

JUDE (6)

—H. L. Heijkoop

But I would put you in remembrance, you who once knew all things, that the Lord, having saved a people out of [the] land of Egypt, in the second place destroyed those who had not believed (v. 5).

Verses 5 to 7 are actually a parenthesis. In verse 8 the Holy Spirit comes back to the theme of the ungodly of verse 4, but in the intervening verses they are not mentioned. The evil consisted not merely of the fact that these men had got in, but the Assembly itself was in danger of leaving her first condition. The beginning of this was already seen. Since they had to be reminded of necessary things, they obviously had forgotten them. This is even clearer in the Greek. The phrasing is: "To remind you I purpose...", the emphasis being on *remind*. There had been a time when this had not been necessary, for once they knew all things. The word "once" (*hapax*) has the same meaning as in verse 3: "once for all times" (see the remarks on verse 3). The "all things" do not merely consist of the things connected with what Jude wrote in these verses; that is true as well, but the expression has no limits. The same thought is found in 1 John 2:20-21,27. With the same false teachers in mind as Jude, the apostle John wrote to the little children in Christ: "And ye have [the] unction from the Holy [one], and ye know all things. I have not written to you because ye do not know the truth, but because ye know it, and that no lie is of the truth." And: "The unction which ye have received from Him abides in you, and ye have not need that any one should teach you; but as the same unction teaches you as to all things, and is true and is not a lie, and even as it has taught you, ye shall abide in Him."

Were the first believers, and even the new converts among them, so knowledgeable? Did they have such a great knowledge of the prophets, of the types in the Old Testament, etc., that they could explain the whole Word of God? Could all act as teachers? Were all capable to use "Every scripture... for teaching, for conviction, for correction, for instruction in righteousness"? (2 Tim. 3:16). This is obviously not the idea here. This would have been knowledge, knowledge in the right sense of the word! But this is not the subject of the portion before us.

The babes in Christ received Christ just as much as the apostles. He who has Christ, has the truth, the *whole* truth. They received also an unction from the Holy One, (2 Cor. 1:21-22; 1 Jn. 2:20): the Holy Spirit who indwelt them (cf. 1 Jn. 5:20). This gave them power! The indwelling of the Holy Spirit, as unction and spiritual insight in their hearts, and the complete revelation of Christ, the truth they had received in the beginning, these were their protection against deception and deceivers. When the anointing of the Holy Spirit is within us to discern all things, then each wrong teaching, each corrupt doctrine, each departure of the truth, is revealed to us as a departure from the initial, divine revelation of the truth. Not because we know every wrong teaching, nor because we know every part of the truth, or rather, every aspect of the truth in its details, but we know the voice of the Good Shepherd, and hear whether or not it is His voice that speaks.

This is seen in those who come to the light after a thorough conversion. They are happy. All is so simple for them. Nothing in God's Word stumbles them; they receive it in simplicity and trust it. This is "knowing all things," which is not a question of knowledge, but of having a single eye; "if therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body will be light" (Mt. 6:22). It is looking upon Christ with a single eye and seeing the truth there. This unction is the portion of the youngest child in Christ, and we should encourage them to turn it into a practical reality.

Once love cools down, however, everything changes. Then it is no longer joy for the heart to do what is found in the Word; it becomes a duty! Then problems arise; reasoning starts: must we really understand it this way...? No longer do we see clearly; we no longer have light. "If any one desire to practice His will, he shall know concerning the doctrine, whether it is of God, or [that] I speak from Myself." (Jn. 7:17).

This had become the condition of those to whom Jude wrote. Once, they had received an unction from the Holy One; then, they knew all things. They could not receive the unction for a second time, for it is only given "once for all!" But because their hearts had cooled down, and the Lord Jesus was no longer their only object, their practical condition was no longer so. No longer did they have light and they had forgotten what they once knew. The very fact that, unnoticed, the ungodly had been able to get in amongst them was the clearest proof of this. Therefore they needed to be reminded of the thoughts of God: of the fact that "God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all" (1 Jn. 1:5), and also that "our God [is] a consuming fire" (Heb. 12:29).

In Revelation 2 and 3 the backsliding of the assembly is prophetically displayed. In chapter 1:12-20 we see the assemblies in all the glory God had given them. They were lamps, made to spread light. They were of gold, a type of the divine glory and righteousness. In their midst walked the glorified Lord: Him to whom all power is given. The power of death and hades was at their disposal (vv. 17-19). But even the first assembly the Lord had to reprove since they had left their first love. And the last one (Laodicea) had no longer gold or oil (eye-salve, cf. 1 Jn. 2:20), the only thing whereby light can be spread. Jude saw the danger. He knew where the smallest departure would lead to when there is no repentance. Therefore he wanted to warn them very seriously. He wanted to deliver them from their careless state, which assumed that, since all were so blessed and led into the truth, nothing could happen. Therefore he presented these three serious judgments from God's side over creatures who once had received a blessed position from Himself.

that the Lord, having saved a people out of [the] land of Egypt, in the second place destroyed those who had not believed.

It says "a" people, not "the" people. Of course it is Israel! But the grace of God, who gave the people all their blessings, is presented here. Why did they receive them? Not because God found with them reasons to favour them above all other nations. It was *a* nation like so many others. "Not because ye were more in number than all the peoples, hath Jehovah been attached to you and chosen you, for ye are the fewest of all the peoples" (Dt. 7:7). Not only did He spare them when, first, His providential judgments (Ex. 7-10) and, afterwards, the final judgment (Ex. 12) came over Egypt, but He *saved* them *out of* Egypt. His mighty arm destroyed the enemies and saved them at the Red Sea. He brought them into the wilderness so He could teach them what was in *their* hearts, and what was in *His* heart.

But they saw nothing precious in Canaan and the fruits of the land, types of the heavenly places and the spiritual blessings found there (Eph.). Their hearts longed back to Egypt (Num. 11:5; 14:1-4). In the first joy of their salvation all had been well (Ex. 15). They had seen the mighty deeds of Jehovah; of Him whom their eyes could not see, but in whom they had to believe! Their hearts had been filled with their salvation, so there had been no doubt in their hearts, not even for the future which was still invisible to the natural eye. "My strength and song is Jah!" (v. 2). "Thou by Thy mercy hast led forth the people that Thou hast redeemed; Thou hast guided them by Thy strength unto the abode of Thy holiness... A thrill seized the inhabitants of Philistia... All the inhabitants of Canaan melted away" (vv. 13-15). "Thou shalt bring them in, and plant them in the mountain of Thine inheritance, the place that Thou, Jehovah, hast made Thy dwelling, the sanctuary, Lord, that Thy hands have prepared" (v. 17). Yet, only a few verses further in the same chapter they already murmured about the difficulties they experienced in the wilderness.

It is one thing to praise God while we stand on the shore of the Red Sea, where we see the salvation from Egypt and the dead bodies of those who have been struck by God's judgment. It is another to do so in the wilderness, where, to the natural eye, there are only hunger, thirst, and enemies, or to do so when we must engage in battle with strong enemies in order to enter the land that God has promised, and which we, consequently, only know from what God has told us about it! Then it is imperative that our heart trusts in God.

In Exodus 32:1 we have the crucial characteristic of unbelief. The people are not satisfied with a God who is not visible to the natural eye. They want a visible god, one that their natural senses can take hold of. This is unbelief, for: "faith is [the] substantiating of things hoped for, [the] conviction of things not seen!... But without faith [it is] impossible to please [Him]. For he that draws near to God must believe that He is, and [that] He is a rewarder of them who seek Him out." (Heb. 11:1,6).

The end result of unbelief will always be contempt for the inheritance which God in His grace has given, and the longing back for the goods of Egypt, yea, even for Egypt itself. As soon as the heart is not filled with the Lord alone, there is something between the Lord and the heart. Then there is no longer light or trust in the Lord. For trust is only maintained through practical fellowship with Him. Where there is no practical trust in the Lord, the heart does not value what the Lord has promised, for the fulfilling and the value of the promise depend on the faithfulness and reliability of Him who made the promise. Therefore the people wanted first to spy out the land (Dt. 1:22) and, when they had done so, they refused to enter it. The land that Jehovah had called a good land, a land flowing with milk and honey; "a land which Jehovah thy God careth for; the eyes of Jehovah thy God are constantly upon it, from the beginning of the year even unto the end of the year;" a land Jehovah had called *His* (Dt. 11:12; Lev. 25:23), is by unbelief called: "a land that eateth up its inhabitants." And the people murmured: "Would that we had died in the land of Egypt!... And why is Jehovah bringing us to this land that we may fall by the sword, that our wives and our little ones may become a prey? Is it not better for us to return to Egypt? And they said one to another, Let us make a captain, and let us return to Egypt." (Num. 13:32 14:4).

Where grace is despised by the rejection of what grace has given — thus in fact God is rejected by a people that through grace had become *His* people — only judgment remains. "For all those men who have seen My glory, and My signs, which

I did in Egypt and in the wilderness,... shall in no wise see the land!" (Num. 14:22-23). God "destroyed those who had not believed," so Jude wrote.

in the second place destroyed those who had not believed.

Though He first saved them from Egypt, now He destroyed them. This is the significance of the phrase "in the second place." First He acted for them by saving them out of Egypt (on the basis of the pascal lamb). He revealed His glory and placed Himself at the head of His people. The second time He acted by destroying them. The setting up of the golden calf was the beginning of that "in the second place." It took almost forty years before God had destroyed every man with the exception of Joshua and Caleb.

What a solemn warning to those to whom the epistle of Jude is addressed! It was a warning to the believers living when the epistle was written, but also to us, who live in the time prophetically described in this epistle.

We have seen in verse 3 that the time of the Assembly is the time of *the faith*, that the Assembly is heavenly and spiritual, that she is administered by the glorified Man in heaven, her Head who sent the Holy Spirit to be with her and dwell in her for eternity so that she should not do those things which she desires (Gal. 5:17). We have seen that her blessings too are heavenly and spiritual (Eph. 1:3), and that her service is in spirit and in truth (Jn. 4:23-24).

How has this been put into practice by the Assembly? She appointed a "vicar of Christ" (calling him pope). She deprived the Holy Spirit of His leadership, by establishing church orders for the government of the assembly, and by appointing a priest or minister to lead the service according to the church orders. Rather than being a spiritual, heavenly body, that is a stranger here on earth, she wanted to occupy a position in which she either rules on earth over the earthly powers, or at least is recognized by those powers. Instead of worshipping in spirit and truth — insofar as we can still speak of worshipping, and to the degree that worship has not entirely been replaced by the so-called ministry of the Word — she developed liturgies dressed up in human form and beauty. Instead of hearts filled with heavenly, spiritual blessings, we find hearts filled with earthly thoughts in an effort to "seek the glory of God in all areas of life."

But what about the few who *confess* that they have returned to that "which was from the beginning"? Is their confession real? Do they worship in spirit and truth? Do they acknowledge the sole authority of the glorified Lord in heaven? Do they honour, by making it a reality in their heart, the leading of the Holy Spirit in their gatherings, so that He can use whomsoever He chooses; are they indeed entirely dependent on this? And what about His leading in their personal lives? Are they going their way with their eyes fixed upon the glorified Lord alone, forsaking all natural securities (Mt. 14:29)? In short, do they walk in *the faith*?

"The just shall live *by faith*; and, if he draw back, my soul does not take pleasure in him!" (Heb. 10:38).

To be cont'd

JESUS, LOOKING AROUND. . . (3)

—A. E. Bouter

On the way. (Mk. 10:17-31)

There are many people "on their way" who are *rich in themselves*, just as the rich young man. But the kingdom of God is for the *poor* in spirit (Mt. 5:3), and the gospel of God's grace is preached to the *poor* (Lk. 7:22). He, who has left "his home, etc" for the sake of the Lord Jesus, receives (10:29f). God is not only good (10:18), but also rich to give, but we must be ready to receive from Him. We must be poor, and be like children:

"Verily I say to you, Whosoever shall not *receive* the kingdom of God as a little child, shall in no wise enter into it" (10: 15).

That was the very problem of the rich young man. He didn't want to be as a child and trust Another. He relied upon himself (cf. Lk. 18:9ff); he didn't see himself as one who was in need of anything, and even less as one who would simply receive something. He was all set and prepared to earn something (10:17), but eternal life can only be received (10:30); it does not come as an earned reward, but as a gracious gift from a good God. In Romans 1 to 8 this is explained in detail.

Even after our conversion we can get into a condition in which we think to be rich in ourselves (see Rev. 3:17). So many treasures, so many riches... yet poor, and that while the Great Giver is so close by! Then, just as for the rich young man, the Lord (the Teacher) has some advice to acquaint us with God's thoughts. With what love did the Lord look at His creature when He said: "One thing lackest thou." He had to learn to "sell and give"; then he could "receive." Even a blind beggar as Bartimaeus (Mk. 10:46) had to "throw away" his garment to come to Jesus. And how many garments would the rich man have had?

Wasn't it much too severe: "Sell *all* you have"? Yet, as long as he did not do so, he would have some reason to rely upon himself or upon something of himself; just as the sick woman in the crowd. She first spent all she had, only then — after none of her efforts had profited her — she came to seek help from the Lord.

And we?

What is our stumbling block? If we are a disciple of the Lord, we hear Him say, "Sell... give... and thou shalt have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me," and we notice how the rich young man became "sad at the word, went away grieved, for he had large possessions." It causes us to think... *then* the Lord has something to say to us also: "*And Jesus looking around, says to His disciples...*" (10:23ff).

We cannot now discuss all details of this passage. The essence is that the Lord Jesus looks at *us*. We too are "on the way," and though we have "peace with God," though we have the full assurance of Romans 8:38f, the Lord causes us, through an account like this, to take a look at ourselves. If we are on our way to eternal life (see Mk. 10:30), then we should not allow anything whatsoever to become a hindrance to follow the Lord Jesus. The blind Bartimaeus learned that lesson, "... and he followed *Him* in the way" (10:52).

In the temple.

The healing of the blind Bartimaeus introduces this portion. He had come as far as to acknowledge the rejected, despised, "Jesus the Nazarene" as "Son of David," calling Him (just as Mary Magdalene — Jn. 20:16) "Rabboni," "my Teacher," which speaks of a close, personal relationship. Afterwards he followed Him on the way. And where does He bring us? To the mount of Olives, a place where we acknowledge God's authority and the rights of His anointed One, where we stand and act under the leading of the Holy Spirit. There the true Teacher instructs us in God's thoughts about the "temple," the place where God was served, first given by Him and entrusted to man's responsibility, but now lying under the judgment of God (Mk. 13:2; cf. for us i.e. 1 Pet. 4:17; Rev. 1-3; 1 Cor. 3:16f).

To receive such instructions, we must first have placed ourselves under the authority of the Lord Jesus (11:2b). First we must acknowledge His rights ("The Lord has need of it," 11:3) in the place where He is rejected. We must also exclaim that only in Him our salvation is to be found, keeping in mind that we now belong to *Him* in a (religious) world where He is practically not acknowledged. Do we expect our help ("Hosanna") from Him? Then we may, as it were, enter Jerusalem with Him and look at the temple, and look around there with Him.

Applying these things to ourselves (and God has given these accounts first of all for us, although they have a clear, prophetic bearing), we begin to ask ourselves: How would the Lord Jesus look at this, how would He judge that, what would He do? The apostle Paul, as a true disciple (see e.g. 2 Tim.) as well as many others mentioned in the New Testament, had far advanced in this.

Such moral judgment always precedes the doing of God's thoughts, as we find in Mark 11:15-19. The Lord Jesus could not find anything here upon which His look could rest with approval. This is in contrast to "in the house" (Mk. 3:34). "And having looked round on all things, the hour being already late, He went out to Bethany with the twelve."

On the mount.

Now that we have had the Lord before us in these five different situations as the One who looks around to see everything, it is especially noteworthy to experience as it were in this passage, how, the disciples looked around (the only time that this word in the Greek New Testament is used for the disciples; the other five times it was for the Lord Himself). Isn't it in response to the times that He looked around? Isn't it the purpose of the Holy Spirit to direct our full attention, as disciples, to the Man after God's heart? But let us first look at some of the surrounding details.

9:1 — The Kingdom of God belongs to another world, to God's world (cf. Mk. 8:31-9:1). It became visible in the Lord Jesus, but today it becomes visible in this world in moral power (in disciples), before it is established in manifested glory and power, whereby all will be subjected at the feet of the Son of man. For this, however, He must taste death (see 9:31 and Heb. 2:9).

9:2 — "After six days." This kingdom is of an order falling outside the reach of the natural man, who is characterized by the number six (cf. Gen. 1:27ff; 1 Sam. 17:4; Dan. 3: 1; Rev. 13:18). In Luke 9:28ff we see how the kingdom is presented in the glory of God's grace, by and in a Man of a new order (after *eight* days), in an on-God-dependent Man (Lk. 9:29 "He prayed"). The name Jesus has in the Greek a numerical value of 888.

— "Jesus takes with Him." If it depended on them (or on us), even with the promise of Mark 9:1, nothing would have come of it.

— "On a high mountain." The unfolding of God's thoughts is on an entirely different "level" than the present world system. This last is in Scripture always connected with a "valley" (Gen. 11: 2 ff, an. an. 3: 1), whereas the "mountain" is connected with the glory of God and of the Lord Jesus (see e.g. Gen. 22; Ex. 3:1ff; 24:12; 25:40; etc.; Ps. 87; Ezek. 40:2; Mt 5; Rev. 21:10 besides many other scriptures).

— "by themselves apart." The Lord Jesus had chosen three disciples for the special privilege to see Him in glory.

— "And He was transfigured before them;" that is before their faces. From this we may deduct that it was not only the purpose of the Holy Spirit to show the glory of the Lord Jesus in an objective way, but that this event would have an effect on them (see also 2 Pet. 1:12-21; Rev. 1:10-20).

9:3 — "His clothing became shining, exceeding white." The moral power and glory of the kingdom became visible in Him to the natural eye, in His walk and His testimony.

— "as fuller on earth could not whiten [them]." This cleanness, purity, beauty, transcends all human efforts, even of the best trained man.

9:4 — "And there appeared to them Elias with Moses." In Mark, Elias comes first. This speaks of the prophetic service that leads to the restoration of what God had originally given. Thus the Lord Jesus Himself was the true Prophet-Servant bringing restoration through the power of the kingdom of God (9:1).

— "and they were talking with Jesus." Only on that basis is true fellowship with Him possible.

9:6 — "He knew not... they were filled with fear." Only after the suffering, death and resurrection of Christ did this change. Through the coming of the Holy Spirit, after His glorification, the disciples received the ability to understand the things of God's kingdom and to move freely in it, just as we, through grace, may do today.

9:7 — "And there came a cloud overshadowing them." It is God's purpose and work to bring us, as disciples, together under the glory of His presence (the cloud; cf. e.g. 1 Cor. 14:25), where He Himself testifies: "*This is My beloved Son,*" adding the call: "Hear Him." If we truly listen to His voice, or if at least the preparedness is found with us to do so, we will see Him too. This brings us to the point that caused us to consider this portion.

9:8 — "And suddenly having looked around, they no longer saw any one, but *Jesus alone* with themselves."

How do we look around?

What an impressive event this must have been to the three disciples. Was there ever anyone who could compare with this Person? Still, how quickly — and how often, alas — is our attention drawn to ourselves (Rom. 7; "I", "my") or to people (see 1 Cor.), rather than to The Man.

Have we already learned to look around as these disciples did? For James this meant that he was prepared to go into death for *this* Master; for Peter, to let his service be filled entirely by this Lord (see his epistles); for John, to be alone on an island out of love for, and in obedience to, Him. Alone? *With* Him! (Rev. 1). Little wonder that he did not find anyone (neither in heaven, nor on earth, nor under the earth) who was worthy! Then his attention was drawn toward the Lamb (Rev. 5:5-6). Think of Paul, who had looked around in Athens — the centre of human philosophy and art — (Acts 17), but

he didn't find anything there. Then he came to Corinth testifying that "Jesus is the Christ" (Acts 18:5), the Man in whom God had found His delight. Paul saw no man save Jesus only; he presented Him to the Corinthians and to us.

"With them."

What a tremendous consolation this is! In the ship (Mk. 8:14) the disciples had not yet learned that this "One Bread with them" sufficed. Yet, only in Him can food be found. Now we find in Mark 9 that this one Person is the Object on which the attention of heaven is focused, which fills the heart of the Father. Wouldn't He then be everything to us?

A disciple shouldn't just learn that with God only One Man counts, but also that this is to be so *for him or herself* in the practice of daily life. Only then can we serve God here on earth as disciples in His kingdom. And only then can we *practically* take our place in the Assembly (here it is not a question of position before God); that is the goal the apostle Paul aims at: "Christ [is] everything, and in all" (Col. 3:11).

Have we learned to see, to know (inwardly, *oïda* — 1 Cor. 2:2), and to know (objectively, *ginosko* — 2 Cor. 5:16) no one but Him alone? Then everything that is of self, all that is of the natural man, falls away. Then we see that nothing of the natural man can have a place in the Assembly of God (see e.g. 1 Cor., Gal., and Col.). As disciples we must *learn*, even learn to *look around* as the Lord Jesus did while He was on earth.

He desires that we see the things as He sees them. Then He can have fellowship with us; then He can be "with us." He desires to have us with Himself "in the house," for then we will also learn to see as He does, be it in the synagogue, in the crowd, on the way, or in the temple.

But I believe that the starting point for all of this is found in what we have learned on the mountain. There we have received God's thoughts, there we have learned how God sees the Lord Jesus and how to look around so that we see Him alone, although: with us.

The End

OUTLINES FOR BIBLE TEACHING (19)

39. THE TWELVE SPIES — Numbers 13-14; Deuteronomy 1:19-46.

Outline

1. The Spies and Their Report Num. 13:1-33
2. The Rebellion of the People Num. 14:1-10
3. God's Judgment Num. 14:11-45

Explanation

1. Not God, but Israel wanted the land to be spied out before entering it.
2. Although the ten spies admitted that the land itself was good, they spread an evil report.
3. Although God's righteous judgment was announced, through Moses' intercession God showed mercy in judgment.

Lesson

Since Israel did not trust God's promises, they demanded the land to be searched out (Num. 23:19; Dt. 1:19-22). The spies looked at the difficulties, as unbelief always does, and so failed to honour God.

At the Red Sea Israel had been a triumphant people (Ex. 15:13-18), unbelief made them a weeping people (Num. 14:1-2). Unbelief caused the voices of faith and truth (of Joshua and Caleb) to be drowned out and the lies to be believed (rebellion).

When the judgment is announced (Ps. 106:24-27), Moses' intercession showed his selfless devotion to God and to the people. Jehovah's government displays grace and punishment simultaneously (Heb. 3:13, 17-19).

40. GOD IS HOLY. THE SABBATH BREAKER. THE BLASPHEMER. THE REBELLION OF KORAH. — Numbers 15:22-36; 16:1-17:13; Leviticus 24:10-23

Outline

1. Presumptuous sinners Num. 15:32-36, Lev. 24:10-23
2. Rebellion Num. 16:1-19
3. Downfall Num. 16:20-40
4. New Rebellion Num. 16:41-50
5. The Budding Rod of Aaron Num. 17:1-13

Explanation

1. God deals in grace with those who sin in ignorance, but those who sin presumptuously, as the Sabbath breaker and the blasphemer, must be cut off.
2. Korah, helped by Dathan and Abiram and two hundred and fifty princes of the assembly, challenged the leadership of Moses and the priesthood of Aaron.
3. God justified His servants through a righteous judgment (Heb. 12:29; 10:31; Rom. 13:1-2).
4. The rebellion on the next day was no longer by the leaders only, but by the entire congregation, which murmured against Moses (Num. 16:41).
5. By means of the budding rod of Aaron, the Lord settled the question as to who was chosen by Him for the priesthood.

Lesson

There is a great difference between a sin of ignorance (and carelessness is not ignorance!) and one of presumption. God's holiness cannot overlook either of them, but God's grace presents a way of reconciliation for the former (Num. 15:22-31). The deeds of the Sabbath breaker and the blasphemer did not stem from ignorance.

God had separated Aaron to the priesthood. Korah really revolted against God (Jude :11). Outwardly it appeared that those revolting were taking a stand for the rights of the people; in reality they were seeking their own exaltation (pride, ambition — 1 Pet. 5:5; Isa. 13:11).

Moses did not defend himself, but asked the Lord to give His decision (humility, wisdom). By grace the children of Korah were kept from their father's judgment (2 Pet. 2:9; Num. 26:11). Their descendants were the sons of Korah, the singers (Ps. 44-49; 84; 85 are all Psalms for the sons of Korah).

The rebellion of the following day was worse. The priesthood, despised by Korah and his friends, was needed to save the people (Num. 16:46-50).

Aaron was a type of One greater than himself. Through his budding rod the Lord showed that He had chosen Aaron (Heb. 5:4). Moses' rod spoke of power and authority, Aaron's of grace and mercy, giving life from the dead (see also Num. 20 and Heb. 9). It was this grace of the Lord that led His people through the wilderness.

To be cont'd

THE MINOR PROPHETS (6)

—R. Been, Sr.

Hosea

Chapter 1.

Verses 6-9. When a daughter is born to Hosea from Gomer, God says that this child must be called *Lo-ruhamah* which means: "The not-favoured one." The measure of Israel's sin was full. God would no longer be merciful to the people; they would certainly go into exile. They would be scattered as autumn leaves by the wind as the result of their unfaithfulness towards, and their departure from Jehovah.

In verse 7 the prophet suddenly mentions Judah, the kingdom of the two tribes. Jehovah would still have mercy over the house of Judah. He would still save Judah, and in such a manner that it would be very evident that their rescue was not owing to the policies or power of the two tribes, but only to Him, to His mercy over them.

In those days Judah had not yet sunk as deep as Israel. Under the reigns of Uzziah, Jotham and Hezekiah there was even, though small, a revival of Godly principles, although even then the heart of many was not right before God. How sad, however, was the condition of Judah during the reign of Ahaz, who openly introduced and protected idolatry and even closed the house of the Lord (2 Chr. 28:24). The two tribes, therefore, were in dire need of the mercy of the Lord. They were still given an opportunity to repent, and would not be dragged along by the stream that swallowed up the ten tribes. Though the Assyrian tried to get a hold of Judah and Jerusalem, an angel of the Lord slayed the Assyrian army in a decisive way and Judah was saved.

Yet, Judah did not repent permanently. Then God's judgment also came over the two tribes and they too were brought into exile by Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babel. In their exile the prophet Ezekiel spoke to the nation, telling them that they had done worse than the ten tribes, yes, even worse than Sodom (Ezek. 16:46-63).

Verses 8 and 9 tell of the birth of Hosea's third child, a son. Again the Lord determines the name of the boy: *Loammi*. This means: "The not-beloved" or "not My people." Israel, here looked at as the nation of the twelve tribes, is no longer the nation which the Lord acknowledged. God would no longer be their God. Here there is no longer an exception made for Judah, as there was at the birth of *Lo-ruhamah*. This judgment goes beyond the borders of the ten-tribe nation. As far as the *official recognition* by God is concerned, Israel is no longer the people of God.

But as far as *the heart of God, His love*, is concerned, Israel remains the nation for which He cares, so that it will not be wiped out completely. This we see so beautifully in the book of Esther, where we read how God works *in secret* on behalf of His people whom He could no longer publicly acknowledge as His people.

Quite likely many in Hosea's days held him for an unaccountable fanatic. They passed off the warnings expressed by the names of the prophet's family members with a shrug of the shoulders or in irritation. Yet these names had been established by God as signs. These God-given signs we will once more present here:

Gomer was an immoral woman. A picture of Israel in its unfaithfulness and departure from Jehovah. Her name means: "*perfect*." Israel had *perfectly* sunk into idolatry, she was *perfectly* unfaithful.

Jezreel means "*God scatters*." The house of Ahab had been judged in Jezreel. And Jehu's house would be judged there also; there the ten-tribe nation would find its end.

Lo-ruhamah means "*The not-favoured one*." The measure of Israel's sins was full. God would no longer have mercy over the ten tribes, the judgment was sure to come.

Lo-ammi means "Not My people." From now on Israel would no longer be the acknowledged people of Jehovah.

In his ministry, warnings, and admonitions, the prophet must certainly have pointed out the seriousness and significance of these names, but the nation as a whole did not listen to him. It was perfectly into wickedness. Therefore the kingdom would no longer exist. God would no longer be merciful towards them, nor acknowledge them as His people.

Verses 10-11. With the pronouncements mentioned in the previous verses, it certainly seems that a definite end has come to the relationship of God with Israel, and that only judgment remained for this people. And indeed, the judgment has come over both the ten-tribe and the two-tribe nation. For more than twenty-five centuries has the pronouncement: "Lo-ammi — not My people" rested on this nation.

But judgment over His people is in Scripture never the last word. It never remains "*night*" for Israel, a "*day*" always follows. Both the fact that Israel has continued to exist during all these ages, although it is no longer the acknowledged people of God, and the fact that it still exists today despite their being scattered among all nations of the earth, point in themselves to the coming of that "*day*." And the fact that in our days Israel exists again as an independent nation tells us that that "*day*" is *near*.

This is why there is a divine "*yet*" in verse 10. For the same reason, this chapter does not end with the blackness of judgment, but with the glorious dawn of a complete restoration. The name Hosea means "*redemption*."

And so it says in verses 10-11: "Yet the number of the children of Israel shall be as the sand of the sea which cannot be measured or numbered; and it shall come to pass, [that] in the place where it was said unto them, Ye are not My people, it shall be said unto them, Sons of the living God. And the children of Judah and the children of Israel shall be gathered together, and they shall appoint themselves one head, and shall go up out of the land: for great is the day of Jezreel."

How great is God's grace! He opens a future door of redemption for His people. The prophet does not mention reconciliation here. Nor does he speak of the Messiah for whose sake and through whose work this grace of God can be bestowed. *He restricts himself to establishing the great, glorious, and powerful fact of the reacceptance of a once-rejected Israel.*

We hope that the eyes of many Christians who doubt or deny the restoration of the earthly people of the Lord will be opened for this fact. For many spiritualize these and many other pronouncements of Scripture, applying them to "the Church"; yes, some even say that it is degrading for a Christian to maintain that Israel will one day be restored.

To be cont'd

THE OBEDIENCE OF FAITH

—A. v.d. Kammer

An unloved word from Scripture (2 Cor. 6:14-18).

"I will bless thee." That was the purpose in the heart of God regarding Abraham, and at that moment He told it to Abraham (Gen. 12:1-4).

At another time, He said to Israel: "I will set My habitation among you...; I will walk among you, and will be your God, and ye shall be to Me a people" (Lev. 26:11-12). Here we have His purpose with Israel, as He made it known through Moses.

Just as God had purposes of blessing with Abraham and Israel, so He has them with us. To the believers in Corinth (and not to them alone, but to "all that in every place call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ" - 1 Cor. 1:2), He says, "I will receive you; and I will be to you for a Father, and ye shall be to Me for sons and daughters, saith [the] Lord Almighty" (2 Cor. 6:18).

God could not, however, bring out His purpose with Abraham and Israel loose from their behaviour towards Him. Neither can God execute His purposes regarding us loose from our condition before Him. His blessing depends on prerequisites. The execution of His purposes must be in harmony with His perfection. God cannot deny Himself in His holiness. By His perfection, God has as it were limited Himself. His omnipotence, as His love, can do nothing that would be unworthy of His holiness and righteousness. He makes His purposes known to Abraham, for He wants to bless him, but, in harmony with His holiness, He demands separation from his father's house etc. First Abraham had to break his relationship with everything with which God could not be connected; only then could God bless Him.

The first step

The first step of obedience of faith that Abraham had to take, so that he might be blessed, was not a step "into" the land but a step "out of" his family. So it was with Israel and so it is with us. If we want to receive the promised blessing, our first

step is to be a step "out of." God's prerequisite for accepting us as sons and daughters is, as with Abraham: "Wherefore come *out from* the midst of them, and be separated, saith [the] Lord, and touch not what is unclean, and I will receive you" (2 Cor. 6:17-18).

Do you say: "I cannot understand why Abraham had to separate himself first. There is no harm in having a parental home and a family, is there?" As such, there is certainly nothing wrong with these. The parental home from which Abraham had to separate himself, however, was not under the leading of the Spirit of God but under the power of idolatrous darkness (Josh. 24:2). God could not give His blessing to Abraham as long as he maintained connections with his idolatrous family. Nor can God bestow the blessings of His Fatherly love upon us as long as we are "under one yoke with unbelievers." Therefore, though He desires to dwell in our midst and reveal to us the riches of His love, He says, "Wherefore come out from the midst of them, and be separated — and I will receive you; and I will be to you for a Father, and ye shall be to me for sons and daughters, saith [the] Lord Almighty."

Tell me, what do such requirements and such promises of your God mean to you? Do these touch your heart? Abraham's heart was deeply touched when God told him, "I will bless thee"! The promises God gives us are far greater and more glorious than those Abraham received. He promises us His Fatherly love, the place of sons and daughters. What value do you attach to these promises? Abraham valued them so highly that "he departed as Jehovah had said to him" (Gen. 12:4).

God's requirement: "Go out... from thy father's house" and the promise: "I will bless thee," brought Abraham's heart to light. Now it would show what had greater value for him, his father's house or God's blessing. He could not have both. One he had to give up. He had to choose, to decide. Such a choice cannot be made without a deep, inward conflict. Do you think that Abraham had no heart for his father's house, his family, his homeland? Certainly! But God meant more to him; so he took God's side and did "as Jehovah had said to him."

Let us look at Moses! He too had a day in which he had to choose. He was wise, he chose rather to suffer with the people of God the reproach of Christ than to have the temporary treasures of Egypt. He looked at the reward and left the land (Heb. 11:23-28). These are steps of faith which bring us simultaneously "without" and "within": and that within the blessing of God. Do you believe God and His Word? Has Abraham become your father of faith too? Have you come to the obedience of faith about which the apostle Paul speaks? (Rom. 1:5; 16:26). Is Jesus Christ, the Leader and Completer of faith, this far with you? Has God become your Father, and you His son or His daughter? Is with you, after the commandment of the eternal God, the obedience of faith awakened? Are you able, after having been born again spiritually, to call thus upon God, the Father of Spirits, in spirit and in truth? Have you, in living faith, trusting upon Him and His Word, become wholeheartedly obedient, because you love the Father and the Son with your whole heart? Are you so obedient that you are prepared to leave all? If not, you cannot be a disciple of Jesus, an imitator of Christ (1 Th. 1:6).

The word of the Lord to us: "Come out from the midst of them, and be separated ... and I will receive you" also brings your heart and mine to light. As Abraham and Moses we too must choose between either not going out of their midst or being accepted by the love of God. You cannot have both, just as little as Abraham and Moses could. One of the two you must leave behind. Still, again and again, children of God try the impossible: to serve two masters and to halt between two opinions (1 Ki. 18:21). How sorrowful, for they are the poorest of all, they find joy neither on this side nor on the other (cf. Mt. 6:24 and 1 Jn. 5:2 1).

How simple, how clear and to the point is such a word from our God. It is impossible to misinterpret it. He desires that God's children leave every connection with the children of the world. He calls such a connection an "unequal yoke" and desires that believers are not found therein. Why? Because He wants to bless us with His faithful love.

How come then that so many children of God (and even ministers of the Word of God) are not only in such an "unequal yoke," but even defend such non-scriptural connections and justify them? Yes, how come? If it is not self-will (cf. 1 Sam. 15:23) then it is ignorance about God. And from where comes such ignorance? From not having the Spirit and from not being intelligent, taught by the Word, which is Spirit and Truth, for the Spirit will lead you in all truth. To their shame, Paul had to write to the Corinthian believers: "Some are ignorant of God" (1 Cor. 15:33-34). Had they better realized who God is, they would have seen that God cannot be connected with things contrary to His Word. Can God "dwell and walk in our midst" when we are connected with "unrighteousness"? Every unrighteousness is sin; for the wrath of God has been revealed over all unrighteousness of men (Rom. 1:18; 2 Tim. 2:19; Ti. 2:11-14).

To be cont'd