

JUDE (9)

—H. L. Heijkoop

Yet in like manner these dreamers also defile [the] flesh, and despise lordship, and speak railingly against dignities (v. 8).

After the parenthesis of verses 5-7, verse 8 speaks again about the ungodly of verse 4, who crept into the Assembly. Despite God's judgment over departure and sin, these people act in "like manner" as Israel of old, the fallen angels, and the whoring cities around Sodom.

They are dreamers who lost the truth of God (in so far they ever possessed it). They had not (as we are told to do in Eph. 6:14 and 1 Pet. 1:13) girded up the loins of their mind with the truth, but were guided by the imaginations of their own hearts which knew no restraint. Undoubtedly they justified themselves, lifting themselves up above others (see v. 19); they had a false security, while judgment was about to come over them. As soon as man gives up God's Word as guide for his actions, he loses his hold and is left to his own, foolish fantasy and imagination.

Why is this? Because the Word of God expresses the authority of God, and His will is the only guidance for man. It is the responsibility of each creature to obey God's Word. And if this is so for each human being because he is created by God, how much is this the case for those who are born again through the word of Truth! They have been called in a special manner to teach and keep the Word of God (Jn. 17:6; Rev. 3:8b).

This is of immense practical significance! If we were to express in one word what practical Christendom is, we would have to say "obedience." But it is not the obedience of the first Adam; he had to be obedient to the law. But the obedience of the last Adam is the obedience of faith. Adam's obedience was not to eat of the fruit of one particular tree. But since God has revealed His whole will, we are bound to that revealed will. This goes so far that not only *doing* a wrong thing, but also *not doing* a good thing is evil. "To him therefore who knows how to do good, and does it not, to him it is sin" (Jas. 4:17).

The law of Moses was the law of bondage (Gal. 3:23-4:9). The purpose was to convict man of sin that dwelt in him in his nature, to break down all self-righteousness. James didn't speak of this law. He spoke of the works of the new life, which God's grace has given us in the new birth, and about the love that Christ has revealed, so that we might show forth in ourselves the example of Christ. He spoke about "[the] perfect law, that of liberty" (1:25).

The obedience of the first Adam, that of the Israelite, was: "Thou shalt, or thou shalt not!" The obedience of the last Adam, Christ (1 Cor. 15:45), was to be in every act of His life, in each feeling of His soul, and in all that related to His walk with God, well-pleasing to God (Jn. 8:29). We are called to do the same. This is what Peter meant when he wrote: "Elect according to [the] foreknowledge of God [the] Father, by sanctification of [the] Spirit, unto [the] obedience and sprinkling of [the] blood of Jesus Christ." (1 Pet. 1:2).

Undoubtedly this refers to Exodus 24, where Moses sprinkled both the people and the book of the law with blood (Heb. 9:19). Thus all was brought under death, to make clear what transgression of the law meant for the transgressor. But in doing this, Peter showed the great contrast between the position of Israel and that of the Christian. Christians are also brought into a place of obedience, but of infinitely deeper and farther reaching obedience — the obedience of Christ. It is not the obedience *to* Christ but the obedience *of* Christ. Thus, the obedience which Christ revealed in His life upon earth. But we are brought into this place through sanctification of the Spirit, through the new birth by the Holy Spirit, which has given us new life (Jn. 3; 2 Th. 2:13). This place is marked by the sprinkling of the blood of Christ, the blood that speaks of better things than the blood of bulls and goats. It speaks of a finished work, through which sins have been done away, and of the cleansing of sin (1 Jn. 1:7; Heb. 9:14).

This new nature, which we have received through the "sanctification of the Spirit," is entirely different from the nature man receives at birth. Of the latter God's Word says: "Every imagination of the thoughts of his heart [is] only evil continually" (Gen. 6:5), and also: "The mind of the flesh is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God; for neither indeed can it be: and they that are in flesh cannot please God" (Rom. 8:7-8). But our new nature is entirely different. From the moment of our new birth, we desire to do the will of God. Even before we have peace with God or are set free (see Paul in Acts 22:10, and the regenerated but not set-free soul in Rom. 7:22). With this I don't speak about our weakness and our old nature that opposes the desire of our new nature, nor of the way in which we come to settled peace with God and perfect liberty before God, but rather of the character of our new nature.

Well, these "dreamers" of which Jude spoke had no desire to do the will of God. The Word of God was not the authority that directed their walk. They lived according to the imaginations of their own hearts. For such people the Word of God, and especially the New Testament, is nothing more than a beautiful aid. When natural feelings and natural wisdom use the New Testament, we get among other things a Christian Socialism, a "social gospel." Then, the freedom in which Christ has placed us becomes a freedom for the flesh to act according to its lusts; the infinite grace of Christ, who is not ashamed to call us brethren, and who tells us: "All ye are brethren" (Mt. 23:8), is used to reject all God's authority. Then too, the exalted blessings which we have received give rise to their railingly speaking against "dignities" and their legal exacting from others the qualities of new life. But they do so only for their own benefit. Thus God's Word is undermined and all truth denied. The whole principle of the New Testament, however, is to feel as Christ felt and to act as He did. And what was the principle of His life? It was love which sought to give, seeking nothing for itself. "Whosoever will be great among you, shall be your servant; and whosoever will be first among you, let him be your bondman; as indeed the Son of man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many" (Mt. 20:26-28).

defile [the] flesh. — It is not "their flesh" but "flesh" without the article. This does not have reference to the specific thing, *the flesh* itself, but rather to its character. That what can be designated as "flesh," is being defiled by them. Thus it not only refers to moral evil, but it speaks generally of moral and carnal corruption (Cf. Ti. 1:15). If we read Scripture carefully, it will occur to us that a very religious profession without life is almost always linked to awful sins (Cf. Mt. 23:25-28; 2 Tim. 3:1-5; Ti. 1:15-16).

despise lordship. — Here also the Greek has no article. Many have tried to establish what lordship or authority is meant here. Some (like Calvin and Reza) thought that it referred to emperors or kings. Others considered it to be apostles and church leaders. Yet others think that it applies to angels because they think it does so in the three other places where this Greek word is used in the New Testament (Eph. 1:21; Col. 1:16; 2 Pet. 2:10). They, moreover, appeal to the relationship between verses 6, 9, and 10. Well, as to Colossians 1, and perhaps also Ephesians 1 they are quite right, but I believe that 2 Peter, just as Jude, speaks in a general way. Finally there are some who think that it, similarly to verse 4, applies to the Lord Jesus and God.

Since the article is missing, however, I believe that it doesn't refer to a specific authority, but to authority in general. It is the spirit of lawlessness, the spirit of democracy which characterizes these men. It is the principle that God's Word repeatedly presents as the character of Christendom in the last days. (Cf. 2 Tim. 3:2, "disobedient toward parents"; 2 Tim. 4:3; 2 Pet. 2:10, and Rev. 3:15 etc. - Laodicea means "people's rights"). It is the perfect demonstration of the human will by man's putting himself and *his* rights in the foreground, while refusing to acknowledge any higher authority.

Who is not familiar with the call for "people's rights" — today's slogan. And in a world full of oppression this seems all too justified! If God is left out of our considerations (and is this not fully the spirit of our time?), why should the great mass put up with the tyranny of the few? And this all the more when the few act according to the old saying "might is right"! Isn't democracy justified by Scripture when it says that "God is no respecter of persons"? But God's Word says: "Let every soul be subject to the authorities that are above [him]. For there is no authority except from God; and those that exist are set up by God. So that he that sets himself in opposition to the authority resists the ordinance of God" (Rom. 13:1-2). After the flood God instituted government to restrain the corruption and evil deeds of sinful man. As always, God has more wisdom than man. But above all else, the creature has no right to judge the effectiveness or justice of God's ordinances. He has but to subject himself to them!

The Church has developed such close ties with the world that many speak of a Christian world, and Christian powers. Is it, therefore, any wonder that the world's spirit of democracy has entered the Church so strongly? There was a time when the Church reigned, and truly, the days during which the Church reigned in absolute power were dark ages for the human race. Today most protestant churches are based on the democratic principle. Each chooses his own Church. They choose their own church officers to rule over them (overseers and elders), and if they are not satisfied with them they don't choose them again. They appoint their own teachers and shepherds (2 Tim. 4:3). They themselves decide how their services will be conducted. They establish their own liturgies. Do not both situations, both when the church reigned and now that the people reign, deny the rights of Him who alone is Lord, of Him to whom the Church belongs? God's Word prophesied that the rule of people would enter the Assembly. Now God's Word calls this the sign of complete departure, of lawlessness which would characterize the Assembly in her last days on earth.

Speak railingly against dignities. — Railing is to speak evil while knowing that what is said is not true. The only places in the New Testament where "dignities" occurs in the plural are 1 Peter 1:11 (glories); 2 Peter 2:10; and here. In 2 Peter 2:10 it is used in pretty well the same connection as here. In 1 Peter 1:11 it concerns the future glories of the Lord Jesus, of which the prophets in the Old Testament spoke. I believe, therefore, that here in Jude it speaks in general about those who have received honour from God, or perhaps even about *things* which have received honour. In the former case, they

could be the same persons who exercise the "lordship" mentioned in the previous clause. In that event it refers to an other side of their position. The first side was that they rule, the other that they possess dignity. The ungodly of which Jude spoke *reject* this lordship and *rail* against this dignity. The latter is an outgrowth of the first. It is the unbridled freedom of the tongue of those who have no longer respect for God or man, who don't accept any obligation to be faithful or obedient, and who say, "With our tongue will we prevail, our lips are our own: who [is] lord over us?" (Ps. 12:4).

And so we have in this verse once again discovered the two great principles of evil which Satan introduced in the Assembly through his instruments. In verse 4 we saw the kernel of it: Denial of the rights of Christ as Master and Lord, and the abuse of grace by turning it into dissoluteness. Here we notice them in their general effect: the defilement of the flesh and the rejection of lordship, while the latter reveals itself also in a second form: in the unbridled tongue. We can also see a connection between the things mentioned in verse 8, and the events enumerated in verses 5-7, though in reversed order. The defilement of the flesh can be compared with the sin of Sodom, the rejection of lordship with the angels leaving their original place, and the railing against dignities with the judgment over Israel (see Num. 14:20-35). Yet, though we can compare these things, they are not *exactly* the same.

To be cont'd

THE OLD PROPHET OF BETHEL (3)

—*W. R. Dronsfield*

Do we, or Don't we? (For those who say they do.)

We have come to a very important truth which is not pressed today so much as it should be. In fact, I wonder sometimes whether God has a controversy with us. We are not being blessed!

We look around at the assemblies that claim to be gathered in obedience to God's Word, and we don't see very much blessing today. I know these are very hard times with regard to the gospel and I know that men's hearts are hardened, and that they do not respond to the gospel message; but there seems to be very little blessing in the gospel. Yet, we see blessing among other believers, and there are others who seem to be getting conversions and some added to them. There are so-called churches that seem to be growing — Evangelicals, they call themselves. But we don't find that we are growing very much. Why is this?

Could it be that many of us have forgotten our "raison d'etre," to use a French expression? In other words, our reason for existing at all as meetings? We are gathered together as an expression of the body of Christ. How many of us really are so gathered from true conviction of heart that this is the only place where they can be gathered through obedience to the Lord?

Perhaps I am being rather hard against my brethren when I say that perhaps not very many of them are. But I see what is happening. I see that when people leave a certain district — perhaps they retire, perhaps they find a better job — to go to a place where there is no assembly, or only a very little one, or only one a great distance off, they go elsewhere, although they seemed to be loyal and faithful believers while they were in one place. Now they go somewhere else, to a company which is not meeting on the principles of the one body, and they don't resolutely say, "I cannot do it. Inexpedient or difficult as it may be, I must still gather to the name of the Lord." They don't say that. They go to an independent assembly or to one or the other denomination. "It's Evangelical," they say. Or: "Well, they've got the gospel!" But I say, "Of course they have, but God values the truth of the Assembly, and we don't realize how sad it is to God when we disobey Him in this way, and to the Lord Jesus Christ, the Head of the Church, when we disown His headship this way."

When we go on holidays and there is no assembly there, do we go somewhere else? Or do we choose a place for a holiday where there is a gathering of the Lord's people so that we can have fellowship with them, knowing that they are gathered to the name of the Lord? Is it right to gather to the name of the Lord for 51 weeks of the year and not to do so for the 52nd? If it's wrong to do otherwise for 51 weeks, isn't it wrong for the 52nd? Of course it is! People seem to take these things very lightly these days; they are not obedient.

Why do we see so few new gatherings being formed among us? If people were absolutely determined in the truth, when they were forced to go to a place where there is no meeting, they wouldn't join up with other places. They would stay where they are. They would stay there as individuals, if necessary, or travel long distances to the nearest assembly. If they realized — as the man of God should have realized — that obedience to the Word of God is the paramount thing, they wouldn't go and join something else, thinking that, because they couldn't help it, they can go back to their own home

assembly when it's convenient for them and break bread just for expediency. They wouldn't do that, and neither would there be this weakness that we see today.

Still, there are a few places where assemblies have grown up, even in the past ten years. How have they grown up? Brethren have moved to other places and said, "We can't join up with these other people. We must stay where we are." And others have come to them, and there have been new assemblies formed. That is faithfulness. But how often do we find this? Is it any wonder that we are declining?

Over and over again, I see people leaving one place and going to another and being swallowed up in the sects and the systems, and one thinks, "Fancy such a person doing that; we thought that they at least understood the truth." But apparently they didn't, because they are lost to the meetings.

It is a very sad state of affairs today, and the reason is simply this: We do not see how valuable the truth of the Assembly is, how precious it is in the eyes of Christ that we should obey Him and have Him alone as our Center. We fail to see that it is a vital truth. For those that have received it, for those that have been given it, it is very important to obey it. Those who do not see it, God blesses them. Yes, why not? They do what they think is right. They preach the gospel, and God gives them conversions; but in our meetings, how few conversions we get!

Only in a very few meetings do you find conversions. Why is it? Is God withholding them from us because we are not able to bring up the babes in the truth of the Assembly? Are we so weak that if we got a good many conversions, the newcomers would, as it were, overwhelm us and bring in things which were not right according to the Scriptures, and we being afraid to offend them would let them get their own way so that the whole truth would be lost? Is that a fact?

Well, sometimes when God has allowed conversions to take place in assemblies, that is just what has happened. It has become a sort of mission, and is lost to the truth. We have to look upon this, as it were, from the Lord's eyes. There is a precious thing here. There are a few gathered to His name, and He desires that that should be continued. Perhaps to get a large number of conversions might not be the best way to continue it if we are so weak that we do not obey the truth and let it slip when we are compelled to by expediency.

How dear to the heart of Christ is the Church. It is the Father's love-gift to Him. He has purchased it by giving Himself. As His bride and wife we shall share in His glory and know intimately His mind and His thoughts for all eternity. We shall bask in His love. No one else in all creation is so blessed! Shall we not give Him due place even now down here where He is still rejected?

The End

OUTLINE FOR BIBLE STUDY (22)

40. SIN AND PUNISHMENT OF ACHAN. AI TAKEN BY AMBUSH. — Joshua 7-8

Outline

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| 1. Israel's Defeat at Ai | Josh. 7:1-5 |
| 2. Joshua's Prayer and the Lord's answer | Josh. 7:6-15 |
| 3. Achan Pointed Out and Punished | Josh. 7:16-26 |
| 4. Conquest of Ai | Josh. 8:1-29 |
| 5. Mount Ebal and Mount Gerizim | Josh. 8:30-35 |

Explanation

1. By faith the walls of Jericho fell, but at Ai the people depended upon human strength rather than upon God.
2. Joshua was disheartened, because he had not walked in communion with the Lord. Moses acted differently (Ex. 32:11-23).
3. Not the people's condition in itself led to defeat, but the flight of Israel resulted from the sin of one single man.

4. After the transgressor had been done away, the Lord went again with Israel (Nah. 1:2, 3; Ps. 30:5).

5. God reminded the people that obedience brings blessing, while disobedience brings a curse.

Lesson

Israel immediately forgot its lack of power and its self-reliance led to its defeat. "Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation" (Mt. 26:41). Defeat often follows after a victory. After the victory on Mount Carmel Elijah fled from Jezebel. Peter walked on the sea, but he began to sink when he no longer looked upon the Lord. With God they could do great things, without Him they could not even accomplish the least (Jn. 15:5).

46. THE GUILF OF THE GIBEONITES. JOSHUA'S VICTORY. — Joshua 9-10

Outline

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| 1. The covenant with the Gibeonites | Josh. 9:1-15 |
| 2. The Deceit Discovered | Josh. 9:16-27 |
| 3. The fight against Adoni-zedek | Josh. 10:1-27 |
| 4. Joshua's Faith | Josh. 10:12-15 |
| 5. The South Conquered | Josh. 10:28-43 |

Explanation

1. Joshua and the elders failed to seek divine guidance for every step (v. 14).
2. The people had to bear the consequences; if they failed to keep the covenant, God's judgment would come over them (2 Sam. 21:1-14).
3. Jehovah commanded Joshua to join battle with Adoni-Zedek (Josh. 10:8). In this battle God showed that He was at the side of Joshua, He discomfited the enemy and cast great hail stones on them while they fled.
4. The Lord heard Joshua's prayer and the day became twice as long. After the victory, however, they had to return to Gilgal, the place of circumcision, to express their dependence upon God.

Lesson

The book of Joshua depicts our battle in the heavenlies. We can only succeed in this battle if we put on the whole armour of God (Eph. 6:10-20).

Here is an important lesson for the Church of God who has not been watchful. If we have been unfaithful, we must humble ourselves and separate ourselves from evil.

Nobody can withstand those who are acting in faith, but it is essential to always express full dependence upon God and not upon human strength.

To be cont'd

THE MINOR PROPHETS (9)

—R. Been Sr.

Hosea 2 (Cont'd.)

vv. 18-23.

These verses speak of the blessings which will be the remnant's part during the thousand year reign of Christ. Jehovah will once again be everything to them. He shall protect them against all kinds of enemies, be they men or beasts. War will be no more. God will break the bow and the sword and the battle out of the earth. There will be peace and rest everywhere. Unrighteousness, lies and deceit will no longer be found among the people. No one will frighten them anymore. All will know the Lord. A loving relationship between the people and Jehovah as expressed in the marriage relationship will be restored. Judgment has come over them according to righteousness, but so will mercy and lovingkindnesses.

The little word "and" occurs very often in this portion. It is the link chaining each blessing to the next. Verses 21 to 22 speak further of the great blessings of Christ's reign of peace. Then Jehovah will in faithfulness betroth Himself to this people, pouring out His blessings over them. Upon His command, the whole earth will produce wine and oil in abundance in answer to the prayers of Israel. This is here expressed in poetic language: Jehovah will hear the heaven and the earth, so that the earth will be made fruitful through the rain from heaven. The earth in turn will hear the corn, the wine and the oil, so that there will be an abundant harvest. Jezreel, who prayed for this, will be heard.

Stripped of poetic language the preceding portion says that then there will exist the most beautiful harmony between God and His people, between the Creator and the creation, between heaven and earth. There will no longer be death and crop-failure, no heaven of brass, no unheard sighing of a languishing creation.

Jezreel will no longer be the place of judgment, and revenge, but of blessing. During Christ's reign over His kingdom the people will again receive the blessings of corn, wine and oil — products they once sought from the Gentiles but which were then withheld by God.

This whole perfect, blessed condition during the realm of peace, this entire harmony of heaven and earth, is a fruit of the work of redemption and salvation accomplished by Christ on the cross. In the three hours of darkness He called to God (Ps. 22:1-2). He called during the day, but God did not answer. He called in the night, but He had no rest. Then He poured out His plaint: "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" But when the work was finished, then He was heard: "When He cried unto Him, He heard" (Ps. 22:24). Thus the end of the Psalm speaks of blessing, pure blessing.

Verse 23 points once more to the blessed relationship that will exist between Jehovah and the people of Israel. With repentance will *Lo-Ammi* (not-My-people) have returned to Jehovah, and He will remove that *Lo-* (not) and say to the people, ye are "My people." With a despondent spirit will *Lo-Ruhamah* come at His feet and He will be gracious to that people, and have mercy over them. Is it a wonder that in the face of such an abundant display of lovingkindness this people will say, "My God"?

Hosea 3.

"Many days alone."

The prophet's marriage to Gomer displayed several thoughts of God about Israel, the ten tribes. This marriage was a sign for the people.

Gomer displayed the *moral condition of the people*,
Jezreel, her son, the *judgment over the royal house*,
Lo-Ruhamah: that there would be *no more mercy*,
Lo-Ammi: the *setting aside of the people*,
Hosea: the dawn of *a new day*, an *open door of hope*.

In this chapter we meet another woman:

"And Jehovah said unto me, Go again, love a woman beloved of a friend, and an adulteress, according to the love of Jehovah for the children of Israel, though they turn to other gods, and love raisin-cakes. So I bought her to me for fifteen silver [pieces], and for a homer of barley, and a half-homer of barley. And I said unto her, Thou shalt abide for me many days; thou shalt not play the harlot, and thou shalt not be [another] man's, and I will also be for thee."

This certainly was a difficult charge for the prophet. Nothing but unlimited obedience to his Sender and a burning love to his people caused him to go silently his way. In this charge, Jehovah came to the aid of the prophet by giving him insight

why he had to go this way. He said as it were to Hosea: You must make an *adulterous* woman a *lonely* one. For that is what I do with *adulterous* and *idolatrous* Israel.

Hosea obeys. He is a good servant, persevering in his prophetic service. He buys the woman for the mentioned price, yet there is no thought of an *intimate relationship with her*. Once she has accepted the agreed price, she has become the *legitimate possession* of the prophet, and the prophet places her in *loneliness*. What a picture of Israel's history. And this is what counts here.

Jehovah had loved the Israelites, but they had left Him to follow after other gods. They had loved "raisin-cakes." We read how, when David had brought the ark of the Lord to Jerusalem, he provided raisin-cakes and other things for the celebration of the feast (2 Sam. 6:19; 1 Chr. 16:3). This was a festive treat. The devil had deceptively promised the people an uninterrupted feast; they would eat this treat continuously once they served the idols. This deception we find in all ages. The natural man does not always look for satisfaction in great sins, frequently he desires refined enjoyment, intellectual pleasures, and seeks to make his life a feast for his intelligence. To achieve this he turns to the world and leaves God, thinking that God cannot give him this.

When Hosea had bought this woman, he was able to determine her future life. And so he did. Taking her past life into account, he told her that she was not to commit immoral acts, not to belong to any man, but *to remain many days in loneliness*. Even he would not come to her. Wasn't that just what happened to the people of Israel? This is what we are told in verse 4. Many days the Israelites would remain without king, without prince, without sacrifice, without statue, without ephod and teraphim.

First of all, this would become the condition of the ten tribes. From the day of their exile they were without prince, without sacrifice, without fellowship with God. Initially it was different for the two tribes. They had governors after their return out of the Babylonian exile, although they were subject to Gentile rulers. The two tribes had even then a certain service for the Lord and there was also a house, a temple. Only after Judah had rejected and crucified the Messiah did the lot of the ten tribes become theirs as well. Then the two tribes were also scattered over the entire globe. Thus, what the prophet said here is now already some two thousand years applicable to all twelve tribes. No longer have they a king, a sacrifice, or worship, but neither have they — and this applies particular to the two tribes — idolatry, but rather a house swept clean and adorned, only waiting for *seven spirits, more evil than the first* (Mt. 12:44-45). Healed from their virtually ineradicable idolatry, the Jews sit, as a woman who has been left, *without God and without idols*. At present they have neither a true nor a false religion, but they have no means to approach to God either. In just one word, they have *nothing*, and that for many days.

Poor Jews! Believers in Christendom love them for the fathers' sake. Because the believers have received salvation through Him who was, according to the flesh, out of Israel. But the great mass of Jews are not aware of their poverty. They pride themselves in their science, wealth and intelligence. Some of them have said, the Jews have the bar, the pulpit and the purse. In their indestructible enthusiasm they say, "*We have everything.*"

But Hosea says, "*They have nothing.*" *Where are their kings and princes? Where is the house of David?* Already for years the Jews are subject to Gentile or "Christian" rulers. In many countries they have been and are persecuted, treated as second-class citizens. One of them was, seeing His genealogy, a King, born from the house of David. But this One has, after His rejection, journeyed off to a far country, heaven. He, Jesus Christ, is their true, God-given King. In a little while He will reign over the entire earth.

Where is their sacrifice? How can they approach God? Moses teaches: by means of a sacrifice; but they have no sacrifice. They cannot bring their earlier offerings in the countries of their exile. They would be "stoned" if they did. Their passover lamb is a fried bone. The true Sacrifice is in heaven but it has been, and still is, rejected by the Jews.

How can they know God's will? Moses teaches: through the priest, standing with the ephod and the Urim and Thummim. *But, where are the priest and the ephod?* The only One, the true and eternal High Priest, according to the order of Melchisedec, is in heaven, rejected by the Jews.

That the Jews lack a *statue* and a *teraphim* is not a loss. After the Babylonian exile the Jews have remained free from idolatry. But, as we mentioned already, the swept and adorned house only awaits the occupation by seven evil spirits, worse than those of days gone by. In the end-times the great mass of the Jews will under the antichrist apostasize into the most terrible idolatry, namely the worship of man, in his technique and power, knowledge and ability. But at present their religion is nothing but an accumulation of rigid traditions and ordinances of rabbis.

Terrible condition! But it will come to an end. In verse 5 the Spirit of God brings in light once more, and the prophet Hosea, who saw this dawn even then, calls out, "Afterwards shall the children of Israel return, and seek Jehovah their God, and David their king; and shall turn with fear toward Jehovah and toward His goodness, at the end of the days."

From other prophecies we know that we should not understand the *children of Israel* to mean the *entire* nation, (man for man) of the twelve tribes, *but rather a remnant of it*. The prophet Zechariah mentions that two-thirds of the future nation of two tribes will be extinguished — removed by death — for their idolatry and apostasy under the antichrist. And the future nation of the ten tribes will indeed set out to return to Palestine, but they will not reach it. On their way the judgment of God will come over them. A remnant of the ten tribes, the elect (Mt. 24:31) will, however, be gathered by the Lord in the land.

These remnants out of the ten and the two tribes will *in repentance and self-judgment* sorrowfully return to God. It will differ greatly from the "national awakening" of present-day Israel which starts to assume more and more an antireligious character. But just as the brothers of Joseph did once, so will especially the remnant of the two tribes stand before the "Sold-one," confessing their guilt. For a blood-guilt rests on the two tribes since the day that they nailed the Righteous One to the cross, calling "His blood [be] on us and on our children" (Mt. 27:25).

Sorrow and pain will then fill the heart of the remnant (Zech. 12:10-14), and, as Hosea puts it here, they "shall turn with fear." What grace that they don't have to come to *Jehovah and His wrath*, but to *Jehovah and His goodness*!

The remnant will, however, not only seek Jehovah, their God, but also *David, their King*. Then God will give to the remnants out of the two and the ten tribes the true kingdom. It will not be a king as Israel used to choose for itself, like Saul and Jeroboam; it will be a king after God's heart, a *David*. And to their terror they will see Him with the tokens of His sufferings on the cross in His hands and feet, and discover that this is *Jehovah* their King, whom they did crucify.

Reviewing now the first three chapters, we notice that the prophet Hosea points *at the end of each chapter* to things that will be the portion of the people in the distant future. He announces these things when the exile of the ten tribes is *imminent*:

At the end of the first chapter: Israel will be restored in the land under one Head, one King, and will be as the sand of the sea in number;

In the second chapter: God will restore the old relationship with the nation; Israel will once again be God's people, and the people will exclaim, "My God!";

In the third chapter: Israel will repentfully return. The people will enter the blessed reign of the true David, the Christ whom they once rejected.

We want to conclude our exposition of these three chapters with two Scripture portions:

"For Jehovah hath called thee as a woman forsaken and grieved in spirit, and as a wife of youth, that hath been refused, saith thy God. For a small moment have I forsaken thee; but with great mercies will I gather thee. In the outpouring of wrath have I hid My face from thee for a moment; but with everlasting loving-kindness will I have mercy on thee, saith Jehovah, thy Redeemer" (Isa. 54:6-8).

"Exult, O daughter of Zion; shout, O Israel; rejoice and be glad with all the heart, O daughter of Jerusalem: Jehovah hath taken away thy judgments, He hath cast out thine enemy; the King of Israel, Jehovah, is in the midst of thee; thou shalt not see evil any more. In that day it shall be said to Jerusalem, Fear not; Zion, let not thy hands be slack. Jehovah thy God is in thy midst, a mighty One that will save: He will rejoice over thee with joy; He will rest in His love; He will exult over thee with singing" (Zeph. 3:14-17).

To be cont'd

THE OBEDIENCE OF FAITH (4)

—A. v.d. Kammer

If we want to serve the Lord in a manner pleasing to Him, we must first of all learn to refrain from playing lord and master in the house of God. We are not in our house, not in our assembly, but in His Assembly, where all must be according to His will. God takes notice of what *is done in His house*. This we see in Nadab and Abihu (Lev. 10: 1-3). We may learn from them that it is not indifferent to God whether we depart from His ordinances or not. They had only presented strange fire

before Jehovah, "which He had not commanded them. And there went out fire from before Jehovah, and devoured them, and they died." We have to do with Him; we must be well aware of this when we approach Him and occupy ourselves with the things in His house. Therefore the Scriptures warn us, to "serve God acceptably with reverence and fear. For also our God [is] a consuming fire" (Heb. 12:28-29). Yes, God is very particular! All that is foreign, every deviation from His Word, that men "in the stubbornness of their evil heart" (Jer. 7:24) have introduced, God calls "their abominations" which they have set "in the house which is called by My name" (Jer. 7:1-30; Ezek. 7:20; Amos 5:21-23). If God judges it in this way, can we then ask, "What is wrong with it?"

How is it that the children of God pay so little attention to these things, and why are they treated as if they are of a secondary nature? Isn't it because we have become *so self-reliant in the house of God?* A great house? Exactly! That is what Satan wants us to think, that we can act in an independent and self-reliant way. If he succeeds in this, the doors are open to bring in corruption.

Paul's most beautiful "title" was: slave of Jesus Christ. To him it was an honour to have bound himself to the Word of the Lord. Today, however, things have changed. Today it is an "honour" to be independent. Men who act this way are admired; on the other hand people turn despisingly away from those who consider themselves bound by the Word: That is narrow-mindedness. Yes, man has become broadminded towards evil (Ezek. 34:18-22).

Scripture warns us against such self-made religions (Col. 2:23).¹ They serve "[the] satisfaction of the flesh," but they do not please God. Man finds his honour and glory in them, while the Lord stands outside. "This people honour Me with their lips, but their heart is far away from Me" (Mk. 7:6).

In such a refined way they adorn their own traditions, labeling them "superior" and "suited to the times," that the Lord says, "Well do ye set aside the commandment of God, that ye may observe what is delivered by yourselves [to keep]" (Mk. 7:9). How far this arrogation of independence in the great house and the lack of sensitivity towards the Lord go, one can see in the excuses for and the approvals of all departures from Scripture and the ordinances of His house. As soon as they are accompanied by a "Corban," a declaration that it is better and more expedient for God's cause, all is thought to be well.

If we contrast this with the sharp Word and God's severe judgment, it is hardly conceivable how children of God can so thoughtlessly pass over departures from the Word of God. Nadab and Abihu paid for a small deviation with their lives; Moses paid for a small deviation with his entering of the land; and a small deviation resulted in the death of Uzzah (2 Sam. 6:6). Just how great our loss is when we join such lawlessnesses we will discover when we will be manifested before the judgment-seat of Christ, when the Lord comes and His reward with Him (Rev. 22:12).

Therefore the Lord does not only tell us not to be unequally yoked with unbelievers, but He also asks us: "What participation [is there] between righteousness and lawlessness?" Every connection of His name with things that do not agree with His Word is a profanation — an abuse of His name. "Let every one who names the name of [the] Lord withdraw from iniquity" (2 Tim. 2:19). "Do not have fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather also reprove [them]" (Eph. 5:11).

Reduced Opportunities?

Now we have come to the fourth objection: One can work better for the Lord if one does not separate himself. It seems hardly necessary to say anything about this. Yet, a few words may help.

Just think it over: It is easier to work for the Lord if one does not do what the Lord demands! It is easier to win souls for the Lord in the path of disobedience than in the path of faithfulness! One does evil that good may come out of it (Rom. 3:8). How close do these words come to the ungodly adage: The end justifies the means.

Brother! How must your heart be taken in by logical conclusions, how must you have given up your position as dependent servant of the Lord Jesus, that such deceit is able to blind you! Could Lot do more work for the Lord in Sodom, and spread more blessing than Abraham outside of Sodom? Oh, but Lot would have perished in Sodom if the angel had not taken hold

¹ *The first worship service found in Scripture, was a self-made worship. Cain approached God with the fruits of his labour, the works of his hands. And since it pleased himself and seemed good to him, he thought that it would please God as well. But God rejected him and his sacrifice. Is it any different with today's relished traditions, forms, ceremonies, processions etc.? These things make men feel so good that they think that God is happy with them too.*

of his hand and led him out. What could Jonathan have been for David if he had left Saul's house! Because he didn't do so, he lost everything, and his body hung beside Saul's on the wall of Beth-shan (1 Sam. 31:12; Rev. 18:4).

How many excuses are given to render the divine law of separation powerless! Yes, even God's Word, and the Person of the Lord and the Apostle are called upon to darken the clear commandment of the Lord. They say, the Lord and the Apostles were born Jews and remained Jews and Paul *became all things to all men*. What Paul in 1 Corinthians 9:20-23 says of his "manner" of service, that he adapts himself to the ways of the Jews and the Gentiles to save them out of Judaism and idolatry, they apply falsely to his personal position. They claim that, though Paul taught others to separate themselves and to withdraw from iniquity, he failed to do so himself; he would have given the salvation of souls priority over such demands of the Lord. But this was never the case with Paul. Rather, he testified that, although he was not "under law," he was "not without law to God, but as legitimately subject to Christ." No matter how he adjusted himself to either the Jews or the Gentiles, he was, nevertheless, subject to Christ and not under an unequal yoke with any of them. He never permitted himself anything that would have placed him in opposition to his Lord. He did not preach things to others which he did not practice himself. He ran the race in such a way that he received the crown (1 Cor. 9:24-27).

Those who want to appeal to this word must, just like Paul, first shed the unequal yoke and then seek to lead sinners to Christ in "all kinds of ways." The "way" in which one adapts himself to sinners with religious biases (Jews), to sinners who are ignorant (Gentiles), to those who are Christian in name only, or to Chinese, when bringing them the message of salvation in order to save some, is certainly different in each case. The "all kinds of ways," however, must (as with Paul) be in agreement with the Word of God. Paul's adaptability is essential, but it must not conflict with Scripture.

To be cont'd