; for behold, the kingdom of God is in the midst of you" (Lk. 17:20). The Lord spoke these words to the Pharisees. Once we know this, we realize that it certainly did not mean: "within you," in the sense of "within your heart," for the Pharisees had no part in it, it certainly was not within them. The Lord's words rather had the sense of: "among you." The Lord stood in their midst as the coming King, and though they observed Him, they did not know that in

Him the kingdom was present in its moral sense. When the King was rejected, He received a place with God, and the actual coming of the kingdom in power and great glory was left for a future day.

The Lord will come with glory, bringing His saints (1 Thes. 4:14; 2 Thes. 1:10; Rev. 19:14) and angels (Mt. 25:1). The essence of His kingdom will not be the fact that it can be seen (Lk. 17:20), although it can be seen indeed. All practical conditions on this earth may become ever so nice (as some Christians expect them to become if they work for God's kingdom), yet the kingdom will not come by things we may wish to look for although it will be the time when righteousness reigns (Isa. 32:1). Nor will the kingdom come by overcoming the evil of hunger in this world. To have sufficient to eat and drink is not the essence of the kingdom (Rom. 14:17), although it will be a time of plenty without hunger. No, its essence is the King Himself: to recognize Him in our hearts as the only One worthy to occupy this place of glory. All other things are entirely secondary. We do not long for the Millennium because it will be such a good time for all, ourselves included, (although it will be that — but compared to our place in the Father's House this is of minor value), we long for it because it will be the time when the Lord will receive His due here on earth. It will be the time during which it can be seen that God is able to overcome evil with good, that Satan is not the conqueror. Then it will be seen that God's longing to dwell with man in creation was not an idea that God had to give up. We long for that time because the Lord will then receive glory in this creation, just as He will receive it in eternity in Heaven.

That time is described in Revelation 20:1-6. It is not in keeping with God's Word to say, as some do, that Satan is bound today. Peter knew better when he said, "Your adversary, [the] devil as a roaring lion walks about seeking whom he may devour" (1 Pet. 5:8). Satan sure likes it when believers think he is bound today, that way he can ensnare them since they are not aware of his doings. Paul knew who is the god of this world (2 Cor. 4:4), and the Lord had identified the prince of this world (Jn. 12:31; 14:30; 16:11). Satan remains that until he is bound. Although he has been defeated at the cross, the judgment over him has not as yet been executed. God's mercy has allowed a time during which as many as possible have an opportunity to flee to the cross for salvation. For once God begins His judgment, it will be too late, there will be no turning then.

And so, when the Millennium, the reign of Christ, is begun one of the first actions of our Lord is to bind Satan a thousand years. These years are the final test for mankind. Today man likes to tell God that he is only a product of his circumstances. Perhaps some would even argue that, if there had not been a deceiver, if there had not been a creation filled with the results of sin, man would have loved God and done His will. All mouths must be stopped! (Rom. 3:19). Man under the direct guidance of the Lord would certainly see the benefit of this, it might, therefore, be expected that man would choose to serve God from the heart after having seen the advantages of this arrangement. Never has man been tested under such circumstances; now God will show what is in man.

After a thousand years of pure blessing under the reign of Christ, as soon as the Lord suspends His rule by loosing Satan, man turns with his arch-enemy against God. Then the measure is full. Man has been tried to the utmost. There is no delay. God's fire makes an end of man, of the earth, of the heavens. All that remains is the judgment before the Great White Throne.

Although God knows that all that appear before that throne will be condemned, God is absolutely righteous, also in the manner in which He executes His judgment. There will be the searching out of what each has done and according to their deeds they will be judged. The more serious sins will receive the more severe judgment. Since all lacked faith, all their deeds were sin (Rom. 14:23; Heb. 11:6; Isa. 64:6). The men of Sodom will receive a lighter judgment than those of Capernaum (Mt. 11:24). For the same reason we might expect that the people of the heathen world will come off lighter than those of the so-called Christian world, but all will be in hell because they have not believed that Christ died for their sins.

In this study we have seen that the Millennium is foretold in prophecy, both in the Old and the New Testament. It has been the subject of the Lord's teaching. Its peculiar character, as being the kingdom of the Son of God's love, enables it to have a beginning and an end, and yet to be eternal, in that it transitions into God's eternal kingdom when the Lord hands over the kingdom to His Father. It begins with the judgment of the living (Mt. 25) and ends with the judgment of the dead (Rev. 20; 2 Tim. 4:1). Although there is a very real and practical aspect to it, its essence is found in accepting Christ as the King appointed by God, which cannot be done without acknowledging oneself to be a sinner in need of a Saviour.

This latter aspect puts each Christian under the moral obligation to act as if the kingdom were practically in force, here and now. We acknowledge that it is present morally for us, for we own the One who is made both Lord and Christ. But we also acknowledge that He is now seated at God's right hand, waiting till His enemies are made His footstool. May we show in the things we do that we are under the sway of this King. We are His bride, but what to think of a bride who acts in a way that will be condemned in others when she will share her Bridegroom's throne? If her heart is right she will act in all

things as if her bridegroom is already on the throne. He is already King on the throne of her heart and on the throne of His Father. In her the qualities of the coming kingdom must be visible today! Are they? In me? In you?

The End.

PSALM EIGHT (2)

—Lecture by J. Redekop

Let us now look at Ephesians 1, particularly at the last two verses, although we should read from verse 15 to get the context. It is a sweeping statement concerning the glorious Person of our Lord Jesus Christ that could only be made by the Spirit of God. Our Lord had gone even into death, though it was not possible that He should be held by its power. God worked "according to the working of the might of His strength, [in] which He wrought in the Christ [in] raising Him from among [the] dead." It was not a mere question of raising Christ from among the dead, for we know from Scripture that there had been a number who had been raised from among the dead before. But none had been raised *and* set down at God's right hand in the heavenlies, above every principality and power. The very One who was made a little lower than the angels for the sufferings of death is now exalted high above angels, above every principality, and authority, and power, and dominion, and every name named. He is above it all, as the Man Christ Jesus who had stooped down into the dust of death.

The fourth chapter speaks of this (vv. 9 and 10), "But that He ascended, what is it but that He also descended into the lower parts of the earth? He that descended is the same who has also ascended up above all the heavens, that He might fill all things." The same One, the same Jesus, who stooped down and descended even into death, into the lower parts of the earth, He is the One who has ascended far above the heavens that He might fill all things, from the lowest to the highest. None ever stooped lower than our blessed Lord, none could stoop lower than He did, but there is none that has been exalted higher than He. Is there any name, is there any principality, is there any authority or power above Him? No, He is far above all principality and power, and every name that is named. From the very lowest to the very highest, He fills all things. There is nothing that He does not fill in the ways, counsels, and purposes of God. Marvelous, that this is the place to which God has exalted Him. That is where we see Him. We see Jesus, made a little lower than the angels, crowned with glory and honour. And so He says, quoting Psalm 8 again, "And has put all things, under His feet." This one short statement embraces the whole, whether heavenly, earthly or infernal beings, all things are placed under His feet.

But there is more: "And gave Him [to be] Head over all things to the Assembly." This last statement, Head over all to the Church, is elaborated upon in Colossians, which speaks of the two-fold headship of the Lord Jesus. He is first of all Head *over* all things, but as Head *over* all things He has been given as Head *to* the Church. We want to notice this distinction. He is Head *over* all things, but He is not Head *over* the Church. He is Head *to* the Church, which is His body. How should we understand this? What is the difference?

It might be helpful to think of a department head in a business. He is in charge and has control as head; all have to answer to him and all follow the directions he gives. But it is obvious that, although we can speak of a head *over* a department, we cannot speak of a head *to* a department. Now here, after saying that Christ is Head *over* all, it says that He is Head *to* the Church. It is a beautiful reference to our body.

The head God has placed on my body is not a dictator giving orders or commands. In a sense that may be so, but it is an integral part of my body. The head *to* my body makes the whole function. This is what the Lord is to the Church: He is Head *to* the Church which is His body. It shows us that there is a living union between the Head, Christ, and the body, the Church. This union is brought about through the power and the operation of the Spirit of God. A Divine Person, the Spirit, came at Pentecost, baptizing the believers into one body and bringing them into living union with the risen glorified Head in heaven.

Wonderful! But is it real? Or is this mysticism? It might sound like mysticism to an unbeliever; unbelievers sometimes speak of it in that way, but it is very real. It is spiritual, that it is indeed, and it is only realized by the power of the Spirit. It is not visible, it is unseen, but we know that all visible things are temporal, but the invisible are eternal (2 Cor. 4:18). Here is something that has been wrought by the Spirit of God, and therefore far more real than the fact that my head is attached to my body. After all, my physical body is only for a time, temporal, but what we possess in Christ, brought about by the power of the Spirit of God, is eternal, abiding, and consequently, very real.

It is just like our family relationships, those between husband and wife, between children and parents. These also are for this world, they are passing too; in the glory they have no place. But we learn to understand the heavenly, spiritual

relationships by these earthly relationships which God has given us while we are on this earth. Thus our spiritual relationships are abiding, lasting, and very real.

And isn't it marvelous to realize that the very One who is exalted as Head over all things, the One who has been given to the Church, that that One is eternal and very real! So then, all that we possess in Him is, even today, a reality. We know that our Head is in the place where God has set Him in the highest glory. Our Head is not anywhere on earth. Here man may have placed someone as head over their church, be it in Rome or in London or in Constantinople or anywhere else. But our Head is in highest glory, He is in heaven. And how great the need for us to hold fast the Head in a practical way, as the Colossians are exhorted.

Now notice how that God "has put all things under His feet, and gave Him [to be] Head over all things to the Assembly, which is His body, the fullness — or complement —, of Him who fills all in all." just to think that we who are part of that Church are His complement, that which brings the Christ to a fullness, completing the Christ: Head and body. Isn't that unique? Was He not sufficient in Himself when He was set exalted in that place? No, there was something lacking! It was just as it had been prefigured in Genesis, when no helpmeet was found for Adam. Thus, when God set Christ in His place of exaltation, there was not a helpmeet found for Him until God, by His Spirit, brought that complement to Him. Now we are in living union with Christ in the glory, and even now we are seen seated in the heavenlies in Christ (Eph. 2:6).

Do we really appreciate this wondrous position to which God has brought us? And soon, when the Lord Jesus comes, we will know and enjoy this in all its fullness. Then He will bring us to that glory which He has entered. Nor will He rest until He has brought us there, for without us He is not satisfied. How could He be? He cannot be satisfied until that union has actually been consummated. Today it is realized and known to faith and brought about by the power of the Spirit. But it is not yet visible, not yet seen, or manifest. When we will be taken up, this will be experienced. What will that be, what will that mean to us? How will, in a moment, every longing of our hearts be answered? It will give a satisfaction and deep joy that cannot be surpassed. How blessed will it be to know ourselves there, forever with Him in that new wondrous relationship, Christ and the Church.

With this before us, I like to refer to 1 Corinthians 11:1-16. We know that this portion has to do with headship, head-covering, the place, position, relation between man and woman. But particularly, I want to point to verse 3. God desires that the Headship of Christ be owned and displayed in the very world where through sin and disobedience the creation order which God had established is displaced. In our days Christ's authority and Headship is denied on every hand. At such a time, God still desires that right here, in the midst of failure and ruin, He might have those who give recognition to Christ's Headship. God wishes to have some who, by their simple actions, would declare, "I own that there is a Head in heaven."

God provides for this by such simple tokens as the head-covering and the long hair of the woman, and the uncovered head and short hair of the man, the representative head. God would have this picture displayed here on earth. In verse 10 we are taught that the woman's head covering, as a token of the authority under which she stands, is to be worn on account of the angels. Notice the interesting connection. He who was made a little lower than angels is now crowned above angels and every name that is named. The Man Christ Jesus, the Man of God's counsels, is now in highest glory above. Now angelic beings gaze and look on us, and see in the Assembly the all various wisdom of God. By the simple act of sisters putting a covering on their heads, they learn that we recognize a Man in the glory, crowned above all principality and power, at God's right hand. They observe that we own and take our place in submission and subjection to His Headship.

Isn't this a great privilege? Had God demanded some great thing, we would perhaps attempt to do it. But now it is so simple that it seems almost too simple and many don't want to do it. The sad reality of this attitude is evident in many places today. So, I feel a need to look at the significance and purpose of the head-covering with the help of Scripture. It isn't just a command, or rule which some brothers have thought of, but the clear teaching of Scripture. Nor is it an old-fashioned tradition upheld by only a few, but God's will made known regarding our simple obedience as in all else.

For the encouragement of the sisters I like to say this: Each time you place a covering on your head, the angels are observing you, and you are telling this unseen world that you recognize that God has placed Christ as the Head of all things, far above angelic beings. The very One who stooped so low in grace is now in highest glory and you recognize that you are, as representative of the Assembly, united to Him whom you own as Head over all. Do you want to own anything else? How simple an expression and a token, yet how far reaching it is in the sight of God.

Sometimes the question is asked, "How often or on what occasions should the head covering be worn? Is it limited to meetings of the Assembly?" As far as the Assembly is concerned, the apostle commended the Corinthians in verse 2 for keeping the directions he had given them and in verse 16 he strongly emphasized that no deviation from this pattern was accepted, "If any one think to be contentious, we have no such custom, nor the assemblies of God." In other words: there

it is not a question. Yet he does not limit it to that, no, it is a creation order. Now if man has failed in creation, then in the Assembly it is picked up afresh as it were. Where man failed in the first creation it is recognized and honoured in the new creation. There it is taken up afresh in the power of the Spirit of God. We don't recognize the first man, but the second Man, the last Adam.

Verses 5 and 6 teach us that a woman praying or prophesying is to be covered, without stating when or where. In 1 Corinthians 14:34 we are told that in the Assembly the women are to be silent, it is not permitted to them to speak, but to be in subjection. Comparing these two scriptures it becomes evident that there is a place where a woman may pray or prophesy other than the Assembly, and wherever that may be it is in order for her to have her head covered. Wherever it is in order for the man to have his head uncovered it is in order for the woman to have hers covered. And what a privilege it is to do so intelligently and to the glory of God.

May the Lord encourage us that in this day, while His Headship, His Lordship, His authority is denied and set aside on every hand, that we might acknowledge and hold fast the Head till He come.

The End.

OUTLINES FOR BIBLE TEACHING (13)

25. MOSES AND AARON MEET PHARAOH — Exodus 5:1-7:13

Outline

1. Pharaoh's Refusal to let Israel go Ex. 5:1-19
2. Israelites' Reversal of Feelings Ex. 5:20-6:1, 9
3. The Promise of Deliverance Renewed Ex. 6:2-8
4. The Signs before Pharaoh Ex. 7:8-16

Explanation

1. Pharaoh obstinately refused Moses' and Aaron's plea. He increased the workload of the Israelites, and did not even allow them time to sacrifice.
2. Their increased burden caused the Israelites to be embittered, and blame Moses and Aaron.
3. Jehovah reaffirmed His promise of deliverance from their Egyptian bondage.
4. Moses and Aaron went again to Pharaoh and caused Aaron's staff to become a serpent. Pharaoh's servants did the same thing, and, though Aaron's staff swallowed up theirs, Pharaoh refused to listen to Moses' request.

Lesson

Through his refusal, Pharaoh became an instrument of Satan. He did not recognize God as the highest authority, and increased Israel's oppression (Ps. 73:6-11).

Even Moses did not understand God's doings and asked, "Why?" God, who knows our frame (Ps. 103: 14), encouraged him (Ex. 5:22, 6:1). Again Moses and Aaron stood before Pharaoh. God sent him mighty works of error in his magicians, Jannes and Jambres (2 Th. 2:9-10; 2 Tim. 3:8). Jannes means, "full of pleasure," Jambres, "magician."

26. THE TEN PLAGUES — Exodus 7:14-11:10

Outline

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| 1. | Water Turned into Blood | Ex. 7:14-25 |
| 2. | Frogs | Ex. 8:1-15 |
| 3. | Lice | Ex. 8:16-19 |
| 4. | Swarms of Flies | Ex. 8:20-32 |
| 5. | Livestock Stricken | Ex. 9:1-7 |
| 6. | Boils Afflict Man and Beast | Ex. 9:8-12 |
| 7. | Hail, Thunder and Fire | Ex. 9:13-35 |
| 8. | Locusts | Ex. 10:1-20 |
| 9. | Darkness | Ex. 10:21-29 |
| 10. | Death of the Firstborn | Ex. 11:1-10 |

Explanation

1-3. These three loathsome plagues were introduced by the lifting up of Aaron's rod. The last one came unannounced. Pharaoh's magicians were able to copy the first two through the power of Satan. The third one being beyond their ability caused them to warn Pharaoh of God's finger. These first three plagues came also over the Israelites.

4-6. These three painful plagues were introduced by the word of Jehovah. Again the last one came unannounced. Pharaoh hardened his own heart five times, but from the sixth plague on God hardened his heart.

7-9. These three appalling plagues were introduced by Moses lifting up his staff. As before, the last of these three came also unannounced. After each plague Pharaoh had to acknowledge his sin or God's power, but it was too late, God had hardened his heart.

10. The last plague was distinct. Moses announced to Pharaoh that the Lord Himself would go through Egypt and kill every firstborn son.

Lesson

We should never underestimate Satan's abilities. He is able to use signs and miracles (2 Th. 2:9).

In the end God hardened Pharaoh's heart because he continued his resistance despite the evidences of God's existence and His power. From then God used him as an instrument for the unfolding of His glory (Rom. 9:17), and God's judgments (Ps. 105:26-36; 135:6-9; 1 Pet. 5:6). This is a serious warning to all who repeatedly refuse to accept God's call to repentance.

Moses had to refuse Pharaoh's compromises. The first one: "Go, sacrifice to your God in the land" (Ex. 8:25). This applies to the worldly Christian, who fails to separate from the world unto the Lord. When Moses rejects this, Pharaoh seeks to accommodate him a little: "Only go not very far away." In this we see Satan's attempt to have the Christian go only halfway, like Lot's wife.

The second one: "Go now, ye [that are] men, and serve Jehovah!" (Ex. 10:11). Satan seeks to convince parents that it is much better if their children are occupied with worldly things during the time of worship. He wants us to believe (and many seem to fall for it) that these things are too much for children.

The third one: "Only let your flocks and herds remain (Ex. 10:24). Satan tells us that, as long as you go to worship, it does not matter too much if you bring anything; your presence is what counts, it shows where your heart is. Moses' answer to this last compromise was: "There shall not an hoof be left behind ... to serve Jehovah our God" (Ex. 10:26). We want to come well prepared when we meet our God!

To be cont'd

TO BE CHRISTIAN, EVERY DAY (8)

—K. Rouw

Deuteronomy 22:1-12

Forget Me not

Dt. 22:12. Tassels shalt thou make thee on the four corners of thy clothing, wherewith thou coverest thyself.

For the fourth time in these twelve verses we read here about our garment. Strange, is God so interested in our clothing? He surely is! Not that we are very different on that point. We used to say: "The fine coat makes the fine gentleman," which left one wondering why we did not say "the fine lady." But now that we are not so much interested in being "fine," we don't hear this too often; today we express other "values" by means of our clothing.

Psalms 104:2 says that God covers Himself with light. One wonders whether this could also have been the clothing of man before the fall. We know that God in His great grace, after man had first tried to cloth himself after he had sinned, prepared clothing for man.

As always, the first Scripture reference to a matter is indicative of its significance: God covers man's moral standing, his nakedness before Him, through the death of animals. With the external skirts which God put personally on man, God wanted to give expression to man's inward condition.

A similar thing is seen in Leviticus 7:8. There the priest who brings the sacrifice receives the skin. It expresses that the priest is seen as clothed in the skin of the burnt-offering. It is an incomprehensible wonder that we are allowed to approach God as priest to display before Him the perfection of His Son, who is the true sacrifice. And then to think that we are clothed by God, not just in garments of salvation, but in the value His Son has to Him.

The skirts with which God covered Adam and Eve were not just some cloth. God introduced their clothing with a very special Hebrew word. After Genesis 3:21 only seven persons, or groups of persons, wore such a garment. The word is used for the beautiful garment of Joseph, the beloved son, and for the skirt worn by Aaron and the priests. Tamar, the king's daughter wore one, as did Husai, David's friend, and Job, the richest man in the east. It was the clothing of the bride in Solomon's song, and, finally, of Eliakim (Isa. 22:21) when he was clothed in the glory of the Messiah. The skirts of Adam and Eve were of such character; such value God attaches to the clothing of believers. The Father gave His Son when He walked here below a body-coat which was "seamless, woven through the whole from the top." It was a coat that expressed the inner glory of His Person. Seamless is: without beginning and without end. Wasn't He "that Holy Thing" woven from above in the womb of Mary? Yet, He became so poor that soldiers cast lots over His coat, and Pilate and Herod "played" Him to each other.

Joyfully, the Son wore the seamless coat, just as Joseph had worn his father's coat. They didn't say: "These are but external things; it doesn't matter all that much." if we allow God to train us, He wants to train us to observe His sensitiveness. But the question is whether or not we want to be trained. The goal today's educators have set for themselves is to brainwash their pupils from all sense of values and norms. Sensitiveness is a rare commodity in all that is called "modern," it is certainly lacking in today's music with its ever repetitive drum rhythm.

As recent as 1975 the directors of one of the large department stores instructed its staff not to wear casual clothing behind the counter: the men not in turtle neck, the women not in pants. Where is that still possible today? Even many believers lose their sensitiveness for such simple, external things. Some ask, "Can we go in casual clothing to the Lord?" Peter, dressed in his fisherman's outfit, girded himself before he went to the Lord. Today we hear, "The Lord looks at the heart." It so happens that the Lord did that in earlier days too; and in Peter's upper-garment He saw a heart that loved and respected Him. The Lord appreciated his effort of putting on a garment so much, that He made special mention of it in John 21.

The other extreme are the worldly fashions which do not function as "covering," but as subtle "uncovering." In our verse it says literally, "The cover (a word rarely used for garment), wherewith thou coverest thyself." Let us just mention swimming attire, although what is worn on campgrounds isn't much better lately. If we wish to show that we are Christians, we will have to pull together more and more, even for recreation during our holidays. It isn't merely a question of looking for suitable surroundings, but the way in which we use our holidays. The boundary between the world together with the so-called Christian world on the one side, and the true Christian who wants to return to the "old paths" rather than to be dragged along on the other side, will become more and more evident.

But God's purpose with our clothing obviously reaches beyond the clothing itself. It takes in our entire conduct: all that people see and notice about us, the things we surround ourselves with because we think they suit us, the things whereby

people know and recognize us. — Tell me which books are yours, and I will tell you who you are. And for "books" we may put: "posters," "friends," you name it.

At the fall of Jericho's walls, Achan stole a garment. It was a theft of cursed material. As usual in case of sin, it all began by seeing, afterwards he took, and it was not a mere coincidence that he first took silver and gold. In the Bible these speak of the price paid for redemption and righteousness. It speaks of man's desire to possess without receiving it at the cross. No wonder then that someone like Achan should add a Babylonian garment to these. Ezra and Nehemiah went out of Babel. So did our parents. And in Revelation the judgment comes over Babylon as the great whore.

Achan belonged to the people of God that had just gone through the Jordan as through death; yet, he wanted to clothe himself as one from Babel. Today we may do this if we wish not to be different in our habits and practical behaviour from the religious world. Then only one man did so; yet, all Israel was held responsible by God. For the Babylonian garment was liable to defile, bit by bit and subtly, the entire people of God. So, we may introduce habits which look very good, which could be considered useful or attractive; there are many of these in Christendom. Some of them may even be pushed upon us — "you just can't avoid that type of thing in our days" — but nevertheless, they set aside a truly Godly life and the working of the Holy Spirit.

The Assembly of God is made up out of families, and these in turn out of individuals. In the whole, each person is as important as the next in the eye of God. He looks at everyone's garment, even at the corners, for He wants to lay hold of these corners. "Tassels shalt thou make thee on the four corners of thy clothing." At first sight it seems a rather strange commandment; still, the Israelite who, without understanding why, did what God asked was at least aware that God saw his preparedness to do what God asked, even if he did not understand why. And that is just it. It all starts with the little things: either doing what God asks, or not bothering to do so. Numbers 15:37-41 gives a little more detail by adding, "That ye may look upon it, and remember all the commandments of Jehovah, and do them; and that ye seek not after [the lust of] your own heart and your own eyes." God wants to warn us: Don't look further than your clothes; the entire world is full of temptations. Let the boundary of your life and thoughts be marked by My Word.

That the Word of God is beautiful is expressed by the words used for tassels (different Hebrew words are used in Dt. and Num.). It can be translated by fringes or hem, or ribbon or edge, but there is also a sense of "treetop" and "an attractive flower." Numbers 15 says that there should be a lace of blue in them. Numbers, as the book for the wilderness, reminds us that our walk is heaven-bound and to be characterized by heavenly things. Similarly, Philippians, which is also a wilderness book, says that our walk, our citizenship, is in heaven. How rich has God made us! God has spared no efforts to remind us of our riches, that we might live more consciously in the enjoyment of them.

From time to time the people of Israel longed back for the leeks of Egypt, but would the prodigal son ever have longed for his old rags? Would he too have needed four tassels to remind him again and again of his father's love? Yet, the Lord has a never ending patience toward us. Countless times He washes our feet. Time and again He wants to remind us of the hem of our garment with its tassels and blue lace.

Whenever the priests carried the ark of the covenant through the wilderness, a blue cover lay over it. So may we display the heavenly Christ to the world, in the wilderness which surrounds us.

The End