

**JESUS, LOOKING AROUND... (2)**

— A. E. Bouter

*In the house*

Scripture presents two contrasting possibilities: either we belong practically to the synagogue of Satan, to his kingdom — Mk. 3:24, his house — 3:25, 27, his authority — 3:26; or we belong to Christ, to His Assembly (cf. Mt. 16:18), His house (3:19f, 32-35), and are in His kingdom and under His authority (3:13-18). In the Lord's time, the synagogue of Satan was Judaism, now it is Christendom. Although it still confesses God's name, Satan is its real master and lord.

In Mark 3:31-35, our attention is drawn by a few points connected with "the house."

— There is mention of being "outside" (3:31ff) and of being "inside" the house (3:21). Today natural ties don't bring a person inside the house (cf. Jn. 1:13); they did so under Judaism.

— Those inside the house occupy a place of rest. "A crowd sat around Him" (3:32) and there were "those that were sitting around Him" (3:34). Whatever is to be done in the house is done from this position of rest (see e.g. Lk. 10:39; 15:20-24; Jn. 12:13). All New Testament instructions regarding the house (the Assembly of the Living God) are founded on the "peace with God" (Rom. 5:1) established by the Lord Jesus.

— The Lord Jesus is the Center around whom the multitude in the house is arranged (3:32, 34); they sit in a circle around Him. This speaks of their relationship to Him and their consequent relationship to each other.

— The ones sitting around Him are marked by the same features (i.e. "doing the will of God") which the Lord Jesus so, perfectly displayed. Therefore He can morally join Himself to them, and call them "My mother" and My brethren."<sup>1</sup>

— In the house His authority is acknowledged (3:35), this in contrast with the synagogue (cf. i.e. I Cor. 1:9 "our Lord").

— There is food and care in the house (cf. i.e. Lk. 10:35, which, as far as I can see, is connected with Mk. 2:23).

— The leading of the Holy Spirit is acknowledged and revered in the house, again in contrast to the synagogue (3:22ff; see also 14:13-16).

— In the house the Lord Jesus is trusted (1:29; 2:1ff), honoured and worshipped (14:3ff), there He teaches (7:17ff; 9:28ff, 10:10; cf. Mt. 13:36 and Lk. 10:39 etc.).

— The house is a place of prayer (11:17).

Several other points could be mentioned, but from these it will be clear that during the present time the Lord Jesus gives the subjects of His Kingdom an intimate place of love and affection, both in their relationship with Himself and among each other. The divine things available in the house for food and enjoyment awaken a desire, and provide the strength to serve, to do the will of God, yes, to learn to appreciate what is precious to God (so it was with Mary, with some of the disciples and with the master of the house in Mk. 14:14). But how to get inside the house? I like to restrict my answer to two points found in this chapter:

— 1. Having withdrawn from the synagogue, the Lord Jesus becomes the *attraction* for a great crowd (3:7ff);

— 2. He takes (although He is the dependent Servant of God) a place of authority: "And He goes up into the mountain, and calls whom He Himself would, and they went to Him... that they might be *with Him*" (3:13f).

These are two pre-requisites for being with the Lord Jesus "in the house." We should be attracted to Him by what we have seen in Him, or even through our own need, and He must have called us. To practically take our place in the house we need to be aware that we are to be entirely subject to His authority. If this be so, we belong to a company among whom the Lord Jesus, so to speak, feels at home.

It must have been quite some event: "And looking around in a circuit at those that were sitting around Him, He says, Behold My mother and My brethren"! How different from the synagogue! Would the Lord Jesus be able to count you and me as part of His family in a practical sense? Or is there something in our lives that hinders our doing the will of God? We would do well to change this quickly, so that we may feel His look, full of love and mercy, resting upon us. "Mine eye shall be upon thee" (Ps. 32:8).

<sup>1</sup> Here and in the parallel passages in Matthew and Luke (apart from differences owing to the unique character of each gospel) the Lord calls those who are morally conformed to Himself, brothers. In John 20:17 He calls the disciples so since they belong to the same family of God; He gave them life from the same Source on the basis of His death and resurrection. Hebrews 2:12 sees us as brothers joined to the glorified Son of man. In Matthew 25:40, faithful Jews, who will serve the Lord as disciples after the rapture of the Assembly, are also called brothers.

### *In the crowd*

In Mark 5 we are confronted with the need in this world; it is summarized in three cases for which *only* the Lord can provide the solution. These three cases serve as lessons for zealous disciples who are inclined to get to work themselves. Their efforts are comparable to those of the people in Mark 5:3 who tried to "bind up," to those of the doctors (5:26), the woman who had spent her entire livelihood, and the mourners in the house of Jairus.

Satan's power expresses itself in violence and corruption, in the active human will and lack of subjection to God (cf. Rom. 1-3). This power of Satan, of sin and of death can only be expelled by the Lord Jesus Himself. This we find first of all vividly demonstrated in the event of the demoniac. Then we meet it in the woman who, for twelve years, had had a flow of blood preventing her from serving God. She illustrates the spiritual condition described in Romans 7. Her case is closely related to that of Jairus' daughter.<sup>2</sup> The Lord Jesus was met by a condition of death rather than a response to His love. So it was with Israel and with us (Eph. 2). But this response comes after He has given her His life in resurrection power, then she walks (5:42). Thus the Lord Jesus finds an answer to His love in our walk.

But let us take another look at the sick woman. Generally the Lord touches the sick one, but here we find the faith of the woman active; attracted by His testimony, she touched His robe. Just as the Lord Jesus fully trusted God while He walked on earth, so we must trust Him; only then can we serve God (Rom. 7-8). It really is a question of practical salvation (5:34): we can only serve Him through faith once we are free from any influence.

In the crowd there are thousands who have not come "to their last" (cf. Mk. 5:2 3) as the man in Romans 7:2 4. They have a certain connection with the Lord Jesus through family ties, confession, or even life from God (Jn. 3). Only faith gives access to the power found in the Lord; no human effort to improve one-self, no logical reasonings, nor any expectation of self, will do.

The woman in Mark 5 (as the man in Rom. 7) finally told Him "all the truth," even in the presence of the crowd! How could she do that? It went with her as with the disciples. In John 20 they met behind closed doors, but on the day of Pentecost they were "on fire" for the Lord in the presence of the whole crowd. It was because she had heard the voice of the Saviour, who had turned around in the crowd to speak with the disciples (5:31), and because she felt His eye upon her. "And He looked round about to see her." What a change this brought in her attitude! Her need led her to touch His garment; His glance led her to testify of Him. Thus He had become her Saviour *and* her Lord.

As long as we want to maintain something of ourselves it is not possible to experience the power of Christ. The power of the Holy Spirit in Romans 8 is available to those who have not only experienced something of what is described in Romans 7 and Mark 5:25ff, but who, in faith, have also entrusted themselves entirely to Him. "Everything she had" had been of no avail, but touching Him once was sufficient. Thus the Lord enters our lives as Saviour and the Holy Spirit begins to present us His glory. It is as if we, feeling the Lord's eye upon us, see Him in all His beauty (Ps. 45), although He is still rejected here below. Then we receive courage to stand up for Him, to confess Him and to say: "He is my Lord!" Then we no longer hang on to anything of ourselves ("she fell at His feet"), but magnify Him.

The power of the Lord Jesus was in principle available to the whole crowd, but only one made thankful use of it. So it is today, only those who follow the path of this one woman in the crowd will be able to profit by it to their own blessing and to His honour.

How must this woman have served the Lord in her walk, what memories must she have had of His garment! What an influence this must have had on her own garment! And how is it with us? Can the Lord Jesus be seen in our testimony, in our walk, word and work?

*To be cont'd*

### **JUDE (5)**

—H. L. Heijkoop

---

<sup>2</sup> *There is an anti-climax in these three accounts. The active human will under Satan's guidance opposes the Son of God; the will of the woman is powerless; and the daughter of Jairus no longer has a will, for she has died. The Lord Jesus gives life, heals and expels the devil. In each situation He brings all into harmony with God so that He can be served. Thus the true Servant brings restoration.*

#### Verse 4

*For certain men have got in unnoticed, they who of old were marked out beforehand to this sentence, ungodly [persons], turning the grace of our God into dissoluteness, and denying our only Master and Lord Jesus Christ.*

The Greek states literally: *Got in unnoticed* are certain men. It puts the emphasis on *got in*. In one way, the Assembly had been redeemed out of the world. It had been set apart from the world to display God's goodness and holiness and the authority of the Lord Jesus. But Satan had brought men in her midst who will be the special object of judgment when the Lord comes with His holy ones (vv. 14-15). Not that the whole Assembly had gone astray but, while its general condition was still good, evil had slipped in. Through this the Assembly, as body on earth, was in danger of leaving her true position, just as each previous testimony had done. When things are allowed in which deny her testimony, when she leaves her first position, judgment is all that remains!

While men slept, the enemy sowed darnel amongst the wheat (Mt. 13:25). The ten virgins slept, for they forgot the Lord's coming. To meet the bridegroom they had to go out and leave the world, but they had found a resting place in this world; they had fallen asleep. We can only sleep here when we have developed a relationship with this world, for the world doesn't permit those who are separated from it to rest. And as long as they slept, there was no discernible distinction between the virgins. Even they themselves couldn't notice any difference! As soon as they awoke, however, they had to go out anew; then it became evident who really knew the bridegroom and who didn't. After a Christian has joined the world to find rest, to sleep, he has no choice: he must go out anew!

Satan brought his servants into the assembly; the believers failed in that they let them in. Satan made good use of the door they had left open. True, those people didn't come openly displaying their own character. "Satan himself transforms himself into an angel of light. It is no great thing therefore if his ministers also transform themselves as ministers of righteousness" (2 Cor. 11:14-15). No doubt they presented themselves as true and sincere believers; darnel looks very much like wheat (Mt. 13:25), but where was the condition of Acts 5:13, "But of the rest durst no man join them"? And where was that fellowship with the Lord which gives ability to discern whether the voice is that of the Good Shepherd or not? Jude was not deceived; he pointed at the evil. Although these people professed Christ with their mouth, their practice denied Him.

The importance of porters in days of decline cannot be overestimated (2 Chr. 23:19). They watch at the gates of God's house, to see that only those who qualify, who have an unassailable right to enter, do so. What are their qualifications? Could it be great knowledge of God's truth? But where could they who come obtain such knowledge? Could it be insight in the thoughts of God? But how could they possibly get such insight? There is neither true knowledge of the truth, nor true insight in God's thoughts apart from an obedient walk in harmony with the truth according to God's thoughts.

John 7:17 gives the key to true knowledge: "If any one desire to practice His will, he shall know concerning the doctrine, whether it is of God." When there is obedience in our heart, God gives us light to take one step. After this step has been taken, He gives light for the next one, and so on. God doesn't give us light if He sees unwillingness in our hearts to act according to the light. It would only make our responsibility greater; in fact, it would only serve to puff us up.

True insight in the thoughts of God, and true knowledge of the truth isn't a matter of intelligence; it is a matter of the conscience, of the heart. Therefore, it is only obtained when we bring God's thoughts into practice. No one learns to really understand the truth connected with the Lord's table unless he takes his place at that table. No one learns to truly understand what the Assembly is unless he practically takes his place as a member of the body of Christ. It is, therefore, not possible to find true knowledge with one who asks for his place at the Lord's table. At best we may expect a beginning of knowledge.

True, someone may have a great, theoretical knowledge of God's thoughts. An intelligent person with a good memory can very well fill his mind with the contents of a few pamphlets, grasping it logically. But would this be desirable? His condition would be that of Laodicea where the truth was found in the head, but not in the heart, nor in relation to Christ. Satan's servants can have such knowledge too; many do! It is no proof at all that the person in question is a child of God, whose place is in the Assembly.

1 Peter 1:2 shows us the way. True believers are, by sanctification of the spirit, brought unto the obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ. These are the two requirements. New-birth has put them in the place occupied exclusively by all true partakers of the work of the Lord Jesus. There alone can we find true obedience; the obedience found in the Lord while He was on earth. In principle, it is now present in all true believers, for they have received Him as their life.

Surely, conversion, real conversion, is of prime importance, but it is not all. Old Testament believers were also converted and born again; yet, they were not on Christian ground. For then, the work on the cross was not yet accomplished; Christ was not yet raised as perfect proof that God was completely satisfied with the wonderful work on Golgotha. No one will be saved from hell unless he is converted. But "the gospel (the glad tidings) of our salvation" (Eph. ph. 1: 13) brings much more. It brings us complete blessedness, cloudless peace, and liberty though we are still on earth. This is new, and has only come after the cross, it is the true Christian position.

This is the first condition of admittance to the Christian circle. One should not merely *hope* to have his sins forgiven, but one should completely rest upon Christ, knowing the redemption which is in Christ to be his present possession. If a person does not rest upon Christ, he should be counseled to hear the gospel message, not just as Peter brought it, but more complete, as Paul preached it (1 Cor. 15:1-4). Peter's message served to awaken the conscience, it gave knowledge of sin by directing one's eye toward the cross. The complete gospel, however, also provides the answer for all the needs which arise in the heart through Peter's message.

I know a case of a young girl who had been accepted at the Lord's table. After many years she told me that she often doubted her salvation. I was convinced that she was truly converted and that her sins were forgiven. Nevertheless, she sat at the Lord's table singing such hymns as: "All our sins, so great, so many, in His blood are washed away," without the assurance that this was true of herself. In eating the bread and drinking the cup she expressed to have fellowship with the body and the blood of the Lord (1 Cor. 10: 16), but in her heart she often doubted that it was true. What a ruinous effect this must have on one's spiritual life; how can there be real growth in the knowledge of God's thoughts?

The second condition is obedience to the Word of God. Not the degree of knowledge and insight, but the degree of obedience is to be looked for. True obedience can only be found in a heart that is born again and has fellowship with the Lord. Such obedience, combined with liberty in the soul, will soon lead to an increase in knowledge, for the light that has been received is translated into practice. This is the godly way for instruction in the thoughts of God.

These are the only two conditions I can find in God's Word for reception at the Lord's table. We can never be too careful when applying them. In times of ruin everyone claiming to have a title must prove his right (Ezra 2:59-62). Satan's continuous efforts to slip one of his servants in, demands extreme care on our part. We have much reason to bow before God with confession of guilt when we see whom the Assembly has admitted into her midst!

The "mixed multitude" always contaminates God's people. Since they never experienced the bondage of Egypt, they didn't know the redemption either, and had no part in the inheritance in the promised land, Canaan. Therefore, they easily fell prey to lusts, causing the children of Israel to weep again (Num. 11:4).

Those who had got in are called *men* by Jude; normally Scripture doesn't use this term to designate believers. In Hebrews 9:27-28 believers are contrasted with men. The latter *must* die once, whereas believers don't need to die. Although many of them have died, the moment is coming that all believers then living on earth will enter heaven without dying (1 Th. 4:17-18; 1 Cor. 15:51-55). These *men*, these weak creatures, dare to deny the authority of the Lord Jesus. They dare to do, what the archangel Michael durst not (vs. 8-10); they speak hard words against the Lord Jesus.

*they who of old were marked out beforehand to this sentence*

The porters may have failed, but God's all-seeing eye saw them long beforehand, and God, knowing what they would do, also knew on what ground they would be condemned! Not that they were long before chosen for their position, and consequently for condemnation! No, God saw them beforehand, and, knowing what they would do and who they would be, God's Spirit made this known to some of His people (vv. 15 & 18).

*ungodly [persons], turning the grace of our God into dissoluteness,*

Despite their outward appearance, and their disguise as angels of light, they are nothing but ungodly persons. They are people without fear of God before their eyes (Rom. 3:18), who act without taking account of Him, excluding Him from their thoughts, deeds and ways (v. 15). They undermine the greatest moral foundations. Once, Paul was railingly accused of teaching: "Let us practice evil things, that good ones may come" (Rom. 3:8; cf 6:1); now they teach and practice this. They accept grace but pervert it by presenting it and using it as a license to sin, to satisfy the lusts of their corrupt hearts. They use it as a license for rejecting the authority of Him through whom grace *subsists* (Jn. 1:17). What a corruption!

Is there anything greater than the grace of God, than the desire of a Saviour-God to save lost, insignificant creatures who had rebelled against Him, rejected His Son and nailed Him to a cross? To save these lost ones, God gave His only-begotten Son on the cross, for it was the only means whereby He could forgive their sins! And then to think that some use this grace as an excuse to act more against His will by giving more freedom to their own evil heart of which He has said that it is desperately wicked and at enmity with Him!

We shouldn't assume that such persons teach these things always openly and boldly; they disguise themselves as angels of light. They would teach for instance that, since we are no longer under law, we don't have to keep strictly to the thoughts God has revealed in His Word. "Conversion," so they say, "is the main thing, the rest is not all that important. You are saved, aren't you? Well, that is what counts!"

Scrutinizing our own lives in God's light, we wonder how far we have accepted this principle. Do we not have much reason to be ashamed? Just observe how many believers who, in ignorance, place themselves under the law of Sinai, live very conscientiously. On the other hand, we, who through grace know not to be under the law but under grace, are so permissive, either personally or collectively.

*and denying our only Master and Lord Jesus Christ.*

The English word "Master" is the translation of the Greek word *despotes*. In classic Greek it was used with the following meanings:

- The lord of the house who normally made all the decisions in his family and in his house;
- the master, in contrast to the slave;
- the absolute ruler, one who exerts his power not limited or hindered by any law;
- the gods, to indicate their might, in this sense it was also used for the Roman emperor.

The Septuagint used it only a few times and then mostly to express the power of God. In the New Testament it is used ten times, four times for masters of slaves (1 Tim. 6:1,2; Ti. 2:9; 1 Pet. 2:18), four times for God (Lk. 2:29; Acts 4:24; 2 Tim. 2:21; Rev. 6:10) and twice for the Lord Jesus (2 Pet. 2:1, Jude :4).

When we consider these Scriptures, especially when we compare 2 Peter 2:1 with Jude :4, we notice that here the idea is of a Master who has bought slaves who refuse to obey Him. Salvation is not the subject here; Matthew 13:44 clarifies this. The Lord did not only buy His own, but, in order to possess the treasure, He bought the whole field. According to verse 38, the field is the world. He bought the world, just as Joseph bought the land of Egypt and its people for Pharaoh (Gen. 47:18-20). Thus Peter writes, "denying the Master that bought them." For the same reason Christ is called the Head of every man, not just of believers (1 Cor. 11:3). Every man is owned by Christ, and must, as a slave, obey Him. The believer has been bought too and cannot act as if he is his own master (1 Cor. 6:20); he has no rights. But, more than that, the believer is also saved, redeemed from Satan's and the world's power, and from judgment. Those who got in unnoticed deny our Master; they don't recognize His rights and don't obey Him.

But the Lord is not just our *Master*, He is also our *Lord (Kurios)*. The Septuagint translated the Hebrew name Jehovah (or Jahweh, for it is not known how it should be written) by *Kurios* (Lord). The New Testament continued to use *Kurios* for Jehovah. The Lord Jesus, as being the eternal God, Jehovah, the God of Israel (see e.g. Isa. 6:1-10 and Jn. 12:38-41), used the title *Kurios* for Himself. In the Greek it can generally be seen when the word *Kurios* is used to indicate that the Lord Jesus is truly God, for then there is no article with it. Otherwise, the word is used to refer to the Lord Jesus as Man. In Acts 2:36 we have an example of this; "Let the whole house of Israel therefore know assuredly that God has made Him, this Jesus whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ." In this verse the title doesn't speak of the Lord's highest glory, for it does not refer to His eternal divinity and the completeness of His Person. Rather, it states that God made the *Man* Jesus, Head of all things, both in heaven and upon the earth (Heb. 2:8). In Philippians 2 we read why God did this.

The Lord Jesus, the eternal Son of God, humbled Himself and became Man; and being Man, He took the lowest place. He was obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. What must that have been for the Lord! Even as Man, He did not have to die. He was the only Man who never sinned, for in Him was no sin, and He did not know sin. All the fullness of the Godhead was pleased to dwell in Him and to reconcile all things to itself by Him (Col. 1:19-20). But to do this, He had to die. His holy soul shrunk back at the thought of bearing our sins in His body (1 Pet. 2:24), and of being made sin for us (2 Cor. 5:21). Thus He prayed in the Garden of Gethsemane: "Father, if Thou wilt remove this cup from Me," but He added: "Not My will, but Thine be done." Yes, He was obedient even unto death, and that the death of the cross!

What must it have been for the Lord, when Judas betrayed Him with a kiss! What must it have been for Him to be spat in the face by soldiers, to be scourged by them and to become the object of their rude mockery and scorn. What must He have endured when He was finally crucified.

But even more, how must it have affected Him to have to carry our sins, and to be made sin for us and then to be judged by a holy God who could not tolerate any sin. Under these circumstances He was surrounded by the world in its various forms, the object of their mockery and scorn, while the full force of evil rushed upon Him. Hear Him crying in the Psalms, looking for pity and finding none. Hear how He calls to God, "My God, My God why hast Thou forsaken Me?" In these very moments, while, in obedience to God, He was in these unspeakable sufferings, He perfectly revealed God; thereby glorifying God to the utmost.

When God is revealed, He is glorified, because everything of Him is wonderfully glorious. How was God's righteousness seen when He struck His Son, bringing my judgment over Him when He carried my sins. God's holiness was seen when the Lord cried, "Why hast Thou forsaken Me?" It was a bright display of God's truth: "The wages of sin is death." But even greater, there it was gloriously revealed that "God is love!" There we see a God who gives His only begotten Son into death; yes, a God who personally judges His Son to save lost, guilty sinners from that judgment! Never did God look upon His Son with more delight than during these very moments when He had to hide His face from Him because He bore my judgment. What must it have been for the Father to see how the Lord Jesus was treated by insignificant, sinful creatures. What must it have been for God to forsake His Son when He hung alone upon the cross, surrounded by His enemies, and when God, as it were, had to side with His enemies!

"Wherefore also God highly exalted Him, and granted Him a name, that which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of heavenly and earthly and infernal [beings], and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ [is] Lord to God [the] Father's glory" (Phil. 2:9-11). One day *every* knee will bow before the Lord Jesus, including the knees of the lost ones; yes, even of the devil and his angels. But now God is inviting persons to voluntarily acknowledge Jesus as *Lord* while He is still rejected in this world. Those who do so receive a glorious reward; they will rule with Him! But those who refuse to acknowledge Him are lost for ever. No one will be saved from judgment, except by receiving the Lord Jesus as Lord, by acknowledging His authority. "If thou shalt confess with thy mouth Jesus as Lord, and shalt believe in thine heart that God has raised Him from among [the] dead, thou shalt be saved" (Rom. 10:9). We could consider, "All that... call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, both theirs and ours" (1 Cor. 1:2), to be somewhat of a definition of Christians.

In reading the Scriptures we notice that the devil and his demons know the Lord Jesus very well. They call Him "the Son of God" (Mt. 8:2-9), "the Holy One of God" (Mk. 1:2-4), "Jesus, Son of the Most High God" (Lk. 8:28). In Acts 16:17 they witness of Paul and his companions that they are "bondmen of the Most High God, who announce... the way of salvation." They even know that the Lord Jesus will ultimately cast them into the lake of fire (Mt. 8:29). We never read, however, that they call Him Lord, for they don't acknowledge His authority. Someone's acknowledging, in his words and deeds, Jesus as *Lord* is therefore conclusive evidence whether he speaks through the Holy Spirit's or the devil's power (1 Cor. 12:3).

Those who *today* call upon the name of the Lord Jesus, put themselves under His authority. They call Him *Lord* Jesus. God holds them responsible to show this in their whole life, both in great and small things, by their asking for, and doing of His will.

We may now summarize the foregoing. The word "Master" (*despotes*) points to the claim the Lord has upon each person. The word "*Lord*" is connected with the smaller circle of those who call themselves Christians, those who have placed themselves under His authority.

Peter (2 Pet. 2) speaks of persons who only deny their Master, but Jude goes further. He refers to those who deny not only the sovereignty of the Master of this world but also "our Lord" to whom we belong, and in whose name we are baptized. Those people deny Him of whom we confess that He saved us from destruction and in whom we have put our trust. This is a much more severe denial. They do not deny His name, but they reject His *authority*, so that they may follow their own lusts, their own will. Theirs is not simply a going astray but spiritual rebellion; it is complete rejection of authority by disobedient hearts. They display their arrogance in the very domain (the Assembly) where Christ and His authority are to be everything. For authority they look only to themselves and to what they call their conscience. This is the principle of sin, the lawlessness of which John speaks (1 Jn. 3:4). This renders it real apostasy, although outwardly these persons still belong to Christendom. The Apostle Paul writes about this very thing, "For the mystery of lawlessness already works; only [there is] He who restrains now until He be gone, and then the lawless one shall be revealed" (2 Th. 2:7-9).

Thus these people who got in among the believers were the forerunners of the public apostasy and the revelation of the lawless one, the man of sin. They were controlled by the same spirit that will reveal itself in the man of sin before the eyes of all. Even in Jude's time there were such persons. But we must not forget that the Holy Spirit warns us through Jude how

things will be during the end times, our time (v. 18). They are also among us today! How needful then to be watchful that this spirit does not influence us. Being zealous for the honour and the authority of our Lord, we must seek to prevent that the smallest departure from His Word, the slightest tendency to misuse grace, enters among us. The seed of apostasy can be in a little thing, in a seemingly insignificant asserting of the human will. But where will it end? Perhaps there is only a small beginning of apostasy in one's heart, but where will it end if the back is turned to the Lord, and one persists in that path? We cannot possibly tell, but the Spirit of God can tell and does so. He shows us that these small departures end in the terrible pit of the enemy.

May God give us grace to fully acknowledge the *authority* of the Lord Jesus, so that in nothing, be it small or great, we do our own will, but in *all* things ask, "What shall I do, Lord?"

*To be cont'd*

## **THE MINOR PROPHETS (5)**

—R. Been Sr.

### *The Prophecy of Hosea*

#### Chapter One

##### *Israel's Rejection*

Verse 1. It is remarkable that Hosea, although he served among the people of the ten-tribe kingdom, marks the time of his prophecy by the names of kings of the two tribes. Only Jeroboam II of the northern nation is mentioned. Silently he bypasses the six other kings of Israel who reigned after Jeroboam II. Why would this be? The answer to this question is found in the history of these kings of Israel and substantiated by the first chapter of Hosea.

Jehu, who as a rod for chastening had executed God's judgment over the house of Ahab, had killed Jehoram, the son of Ahab who was king of Israel (2 Ki. 9:24). Jehu had also destroyed the other 70 sons of Ahab and all prominent persons of this royal house (2 Ki. 10:1-11). But in his fleshly zeal he had gone beyond what God had told him to do by killing Ahaziah, king of Judah and his forty-two brothers (2 Ki. 9:27; 10:13-14).

God had approved of Jehu's actions insofar as he had obediently executed God's judgment over the house of Ahab (2 Ki. 10:30). Therefore Jehu's sons would occupy the throne of Israel unto the fourth generation. Jehoahaz, the son of Jehu, was the first generation (2 Ki. 13:1-2), Jehoash, the son of Jehoahaz, the second (13:10-11), Jeroboam, the son of Jehoash, the third (2 Ki. 14:23-24), and Zechariah, the son of Jeroboam, the fourth (2 Ki. 15:8-9). All these descendants of Jehu did evil in the sight of the Lord. And so the Lord's promise regarding the house of Jehu had been completely fulfilled (2 Ki. 15:12).

During the reign of Jehu, Jehoahaz, Jehoash, and Jeroboam (Zechariah, the fourth generation from Jehu, reigned only six months), the nation had flourished socially. Even through Jeroboam, the Lord had still given deliverance, for He had not yet said that He would destroy Israel (2 Ki. 14:25-28). Rest had come to the often troubled nation and with the rest prosperity. The blessing, however, did not bring about a repentance of the people of God. It mixed the worship of calves of Jeroboam I, the worship of Baal introduced by Ahab with the worship of the true God. Their idolatry was mixed with all kinds of unrighteousnesses and with excesses which their prosperity enabled them to pursue. Then the Lord decided to destroy Israel from under the heavens, but not before the promise given to Jehu had been fulfilled. Then God's judgment would, beginning with the house of Jehu, bring an end to the kingdom of Israel (1:4).

The fourth generation of Jehu's house heralded the fall of the kingdom of Israel (for all intents even with Jeroboam II, for Zechariah reigned only six months). *The five remaining kings of Israel who reigned after Zechariah are not mentioned when the duration of Hosea's mission is given.* In God's books the end of the ten-tribe kingdom came with the end of the house of Jehu, although the actual judgment was delayed for nearly forty years. This seems to be the reason why the prophet gives the duration of his mission in terms of the reigns of the four kings of *Judah* and only mentions Jeroboam II of Israel. During the days of the kings of Israel reigning after Zechariah, disorder, murder and anarchy were rampant. The prophet certainly served during a dark time and under tragic prospects.

Verses 2-3. The actual prophecy begins in verse 2. Jehovah instructed the prophet to take a wife who had lived an immoral life. Through it she was a picture of the entire nation of Israel. As this woman had lived in physical fornication, so Israel did

through its idolatry. Just as it meant dishonour and sorrow for the prophet to be united to such a woman, so it was a sorrow and dishonour to Jehovah that Israel had marred her legal ties to Him by giving herself to idolatry.

Previously the Lord had joined Himself most closely to Israel. The prophets often display this relationship through their marriage ties (i.e. Isa. 54:5-6). But the nation had left Jehovah, and had accepted other gods. Scripture calls this adultery. Israel had become unfaithful to the Lord.

It had reached the point that the *word* the prophets spoke on behalf of God had no longer an effect upon hearts and consciences of the people of the ten tribes. No longer did it convict them of sin and unrighteousness, so that they might be brought back from their evil ways. *Then the Lord caused His Word to be accompanied by visible, symbolical signs.* For that reason Hosea had to take such a wife. Would Israel, with such a sign before it, understand that it lived in adultery, in idolatry, and that it was guilty before Jehovah? It surely must have caught their attention that the faithful prophet took such a woman as his legitimate wife upon the clear instruction from the Lord. It was not a passing sign but a *continuous reminder* of the terrible condition prevailing among the people. The name of the woman (*Gomer*) means: "*perfect*." In its idolatry the nation had reached the point of perfection.

Verses 4-5. When a son was born out of this marriage, the Lord commanded Hosea to call this boy *Jezreel*, meaning "*God scatters*." The city Jezreel was the place where God's judgment over the house of Ahab had been executed (2 Ki. 9:30-37; 10:1-11). Now Hosea's eldest son, Jezreel, would be the testimony of the judgment over the house of Israel, the ten tribes.

The judgment would begin with the house of Jehu, because of the murder of Ahaziah, the king of Judah, and his 42 brothers (2 Ki. 9:27; 10:13-14). God had approved of Jehu's actions towards the house of *Ahab* as being the just reward for all the sins of Ahab. Now, nearly eighty years later, the murder of Ahaziah and his house is shown to be a blood-guiltiness of Jehu's house.

This is a very grave principle of God's ways. Jehu had executed God's counsels over the house of Ahab. But, driven by his own violent nature and lust for power, he went far beyond what the Lord had told him. Perhaps he appealed to his "zeal for the Lord," but that was not the true reason. What God thought about this unuprightness and the blood-guiltiness is not mentioned in the book of the Kings; but, after eighty years, the prophet Hosea casts full light on this. Before the ten tribes are judged, this blood-guiltiness will first of all be visited upon the house of Jehu, God doesn't forget anything; at His time He will repay every sin. King Saul's killing of the Gibeonites is a similar case; many years later a famine came over Israel for this blood-guilt (2 Sam. 21). Then too it had seemed that it had passed God by, but the famine certainly proved that it hadn't.

The name Jezreel given to the eldest son of Hosea was definitely a sign, both to the house of Jehu and to the nation. Just as the names of Isaiah's sons were for a sign (Isa. 8:18), so were those of Hosea's children. An end would be made to the existence of the ten-tribe kingdom, the bow (the power) of Israel would be broken in the valley of Jezreel. Once the house of Jehu had been judged, there would come an end to the ten-tribe kingdom as well. God did not take the five kings of Israel who reigned after the house of Jehu into account. Their years only proved how justly deserved the previously uttered verdict over the kingdom really was. God could not pass the sins of this nation by without denying His own holiness.

This is an ever-valid truth during all dispensations. Just as Israel, the Church has a responsibility, and it too has failed. As Israel had joined itself to idolatry, so the Church has joined itself to the godless world-system which has the devil as its prince. But the judgment over the Church, over Christendom that has fallen away from God, will be much more severe, for Christendom has been given a much higher revelation from God. Israel failed under the *law*, Christendom under *grace*. In the future, Israel will once more be accepted after she has received double for all her sins. Christendom has *no such prospect*. A final, withering judgment is all that is in store for her, for she has become "the great whore, the mother of the abominations of the earth" (Rev. 17:1, 5). The last words as to her are: "Fallen, fallen is the great Babylon" (Rev. 18:2).

*To be cont'd*

## **OUTLINES FOR BIBLE TEACHING (19)**

### **37. THE SIN OF THE SONS OF AARON — Leviticus 10**

*Outline*



- |                          |               |
|--------------------------|---------------|
| 1. Strange Fire          | Lev. 10:1-5   |
| 2. Priestly Conduct      | Lev. 10:6-7   |
| 3. Instructions to Aaron | Lev. 10:8-11  |
| 4. Sacrifices            | Lev. 10:12-20 |

*Explanation*

1. Contrary to the Lord's commandment, Nadab and Abihu did not take the fire for the burning of incense from the altar of burnt-offering.
2. Since Aaron, Eleazar, and Ithamar were priests, they were not to mourn as others for their sons and brothers.
3. So that they might always have a sober discernment in the things of God, priests were to abstain from strong drink when they served in the tabernacle.
4. Through the eating of the sacrifices, the priests had communion with the altar and the sacrifice burned on it.

*Lesson*

By using other fire than God had commanded, the priests publicly dishonoured God, thereby bringing God's judgment over themselves. When we attend to, and carry out, the things the Lord has commanded us, blessing and joy will follow, and we will experience the special presence of the Lord (Lev. 9:22,23). Previously (Lev. 9) the fire of the Lord had brought joy, but as soon as there had been activity which the Lord had not commanded the fire became a judgment from God, bringing mourning (cf. Heb. 12:29).

Neither priestly nor prophetic service is allowed to suffer through natural motives (cf. Ezek. 24:16-18). God's judgment was righteous and the priests, as God's representatives, were not to mourn as others. Today all believers are priests; and nothing can take that office from them. They are worshippers in God's sanctuary.

Wine and strong drink bring undesirable excitement. In order to carry out their office, priests needed rest and balance of soul. They were, however, to offer wine to the Lord as a drink offering (Lev. 23:13; Num. 28:7).

Even at times when others did what the Lord had not commanded, the priest was to follow the Lord's instructions. All the more the priest had to make himself one with the sacrifice, rejoicing in God's substitute for sin. He had to derive strength (the shoulder) from the sacrifice and to make its dedication and affection (the breast) his own. If weakness is experienced, all that makes it impossible to do things as God has commanded should be uprightly owned before Him (Lev. 10: 19).

**38. THE DESERT JOURNEY. QUAILS. MIRIAM'S LEPROSY — Numbers 9:15 - 12:16**

*Outline*

- |                                      |                            |
|--------------------------------------|----------------------------|
| 1. The Silver Trumpets and the Cloud | Num. 9:15-10:13            |
| 2. Hobab                             | Num. 10:29-32              |
| 3. The Quails                        | Num. 11:1-13, 18-23, 31-35 |
| 4. The Elders                        | Num. 11:14-17, 24-30       |
| 5. Miriam's Leprosy                  | Num. 12:1-16               |

*Explanation*

1. The two silver trumpets are closely connected with the pillar of cloud; both speak of God's guidance, protection, and presence (Psalm 105:39).
2. Moses sought the benefit of Hobab's (Jethro) knowledge of the desert, rather than relying fully upon the Lord.

3. The Israelites were longing for the food they once had in Egypt.
4. Moses felt he was no longer able to bear the dissatisfaction of the people.
5. God struck Miriam with leprosy because she and Aaron challenged Moses' God-given authority. God knew that jealousy towards Moses' Ethiopian wife motivated them.

### *Lesson*

The silver trumpets teach us that we ought to be entirely dependent upon and completely subject to the divine Word. The Israelites gathered, journeyed, fought (2 Chr. 13:12-15; 1 Cor. 14:8), and celebrated their feasts (Num. 10:10) under the sound of the trumpets.

As the Israelites, men cannot (not even skillful ones) find us a place of rest in this world, the Lord gives us rest (Dt. 32:10-12).

The Israelites desired meat, despising the food God had given them. Their wish was granted, but God's judgment came upon them (Num. 11:33; Ps. 105:40). Israel was delivered out of Egypt, which speaks of the world and its enjoyments. We too may desire worldly things and be dissatisfied with God's gifts. Is Christ enough for us? He was for Paul (Phil. 3:8).

The wilderness reveals our hearts, even of the best of us. God calls Moses faithful (Heb. 3:2ff); yet, charged with a great task, even he forgot that God had given him all necessary strength. There was no increase in power, but the Spirit which was first on him alone was now shared with others. It is still so: a servant of the Lord does not depend upon his, but on the Holy Spirit's power.

Aaron and Miriam in their speaking against Moses typify the hatred displayed by the Jews when grace is extended to the Gentiles. Miriam in her temporary exile is a picture of Israel's being set aside today. Through the mercy of God and the intercession of Christ Israel will one day be restored. We too must be careful in judging those whom God has called in His service (Heb. 13:7, 17).

*To be cont'd*