

Jude (16)

—H. L. Heijkoop

But ye, beloved, remember the words spoken before by the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ, that they said to you, that at [the] end of the time there should be mockers, walking after their own lusts of ungodliness. These are they who set [themselves] apart, natural [men], not having [the] Spirit. (Jude 17-19).

After having given a clear description of those who had got into the assembly and the judgment that will come over them, Jude now begins to occupy himself again with the needs of the faithful, those whom he described in verse 1 as "beloved in God [the] Father and preserved in Jesus Christ." These are the ones who walk separated from all the wickedness and evil that he has described.

He distinguishes them expressly from the wicked ones by addressing them with "But ye," in contrast with "they, these" etc. He calls them "beloved" just as in verses 3 and 20. As we saw at verse 3, the word has been derived from the Greek word *agapao*, the word for divine love. Thereby he connects them again with verse 1: "beloved in God [the] Father." He loves them because they are the objects of God's love.

He sees them surrounded by these men, in the present Christian era, and wants to strengthen their souls by words of wisdom and guidance. At the same time, he points them to the resources and means whereby they can be kept from the wiles and deceit of the enemy.

But first of all he reminds them that he was not writing them anything new. The apostles of the Lord Jesus Christ had told them the same things. Even the Lord Jesus had warned the disciples that false prophets would arise and mislead many (Mt. 24:11,24, etc.). Undoubtedly, the apostles have later warned them as well. Peter, for one, writes so emphatically (2 Pet. 3). And they did not just say these things, but God in His grace has caused them to write it down as well. In the days that Jude wrote his Epistle, already two apostles had written about it: Paul and Peter. And afterwards God gave us also John's Epistles and Revelation.

How gracious is God to give us His Word wherein we may not only see the fulness of God's counsels — the revelation of the Lord Jesus and His work on the cross and all the wonderful results of that work — but also the means of our safe-keeping which God has provided for us here on earth. There is no danger, no evil, or the Word of God has warned us for it and given us the means to remain standing in the midst of that evil.

In principle the evil that we see now openly around us developed itself in the last days of the apostles. Not that it was evident to everyone; outwardly all seemed to be good (see Rev. 2:1-7). But He who holds the seven stars in His right hand and walks in the midst of the seven candlesticks, saw that hearts left their first love. And He who has eyes as a flame of fire saw the woman Jezebel at work (Rev. 2:18-28). He gave eyes to His disciples to see things that others didn't see. He also allowed them — though in themselves just as imperfect and erring as we — to write these things down with divine perfection. And while doing so, He caused them to describe the path and the place of a faithful one during the time that these things would have become fully developed. What a grace!

Didn't Paul warn the elders of the assembly at Ephesus (in Scripture the prototype of the entire Assembly) that "there will come in amongst you after my departure grievous wolves, not sparing the flock; and from among your own selves shall rise up men speaking perverted things to draw away the disciples after them" (Acts 20:29-30)? And didn't he write to Timothy, when the latter was in Ephesus, "that in latter times some shall apostatise from the faith, giving their mind to deceiving spirits and teachings of demons" (1 Tim. 4: 1), and that there would be difficult times in the last days (2 Tim. 3:1)? And the Second Epistle to the Thessalonians contains more instructions of this kind.

Didn't Peter write that it is the time in which the judgment must begin at the house of God (1 Pet. 4:17)? And how serious doesn't he write in his second Epistle, especially in chapter 3! John writes that the antichrist will come, and that even now there are many antichrists (1 Jn. 2:18 etc.). How clearly does John describe in Revelation 2 and 3 how the Lord Jesus sees the assembly. Then nearly all was prophetic, now pretty well all is history.

God gave us these warnings, lest we would be alarmed and discouraged when we see the work of the enemy around us: in Christendom in general, but by times even in our immediate surroundings! Don't ever think: "These tools of Satan cannot

enter among us to do their corruptive work there." Even if we would think so through blindness to our own failures and weaknesses, then the sad experiences of the past should tell us differently! Didn't the Lord expose some among us even after they had occupied a prominent place for many years? Let us stay close to the Lord, so that we may receive light from Him. And if God has given some the special gift of "discerning of Spirits" (1 Cor. 12:10), then let us listen to their warnings when they discern persons though we do not yet see anything.

Isn't it remarkable how reverently Jude speaks here of the Lord Jesus. He, who according to the flesh was a brother of the Lord Jesus, since he was a son of Mary and Joseph, calls himself in verse 1 a *bondman* of the Lord. And here, and also in verses 21 and 25 (see also 5 and 14), he speaks only about the *Lord* Jesus Christ. Precisely in a time in which, even in Christianity, the authority of the Lord is denied, we must most carefully watch that we, also in the words we use, recognize His Lordship!

Evidently the apostles had said such things earlier, and Peter wrote "*that there shall come at [the] close of the days mockers*" (2 Pet. 3:3). Today's open demonstration of things that Scripture connects with the closing days, shows us that we live in that time. A most sobering thought! On the one hand it causes us not to be alarmed by the manifestation of evil in the assembly, no matter how serious it becomes. On the other, it causes us to be watchful, lest we be dragged along. And with it we have the glorious certainty that it is "the end of time": the coming of the Lord is near. That is not to say that this time could not be extended! The Lord Himself compares the time of His coming for judgment with the days of Noah (Mt. 24:37ff). But precisely in regard to the days of Noah Scripture says that the long-suffering of God was waiting (1 Pet. 3:20). "The Lord does not delay His promise, as some account of delay, but is longsuffering towards you, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance" (2 Pet. 3:9). God's judgment will only come when the evil has completely shown itself and after God's patience has endured its utmost.

They would not just be men living in sin and lawlessness, but mockers! Men without reverence, not hesitant to mock and deride the most holy things. Not to have reverence for the things of God is a terrible thing in God's eyes. Peter says that they mock with the doctrine of the Lord's soon return. In Psalm 1 the man who does not sit in the seat of mockers is called blessed. But the clearest evidence how serious mocking is, we find in 2 Kings 2:23-24. Elisha was the prophet of grace, just as Elijah was more the prophet of judgment. In Elisha's history we find only demonstrations of grace: help in circumstances resulting from sin and departure from God. Yet twice he has to announce judgment, and here we have the only time that he himself executes judgment. And what was the cause of this judgment? The children mocked the ascension of Elijah (a remarkable type of the Assembly's being taken up to be with the Lord - 1 Th. 4:17), by saying to Elisha, "Baldhead, go up!" In other words: Follow Elijah! Wouldn't we have excused this with words like: "They are only children, they don't know any better!"? Doesn't Scripture say: "Folly is bound in the heart of a child" (Prov. 22:15)? But the man of grace, no doubt directed by God, cursed them and bears came and tore 42 of them. It is well for us to keep our tongue and humour under control when it concerns the things of God.

walking after their own lusts of ungodliness

Actually the Greek puts it stronger yet, "lusts for impious things." Their mocking unbelief is but an expression of their inward corruption: the lusts of their hearts go only out towards ungodly deeds. In the normal manner of speech we think of ungodliness as a rough, publicly sinful, mocking lifestyle, but it isn't just that! It actually means that they take no account of God; in their lives and thoughts is no place for God and therefore they are separated from God.

These mockers are not the kind of people of which the world would say that they live without God or command. In name and outwardly they are Christians. This is very clear from verse 4. They certainly are not children as in the story of Elisha. They are men who consider themselves to be wise and well-taught. But in their thoughts, in their desires, the lusts of their hearts, there is no place for God. They may be professors in theology (that science concerning God and things divine), and consequently be occupied with these things all their life, but in their theology there is no place for God. It is *their* theology; the wisdom of a brain that doesn't know God nor takes account of Him. Their god is the god of fantasy: one of their own making.

These are the men who laugh mockingly while they shake their heads full of compassion for those backwards people who still believe in the inspiration of the Bible. They say: "That hopelessly antiquated idea we certainly have laid to rest in our times." A well-known expositor of Bible study books written to help Christian educators wrote this a few years ago to a friend of mine. They smile about those who in their ignorance still believe literally what it says in the first chapters of Genesis and many other places of God's Word. They are indignant when one dares to speak of an eternal judgment: their god is a god of love, who eventually will bring all men (even the devil) to heaven, or in the worst case, will annihilate the ungodly. *They* will determine what in the Bible is really of God and what isn't. And this they do in such a way that in the

end nothing is left but a book written by falsifiers - yet a good book, which, though it tells a lot of untruths, is still a very worthwhile book.

At one time these men gave a good impression and spoke nice words. They were confirmed, just as if they had faith; they were baptized and received into the Christian company. They announced the Lord's death and shared in the community of the church. But their hearts became tired of the Truth and they became its most bitter enemies. The corruption of the best is always the worst corruption. They confessed to be believers, but in reality they were servants of Satan.

these are they who set [themselves] apart

The word "themselves" is placed in brackets for by far the majority of manuscripts do not have it. The sentence can therefore also be translated as: "make separations." The Greek word *apodiorizo* occurs only here in the New Testament. It is a verb composed of *apo* (from), *dia* (asunder), and *horizo* (to limit). Without the preposition *apo* (thus: *diorizo*) it is for instance used in Leviticus 20:24 (separated), and a related word (*aphorizo*) is used in Matthew 25:32 (He shall separate them from one another), Acts 19:9 (separated), 2 Corinthians 6:17 (be separated), Galatians 2:12 (separated himself), and Luke 6:22 (they... separate).

Since God's Word repeatedly speaks of separation, turning away from, withdrawing, etc., it may be good to pay some attention to this thought. From the above verses it is already evident that there is a separation that God wants to see as well as one that is wrong. In Leviticus 20 and Matthew 25 we have a separating done by the Lord Himself, and in 2 Corinthians 6 one demanded by God. It is also clear that in Acts 19 it was according to God's thoughts, while what Peter did in Galatians 2 was absolutely wrong. God's Word commands us to separate ourselves from the world (2 Cor. 6:11-7:1; 1 Jn. 2:15-17, etc.), from all unrighteousness in Christendom (2 Tim. 2:19-22); and to go outside the camp. Besides this we are told to "remove the wicked person from amongst yourselves" (1 Cor. 5:13), and to reject a heretical (i.e. sectarian) man after two admonitions, as well as to turn away from those who create divisions and occasions of falling, contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned (Rom. 16:17). But then there are also various wrongful separations mentioned (1 Cor. 1:10-15; 3:1-8; 11:18; Gal. 2:12, and Jude :19, etc.).

1 Corinthians 11:18-19 helps a great deal in this. There were divisions (*schismata*) among the believers of Corinth and the apostle adds: "For there must also be sects (*haireisis*) among you, that the approved may become manifest among you."

The word *schisma* occurs in Matthew 9:16; Mark 2:2 1; John 7:43; 9:16; 10:19; 1 Corinthians 1:10; 11:18 and 12:25. In the New Translation it is always translated by "division," so it is in the KJV, except in 1 Corinthians 12:25, where it is rendered "schism."

The word *haireisis* occurs in Acts 5:17; 15:5; 24:5, 14; 26:5; 28:22; 1 Corinthians 11:19; Galatians 5:20, and 2 Peter 2:1. The New Translation (NT) renders this word "sect" in all but two places, the KJV does so everywhere in the Acts except in Acts 24:14. There, and everywhere else, the KJV has "heresy," the word used by the NT in 2 Peter 2:1. In Galatians 5:20 the NT has "schools of opinion;" a rendering that gives the general idea of the Greek word very well.

Another word, *dichostasia* occurs in Romans 16:17 (there rendered "division" by both the KJV and NT) and in Galatians 5:20 (where it is rendered "sedition" by the KJV and "disputes" by the NT).

Looking over these Scriptures, we see that in the Word of God a sect is worse than a schism. Schisms are contained within the assembly, but sects are seen outwardly. A "schism" (rent) is a division within the assembly while outwardly all relationships remain as before, yet there is division of thought and feelings through fleshly taking-of-sides or prejudices. It has more the character of parties which are in spirit estranged from each other but who are still linked together by the observance of assembly functions. This is the character of the persons in Romans 16:17-18, although there there is more a reference to the results: discord. When this is found, those who are spiritual, the tried ones, they who want to maintain "the doctrine which ye have learned" — namely, that we must not only outwardly walk together, but also inwardly, acting with more true love, even if we don't think alike on all matters — they must withdraw from such persons (*ekklino* occurs only in Rom. 3:12 [gone out of the way] and 1 Pet. 3:11 [eschew — KJV; avoid — NT]).

This is not a question of removing from the Lord's table; it has nothing to do with that! One must avoid such persons, depart from them. Normally (not always) it concerns men who have gifts: teachers, preachers, evangelists. One should no longer make himself one with their work, no longer invite them, and if they invite themselves, not accept their service. Obviously, they will be affected by this, but that is the purpose of it. Thus they become aware of their position and condition, and this should bring them to repentance. If this happens, all ends happily. If they become bitter, however, the end will be that they will make an outward division by forming a sect.

In Corinth there were many schisms, and they had to develop further and become sects, so that it would become evident who were the approved. This would reveal who would not let himself be pushed into a party but, by looking only at the Lord Jesus, kept the well-being of the entire assembly of God at heart. A sect is an association of people who confess to be Christians, but who are associated by another tie than the Holy Spirit. He Himself is the only proper tie, for He has baptized all believers into the one body of Christ (1 Cor. 12:13).

As such, a sect has therefore nothing to do with a wrong doctrine or a deviating doctrine, though it may well be connected with one, as often is the case. In principle it is simply the activity of self-will, which sets own thoughts, and *Self* above the Assembly of the living God.

It is clear that the men of whom Jude wrote do not separate themselves outwardly, but that they stay among the believers. This follows very clearly from verses 4, 12, etc. And it is just as clear that they do not separate themselves from evil, be it moral or doctrinal. In a proud, pharasaic (=separating) spirit, glorying in their higher knowledge or intellectual progress, they depart inwardly from the humble believers who go faithfully their way, trusting in God and His Word. In reality they also miss communion, for they have nothing in common. And it is just as clear from the preceding verses that it is the duty of every believer to separate himself from such people. They should not be admitted to the fellowship of believers and no one should in any way join them. "Every one who names the name of [the] Lord withdraw from iniquity. But in a great house there are not only gold and silver vessels, but also wooden and earthen; and some to honour, and some to dishonour. If therefore one shall have purified himself from these, [in separating himself from them], he shall be a vessel to honour, sanctified, serviceable to the Master, prepared for every good work. But youthful lusts flee, and pursue righteousness, faith, love, peace, with those that call upon the Lord out of a pure heart" (2 Tim. 2:19-22).

natural [men], not having [the] Spirit.

The Greek word *psuchikos*, translated "natural men," is derived from *psyche* or soul. It is found in the New Testament in 1 Corinthians 2:14; 15:44; James 3:15 as an adjective, and in 1 Corinthians 15:46 and Jude :19 as noun. It stands for a man, or a body (1 Cor. 15:44), who is alive because of its soul; and therefore a man as created by God (Gen. 2:7), but we must take into account that he is now a sinner. In all places the word is used in contrast with that which is heavenly or spiritual; the *pneumatikos*. This latter word is a man (or body — 1 Cor. 15:44), who lives and is characterized by the Spirit. He is therefore born again, sealed (Eph. 1:13), and walking (Rom. 8:4,5,14), through the Holy Spirit. It is the normal Christian position according to Scripture.

Sad to say, not all who are born again — who are therefore no longer natural men — are spiritual. Scripture uses two words to identify these men. The first one is *sarkikos* (Rom. 15:27; 1 Cor. 3:3; 9:11; 2 Cor. 1:12; 10:4; and 1 Pet. 2:11), the second is *sarkinos* (Rom. 7:14; 1 Cor. 3:1; 2 Cor. 3:3; Heb. 7:16). In classical Greek the latter word is generally used in reference to the body, the material of which the body consists, therefore the "flesh." In the last two places in the New Testament this meaning is quite clear. But I believe that it has the same meaning in Romans 7:14 and 1 Corinthians 3:1, although some younger manuscripts have *sarkikos* in these places. The man in Romans 7 is born again and desires to do good, but he does not have the strength for it, because he is not yet set free; the Holy Spirit does as yet not dwell in him. He feels his inability to fulfill the law.

Apart from Romans 15:27 and 1 Corinthians 9:11, where the word is used in a general sense (i.e. material), *sarkikos* presumes a fleshly will. It is translated by carnal (everywhere but in 2 Cor. by the KJV) or fleshly (everywhere but in 1 Cor. by the NT).

In short, we find therefore that every man on earth is in one of the following three conditions, all mentioned in 1 Corinthians 2:14-3:3:

1st. The *psuchikos*, the natural man; a man who is not born again and who possesses therefore no spiritual life, but who lives, having a soul, by virtue of his created soul.

2nd. The *sarkinos*, who indeed is born again, but who is, not delivered from the power of sin, and therefore not sealed by the Holy Spirit, and also the *sarkikos* who may be sealed, but for whom the flesh has still many attractions, such as human wisdom, ability, eloquence, etc.; he is one who has not judged the flesh in its principle, nor hates it in its various forms and degrees. The man in Romans 7 is *sarkinos* and the Corinthians were *sarkikos* (3:3). In 3:1 Paul does not call them *sarkinos* but says that he had to address them as if they were *sarkinos*; they had the Holy Spirit indwelling (6:19), but they didn't walk in the energy of the Holy Spirit, no matter how many spiritual gifts they might have received. Both these groups are therefore fleshly believers.

3rd. The *pneumatikos*, the spiritual man, the Christian; he is born again, the Holy Spirit dwells in him, and he is led by Him and motivated by Him. This is the normal Christian position as presented in Scripture.

Well, the men about whom Jude writes have only a natural soul. They don't have life in Christ. They are "natural" men. Nor do they have the Holy Spirit, the great privilege of Christians. They are therefore not Christians, no matter what lofty names they arrogate to themselves, for if any one has not [the] Spirit of Christ *he is not of Him*" (Rom. 8:9).

With this ends the description of these apostates. And indeed, apostasy is the end of Christendom. Doesn't Paul in his last letter describe Christendom of the last days with the same words he used for the corrupted gentile world in Romans 1 (2 Tim. 3)? Has apostasy not been the end of each dispensation? Before the Flood, God saw that all flesh had corrupted its ways on earth (Gen. 6:11-12). After the Flood, men gave themselves up to idolatry, so that God had to call Abraham out of the world to walk with Him alone. The seed of Abraham was put in a privileged position and God gave them a rich revelation of Himself and His thoughts to deliver them from the evil in the world around them, yet God had to scatter them among the nations. And when He allowed a small remnant of the two tribes to return from Babel, giving them the tremendous privilege of Jehovah Himself coming among them to reveal grace and truth to them, they crucified Him, so that He had to remove them from the land as well. And now we have the last thing, Christendom. Could there be a more exalted thing, a greater grace than Christianity? God has been fully revealed as the triune God, as life and light. Man has been redeemed by the unfathomable, immeasurable, infinite work of the Son of God on the cross. After this, the Holy Spirit came on earth to baptize these redeemed ones into one body, so that He could dwell permanently in it and in each Christian individually. The glorified Christ is the Head of this body, which in turn is His bride. And what a future is in store for her; to reign with Christ over the universe, and to dwell forever in the Father's House, made one with her Head and Bridegroom.

But also Christendom will end in apostasy. The beginning of it was already present in the last days of the apostles. But although the great mass of the saints in those days saw little or nothing of it (aren't even in our days most believers not blind for it?), God gave inspired descriptions of the apostasy so that everyone, who reads His Word and believes it, might be prepared and know how he has to behave himself under such circumstances. We have complete descriptions, in clearer words and darker colours than we perhaps had dared to use if God by His instructions had not taught us this.

But faith is a wonderful thing. After the Apostle Paul, as we have seen, in his last letter (with the martyr's death before his eyes) had described the total apostasy of Christendom, we hear the victor's shout about the crown which was laid away for him and for all who love His appearing. He, who had received not a spirit of cowardice, but of power, and love, and of wise discretion, knew that the Lord would deliver him from every evil work for His heavenly kingdom (2 Tim. 1:7; 4:8,18). We find the same with Jude. He doesn't end with the work of men, although he saw the total corruption of it. His faith saw beyond men to Him who is the object of faith, and whose grace and resources are greater than the power of all evil, than all corruption, than all the needs of those who look up to Him for help.

To be cont'd

THE MINOR PROPHETS (16)

—R. Been Sr.

Hosea 10

The fruit of the lie

This chapter is divided into:

1. *Verses 1-4.* The idolatry in Israel. All fruit for God is lacking. As a poisonous herb, God's judgment is greening on the fields.
2. *Verses 5-8.* The judgment will come over the inhabitants of Samaria, over the idol priests and the king. The high places, where idolatry was committed, will be removed.
3. *Verses 9-12.* A glance back over Israel's history. The people are admonished to return to Jehovah.
4. *Verses 13-15.* The fruit of the lie. The misplaced trust of the nation and its consequences.

Verses 1-4. Israel is an empty, unpruned vine, which indeed produced fruit, but not for Jehovah, but *for Israel itself* (see 9:4). The kingdom of the ten tribes had grown, and seemed strong, full of inner-strength. Initially God had had delight in Israel, the kingdom of the twelve tribes, then the fathers had been as "grapes in the wilderness" (9:10), as "the first-ripe fruits of the fig-tree," but soon it had left the living God for the golden calf and later for Baal-Peor. Ephraim had used all its material wealth to *multiply its altars*, and according to the goodness of the land it had erected *more and more beautiful idol images*.

Israel was the vine and the vineyard of Jehovah (Ps. 80:8-9; Isa. 5:7), wherein He had done all that was required to produce fruit for Him. But instead of noble fruits, the vineyard had produced stinking grapes, which did not glorify the Husbandman, Jehovah. Israel had not answered to the expectations; it did bring forth fruit, but fruit which besides being stinking through their wrong doings, was only for themselves. The Lord Jesus did bear perfect fruit *for God*; therefore He could say: "I am the *true* Vine." And if today's believers wish to bear fruit for God, they must live their lives in a living and practical communion with the Lord Jesus.

Israel multiplied altars. God only knew of *two* altars (Ps. 84:3), which were a joy for every pious Israelite. They were the brazen altar of burnt-offering — a type of Christ's work of redemption on the cross — and the golden altar of incense — speaking of the glorification of God.

The heart of the people was divided; besides an outward service for the Lord they erected more and more idol-altars on which they brought bloody sacrifices, at times even their own children. No wonder that the Lord would judge these images, He would destroy them and break down their altars.

Hosea speaks of a time in which there wouldn't be a king over the ten tribes. Indeed, there came a period without a king just prior to the ascension to the throne of King Hoshea, Israel's last king. During that period, the people could say that they had no king. But the fault of this lay not with Jehovah but with the people that added to these words: "*We feared not Jehovah, and a king, what can he do for us?*" He would anyway have lacked the power to save them from the scorn and humiliation that had come their way through their own fault. Here is no evidence of a longing for God, for a return of Jehovah as their King *but only a forced subjection to a stronger power of which they were not able to free themselves*. Their heart is hardened. The rod of discipline surely came over them, but their conscience was not awakened.

This certainly is evident from verse 4. The prophet presents three serious accusations against the people: *They speak hollow words, swear false oaths, and make covenants*. Even though they had momentarily humbled themselves, their words remained hollow. King Hoshea, in making a covenant with the king of Assyria, had sworn falsely to him. For afterwards he looked treacherously for support from the king of Egypt (2 Ki. 17:4-6). Later Zedekiah, the last king of Judah, did the same thing towards the king of Babylon (2 Chr. 36:13). The judgment over these things sprang up as a poisonous plant in the furrows of the fields, spoiling the harvest. The king of Assyria, in revenge for the treason of Hoshea, came up against the ten tribes, laid siege before Samaria, took the city and led the people captive to Assyria.

vv. 5-8.

And what did the people of Samaria do in face of the judgment that came over them? *They were concerned "about their calf,"* the idol that was placed in Bethel, the place that the prophet indignantly referred to as Beth-Aven (4:15; 5:8; 10:8 — house of unrighteousness, or house of idols). In Joshua's days there actually was a place called Beth-Aven (Josh. 18:12), when the rather restricted boundaries of Benjamin were determined, it was mentioned as a wilderness not far from Bethel. But the prophet used the name Beth-Aven to indicate what had become of Bethel, the house of God. King Jeroboam I had erected golden calves at Dan and Bethel. And especially the one at Bethel had played a major role. Since then, Bethel had been a house of idols. In earlier days God had confirmed His promises to Jacob at Bethel (Gen. 28:19; 35:15).

The prophet calls the people here: "the people of the calf." It would tremble because of the fate of the calf, and mourn about it; not just the people, but also the Chemarim (the idol priests) who had always been happy with the rituals connected with the calves. Obviously this calf could not deliver itself. It would be taken to Assyria as war booty of King Jareb (fighting spirit). When Israel would see that the calf could not deliver itself, that the basis on which they relied failed them, they would mourn over their idol. The idol priests would tremble. Just as in a later day the Ephesians would be aroused to save their idol Diana (Artemis), so the idol priests feared that all their gain would vanish once the golden calf would be gone. The *material* value of idolatry played a major role in the sadness of the priests and the people. Their god, which brought them great material gain, was taken from them and taken to Assyria.

The prophet compares the King of Israel to *foam on the waters*, a picture of an utter lack of value. The heights of Beth-Aven, the idol temples, would be destroyed. Thorns and thistles would grow upon the altars. The invasion of the Assyrier would be so terrible that the people would rather die than live. It would say to the mountains: Fall upon us, and to the hills: Cover us. The Lord Jesus referred to these words when speaking to the women who bewailed Him and mourned for Him while He went to Golgotha (Lk. 23:30). The prophet Isaiah speaks in the same spirit about the fear and terror (Isa. 2:19). Revelation also uses these words to describe the terror and anxiety caused by the judgments during the great tribulation (Rev. 6:16).

vv. 9-12.

In these verses the prophet looks back at Israel's (the twelve tribes') history, all the way to the days of the terrible events at Gibeon (Jud. 19). That sin had not been contained within the walls of the city, but the entire nation had been defiled by it. The fight against "the children of iniquity" (the Benjaminites) had not caused the people to stay far from their sin. Therefore, God would cause His hand of discipline to come upon them. They would have to bear the terrible results of two evils in Israel: they had forsaken Jehovah, the fountain of living water, and hewn themselves broken cisterns that hold no water — a metaphor speaking of the service of calves at Dan and Bethel (Jer. 2:13).

Ephraim, the personification of the ten tribes, loved, so the prophet continues, to tread out corn. But it had withdrawn itself from the preparatory and heavier tasks. Yet, it had been used to the yoke, and it didn't lack the strength to bear it. God saw this strength, and He would force Ephraim under the yoke, for it lacked only the will to obey and kicked back, it resisted. God would force it to plow and harrow, and so He would do to Judah. This, trimmed from all metaphors, means that Ephraim and Judah, although under different circumstances and at different times, would, through their exile, *become bondmen of strangers and be forced to work in a foreign land for strangers, to do the heaviest work, so that these strangers would have a good harvest.*

In verse 12 the prophet urges the people once more to seek Jehovah. It was high time to sow in righteousness and to harvest in blessing, to clear the land, to start a new life, the fruit of new birth. Israel was as a field that had long been left fallow, full of thorns and weeds. For such a field, deep and thorough plowing was of prime importance. The people had to be cleansed from wickedness that was rooted down deeply.

The prophet Jeremiah presents the same picture to the people. But he adds to it that they should not sow among the thorns, for then they could not expect fruit. This means that they had to do away their evil acts, to confess them to God and to judge them. They had to circumcise themselves before the Lord, to really do away with the evil in their hearts (Jer. 4:3-4).

Taking it all together, we see how beautiful verses 11 and 12 really are; though they may be a little difficult to understand at first. Ephraim chose not to serve God. He loved the freedom that he enjoyed while "treading out the corn." But from ploughing he shied away, for it would bind him under a yoke. But, and here we have the beautiful application of the metaphor, the ploughshare had to go deep into the hearts and consciences of the people. Even a second ploughing was needed. Only then could righteousness be sown and blessing be reaped from the "field" of the heart. That was the only way, the prerequisite of repentance and departure from evil, under which they would seek the Lord (for which it was high time). Then He would not let Himself be waited for, but would come to them and rain blessing upon them. The righteous experiences righteousness from the Lord, a fitting reward. But it was not possible to receive such a blessing without repentance and conversion.

What a glorious relationship exists between these verses! A change in the sinful condition of the people beginning from within would be followed by an outward change. Of course, the inward change had to be worked from above, but God was prepared to do so. In this we see once again the deeper sense of the words of the prophets.

We would observe that the words: "break up your fallow ground" may also be rendered "plow a second plowing."

vv. 13-15.

Israel had plowed wickedness, reaped iniquity, and eaten the fruit of lies. They had walked in self-confidence, and built upon the multitude of their heroes. But the heroes could not prevent the internal weakness of the people from being displayed.

Therefore a great tumult would arise among the nations. The NIV speaks of the "roar of battle." All the strongholds of Israel would be destroyed; just as Salman had destroyed Beth-Arbel in a terrible way, so it would come over all the fortresses of Israel. There is no further mention of Beth-Arbel in Scripture.

The King of Israel would be utterly cut off at day-break, at dawn. This is to say, death would very suddenly take him away. With King Hoshea, the kingship over Israel, over the ten tribes, came to an abrupt end. Even in the future there will not be a king over the ten-tribe nation, for the ten tribes, that is to say a mere remnant of them, will be reunited with the two tribes under a King of the house of David (1:11).

All the misery coming over Israel was the result of Bethel. The prophet calls the service of the calves, "the wickedness of your wickedness." It is a form of speech found more often in Scripture which has a superlative sense. We would speak of "utter wickedness" or "wickedness to perfection."

How terrible then is the sin of Jeroboam, the son of Nebat, *who made Israel to sin*. How far-reaching were its results!

To be cont'd.

OUTLINE FOR BIBLE STUDY (28)

59. AMALEK DEFEATED. SAUL REJECTED. DAVID ANOINTED. — 1 Samuel 15-16

Outline

1. Saul's Disobedience 1 Samuel 15:1-9
2. His Rejection 1 Samuel 15:10-31
3. David Anointed 1 Samuel 16:1-13
4. David in Saul's Court 1 Samuel 16:14-23

Explanation

1. The battle against Amalek truly showed Saul's character. We see his insincerity in chapter 15:13. Saul's will was in opposition to God's.
2. Saul's disobedience was the cause of his rejection by God (Lk. 1:52; Dan. 2:21). Samuel dealt with Agag according to God's commandments. Israel had rejected Jehovah but Jehovah did not forsake Israel.
3. God provided a man after His heart to be king (1 Sam. 13:14). At the anointing Samuel would have chosen Eliab or another son of Jesse but it is not the outward appearance that is important, but the heart.
4. At Saul's court David was trained for his royal calling. Saul continued to live without God and came more and more under the power of darkness (Isa. 48:22; Prov. 3:33).

Lesson

God does not delight in outwardly religious sacrifices but in a contrite heart that listens to Him and glorifies Him (1 Sam. 15:22-23). Saul's repentance (1 Sam. 15:30) was not a godly repentance, he thought only of his own honour and the people's respect for himself. The one that was despised and forgotten was here the elected one (1 Cor. 1:27-29). David is a type of Christ, who was despised and not esteemed (Isa. 53; Ps. 118:22, 23).

60. DAVID AND GOLIATH - 1 Samuel 17

Outline

1. Goliath's Defiance 1 Samuel 17:1-11
2. David's Courage of Faith 1 Samuel 17:12-58

Explanation

1. The battle with the Philistines brought another opportunity to bring to light the difference in the characters and values of Saul and David. The Israelites were fearful because of the fearfulness of their king; they stood there as the servants of Saul, not as the hosts of Jehovah.

2. David alone acted in faith. The issue between the Philistines and the Israelites was for him a matter between the Philistines and Jehovah (1 Sam. 17:26). Saul trusted in the natural ability and in armor (Jer. 17:5). David rejected all natural aids and cast himself upon Jehovah's arm (Ps. 37:5). The victory over the proud Philistine, who had only confidence in his own strength, is an act of faith (Ps. 60:12), he received the punishment due to him (Prov. 16:18; Ps. 37:12-15).

Lesson

The giant is a picture of Satan, the mighty adversary of God, who keeps men in fear and slavery. David is a type of the Lord, who, through death, has broken forever the power of Satan (Heb. 2:14, 15) and in His resurrection has triumphed over him (Col. 2:15).

To be cont'd

FUTURE BLESSINGS FOR ISRAEL?

—*J. van Dijk*

Not all Christians — not all our readers — believe that there are still blessings in store for the nation Israel. It isn't that they are not aware that the Bible speaks prophetically of such blessings (i.e. Jer. 23:1-8), but they believe that these portions have only a spiritual application to the Church. We don't intend to go into all aspects of this matter but like to consider one argument often advanced in support of this idea. The particular argument goes somewhat like this: How could God ever turn again in mercy to the nation Israel, now that it has rejected and crucified its Messiah, the Son of God?

Let us look at man's history. Shortly after building the tower of Babel, the Gentiles turned from God to idols. God, therefore, called Abraham from among them and built from him the nation Israel. Clearly, God had turned away from the Gentiles, and many Scriptures show how God would bless Israel while judging the nations for their idolatry. But Israel did no better; they finally, with the help of the Gentiles, crucified their Messiah. The Gentile governor failed to pass a righteous judgment and Gentile soldiers drove the nails through the hands and feet of their Creator. Moreover, God tells us that the Lord Jesus went to the cross because *all* had sinned (Rom. 3:9-19).

In the face of this would any one — especially any Christian — dare to say that only the Jews are guilty or that they are more responsible for Christ's death than the Gentiles? Our sins brought Him to the cross. So, who forfeited all rights to God's mercy? Surely all men stood equally guilty before God!

And then? Then God turned again in mercy to the Gentiles. When the Lord Jesus told the Jews in His days that God would do so, it was so contrary to all their expectations that they said, "May it never be" (Lk. 20:16). Not only did they not believe it — though the prophets had spoken about it — they got angry about it. Their anger caused them to reject first the Lord Jesus who had said these things and later Paul, who repeated them (Acts 22:21-22).

Some of the professing Christians of whom I spoke display a similar attitude. They become quite indignant at every mention of a future blessing for the nation Israel. In Christ's days, the Jews had prophecies that spoke of future blessings for the nations but they reasoned these away. Now some Christians do the same with the prophecies that speak of future blessings for the nation Israel.

The basis for God's mercy to both Gentiles and Israel is the work of the Lord Jesus on Golgotha. Yet, God's mercy does not become effective toward us, Gentiles, without repentance and faith on our part, and it will not become effective to Israel

without these either. And just as it was not our seeking after God (Rom. 3:11) but God's goodness that led us to repentance (Rom. 2:4), so will God's mercy reach out to the nation Israel (Rom. 11:32). God's Word clearly says that a time will come in which all Israel will be saved (Rom. 11: 26). In that day, those in Israel who will not believe will die, and all who remain — the faithful remnant — will in repentance and faith accept the Lord Jesus as their Messiah; He replaces their heart of stone by one of flesh (Ezek. 36:26). Then they will see whom they have pierced, and wail because of Him (Zech. 12:10-14).

We could hardly expect these few lines to be sufficient to change the thinking of our brothers and sisters, but we do hope that at least none of those who have read them will ever again advance the argument that God's mercy could not cause the nation Israel to return to Him in repentance because they once rejected the Lord Jesus. This argument is simply not worthy of a Christian who knows that he himself was brought to repentance and conversion through God's undeserved mercy alone. What God did for him, God can do for a whole nation, so that all Israel shall be saved.