

JUDE (2)

—H. L. Heijkoop

Verse 1

Jude, bondman of Jesus Christ, and brother of James, to the called ones beloved in God [the] Father and preserved in Jesus Christ: Mercy to you, and peace, and love be multiplied.

Jude

Jude (or Judas) is the Greek form of Judah, which means: "He will be praised!" This is a beautiful name for someone who, although he must describe the God — dishonouring corruption of the Assembly, is allowed to finish his epistle with the words: "To the only God our Saviour, through Jesus Christ our Lord, [be] glory, majesty, might and authority, from before the whole age, and now, and to all the ages. Amen" (v. 25).

Judah is the name of the chief of the royal tribe and also of the kingdom under the government of the house of David (Gen. 49:8-12). The first one known by the name of Judas in the New Testament is Judas Iscariot, the son of perdition, who is a type of Israel in its rejection of the Messiah (Gen. 49:17-18). Our Jude, however, as "bondman of Jesus Christ," is a type of Israel in a future day. His heart must have been stirred when he wrote this letter. He had been an eyewitness (even a partaker) of the apostasy of God's earthly people. Now he also had to witness the apostasy of God's new testimony on earth, the heavenly people. What a confirmation of the utter incompetence of man it was. There is no hope left other than in God's mercy.

bondman of Jesus Christ and brother of James

Who was this Jude? He refers to himself only as bondman of Jesus Christ and brother of James. The New Testament speaks of other Judes besides Judas Iscariot. But only two could qualify as "brother of James." The first one is named in Luke 6:16; John 14:22; Acts 1:13. But it is not at all certain that in these places "[brother] of James" is right. Many think it must be "[son] of James." Besides, the Jude in these passages was an apostle, whereas, it seems fair to conclude from verse 17 that the author of this Epistle was not. Moreover, there is no indication that the James of Luke 6 etc. was so well-known that the expression "brother of James" would have been sufficient to show who the writer was.

The second "Jude, brother of James" we find in Matthew 13:55. This James was indeed well-known in the whole assembly. He is the same James, who, together with Peter and John, is referred to as "pillars," and among them he is mentioned first (Gal. 2:9). Acts 12:17; 15:13 and 21:18 indicate that he was *the* most prominent brother in Jerusalem, even when the apostles Peter and John were present. In Acts 15 Peter, Barnabas and Paul *spoke*, but James *answered*. He seems to have led this discussion. There is nothing wrong with a brother's exercising leadership provided he has received the gift for it; in 1 Corinthians 12: 28 this gift of government is mentioned. But it is entirely contrary to Scripture to do so on the basis of a received appointment (or ordination), whether or not he has the spiritual gift and power for it. It is quite possible that God wants one brother this time and another some other time to take a more prominent place. In Scripture, government or leadership is never restricted to one person. But, apparently the Lord used James in this prominent place continuously.

Most likely then; Jude was the brother of this James. But this means that he was also the brother of the Lord Jesus according to the flesh, for in Galatians 1:19 James is specifically called the brother of the Lord. This is in harmony with Matthew 13:55-56: "Is not His mother called Mary, and His brethren James, and Joseph, and Simon, and Judas? And His sisters, are they not all with us?" Compare this also with Mark 6:3.

At the time the Lord started His public service His brothers did not believe in Him. The Lord states this clearly in Mark 6:4. Even worse! In Mark 3:21 it says: "And His relatives having heard [of it] went out to lay hold on Him, for they said, He is out of His mind." This was the attitude of the younger children of Joseph and Mary who had been near Him from their birth and had seen His perfection all their lives. What proof of the total corruption of the human heart. What must this have meant to the Lord!

After the three years of the Lord's public ministry during which He had done all His miracles, they still had not changed (Jn. 7:5). It seems that they were not even present at the cross (Jn. 19:25-27). Yet, after the Lord's ascension we find them with the apostles (Acts 1:14). The cross, which would normally speaking have been an insurmountable obstacle to their unbelieving hearts, and the resurrection, were used by God to break their hardened hearts. Did the Lord's appearance perhaps bring about their conversion? (1 Cor. 15:7).

Undoubtedly God's wisdom was in all of this. No one can say that the Lord was influenced or supported by his relatives, as we find it so often in the world; just think of Napoleon or Mohammed.

In Scripture we hear nothing further of the Lord's sisters nor of Joseph and Simon. We saw that James received a leading position in the assembly in Jerusalem, and that he was also well-known elsewhere. Of Jude we hear only in this Epistle. Finally, we are told in 1 Corinthians 9:5 that the brothers of the Lord were married.

Why didn't Jude call himself the brother of the Lord? Had he been seeking honour for himself he certainly would not have missed this opportunity. What an important place would it have given him in the eyes of believers with little or no spiritual perception! But it would hardly have been pleasing to the Spirit of God or reflect the mind of Him who said: "I am meek and lowly in heart" (Mt. 11:29). Jude acts in accordance with the Christian principle of 2 Corinthians 5:16: "We... know no one according to flesh; but if even we have known Christ according to flesh, yet now we know [Him thus] no longer." Besides, as long as the Lord had lived on earth he had not believed in Him. Now it seems that he wants it emphasized that he is nothing but a bondman of Jesus Christ. In the Greek there is a certain contrast, we might therefore translate: "bondman of Jesus Christ, *but* brother of James." Isn't this demonstration of humility and truly Christian attitude Jude's highest honour? What an example for all believers with earthly privileges. What a contrast to those who use their earthly wealth or social position to arrogate a prominent place among believers.

to the called ones

They are called, not only by God's call of love (2 Cor. 5:20) to which a man may or may not respond, but also by the calling of God's power (Rom. 8:30), which is always accomplished. It is a general address which, without exception holds true for *all* believers. This is important in view of the contents of this letter which is not addressed to believers in a certain place. We don't even know to whom this letter was originally sent. God has intentionally omitted this information so that not any believer could think the Epistle not to be for him. It is for everyone, no matter during what time one might live (although it is more especially for us who live in the time of which the Epistle speaks prophetically), wherever one might dwell, or whatever insight one might possess, whatever one's walk or whatever may separate one from other believers. This form of address may be most comprehensive, it is also most wonderful. God has called us according to His eternal purpose to be "conformed to the image of His Son... But whom He has predestinated, these also He has called; and whom He has called, these also He has justified; but whom He has justified, these also He has glorified" (Rom. 8:29, 30). It reminds us of the wonderful election by God and of the purpose of our election: to be conformed to the image of His Son. This should make us eager to listen to the divine instructions showing us how to behave in this time of apostasy.

beloved in God [the] Father

In the New Testament two Greek verbs are used for *to love*: *phileo* and *agapao* (and its noun *agape*). The former relates mostly to friendship, while the latter refers everywhere (except in Ti. 3:4), to the love of God for man and of man for God. It also is used to express the love of the Father for the Son, except in John 5:20; and of the love of the Father for the disciples, except in John 16:27. *Phileo* is emotional, stimulated by something attractive in the object of love, by something that gives delight. We find the word back in the name Philadelphia, which means brotherly love (*phil* is love, and *adelphos* is brother).

Agapao speaks more of an established condition within a person, prompting the person into action. Its origin is therefore more in the person who loves, although it is connected with the preciousness of the object of love. "God is love," is the real origin of this love, also in those verses where it is used for the love of man to God. Here in Jude: 1 *agapao* is used; it is a past participle, used in the perfect tense. So it is an action that is completed in the past but with a present, and in this connection, a permanent, result. It speaks of a durable sharing in love; a being surrounded by an atmosphere of love.

The Greek doesn't say: "God *the* Father." but "God Father." The significance of this is to present God as Father, and in Him they are beloved. It does not mean that Jude loved them! "In" has also the meaning of "by" although it is stronger than that. It is used many times in the Scriptures to indicate the relationship between the believers and Christ. "In God [the]

Father" occurs, as far as I know, only here and in 1 Thessalonians 1:1 and 2 Thessalonians 1:1, in the latter case it is: "In God our Father."

The Thessalonians were young in the faith. From the moment of their conversion they had suffered persecution. We know that the apostle Paul himself had to flee from the persecution which had started (Acts 17). Now, in the First Epistle (which is also his first inspired epistle) he called them "the Assembly of Thessalonians *in God [the] Father*." That this was intentional is evident from the fact that he repeats it in his Second Epistle. In the latter one we see that the persecution continued and that, through the activities of false teachers, evil had crept in, greatly disturbing these young believers. Since these believers, young in the faith as they were, were already exposed to persecution and temptation, the Holy Spirit wanted to comfort them by the Apostle's reminding them that they were "*in God the Father*." What could harm them if this were their position? The knowledge that God is our Father is possessed by new converts who have heard the full gospel. John writes to those young in the faith: "I write to you, little children, because ye have known the Father" (1 Jn. 2:13).

In Jude we have the other side. It is one of the later books of God's Word. The believers to whom the Epistle was addressed were certainly no longer young in the faith, although there must have been young believers among them, but they are seen as going through a sea of trouble and sorrow. Now they are told that things will not get better, but worse, until, finally, the Lord will come in judgment.

preserved in Jesus Christ

Wouldn't such remarks alarm people not established in the truth? To present this Jude addresses them as "the called ones" who are beloved in God [the] Father. And he adds to this "And preserved in (or by, or for) Jesus Christ." The Greek is not clear whether it should read *in*, or *by*, or *for*. All three thoughts are proper but, of course, the Holy Spirit wanted to express only one thought. We must look to Him for the answer as to which word is correct here.

We cannot help but think of John 17:11, where the Lord prays, "Holy Father, keep them in Thy name which Thou hast given Me." What a wonderful opening for a letter in which Jude, while describing the progressing apostasy, constrains them to remain faithful in the midst of corruption. To the addressees of this Epistle (i.e. all believers, but especially those of our time), it is said that, through the will of God, they have been called out of the place of corruption in which they once were. And this same will of God has called them to the position of objects of divine love, the love of God our Father. As such they are preserved in, or for, or by the Lord Jesus. God loves us, as He loved the Lord Jesus (Jn. 17:23), and our security is as great as that of the Lord Jesus.

The word "preserved" is another past participle used in the perfect tense, just as "beloved." It signifies an act completed in the past, but with present and lasting results. They were, so to say, hidden in Jesus Christ, and that forever, so that the enemy could never snatch them away.

What an encouragement this is when we look upon all the unfaithfulness and apostasy around us; yes, even on our own weakness, and our complete lack of power. It is tremendous to possess the inward consciousness of God's love, and to walk in perfect awareness that God loves me. It gives strength for my walk. God cannot be unfaithful to His calling, nor can He let go of His counsel of love concerning His beloved ones.

To be cont'd

THE MINOR PROPHETS (2)

—R. Been Sr.

General Remarks on Prophecy

The Value of Prophetic Study

The study of prophecy is of great value for a healthy, spiritual life. Many claim that such a study breeds dreamers, but the New Testament says, "Every Scripture [is] divinely inspired, and profitable for teaching, for conviction, for correction, for instruction in righteousness; that the man of God may be complete, fully fitted to every good work" (2 Tim. 3:16-17). This certainly is an entirely different evaluation of prophecy, which doubtless falls within the realm of "every Scripture."

For this reason we will point out various benefits to the spiritual life of the believers, flowing from the prayerful reading and studying of prophecy.

1. The apostle Peter compares the prophetic word to a lamp shining in a dark place, and he says that we do well to heed it (2 Pet. 1:19). This world becomes increasingly darker, and the believer has an urgent need for reliable light. If he goes his way by the light of prophecy, *the Morningstar, Christ, will arise in his heart* and the longing for the cloudless morning will more and more increase.

2. Prophecy tells us, both in regards to the past and in regards to the future, what will take place. All prophecies relating to the past have been accurately fulfilled. And today, which are the last days, and difficult times for us (2 Tim. 3:1-5; 4:1-4), we can see how the apostle Paul described Christendom's future 1900 years ago. We may conclude that also this prophecy has been accurately fulfilled. Just as it was prophesied then, so it is now, unfortunately. *Our trust in the Holy Scriptures is only increased thereby.*

3. In our days, there is a false hope in Christendom; many expect that the world will be converted and won for Christianity. This is an unscriptural expectation which leads to all kinds of wrong ideas. Rather than approaching the individual, mass-actions are preferred. There is even a certain alliance with pagan religions. Through reading and study of prophecy *we will be kept from wrong doctrines and expectations.*

4. The apostle John says, "We [believers of the Church] shall see Him as He is" (1 Jn. 3:2). That is *prophecy*. But this word is immediately followed by: "And every one that has this hope in him, purifies himself, even as *He* is pure" (1 Jn. 3:3). That is the practice of our Christian life. The apostle Paul says, "When the Christ is manifested who [is] our life, then shall ye also be manifested with Him in glory" (Col. 3:4). That is *prophecy*. But then he continues immediately: "Put to death therefore your members... Put ye off therefore also; put on as the elect of God..." (Col. 3:5-15). That is practical. The apostle Peter says, "But, according to His promise, we wait for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwells righteousness" (2 Pet. 3:13). Once again, this is *pure prophecy*. And again, immediately upon it follows: "Be diligent to be found of Him in peace, without spot and blameless," and that again is practice. On the basis of these three quotes we may say: *a life based on the prophetic predictions of Scripture, particularly those of the New Testament, will be attended by a good practical walk.*

5. Believers are always in danger that invisible things will take a second place to visible things, although the former ones should be given the first place. Prophecy places the invisible things before the eyes of the believers in their true and infinite value. A believer who with an engaged heart reads and ponders over the Revelation of Jesus Christ, will be lifted up by that book into the heavenly sphere. The practical results of this will become evident to others. *Through prophecy, the invisible things will become more and more real to us.*

6. In a believer's life there is also much difficulty, suffering and sorrow. God nurtures and keeps him through these things. If all is well, there will be, during the time of temptation, a "boasting in temptations" because of the blessing-filled results of the sufferings. And there will also be a "boasting in the glory of God" (Rom. 5:3-5; 5:2). *Prophecy* adds to this, "that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy [to be compared] with the coming glory to be revealed to us" (Rom. 8:18). And: "Our momentary [and] light affliction works for us in surpassing measure an eternal weight of glory" (2 Cor. 4:17). *Thus, the reading of prophecy gives joy and strength in the midst of sorrow and sadness.*

7. The believer is called to contend for the faith (the total of Christian truth contained in Scripture), once delivered (for safekeeping) to the saints. This is to be done in view of the approaching coming of the Lord Jesus (Jude: 3). The entire prophetic message of the Bible places believers in the light of His coming. Then they will be manifested before the judgment seat of Christ where rewards will be given for their devotedness during this life to the things of the Lord. Thousands of believing men and women prove by their walking in the light of this prophecy how shallow the accusation is that the study of prophecy leads to sluggishness and dreaming. To the contrary, *the reading of and living according to prophecy promotes the serviceability of the believer.*

8. There is the ever present danger that the believer may be ensnared in worldly grandeur and glory. If all is well, he takes the word of Jeremiah to Baruch into account: "And seekest thou great things for thyself? seek [them] not" (Jer. 45:5). *Prophecy, putting all things in the true light, causes believers to be small in their own eyes.*

9. Sectarianism is of the flesh, not of the Spirit. We are admonished to keep the unity of the Spirit in the uniting bond of peace. The study of prophecy reveals the future glory of the one Assembly, the body of Christ, to which all believers belong. *Prophecy condemns every form of sectarianism.*

10. The claim, made by many, that the study of prophecy breeds dreamers, is made particularly with Old Testament prophecy in mind. Those who say this, *believe that the nation Israel has no future and all pertinent Scripture references to*

an earthly, millennial kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ are spiritualized by them. They apply the prophecies that speak of it to the Church. Consequently, they consider the literal fulfillment of these prophecies to be a utopian dream. Scripture, however, is all too clear when it speaks of a restoration of the nation Israel and the establishing of an earthly kingdom of Christ. And which believer in our days would not be interested in the prophecies that speak of the glorification of Him who once humbled Himself so deeply on this same earth? Humanly speaking, each believer wishes to see Him glorified. If anyone can be found that deserves the glorification mentioned in the Old and New Testament, it would be the Lord Jesus Christ. And then we do not even mention that today's believers will share in the earthly reign of Christ, a fact which also gives reason to be occupied with prophecy.

11. No one should study prophecy merely out of *curiosity* about the future. Doing this, one could perhaps acquire quite a bit of knowledge, but the heart would remain cool. Prophecy has the very important purpose to keep the believer *separated from the world*. It has Christ as its content, His sufferings, His glory. A presentation of what the world is and what its end will be speaks to the believer's conscience and separates him from the world. For this reason Peter says that prophecy is "(as... a lamp shining in an obscure place) until [the] day dawn and [the] Morning star arise in your hearts" (2 Pet. 1: 19). Without the prophetic light we would lose our bearings in this world. Through prophecy *we retain a proper perspective of this world, for it feeds the hope of obtaining the promised blessings*.

12. Prophecy speaks predominantly of *the sufferings, the power, and the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ*. Sufferings are the basis for glory. The power and glory were shown to the disciples on the mount of transfiguration. There they saw the Lord at His coming, as Him who will take the reins of government, and the power with which He will establish His kingdom on this earth.

The Minor Prophets

The so-called Minor Prophets are: Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi. This is the order in which they are found in the Bible. We don't speak of "Minor Prophets" to belittle their service, but only to identify the size of the Bible books called by their names (although Hosea and Zechariah have more chapters than the book of the "Major Prophet" Daniel).

The books of the Minor Prophets are generally the ones least read. Consequently they are less known. They are nevertheless a treasure house of teaching even for believers of the day of grace.

Historically, the order in which these prophets lived is:

1. Jonah. Although there is no date mentioned in the book itself, his name appears already in Second Kings 14:25. From this we may conclude that Jonah prophesied before Jeroboam II was king over the ten tribes, or at any rate no later than the early days of this king.
2. Amos prophesied in the days of king Uzziah (Judah) and Jeroboam II (Israel). Approximately concurrently with Hosea and Isaiah.
3. Hosea prophesied during the reign of Uzziah and Jeroboam II.
4. Micah was active during the time of Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah, kings of Judah.
5. Zephaniah prophesied during the reign of Josiah, some two hundred years after Micah.
6. Haggai was the first of the three post-exile prophets among those who had returned from Babel.
7. Zechariah worked among these Jews two months after Haggai and partly concurrently with him. He spoke for about two years to the people. These two prophets were contemporaries of Zerubbabel, the prince from Judah under whom the Jews returned from the exile.
8. Malachi prophesied most likely during Nehemiah's time, or even later. This might be concluded from the fact that he warned the people for the same sins against which Nehemiah had to take action. He lived about a hundred years after Haggai and Zechariah.

Nothing can be said with any degree of certainty about the time during which Joel, Obadiah, Nahum, and Habakkuk lived. Scripture does not give us the least indication.

Summary of the Minor Prophets

Hosea, Amos and Micah are mainly occupied with the *great ruin of the ten and the two tribes*. They announce the judgment over the whole nation, although Judah would initially be spared. To a greater or lesser extent they also tell how God will finally, in the distant future, act toward the nation, and restore it.

Obadiah and Nahum speak of *the judgment over the nations, the Gentiles*. Jonah in his message to Nineveh also depicts this. Nineveh is a type of the world in its pride and unrighteousness.

Zephaniah speaks of the day of the Lord over Judah and Jerusalem and of God's grace.

Joel first portrays the destruction of Palestine by the nations and the judgment that will come over these nations. But later, a time of blessing over Israel and the nations will follow.

Habakkuk deals with the chastising of the people of God by a power appointed by God. He himself endured oppression.

Haggai encourages the Jews who have returned from exile to rebuild the temple of the Lord. He reprimands them for their looking after their own interests while neglecting the Lord's things.

Zechariah speaks of the destruction of the hostile nations, the salvation of the Jews, and the following glory. Jerusalem is presented as the place which is central in God's thoughts.

Malachi portrays the *moral and religious condition* of the Jews who have returned.

In the books of these twelve "Minor Prophets" important historical facts are mentioned, as well as predictions of salvation in a distant future. Yet, these were not the prime purpose of these books. They were written to speak to hearts and consciences, and to bring about a return to God. These books are also very important for today's believers, for the history of Israel's departure from God can in broad lines be seen in that of professing Christendom.

Prophecy and Science

Believers who are truly subject to the pronouncements of God's Word can never be in the dark as to the future of the religious world that surrounds them. All too well they observe the departure of Christendom and they know that this leads to the apostasy and the reign of the antichrist in the last days. Such believers are conscious of their responsibility and the seriousness of the testimony they ought to bear in the midst of ever-increasing ruin. But they can only do so if they keep their "simplicity as to the Christ" (2 Cor. 11:3). Then their minds will not be spoiled. The Spirit of God by means of the Word of God teaches truths to believing hearts. They must keep it as truth coming directly from God rather than from the teachings of men.

Each simple child of God that studies the Bible will quickly be convinced that there is only one way whereby we can learn to understand God's Word. One must totally accept that all Scripture is inspired by God and that only the Holy Spirit can make us understand it.

The danger is great that a scientific education acquired by the human mind will rather darken than clarify Scriptural insight. No amount of knowledge of old languages, fossil animals and plants, ethnology, scientific research and its inherent discoveries, historical research..., in short, no branch of science no matter how interesting, can explain the Word of God. At times science may verify the pronouncements of God's Word, but it will never lead simple believers to think them to be fables. A believer is glad when discoveries confirm Scripture truths, because the objections of unbelievers are thereby refuted. He himself, however, does not need such confirmations.

To the contrary, such confirmations may become hindrances to understand the Word of God properly. Scientifically oriented persons may well have the tendency to *degrade the Bible to the level of things acceptable by human intelligence*. This is rationalism, the system that accepts only knowledge which can be obtained by logical thought and be understood by human intelligence. This way certain matters of faith may be accepted not because God has spoken but because *reason does not oppose them*. Even there where real rationalism is not held, some very orthodox, believing theologians have not been able to keep themselves free from this system, which is based on human intelligence. *Resting on intelligence, even to the least degree, as basis for the acceptance of the Word of God, is rejectable*.

Believers don't deny science its place, particularly not pure scientific knowledge, for it can be most valuable. They respect scientific methods as long as they do not arrogate the right to verify and judge the revelation of God in the Holy Scriptures. They particularly value those scholars who have used their knowledge of the original languages of the Bible to give us a good translation. But all said and done, they have only one source: Scripture; they have only one help in understanding it: God's Spirit, for only the Spirit of God knows the things of God and can communicate them. The Holy Spirit causes us to accept and understand the truths, insofar a man of flesh and blood can do so. All this, the Holy Spirit works, quite apart from human knowledge and logic.

To be cont'd

MYSTERIES (2)

—H. J. Bouter Jr.

The Mystery of the Ruin in the Assembly

This ruin can only be observed when we look at the Assembly in its responsibility, for as body of Christ the Assembly is not subject to ruin. Our responsibility is to hold fast the Head, since that is the only way in which we can put in practice the truth of the one body. It is, however, impossible that the body itself, as formed by the Spirit of God according to God's counsel, would be affected by ruin. Nevertheless, the manifestation of the body is certainly restricted by the influence of ruin.

When we speak of the truth of the one body, we first of all think of the oneness of life with Christ, whereas when we speak of the house of God, responsibility is the prominent thought. The Assembly has failed in its testimony. The house of God has become as a great house with vessels to honour and dishonour (2 Tim. 2). There are builders who have built with wood, hay and stubble on the foundation (1 Cor. 3). In the New Testament we find four mysteries connected with the ruin in the midst of the Christian testimony on earth:

1. The mysteries of the kingdom of heaven (Mt. 13).
2. The mystery of lawlessness, resulting in apostasy (2 Th. 2).
3. The mystery of the seven assemblies of Revelation 2 and 3 (Rev. 1:20).
4. The mystery of the adulterous and idolatrous Babylon (Rev. 17).

In the parables of the kingdom, the Lord describes the result of His preaching. He has been rejected as King by Israel and now He is only active as Sower. He continues this work from heaven, through His servants. The wicked one, however, will also start sowing, causing the kingdom to become a mixture of good and evil until the moment of Christ's return. Then He Himself will execute the judgment. In the third parable we see that the kingdom in this form would become a great power on earth, and in the fourth parable we see that it would be characterized by inward corruption. In the last three parables we have more its intrinsic character, that which *within* the kingdom has special value. The treasure in the field and the pearl of great price, both portray the Assembly which Christ obtained for Himself with the precious price of His blood. The last parable shows that the service of the apostles, the fishers, would eventually be directed to the nations. This would result in the gathering of the good fish in vessels, local assemblies. This contrasts with the work of the angels, whose task will be restricted to the evil ones at the completion of the age.

The apostle Paul describes the development of the ruin, especially in 1 and 2 Timothy. This development is characterized by the hidden working of lawlessness which cannot fully display itself as long as "he who withholds" is on earth. Eventually, however, it will come to complete apostasy from faith. Of this, the apostle speaks in 2 Thessalonians 2. There he speaks of the apostasy in general and about the person in whom the apostasy will be personified, the man of sin, the son of perdition. From this we see that there is a development of the evil which, though restrained for a time, will finally lead to general apostasy. This apostasy has a special representative, called the antichrist by the apostle John. True, he has many forerunners, there are many antichrists (1 Jn. 2:18), but he is nevertheless described as a specific person (1 Jn. 2:22). The Lord Himself says that he is "another come in his own name" (Jn. 5:43). He will proclaim himself as god and will have himself worshipped as God (2 Th. 2:4). This full development of the evil and its special representative is restrained by "that which restrains" and "he who restrains now until he be gone" (2 Th. 2:6-7). Until a certain time there will be an opposing power and person in this world. When this person is taken away there is no longer a hindrance for the revelation of the

lawless one, who will be destroyed by the coming of the Lord Jesus. We could consider governments with their God-given authority to be the means whereby the evil is kept in check. But we should primarily think of the presence of the Holy Spirit in all true believers (forming together the Assembly). The apostasy can only come when the Holy Spirit and the Assembly have been removed from the earth, and all that remains will be a company of professors who have no real life from God. Then Satan will exhibit a tremendous activity upon earth (Rev. 12 & 13).

The Lord Himself describes the development of the ruin prophetically in Revelation 2 and 3. Beginning with the leaving of the first love until the moment at which He will spew the unfaithful testimony out of His mouth. There is here a parallel with Matthew 13. It is certainly remarkable that the fourth parable and the fourth letter describe the results of the activities of a woman. Instead of being a clean lump before God (1 Cor. 5:7), the whole is leavened. Rather than consecrating itself to Christ, Thyatira joins itself to the world and is characterized by idolatry.

The full result of this, we find in the last mystery we referred to, the one of the adulterous and idolatrous Babylon. The description in Revelation 17 and 18 is self-explanatory: "And upon her forehead a name written, Mystery, great Babylon, the mother of the harlots, and of the abominations of the earth... And the angel said to me, Why hast thou wondered? I will tell thee the mystery of the woman, and of the beast which carries her" (Rev. 17:5, 7). Revelation 17 portrays the religious and political character of the unfaithful bride; Revelation 18 shows more her economic power.

In sharp contrast with this we find in Revelation 19 and 21 the description of the true bride, the Assembly bought by the Lamb with the price of His blood. Once the false bride has been judged, Christ joins Himself openly with the bridal Assembly and appears with her in glory on earth.

The Mystery of Israel's restoration

The failure of the Christian testimony on earth prepares the way in God's governmental ways for the restoration of Israel. This mystery was also entrusted to the apostle Paul: "For I do not wish you to be ignorant, brethren, of this mystery, that ye may not be wise in your own conceits, that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fullness of the nations be come in; and so all Israel shall be saved" (Rom. 11:25-26).

Romans 11 shows that there is in this time a remnant out of Israel (v. 5) that has been absorbed by the Assembly of God. The Assembly is seen here as the tree of God's testimony of earth — the olive tree — of which Abraham, or the promise of blessing to Abraham, is the root. In Christ this blessing of Abraham has come to the nations (Gal. 3), on the basis of faith according to Abraham's example (Rom. 4).

Israel has been put aside as God's testimony. God has broken out the branches of the tree, and the believers from among the Gentiles have been grafted in, taking the place of the original branches. Israel has been rejected on the ground of their unbelief, their rejection of the Messiah and their resisting the Holy Spirit when He came with the last message of grace (Acts 2-7).

The Assembly, consisting of a remnant of believers of Israel and for the greater part of believers from among the nations, has taken the place of Israel. We must keep in mind that this is not the Assembly as God sees it in His counsels but as a testimony on earth that is responsible for the blessings that God has entrusted to it.

The Assembly as public testimony would fail too; this we saw already. She did not remain in the goodness of God, therefore she will be cut off and lose her place of blessing. This judgment is announced in Revelation 2 and 3 and described in detail in Revelation 17 and 18. The true Assembly, consisting largely of the nations, will be taken up into glory. Thus the fullness of the nations will go in (Rom. 11:25). Then will the hardness that has come over Israel be lifted and God will once more take up the thread with His old people. All Israel will be saved through the appearing of the Messiah in glory. A new covenant, characterized by unconditional blessing, will be established with them.

In the series of mysteries we have therefore an overview of God's plans. First of all regarding Christ Himself and the Assembly as being one with Him. Christ and the Assembly are the great subject of God's thoughts. We see the failing of the Assembly as public testimony on earth and then the rapture of the true Assembly into glory. The false assembly will be judged, and Christ appears with His true bride, executing judgment over His enemies and saving His earthly people Israel.

Christ and the Assembly will be the centre of the heavenly glory. In connection with the earth this glory will manifest itself as the New Jerusalem that will lighten the world. There is no mention that the heavenly Jerusalem will arrive on earth. Just the dimensions show this to be impossible for it has a length, width, and height of about 2000 km. The heavenly Jerusalem is the centre of the heavenly glory, just as the earthly Jerusalem will be the centre of the earthly glory.

Thus all is in balance. Christ and the Assembly reign from heaven; that is the heavenly part of the kingdom. As Messiah He will join Himself to Israel and exercise His dominion from the earthly Jerusalem, just as the prophets announced it. Then the mystery of God will be fulfilled, and Christ will be Head over all things.

The End

OUTLINES FOR BIBLE TEACHING (15)

31. GOD SPEAKS TO HIS PEOPLE AT SINAI — Exodus 19 to 24 (see Heb. 12:20, 21; Gal. 3:19)

Outline

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|---|--|-------------|
| 1 | God speaks through Moses to the People | Ex. 19:1-8 |
| 2 | Preparation for the Law-giving | Ex. 19:8-25 |
| 3 | Ten Commandments Proclaimed | Ex. 20:1-17 |
| 4 | The People's vow | Ex. 24:3-18 |

Explanation

1. God recounted His gracious acts before Moses. The people responded self-reliantly.
2. Then God instructed the people to purify themselves for the appearance of Jehovah in holiness.
3. When God spoke the ten commandments, the people trembled with fear.
4. The people repeated their vow; then Moses wrote God's words in the book of the covenant. After Moses read it to them, the people uttered for the third time their self-reliant vow. Moses then sprinkled them with the blood of the covenant.

Lesson

Until this time Jehovah had manifested Himself to Israel in grace, desiring them to follow His voice of mercy and keep the covenant of His grace. By their vow ("All that Jehovah has spoken will we do") Israel placed itself upon legal ground instead of entering into the holy promises of grace. Jehovah then changed His relationship to the people (thunder, lightning, smoke), manifesting His holiness to them (Heb. 12:29). He gave them the law in order to bring to light their powerlessness and sinfulness (Rom. 3:20; 5:20; 7:9, 13, and 14). The law is 'a mirror for the sinner and a tutor to bring us to Christ (Gal. 3:24). Christ is the end of the law (Rom. 8:3; 10:4). Today the Christian has the will of God written upon the fleshly tables of his heart (2 Cor. 3:3; Heb. 10:16).

32. THE GOLDEN CALF — Exodus 32:1 - 33:17

Outline

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|---|-------------------------------------|-----------------|
| 1 | Israel's Idolatry | Ex. 32:1-6 |
| 2 | Jehovah's wrath and Moses' Advocacy | Ex. 32:7-14 |
| 3 | Judgment of Idolaters | Ex. 32:15-29 |
| 4 | Moses' Intercession | Ex. 32:30-35 70 |
| 5 | Israel's Remorse | Ex. 33:1-6 |
| 6 | Tent of Meeting | Ex. 33:7-11 |
| 7 | Moses' Request | Ex. 33:12-23 |
| 8 | Jehovah's Glory | Ex. 34:1-9 |

9	Jehovah speaks with Moses	Ex. 34:10-28
10	Moses' face shines	Ex. 34:29-35

Explanation

1. Israel declared an idolatrous image to be its god.
2. By his intercession, Moses turned away the wrath of Jehovah (Ps. 106:19-22).
3. Only those who clung to their apostasy were put to death.
4. The purpose of Moses' second intercession was the acceptance of Jacob by Jehovah.
5. When Jehovah announced that He could not go up in the midst of the nation, the people mourned and took off all their ornaments.
6. Moses pitched the tent of meeting "outside the camp," separated from the sinful people.
7. Moses' relationship to God was revealed by the boldness of his request.
8. Jehovah, in presenting His glory, spoke first of His grace and then of His holiness.
9. Jehovah made a new covenant with Israel based on the law.
10. God's glory was reflected on Moses' face to such an extent that he had to wear a veil when in the presence of the people.

Lesson

By its action Israel broke its covenant and renounced Jehovah (Ex. 20:4-6; Ps. 106:19-22). Moses reminded Jehovah of His *glory*, of the *honour* of His name, and His *promises* (Ex. 32:11-13). In Exodus 32:33 God spoke according to His government, which requires the *destruction of the sinner*. The gospel of God's grace speaks of *blotting out of sin*. Moses was a type of Christ as Mediator (1 Jn. 2: 1). He wanted to become a curse instead of Israel. Christ became a curse for us (Gal. 3-13). Our golden calves or idols are mentioned in 1 John. 2:15-17 and 5:21.

From this account it is evident that Israel was a stiff-necked people (33:3). God, being holy, could not dwell in the midst of a nation of transgressors. The sinner must be stripped of all that belongs to his ego (33:4-5).

The tent of meeting had to be moved outside the camp, indicating that God could no longer be there. When sin had entered the place of God's testimony, there had to be a separated place of gathering, the tent of meeting (see Heb. 13:13).

The name *Jehovah* shows God's character in connection with Israel (Ex. 34:6-7). After its sin, Israel had been saved by grace through Moses' intercession. God left Israel under law (Ex. 34:10-28), but there was now an ark prepared to keep the new tables (Dt. 10:1-5), speaking of Christ's keeping the law. The shining of Moses' face, although only a reflection of God's glory, was too much for Israel to look upon. Therefore Moses has to put a veil upon his face; this speaks of Israel's inability to see the glory of the Lord (2 Cor. 3:14).

To be cont'd