

**JUDE (12)**

—H. L. Heijkoop

*These are spots in your love-feasts, feasting together [with you] without fear, posturing themselves; clouds without water, carried along by [the] winds; autumnal trees, without fruit, twice dead, rooted up (v. 12).*

The Spirit of God, who uses Jude as His instrument, continues here to use a great variety of pictures and illustrations to describe the worthless and deceiving character of these wolves in sheep's clothing. We cannot imagine that someone who has not been inspired would dare to use such strong and definite expressions about persons in the assembly. But precisely because Jude is occupied with those who take the place of salvation, with those who are gathered unto the name of the Lord Jesus, he makes use of these words. As we have seen before, Peter sees more the unrighteousness of man in general, although he does so in view of Christendom that has come and has been presented to man. Jude, however, though he is also occupied with unrighteousness, has a more restricted circle in view. In that place, in the assembly, unrighteousness is much more serious to any spiritual mind. Nothing is more dangerous, nothing is more serious, than departure from faith, from the Christian faith. For it is apostasy from that which has been made known by grace.

There are many things that cause truth to lose its power over the conscience of men. But nothing accelerates this process as moral confusion within us, caused by our forgetting or abusing grace. We turn our backs to God's authority as well as to our relationship with the Lord Jesus. The result will always be that we start to love other objects so much that they become idols to us. Essentially, these things have been present from the very beginning, from the moment the assembly left her first love (Rev. 2:4). From our epistle it is evident that they would proceed from bad to worse until the Lord will come in judgment.

When Jude wrote his epistle, these people — whom the devil had introduced to choke all spiritual life, and to accelerate the development of the condition prophetically foreseen by the Holy Spirit — lived among the believers. But the Holy Spirit describes prophetically the time in which we live. This is always so in the prophetic books. God always uses the then present circumstances and persons to present prophetically the conditions and persons that He sees in the future. At the same time, the fact that these men were even then already in the midst of the assembly, taking part of the love-feasts of the believers, makes it clear to us that we don't have to be surprised at the worst revelation of evil in the assembly.

The Greek word *spilades*, translated "spots," occurs only here in the New Testament. 2 Peter 2:13 has the word *spiloi*, which occurs, besides there, in Ephesians 5:27. *Spilades* is generally used for a rock in the sea, and many linguists understand it to mean rock covered with water, a reef. Doubtless this is the sense here and the NASB has therefore rendered the word this way. The translation by "spots" is very likely adopted from 2 Peter 2:13. Personally I believe reefs to be better. These men were reefs in the love-feasts upon which everything was in danger of suffering shipwreck and getting lost.

The Greek word for "love-feast" (*agapais*) is the third case of the plural of *agape*, the word for divine love (see the note with verse 1). It was the custom of the first Christians in their first love to meet in happy fellowship for meals of love, love-feasts. In this they followed the example of the Lord Jesus, who in the last night before the cross also gathered His disciples around Him for a meal (Jn. 13:2). And just as the Lord instituted the Supper at the end of that meal, so they often celebrated the Lord's Supper at the end of such a love-feast. It seems that 1 Corinthians 11:20-22 speaks of this.

But, just as at the occasion of the meal that the king prepared for his son (Mt. 22), also in John 13 a man was present who did not have a wedding garment. So here, in the epistle of Jude, we find such men. In John 13, the Lord shows how love-feasts can only be maintained by loving to the end: by taking the lowest place and to serve. The light of the Lord's love drives Judas out (v. 21-30). The believers in Jude's days had left their first love. They did no longer watch, but had become sleepy. That is how these instruments of Satan had been able to get in and how they had escaped detection. Jude does not think of weak or carnal believers when he speaks of these reefs, but of men such as the traitor Judas; they are tools of Satan who have no right to be among the believers. But present they were, and their presence was what covered reefs are to the careless sailor: a hidden danger for the believers with whom they met.

And although they were this, it had to be said of them that they were "*feasting together [with you] without fear.*" Hypocrites as they were, they mixed among the true believers, confessing to enjoy and to relish in the things enjoyed by

the believers. What proof of their hardened hearts and seared consciences that they were not afraid for the judgment of God. But, at the same time, how shameful for the true believers that their condition was such that these hypocrites had not a moment's fear to be unmasked by them.

Actually it says: "*Feasting together*," without the words "with you." The word "your" before "love-feasts," however, makes it rather likely that these words are needed to give the sense. The Greek word for "feasting" occurs only here and in 2 Peter 2:13. In it is the thought of luxuriousness and plenty. The word of Philippians 3:19 is applicable to them: "Whose god [is] the belly, and [their] glory in their shame, who mind earthly things!"

#### *pasturing themselves*

Rather than pasturing the flock as true shepherds (1 Pet. 5:2-4), which they claimed to be, they pasture themselves. They are like the false shepherds of Israel of whom Ezekiel 34 speaks (Cf. Isa. 56:11; Zech. 11).

#### *clouds without water, carried along by [the] winds*

One expects water from clouds. But these, though giving the impression that they will bring fertilizing rain upon the dry ground, are in reality active without the true work, the rich refreshing, of the Holy Spirit. Nor do they remain, they are driven past by winds. It is the exact opposite of Ephesians 4:14.

#### *autumnal trees, without fruit*

They resemble Israel as it is presented in Matthew 21:19 and Mark 11:12-14. The fig-tree is a fruit-tree. It has as task to produce fruit. First the fig-tree produces fruits and afterwards leaves. Therefore, when there are leaves, there must be fruit too. Well, Israel did have leaves: outwardly there was life; just think of the scribes and the Pharisees. But the eye of the Lord Jesus, of Him who searches hearts and reins, found no fruit. Mark, however, adds that it wasn't the time for fruit.

With the people of whom Jude writes, it was the time for fruit: it was autumn. They were no new-comers in the midst of the assembly. They had been present for quite some time and, consciously as well as purposely, they took the position of teachers and leaders (cf. Heb. 5:12). Perhaps they also appeared to be bringing forth fruits, but these were no fruits in the eyes of the Holy Spirit. What they did produce were corrupting fruits. I don't want to say that God by times does not use this type of people in a remarkable way! I remember such a case in Germany, where several people were converted through the preaching of a modern minister. Those who were converted were of one mind that the minister himself was not converted. God can use His Word, no matter who utters it. But it is a deadly thing for him who does so.

#### *twice dead, rooted up*

As those who are not born-again, they are dead by nature (cf. Eph. 2:1-5; Col. 2:13). But they are also dead in their pretense of the things that are beyond nature of which they do not possess the reality. It is not as if one can lose life from God. But they are seen as being part of the testimony on earth, just as the Lord Jesus presents it in John 15. "Unless any one abide in Me he is cast out as the branch, and is dried up; and they gather them and cast them into the fire, and they are burned" (v. 6; see also the first part of v. 2).

Besides that, they were rooted up! Although it appeared that they had rooted in the earth, to have part in the life-maintaining flow of grace and to stand firm, in reality their dead roots had never had part in grace. Now the possibility to get such a link was no longer there. "Ground which drinks the rain which comes often upon it... but bringing forth thorns and briars... is found worthless and nigh to a curse, whose end [is] to be burned" (Heb. 6:4-8). To him who is spiritual and who judges things spiritually, it is now outwardly visible what they are.

*To be cont'd*

## **THE OBEDIENCE OF FAITH (7)**

—A. v. d. Kammer

### *Shouldn't we bear with the Weak?*

There are also those who believe that one shouldn't bring up matters that cause division, and that one should not separate because Scripture instructs "the strong" to bear the infirmities of "the weak" (Rom. 14 & 15). Such words seem fair enough. But let us inquire, "What are the things that cause division, and what shouldn't be brought up?" Are they the Word of God? Should that not be brought up? It surely should! But what then are the things that cause division? They are the systems of men, ordinances, regulations, they are man and his disobedience. These are the things they don't want to be brought up. But God certainly brings them up and we cannot just pass over them.

But it has come this far: Faithfulness to the Lord and being subject to His Word has become "division." To whom? Not to those who desire to follow the Word, but to those who don't take the Word so strictly, to those who think they can be just as pleasing to the Lord *without* their departing from iniquity and without implementing the "separating from them." To justify this, they arrive at the foolish principle that uses one word of Scripture to make void another. As if the exercise of "love" would give us a right to deny the truth and to set aside the commandments of the Lord! Let us be fair in our dealing with the Word. Such considerations are plain rudeness towards the Lord. We are not permitted to give the first place to brothers and only second place to the Lord.

Both things we must bring into practice: "withdraw from their midst" *and* "to bear the infirmities of the weak" in the Assembly of God (Rom. 15:1).

Now let us ask, "Who does Scripture refer to when it speaks of 'the weak'?" First of all, it does not use this term to refer to unbelievers. Therefore every application to them is wrong. Neither does it refer to believers who are not too particular about evil and the Word of God. Romans 14 shows us exactly the opposite. These "weak ones" were weak in their knowledge, they lacked light but not faithfulness. Those, however, who know the will of the Lord and fail to do it should not count themselves among the weak, but among the disobedient. The Scriptures never speak of "the weak" or of "infirmities" when the clear commandments of the Lord are not adhered to. It speaks of "the weak" when dealing with "doubtful questions" of daily life. Then it portrays "the weak" as those who, still being weak in understanding the way of full salvation, were afraid to eat meat, and still celebrated Jewish days. Their sole purpose was to please the Lord, while disobedience to the clear commandments of the Lord was the farthest thing from their minds. Paul connects "the strong" with himself ("We, who are strong" — Rom. 15: 1). They are the ones who, like himself, had in faith laid hold of the perfect salvation and lived in it.

### *Those who have separated are not any purer!*

Finally let us give some thought to the protest that it is not purer and cleaner in the circles of those who did separate, than of those who did not do so. Therefore many believe that there is no need to separate.

Be it inward or outward unfaithfulness, it is ever a serious matter and the Lord will certainly deal with each individual. To propose that shortcomings and sins are reasons for not following the clear instruction of the Lord to separate is a twisting of the straight paths of the Lord. We are never told to leave from the midst of unbelievers to enter into the midst of the perfect. A perfect congregation we will not find; even the first one was not perfect. Sins were found in the first assembly, and, sad to say, today too, sins occur among God's children. But the command of "departing from among them," does not at all deal with the question of greater purity or uncleanness, but with that of believing or unbelieving. And besides that with the question whether or not evil and unrighteousness is dealt with according to the Scriptures: whether it is judged and done away when there is no repentance, or that unrighteousness and matters which are in conflict with Scripture are tolerated, while own ideas are adhered to and maintained.

Failures and the results of weakness ought not to lead to separation; they must rather be removed in repentance. When, however, unrighteousness or matters which are contrary to Scripture (as we have already mentioned) are established by ordinances and declarations, so that they are acknowledged and enforced while God's Word is silenced, then matters change. Then the child of God is bound to follow: "Let every one who names the name of [the] Lord withdraw from iniquity" (2 Tim. 2:19).

Weakness and imperfection, yes, sins will certainly be found in the circles of those who have separated themselves; one can hardly be blind to this. But sins are dealt with in accordance with Scripture; the Word is kept. Who looks for great power among those who are separated will not find it there either. We just don't live in days of "great power." The Lord says, "Thou hast a little power, and hast kept My Word, and hast not denied My name" (Rev. 3:8).

The Lord doesn't demand "great strength" but faithfulness. All who desire to remain wholeheartedly faithful to the Lord will receive strength from Him to do so (Col. 1 & 2).

### *Counting the cost*

Why does it seem to be so difficult for many a child of God to walk this path? It is because their eyes are not fixed on the outcome of God and the blessing that this contains for them. Could God demand anything of His children that would cause them harm or put them at a disadvantage? Is not all that He demands from us for our own protection and well-being? Why then do we tremble as if it wouldn't bring us any good? Isn't it often so that our soul is only occupied with the "withdrawing," rather than with the "being received"? We look only at that which we have to give up, but not at that which we will receive. To us only men and their fellowship are important and not the fellowship of Christ (Heb. 3:14).

Sure, we will lose things. We lose the fellowship with the things and works of unrighteousness, of darkness, of Belial, of the unbelievers and their idols; but God gives us more and better things than these. He gives us fellowship with the things and works of righteousness, of light and those in which He delights.

I hope you don't fail to see the love in the command of separation that seems so difficult for you! He wants to set you free, to protect you from the dangers of unbelief. He wants to separate you from unbelievers, of their habits, their politics, their occupations, their joy, their worship services, their so-called piety; so that you, freed from these things and separated, may find the fellowship of "sons" and "daughters," and approach Him with praise and worship. God longs to rejoice in you as a father does in his son or daughter. The Son, who leads many sons to glory, desires to raise this song of praise for the Father even now in the hearts of the sons. He says, "In [the] midst of [the] Assembly will I sing Thy praises" (Heb. 2:12).

But before He can raise that song of praise in your heart and mine in the midst of the assembly, we must depart "from their midst," out of the midst of unbelievers. We cannot sing the song of praise together with unbelievers, we cannot meet to the joy of God, with things that are not good in His eyes. As we saw at the beginning, the first step is a "going out," the second one an "entering." First of all we are taught in 2 Timothy 2 to break with unrighteousness (v. 19) and to cleanse ourselves from persons to dishonour (v. 21), then only follows the second instruction telling us with which persons we must call upon the name of the Lord (v. 22).<sup>1</sup>

At times, however, the losses may seem more serious: It may cost you your profession, your office, your income or a lot of money. It can even be, as it was with Paul, that faithfulness to the Lord costs you your position, friends, your source of earthly happiness, or even your life. Only faith can go such a path. But it ever remains true: The path of obedience is the path of blessing. What a consolation it is that the Lord does not only add "And I will receive you," to His invitation, but also "and I will be to you for a Father." He is the Father of all His children, but in this verse it is a special promise for those who travel the path of separation. To them He says, "I will be to you for a Father." And this Father is "the Lord Almighty." His hands are also mighty in earthly affairs.

Look at Amaziah (2 Chr. 25:1-10); for a hundred talents of silver, Amaziah had acquired 100,000 soldiers from Israel. It was quite a sum. But a man of God came to him and told him that the Lord was not with Israel. He better let them go, and the man of God added, "There is with God power to help and to cast down." It was a difficult thing, seeing the great sum and the king asked what he was to do since he had paid all this money. Now listen to the answer: "Jehovah is able to give thee much more than this." In this, Amaziah was faithful. He forsook the money, setting the men aside, and he had a great victory. The Lord is faithful; He takes notice of obedience.

It may be that we have to go this way alone and forsaken, that we are attacked and considered fools by the world and even by brothers. It should not discourage us. In Abel's time, this was already so. Enoch, Joshua, Caleb, David, Daniel, and others, all stood alone and were contradicted. With the Lord it was not any different. And Paul said of the believers, "All who [are] in Asia ... have turned away from me. No man stood with me, but all deserted me. May it not be imputed to them" (2 Tim. 1:15; 4:16). But the Lord gives a special gift to those who go this path; He gives testimony of them that they have pleased God (Heb. 11:5). That is precious beyond description.

Children of God who walk the path of faith irk the enemy. His attacks are aimed at ruining their testimony and closing their mouths, for he knows all too well that truth sets free; just think of Stephen. Satan could even use a Peter to "rebuke"

---

<sup>1</sup> *We could expand on this last point, but our purpose is to study the first step. Without the first, we cannot take the second. The many objections we have been considering one by one show us how many persons skip that first step and yet like to receive the blessing of the second.*

the Lord and set him up against the Lord when He told His disciples that He would go the path of obedience even into death. Should we be surprised if we have similar experiences on the path of obedience?

These pages may fall into the hands of brothers or sisters who let their lips be used by the enemy to speak against those children of God who have taken their position "outside the camp," who have "gone out to Him." I would like to ask them: Quit doing so! You are speaking against the truth of God. Not those you address err, but you. Search the Scriptures! Beg the Lord for light! You will soon see the truth of separation. Then obey in faith and take sides with them who have gone "forth to Him without the camp" (Heb. 13:13) before you, "bearing His reproach."

Don't seek to escape the light of the truth! You are in need of the Holy Spirit's leading you into "all the truth" (Jn. 16:13). Many speak much of love to the Lord. The Lord, however, says that he it is that loves Him who keeps His commandments (Jn. 14:2 1). Here too, the only issue is the question: "Do you love Me?" The divine command to separate addresses your love.

*Do you want to do the will of the Lord?*

The Lord says: "If any one desires to practice My will, he shall know concerning the doctrine, whether it is of God" (Jn. 7:17). Take special note of this! With these words the Lord pronounces a basic principle of great significance. He says that there is a direct link between the determined will to be obedient and the receiving of light on divine doctrine. Alas, deep down in their hearts many are not at all prepared to face the truth. In such souls there is room for the enemy to work. Egoism, glorifying and serving men, secret roots of sin and other sources of disobedience are often hidden there.

It is the simple truth, understanding the Lord's doctrine depends upon the condition of one's heart. Your conscience must be open and touched by the light of God. For His truth, the Lord does not require your understanding but your heart. He who wants to walk the "way of holiness" may be a "fool," a simple person, but he cannot "err" (Isa. 3 5:8).

To the believers in Philadelphia, the Lord could say: "Thou ... hast kept My Word" (Rev. 3:8). "My Word"! It is for him who loves the Lord a great, precious treasure, beyond description, and full of grace. "Hast kept My Word"! May we all let it enter deeply into our hearts. Let it penetrate, and shine: "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; and I will be to you for a Father, and ye shall be to Me for sons and daughters, saith [the] Lord Almighty."

Thy will be done!

*The End.*

## **THE MINOR PROPHETS (12)**

—R. Been Sr.

Hosea 6.

*Return*

*vv. 1-3.*

These three verses belong actually to chapter 5, for they are a continuation of the last verse of that chapter. The words of these three verses have *not been spoken by the people* during the days of Hosea, but by the prophet himself. In speaking them he appealed to the people, but they did not respond to them.

The last verse of chapter 5 had opened a future door of hope for the nation. If it would acknowledge itself to be guilty before God, if it would be afflicted, then it would early seek God's face. In the first three verses of chapter 6, the prophet continues to say that the people will return to Jehovah. Though He did tear and smite the people, yet He would also heal and bind up. After two days He would revive this people, and on the third day He would raise it, and it would live before His face. Then, the nation would know the Lord; it would even make a real effort to know Him. His going forth was just as sure as the dawn. He would come to the people, and would be a blessing for the land, just as the early and the latter rain.

The prophet had to point the people to many sins. Morally it was already Lo-Ruhamah (not receiving grace) and LoAmmi (not My people), and very soon it would be so in actual fact. Their royal house ran towards its ruin; Baal was being served and worshipped. The priests and the prophets, false ones, were guilty; and so was the entire nation. The land was polluted. It all was enough to make one despondent, and to drive one to despair. But then the prophet Hosea lifts his eye towards the grace of God, and encourages the people to return to Jehovah!

What an invitation this was under the given circumstances, in the midst of such sin! How fortunate for the people that they still had such a man of God in their midst! What will become of a nation when such men keep silent, or when their words find no longer entrance because the ears and the consciences have become insensitive through sin? The prophet includes himself when he speaks of returning to Jehovah. He knows, because he knows God, that the Lord will regard those who return. Had God in earlier days not taken note when the godless king, Ahab humbled himself? Had the judgment not been delayed because of it? Well then, if the people would listen to the call of Hosea, God would still be merciful to them.

Eight hundred years later (Acts 3 and 4), another man of God speaks to the descendants of Hosea's contemporaries about the same subject as Hosea. This witness also points first at the sins of the people. But now the cup is no longer filled to the brim, it overflows. He says:

"But ye denied the holy and righteous One, and asked that a man [that was] a murderer should be granted to you; but the originator of life ye slew, whom God raised from among [the] dead, whereof we are witnesses. Repent therefore and be converted, for the blotting out of your sins, so that times of refreshing may come from [the] presence of the Lord, and He may send Jesus Christ, who was foreordained for you, whom heaven indeed must receive till [the] times of [the] restoration of all things, of which God has spoken by the mouth of His holy prophets since time began. But many of those who had heard the word believed; and the number of the men had become [about] five thousand."

The last sentence is an eloquent addition by the Holy Spirit after the report of the enmity of the priests and the Sadducees in the three preceding verses of Acts 4. Peter spoke eight centuries after Hosea, but both spoke in the same spirit. Throughout the ages, the Holy Spirit has used such witnesses.

The words in verse 14 of chapter 5: "I will be to Ephraim as a lion, and as a young lion to the house of Judah. I, I will tear..." will find their complete fulfillment in the end time, after the rapture of the Assembly. *Then a national awakening will have occurred among the Israelites, but one that will not be accompanied by repentance, conversion, and a returning to Jehovah and the Messiah.* Yet, in Israel's history there has already been a partial fulfillment of this word. Hosea says, "He hath torn, He hath smitten." The exile of the ten and later of the two tribes was such a tearing and smiting.

Yet, Hosea takes particularly this occasion to stir them up to return. If the people of those days had turned to God with repentance and conversion, He would have healed them and bound them up. But the people did not do so then. And the people as a whole will not do it in the future either. The people addressed by Peter did not repent. Yet there was then a remnant that took his words to heart. And so it will be in the end time. The large mass of Israel doesn't hear, doesn't return, and will consequently not be healed and bound up. But the remnant will hear and return to Jehovah. *Verses 2 and 3 apply to this remnant.*

After "two days" the Lord will revive it, and on the third day He will raise it up; then it will live before His face. It is remarkable that this revitalization is connected with, and is pointing to the resurrection of Christ. Just as certain as God has raised the Messiah from among the dead, so shall God revive the remnant. Undoubtedly, there is here mention of a national rather than a personal resurrection, a re-appearance of Israel as a nation, formed out of the remnants of the ten and the two tribes. The prophet Ezekiel mentions that the dead bones will first get sinews, flesh and skin, but not life. They only would stand on their feet after they had been revived by the power of the Holy Spirit (Ezek. 37). Today, Israel as a nation is dead; in a moral sense, obviously. In our days, we live in the "two days" mentioned by Hosea. But for Israel, there is a "third day." Then the people, made up out of the remnant, will arise out of its moral death.

This national resurrection of the nation of Israel, just as the bodily resurrection of the believers of the Assembly, *is linked to the resurrection of Christ.* As the waves and billows of God's judgment over sin, have gone over the Messiah, so the remnant will go through the waves and billows of the great tribulation. But it will rise out of that tribulation just as Christ has risen out of the judgment.

The *third day* is the day in which God reached out with power to raise the Lord Jesus from among the dead. Paul says, "That Christ ... was raised the *third day*, according to the Scriptures." Isaac was under the sentence of death until the *third day*, on which he, figuratively, arose. Jonah, typifying Christ as well as the remnant, was cast upon the dry on the *third*

day. Everywhere in the Old Testament it is shown that the death of Christ was to be followed by His resurrection (See e.g. Ps. 8:5; 16:10-11; 110:1; 109:16).

Yet, there is in verses 2 and 3 not only mention of national resurrection, a national revival, but also of a *spiritual resurrection*; the words "and we shall live before His face" show this. The nation composed of the remnant will know Him, and make every effort to know Him. He will write His law in their heart and mind. All will know Him. The new covenant will be made with this newly resurrected Israel. Spiritually too, this people will be entirely renewed. This is the dawn of the long Millennial day. Then an end has come to the "two days." The richest blessings, figuratively portrayed in verse 3 by the rain, the latter rain, so well-known in Palestine, will be their portion.

There will, therefore, be a *national resurrection* of Israel in a future day. As a nation it will have risen from among the dead. But there is also a totally different, *spiritual mind* found with this new Israel. All possess life from God, this in contrast with the nation of earlier days which, for the greater part, consisted of natural, non-born-again people. Scripture does not speak of a *bodily resurrection* of Israelites who would then go into the blessing of the Millennium. But just as there is a bodily resurrection of the believers of the Assembly, there will also be a concurrent, bodily resurrection of the believers from Israel throughout the ages.

vv. 4-11.

These verses deal with other subjects. First of all verse 4, "What shall I do unto thee, Ephraim? What shall I do unto thee, Judah? For your goodness is as a morning cloud, and as the dew that early passeth away." The word translated by "goodness," others have translated by love, piety, or mercy. We will not try to determine which of these is more correct; it is clear that it speaks of a heart condition that was initially found with the ten and two tribes, or rather, with the entire nation of Israel in its early days. It was a heart condition that was pleasing to the Lord. But this condition had only been present among them in the very first days (Cf. Jer. 2:2). Afterwards it had, as a morning cloud, as the dew at dawn, disappeared. And now the ten as well as the two tribes fell under the same disapproving judgment. These questions were certainly suited to speak directly to the conscience. It was up to both parts of the nation to give a response to them.

Verse 5 gives the answer to the question of verse 4. Because the first heart condition was no longer found with the people, God has spoken through the service of the prophets who admonished the nation, who brought the people the words of the Lord, words of judgment and death. These words had been as a light that goes forth.

The service of the prophets had been a question of life for the people. God from His side sent the prophets so that He could maintain His gracious relationship with the people. These prophets served *when the decline among the people had set in*. They admonished, chastened, spoke of the promises and consolations of God. Samuel served when the priesthood had come to ruin. The service of the Lord's prophets was on the one hand proof of the ruin and on the other hand of the grace of God, who yet came to such a people with His word. That word had pronounced death over them if they would not return from their service of forms to a condition of truth in the heart that was well-pleasing to God.

But the nation went from bad to worse. Not just through idolatry, but even by murdering the prophets (Acts 7:52). Consequently, its link with God was more and more severed. And, once it was estranged from Him, it had to come to all kinds of sin and iniquity.

Yet, outwardly they still served the Lord. The offerings were still brought. The worship, though thoroughly sickened, was still maintained. But what is the sense of offering if there is no practical piety, no real knowledge of God? He cannot have fellowship with unrighteousness. He desires that man show himself in love, truth, and grace towards God and his neighbour. If these are lacking, then all the sacrifices are of no avail. God did not have pleasure in any sacrifice of man if it was not accompanied with an upright walk, in separation of evil (Ps. 40:6). The only One upon whom He has always looked down with pleasure was the Lord Jesus, who was able to say during His life and in His death: "I do always the things that are pleasing to My Father."

The Lord Jesus did twice quote the words of verse 6 in the gospel of Matthew. The first time when the Pharisees criticized His eating and drinking with publicans and sinners; the Lord answered them that they should go and learn what it means, "I will have mercy and not sacrifice." His grace did not reach out to the so-called "righteous," but to sinners (Mt. 9:11-13). The second time he quoted this word when the Pharisees objected to His disciples plucking the ears and eating them on the Sabbath. If they had only understood a little of what it means, "I will have mercy and not sacrifice," they would not have condemned the guiltless (Mt. 12:1-8).

Adam had transgressed the covenant that God had established with him in the form of a commandment, under which God had held him responsible. Later God had done the same with Israel, for they needed to learn what lived in their heart. Had Israel done any better than Adam after God had entered into a covenant with them at Sinai, while giving them the commandments? No, already at Sinai they had broken the covenant; right there they had acted treacherously against Him.

In the verses 8-10, the prophet again deals with Ephraim, the ten tribes. Gilead was a city of workers of unrighteousness, of criminals whose hands were full of blood. On the way to Shechem, the priests lay in wait as a troop of bandits to murder and commit shameful deeds. Besides that, there is another horrible matter in Israel, idolatry, whereby it has become entirely defiled.

What a display of sin! Even the cities of refuge, as Ramoth in Gilead and Shechem, had become places of robbery. Under the pretense that they acted as avengers of blood, the priests murdered those who went to Shechem and robbed them. No wonder, that judgment over such a nation and such priests had become inevitable. When the love and mercy of God will rise as the morning dawn (v. 3), then His judgment will be present as the sun in all its power (v. 5). However, God does not desire judgment, but the sins of man make it necessary for Him.

In verse 11 we suddenly hear again about Judah, to whom it had been said a little earlier, "What shall I do unto thee, Judah?" But now it is said of Judah, "Also, for thee, Judah, is a harvest appointed, when I shall turn again the captivity of My people."

Certainly, Judah will go into captivity, just as Ephraim, but for Judah there would come an end to it. From other prophecies we know that the time of the exile of Judah had been set at seventy years. Then we read the expression, so often used by the prophets, "I shall turn." Here it is used to say, I will bring the captivity of Judah to an end, and restore it. This has indeed happened.

That was "the harvest" that was appointed for Judah. Here we will not dwell on the terrible sin that Judah did commit later when they rejected and crucified the Messiah; for which it has received double. Through all of this, it is clearly evident *that God does not find rest in judgment*. The dove that Noah sent out after the raven returned to the ark, to the place of rest, and in her beak was *the symbol of that peace that follows upon judgment*.

*To be cont'd*

## OUTLINE FOR BIBLE STUDY (25)

### 50. GIDEON'S VICTORY — Judges 7:15-8:28

#### *Outline*

- |                                |                |
|--------------------------------|----------------|
| 1. Gideon's Battle             | Judg. 7:15-22  |
| 2. Ephraim                     | Judg. 7:23-8:3 |
| 3. Succoth, Zebah and Zalmunna | Judg. 8:4-21   |
| 4. Gideon's Downfall           | Judg. 8:22-28  |

#### *Explanation*

1. God, who knew how doubtful things appeared to Gideon, strengthened him by the dream of the Midianite. The armour consisted only of trumpets (God's Word), earthen pitchers (powerlessness), and torches (the life of Christ in weak believers). God glorified Himself in Gideon and his companions (2 Cor. 12:9).

2. Ephraim was jealous, for they had not been called to the battle. Gideon received wisdom from God to appease them.

3. The men of Succoth were too selfish to give some of their bread to Gideon's army before the battle had been fully decided. Gideon promised to punish them in due time. Gideon personally killed the two kings for their lack of mercy they had shown towards his brothers.



4. Gideon did not stay humble (8:23). He made an ephod, an item originally of divine origin. This ephod of Gideon had no value in the eyes of God. Israel had just turned from idolatry and went right back to it (8:27). Since Gideon's heart did not remain humble before God, he called his son Abimelech (v. 32 — "My father is king").

### *Lesson*

God will give us the victory if we are as empty vessels before Him, proclaiming only the Word of God and being lights by having Christ shining through us.

How quickly does jealousy arise among the people of God. And what humility is needed to keep it from becoming a force driving God's children against each other.

There are always those who are full of self-interest. They may seem a tower of strength, and therefore have bread while others lack, yet it is only pretense. When the test comes it is evident that it is not for the Lord's sake, but for self alone. God hates pretense, Gideon broke down their tower and punished these men.

Gideon refused to rule over Israel, but he failed to put the people straight when they said that he had saved them. Then he makes from the booty an ephod as a memorial to that salvation. It is not long before his son's name shows that he considers himself worthy of a king's title. Once we allow pride into a corner of our heart, it will soon reign there.

## **51. JEPHTHAH — Judges 11:1-12:7**

### *Outline*

- |                                   |                |
|-----------------------------------|----------------|
| 1. Jephthah's Origin              | Judg. 11:1-3   |
| 2. Jephthah called back           | Judg. 11:4-11  |
| 3. Prelude to the Ammonite Battle | Judg. 11:12-27 |
| 4. Jephthah's Vow and Victory     | Judg. 11:28-33 |
| 5. Jephthah and His Daughter      | Judg. 11:34-40 |
| 6. Jephthah and Ephraim           | Judg. 12:1-7   |

### *Explanation*

1. Since Jephthah was an illegitimate son of his father, his brethren rejected him.
2. When the need arises, he is called back.
3. Jephthah shows that he is well acquainted with what God has done in the past for his people.
4. Jephthah had not yet learned the important lesson from Ecclesiastes 5:1 (Ps. 141:3).
5. Jephthah's daughter goes as a dead person in separation. She had known no man.
6. Jephthah did not have the same humble spirit as Gideon. He is prepared to go to war against Ephraim and defeats them.

### *Lesson*

Jephthah is in many ways a picture of Christ: in his rejection by his brothers, in relinquishing his rights and departure for a foreign country, and in his return as ruler (Lk. 19:11-27).

Jephthah's daughter was submissive to the will of her father, no matter how difficult it was for her. Her voluntary submission is surpassed only by our Saviour's.

## 52. SAMSON AS JUDGE — Judges 13 and 14

### *Outline*

1. Samson's parents                      Judg. 13:1-25
2. His Journeys to Timnathah        Judg. 14:1-9
3. His Riddle                            Judg. 14:10-14
4. Samson's Anger                     Judg. 14:15-20

### *Explanation*

1. Samson's parents were told that their son was to be a Nazarite.
2. Samson is not spiritually minded, he loves the world (1 Jn. 2:15-16).
3. His wife's betrayal of the secret should have been a warning to Samson. God's law did not permit an Israelite to marry a heathen.
4. Despite his worldliness, the Lord uses Samson to punish the enemy.

### *Lesson*

Through their wickedness, the children of Israel had been delivered into the hands of the Philistines. Their apostasy was so great that they no longer wished to be delivered. Yet God in His free grace provided the deliverance using Samson as His instrument.

A Nazarite was to refrain from wine and strong drink (a picture of separation from the world and its pleasures). No razor should come upon his head: he was to let the hair of his head grow (long hair speaks of submissiveness and dependence). He should not touch a dead body (avoid all sin and uncleanness — Num. 6:1-7).

*To be cont'd.*

## **THE PATH TO HOLINESS**

—*J. N. Darby*

It is not always in the correction of the failures which come before us that sources of unhappiness are healed; they disappear when souls are nourished upon the riches which are in Christ. We must think of this; we must, while ourselves feeding upon Christ — and He gives us to feed on Him without stint — cause others to breathe a new atmosphere, where Christ is, and, if souls are exercised before God there, they are transformed into His likeness, so that their affections flow out even as His flowed out in this world. It is a great thing to say, and undoubtedly we find ourselves far from our Model, but in proportion as we realise Christ in our hearts we reflect Him without being aware of it. The "I" disappears as a motive principle, and the life of Christ is manifested. Real exercise of soul is necessary to produce this result: "Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus," says the apostle. "Death works in us." There are however these three things. "Ye are dead" (Col. 3); this is the judgment of God. "Reckon yourselves to be dead;" this is what faith does, in answer: it is liberty through the grace of the Holy Spirit. "Always bearing about in the body the dying of Jesus;" this is the practical carrying out of it. If we had not the two first, the third would make the *monk*; with the two first it makes the *saint*, where Christ is all.