

JUDE (19)

—H. L. Heijkoop

But to Him that is able to keep you without stumbling, and to set [you] with exultation blameless before His glory, to the only God our Saviour, through Jesus Christ our Lord, [be] glory, majesty, might, and authority, from before the whole age, and now, and to all the ages. Amen. — vv. 24-25

In verse 23 Jude had actually reached the end of his Epistle. In all its variations, he had described the terrible apostasy from the truth that would take place within the Christian profession. The end would be a complete changing of grace into immorality, and a denial of — even rebellion against — the authority of the Lord Jesus. Complete corruption, worthy only of judgment, and fit only to be spewed as a horrible thing out of the Lord's mouth: such is the end of Christendom.

Many people, even believers, don't want to accept this. They think that there will be progress in all things, even in the truth of God. Well, Scripture speaks differently. In it we see from the very first page that man gives up the place with God, where God's grace has put him, for a place with Satan. And the assembly has not done any better. She who received the highest favour and grace has corrupted herself most.

Jude does not allow himself to be deceived by the great numbers that have come into the assembly. He sees that many are really servants of Satan. He sees the complete corruption. And though he also sees the faithful ones, he sees how weak and powerless they are. He told them to build themselves up on their most holy faith, to pray in the Holy Spirit, to keep themselves in the love of God and to await the mercy of the Lord Jesus Christ. But who is able to do such things? How can one keep standing in the midst of apostasy and corruption, where one's own strength is lacking?

Jude sees that there is nothing to boast in the things surrounding him, nothing to be trusted. Fully aware of this, he turns to God. But even more than this, he says that all this apostasy has not come about apart from God's allowing it, and that it is not a sign that God is no longer there. These circumstances are rather the stage on which God's wisdom will reveal itself. God will not lose His Assembly! The same waters that destroyed the world rushed on to lift up the ark. And the same wisdom of God will be unfolded for you personally. He is able to keep you without stumbling. Therefore, be not dismayed or downhearted! Don't think that God forgets you in these circumstances. Look up to Him and see how He will reveal Himself to you in your circumstances. He is the only God and Saviour. Imprint this precious thought on your heart: Come what may, there will be a called people, "beloved in God [the] Father and preserved in Jesus Christ." The Father and the Son, Jesus Christ, have established a path for you. Just remember that God keeps you in Jesus Christ your Lord.

If I look upon the circumstances and myself, then I say, "How can I get through this? How is it possible?" But a prophet sees beyond the difficulties. A prophet is someone who is so close to God that he knows His thoughts and is able to tell them to others as well (1 Pet. 4: 11). It is the distinction between Elisha and his servant in 2 Kings 6. Elisha knew the plans of the enemy when they were still hidden from everyone else. And when these plans were executed and the Syrian army surrounded the town, he saw what no one else did. But once the eyes of the servant were opened, he also saw the mountain covered with fiery horses and wagons all around them. Then he knew that Elisha spoke the truth when he said: "Those who are with us are more than those who are with them"!

Allow God to show His ability and power, allow Him to show you that He can keep you without stumbling. There are plenty of things in this desert over which you could stumble. But He desires to put you "with exultation blameless before His glory." Oh, that our eyes were more fixed upon this glory. God does not forget it. Nor does the Spirit forget the glory for which we are predestinated. We forget it, and therefore we think that we will never arrive there. But we will arrive there, we poor, weak, creatures! He will present us there without spot, completely cleansed, as the victorious tokens of the cleansing power of the blood of His Son. There we must say, "I was a poor sinner who was called by grace. I was always fearful of the dangers along the way, but I have arrived here; it was His wisdom alone that brought me here. And now, all sorrow is past and all is overflowing joy." Not only will we be there to the glory of His name, but we will also have hearts capable of understanding and enjoying these things.

No, Jude doesn't end with what we are, and even less with what Christendom is. In keeping with his name (Jude means "He shall be praised") he ends with a doxology, a song of praise to God. How glorious are these words, when we stand in the midst of the destruction of all that can be destroyed. Observing the downfall of all that can be moved, we are

nevertheless full of confidence as those who know that, despite all, God is able to keep us without stumbling and to set us blameless before His glory.

Jude starts with: "But to *Him*!" It contrasts with: "But these"! in verse 10 and: "These" in verses 8, 12, 14, 16, and 19. It is also distinct from: "But *ye*, beloved" in verses 17 and 20. Yes, we need to know those who bring corruption, as well as ourselves, ourselves in our weakness and in our privileges. But neither looking on those who got in unnoticed, nor looking upon ourselves, necessary as these things might be at times, gives joy and strength. These we only receive by looking upon *Him*!

The Greek word *dunamai* which is here translated by "is able" indicates the indwelling possibility to act: capability and being able. The Greek word for "without stumbling" is *aptaistos*. It only occurs here in God's Word. It contrasts with the stumbling in James 2:10 and 3:2. The word for "to keep" is *phulasso*, which means: to keep safely, to watch over. This word is used for instance also in John 17:12 ("Those Thou hast given Me I have *guarded*, and not one of them has perished"); 2 Thessalonians 3:3 ("The Lord is faithful, who shall establish you and *keep* [you] from evil"); 2 Timothy 1: 12 ("He is able to *keep* for that day the deposit I have entrusted to Him"); 2 Peter 2:5 ("but *preserved* Noah").

What a consolation this is, given the circumstances in Christendom under which we live. There is Someone, by the Holy Spirit referred to as "Him," because we all know Him, who is able and capable to keep us, even without stumbling! Yes, there is a power that is able to keep the saints above the circumstances and without falling, making every thought of sin an inexcusable matter. It isn't that the flesh is no longer in us, but since the Holy Spirit works in the new man there is never a need for the flesh to be active, or to influence our lives (see 1 Th. 5:22). Through Him we can be blameless as far as our walk, our life, is concerned.

We never ought to lose sight of this. We are inclined to adopt Romans 7 as our practical condition. There we find an evil nature wanting to vaunt itself. But the Spirit keeps us from living according to the flesh: "That ye should not do those things which ye desire" (Gal. 5:17).

We possess the same righteousness which Christ possesses in glory (1 Jn. 4:17), for He is our righteousness (1 Cor. 1:30). But He is also our life (Col. 3:4). And the Holy Spirit seeks to reveal the perfection of that life in our practical life. "He that says he abides in Him ought, even as *He* walked, himself also *so* to walk" (1 Jn. 2:6). The way to do this is by looking on the glorified Lord (2 Cor. 3:18), on Him to whom we will be conformed (Rom. 8:29; 1 Jn. 3:2).

with exultation

This is the translation of the Greek word *agalliasis*. The KJV translated this by "with exceeding glory." But Kelly and Bagster both chose the words used by JND. The German translator Bauer gives: "Jubel, Freudenbezeugungen," and Kittel: "Jubelndes und dankendes Lobpreisen" (resp. "Jubilation, loud expressions of joy," and "jubilant and thankful laudation"). The word is only found in the Bible and in Christian books of a later date. In the New Testament it is used in: Luke 1:14, 44; Acts 2:46; Hebrews 1:9 and here. It is related to the word *agalliao* which occurs in Matthew 5:12 (e); Luke 1:47 (r); 10:21 (r); John 5:35 (r); 8:56 (e); Acts 2:26 (e); 16:34 (r); 1 Peter 1:6, 8 (e); 4:13 (e); Revelation 19:7 (e). The NT renders this latter word by either "exult" or "rejoice" (as indicated). Paul uses this word only in Hebrews 1:9. Reviewing all verses we have mentioned, we discover that it means indeed an overflowing joy, either in God, in the Lord Jesus, or in that what God has given. It is interesting to observe that in the Epistles and in Revelation it is always connected with the future.

The Greek word for "blameless" is *amomos*. In the New Testament it is found in Ephesians 1:4; 5:27; Philippians 2:15; Hebrews 9:14; 1 Peter 1:19; Revelation 14:5 as well as in this verse. It shows that we will soon be in accord with the counsels of God (Eph. 1:4) and with the loving purpose of the Lord Jesus (Eph. 5:27). But that is not all. We will be in full harmony with the perfection with which the Lord Jesus offered Himself to God (Heb. 9:14), yes, with His own perfection as the Lamb of God. Isn't that a wonderful thought, especially when we look at ourselves today?

And where will we be in such a condition? It is not merely that He is able to keep us without stumbling here on earth, but He will set us in surpassing joy, blameless before His glory. We will be in His immediate presence, in the Father's house.

This was already alluded to in verse 14. Enoch had prophesied: "[The] Lord has come amidst His holy myriads." Well, if we are to come with the Lord from heaven, He must first of all take us to heaven. Enoch himself is the explanation of this. Without dying, he went into heaven as a type of the Assembly, the Church. In 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 we find the same reasoning. The Thessalonians knew that the believers would come with the Lord from heaven (3:13; 4:14). But they did not know how they would first come into heaven. The Holy Spirit, therefore, explains it to them in 4:15-17. "This we say to you in [the] word of [the] Lord, that we, the living, who remain to the coming of the Lord, are in no way to anticipate those

who have fallen asleep; for the Lord Himself, with an assembling shout, with archangel's voice and with trump of God, shall descend from heaven; and the dead in Christ shall rise first; then *we*, the living who remain, shall be caught up together with them in [the] clouds, to meet the Lord in [the] air; and thus we shall be always with [the] Lord. So encourage one another with these words."

We have the same thought here in Jude. In Ephesians 5:27 we see that Christ will "present His Assembly to Himself glorious, having no spot, or wrinkle, or any such things; but that it might be holy and blameless." Here in Jude we see that each believer personally will stand this blameless before God's glory. And in view of the difficult circumstances, God, the Almighty, is mentioned as the One who can bring us there in such a condition.

We are going to the Father's house. It is not just the love of Christ for His Assembly, and the love of "The Son of God who loved me and gave Himself for me" that are warrants for my standing there as one who is blameless. The Father, who ordained me to sonship for Himself (Eph. 1:4) desires to have me with Him in His house. He wants to have me there holy and blameless before Him in love. And the Holy Spirit has come on earth to dwell eternally within me (Jn. 14:16) and to bring me through this world to the glory. And along the way He adorns me with the treasures of the Son of the Father (Gen. 24:22, 53).

Hereby we see that the triune God desires to set me blameless before His glory. What a wondrous thought! Could there be any doubt in my heart that this will really come about? And this is not all. This glorious hope is presented to us here under the most difficult circumstances for our consolation and joy during the darkest days. And the Lord Jesus said, "Father, [as to] those whom Thou hast given Me, I desire that where I am they also may be with Me, that they may behold My glory" (Jn. 17:24).

Could we be there otherwise than filled with exulting joy? When we think of what we were in ourselves before our conversion, and what we are now, after our conversion; and then to see ourselves standing there blameless in glory; what a joy must there be in our hearts. We will need eternity to think this through and to rejoice in it.

Yet, this will not be the greatest joy. Luke 15 tells us that the Father's joy will be the surpassing joy in the house of the Father, the joy of the Father who has received back the son who, though once lost, now lives again. The Father causes the entire house to be filled with the music that first filled His own heart. And we will share in it; it shall find an echo in our hearts. And, as we have already seen, the use the New Testament makes of this word indicates that it is a joy in God, in the Lord Jesus and also in what God has given.

And who is the one, that is able and mighty to bring all this about? It is the only God, our Saviour! No, there is no other God than He. The world may know many gods and lords: for us there is but one God; the triune God. And this God is our Saviour, our Redeemer. Fourteen times we find in the New Testament that the Lord Jesus is called our Saviour. Twice (Ti. 2:13; 2 Pet. 1:1) we read of our God and Saviour Jesus Christ. But eight times (Lk. 1:47; 1 Tim. 1:1; 2 Tim. 6:3; 4:10; Ti. 1:3; 2:10; 3:4; Jude 24) God is called our Saviour. John 3:16, Romans 5:8, 1 John 4:8-10 and above all Luke 15 show us how the triune God longs to save sinners from perishing.

To know this brings peace to the heart. It is the difference between Exodus 12 and 14-15. In the first of these chapters the Israelites are safe for the judgment, for they shelter behind the blood of the lamb, though they see God as the terrible Judge who wants to kill every first-born. Only the blood of the lamb protects them from His judgment. But then follows chapter 14, where they see again the terrible Judge. But they notice how He is for them, redeeming them out of the hand and the power of their enemies. They see that it was God Himself, who gave His Son for lost sinners. "If God [be] for us, who against us? He who, yea, has not spared His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not also with Him grant us all things? Who shall bring an accusation against God's elect? [It is] God who justifies: who is he that condemns?" (Rom. 8:31-34). This is the wonderful significance of the name "God, our, Saviour." It is that Saviour who has saved us and who will set us before Himself with exultation blameless before His glory.

Through Jesus Christ our Lord

One might ask what this refers to. Is it to the foregoing, thereby signifying that God works all we saw so far in verse 24 through the Lord Jesus Christ? Or does it refer to what follows, suggesting that the glory, majesty etc., will be brought to God by the Lord Jesus? One cannot tell from the Greek.

But is it very important? Doesn't God do everything by the Lord Jesus? Throughout Scripture we find that God works and speaks through His Son. He is the Word! And this is seen to be so, particularly in the work of redemption. Through His Son, God brought about redemption and all blessings we possess in Him (Eph. 1:3-7). Indeed, all that we have seen in verse 24

God works in Jesus Christ who is our Lord. But it is the same glorious Person who glorified God in creation, in His life on earth, in His death upon the cross. And He will also do this in a perfect way in the future. How has He glorified God on the cross! All that we had done wrong, all that we had robbed: God's honour that we had denied Him, His truth, righteousness, holiness, and His love, He revealed on the cross in all their glory. Now God's glory shines, and will do so throughout eternity, more glorious than ever before, infinitely more glorious even than before the fall, than before the creation.

All this is accomplished by Jesus Christ, who is our Lord. And also in a future day the Lord Jesus will glorify God perfectly. Then He will reign here on earth exercising justice and righteousness. Then He will show what God gave men in creation, and what they themselves corrupted when they turned away from Him. Then He will cause the earth to be full of the knowledge of the Lord. Then the universe and all creatures will praise God (see Ps. 148 and 150). After that, He will hand over all rule to God, that God may be all and in all. Isn't it noteworthy that even here the Holy Spirit accentuates the fact that He is our *Lord*? It doesn't say here that He is our Saviour, though He has become that in His infinite grace, but He is our Lord, whom we must serve and to whom we owe obedience. Well, when we see Him here as the One through whom God has given, and will give us all things, and by whom God has been and will be so glorified, don't we then long to serve this glorious Person? Isn't it then the joy of our hearts to say, "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?," and then to go obediently our way?

[be] glory, majesty, might, and authority

The word "be" is in brackets since it isn't in the Greek. Moreover, some believe that it should be "is." If it is "be" it expresses a wish, else it is expressing what is existing. Both, of course, are true. This may well be the reason why the word is missing in the Greek. From eternity, God possesses all that is mentioned here. But Jude desires that it may be so in increasing measure. And that will be so, for it is worked through Jesus Christ.

In all that has taken place, in eternity, in creation, after the fall, and also during the terrible condition now prevailing in Christendom and in the world; in all events from the beginning until the future which is entirely in His hand, He remains ever the Same. He is the Master of all, as He must be and will be. He always works according to the counsel of His will, for the revelation of Himself, so that all may know Him. That is His true glory which He does not obtain through anything outside of Himself, but that shines forth from Himself for the full blessing of eternity, no matter what the ages that are still to come will in due course reveal of Him.

The Greek word for "majesty," *megalosune*, occurs only here and in Hebrews 1:3; and 8:1. It is only used for God. *Kratos* (might) occurs apart from here in verse 25, and in Luke 1:51; Acts 19:20; Ephesians 1:19; 6:10; Colossians 1:11; 1 Timothy 6:16; Hebrews 2:14; 1 Peter 4:11; 5:11; Revelation 1:6; 5:13. In all these verses (except for Luke — where it has "strength") the New Translation has translated this word by "might." In Hebrews it is the might of the devil; in all other places the might of God or the Lord Jesus. When we study these verses, we notice that it is not merely a question of strength, but rather of might in connection with strength, which causes it to be mighty. *Exousia* (power) means power in connection with the right and authority to act in a certain way. JND says in the footnotes in the New Translation: "It is more than authority, but not simply *dunamis*; it is more than *dunamis*, as it includes the right to exercise this. Hence 'power' is nearer to it in English: *dunamis* is the ability to do a thing." He translates it sometimes by "authority," and sometimes by "right" (2 Th. 3:9; Heb. 13:10).

from before the whole age, and now, and to all the ages

This very strong expression with a wide scope is only found here in Scripture. Jude speaks of "age" in the singular when he refers to the past; in such cases Paul uses the plural (1 Cor. 2:7). Jude speaks of "ages" in the plural when referring to the future. John in such cases always uses the singular.

In those places where the KJV gives "for ever and ever," the literal translation would be "to the age of the ages" (Gal. 1: 5; Phil. 4:20; 1 Tim. 1:17; 2 Tim. 4:18; Heb. 13:21; 1 Pe. 4:11; 5:11; Rev. 1:6,18; 4:9,10; 5:13; 10:6; 11:15; 14:11; 15:7; 19:3; 20:10; 22:5).

Now that we have come to the end of this Epistle, and have seen the total corruption of the highest thing God has given on earth vis-a-vis the endless goodness, grace, mercy, and love of our God-Saviour in the opening and closing verses, don't our hearts demand that we join in with Jude? To Him be the glory, majesty, might, and authority, from before the whole age, and now, and to all the ages!

We couldn't praise Him before the whole age. But we will do so to all the ages in the Father's house, casting our crowns before His throne and we ourselves also will fall down in perfect worship before Him (Rev. 4:10-11; 5:13-14). But even now we may do so. We may learn to sing the heavenly hymns of praise even now. And even now we have already the liberty to enter into the sanctuary (Heb. 10: 19-22).

And one thing there is that we can do today but that we can do no longer once we are perfect in the glory of heaven. That is: to glorify Him in a world that rejects Him. And how can we do this? By serving in complete obedience *Him* who has been made by our God to Lord and Christ (Acts 2:36), our blessed Saviour, the Son of God's love, the Son of God who loved me and gave Himself for me. Don't we want to do this?, from now on only asking in all things what He wants us to do?

I like to end with the words of another (JND). "Let us remember, while we go quietly through this world, to be subject to the authorities that are above us, as being from God, not expecting that men will injure us if we have become imitators of that which is good, but blessed if we should suffer for righteousness' sake or for Christ, not frightened in anything by the opposers, which is to them a demonstration of destruction, but of our salvation, and that from God (Rom. 13:1; 1 Pe. 3:13-14; Phil. 1:28).

And when Christ's Lordship (authority) is being denied, be it under the disguise of speaking about the authority of the Assembly, or be it openly, we believe that He is Lord and has the power to maintain His Lordship, yes, all power in heaven and on earth. Our part it is to keep the word of His patience, and our assurance and joy with Him will be complete." (Translator's note: We would have preferred to use the actual words of JND, but were unable to locate this passage in his writings and had to re-translate it from the Dutch.)

The End

THE MINOR PROPHETS (19)

—R. Been Sr.

Hosea (13)

Final Eruptions

This chapter shows most solemnly, how God took note of all the sinful ways of Ephraim, the ten tribes. "What a man sows, that shall he also reap" is an ever valid law. Here we hear the mighty voice of thundering judgment over unfaithful Ephraim; it can no longer be turned away. Yet, on the other hand, in this prophecy there is ever again mention of the love of the Lord for His people that He had once redeemed. There are, as it were, two things striving for the first place in Hosea's prophecy: The righteous wrath of God over the sins of the people, and His love seeking to bless that same people according to His counsels, when it will have turned to Him. This is what is so beautiful in this prophecy.

vv. 1-3

These verses speak of the position, might, and lot of Ephraim, the tribe that was the head of the ten tribes. Ephraim was feared in all tribes; when it spoke all trembled.

The people of the tribe of Ephraim suffered of a sickness of which many people, many believers too, suffer: *It wanted to be the first in all things*. It stood on its rights, but forgot its duties. It prided itself on its birth and privileges. It wanted only to reign and not to serve. Diotrophes, pictured in 3 John, belongs morally to the people of Ephraim.

Ephraim had indeed blessings and privileges, but these were granted him only on the basis of grace. The patriarch Jacob had adopted the sons of Joseph, Ephraim and Manasseh, as his own sons. Both would be head of tribes, just as for instance Rueben and Simeon. And although Joseph wanted the largest blessing of his father Jacob to go to Manasseh, his firstborn, the old Patriarch Jacob let himself be guided by the Spirit of God and laid his right hand on the head of Ephraim; thereby he gave the second son the greatest blessing. Scripture says that he guided his hands wisely (Gen. 48:14).

Rueben was the firstborn son of Jacob. But because he had desecrated the bed of his father Jacob, his *birthright* was given to the children of Joseph, but not in such a way that Joseph was allowed to count himself as the firstborn. Judah, who prevailed among his brethren, received this place. He who was a leader, the Prince, issued from Judah (1 Chr. 5:1). And the

birthright, given to Joseph, should actually have gone to the firstborn of Joseph, to Manasseh. But Jacob counted Ephraim as the firstborn of Joseph.

Not only did the sons of Joseph, the grandchildren of Jacob, receive a place and name among the twelve tribes of Israel, but God says later by Jeremiah, that Ephraim is His *firstborn, a dear son, a child of delights*. Despite Ephraim's departure, the Lord promises that, because His bowels are troubled for him, He will certainly have mercy over Ephraim (Jer. 31:9,20).

When the land of Canaan was divided among the twelve tribes, Ephraim received a considerable portion. In his territory, Joshua got a city, Timnath-serah, on the mountains of Ephraim (Josh. 19:50). Besides, the holy places Bethel, Shechem, and Shiloh where the sanctuary of the Lord stood, were located within Ephraim's boundaries (Josh. 20:7; Judg. 21:19).

But the people of Ephraim just couldn't forget that their ancestor had been vice-regent of Egypt. Joshua, who belonged to Ephraim, had become Moses' successor, and he had been the one who led the people to victory. The judge Ehud had caused the trumpet to be blown on their mountains to call the people to battle against Moab (Judg. 3:27). The prophetess Deborah was from Ephraim. The tribe of Ephraim had played an important role under the judges Ehud and Barak. And besides, had not the patriarch Jacob declared that Ephraim would be greater than Manasseh, and that the descendants of Ephraim would become a multitude of nations? (Gen. 48:19-20). All these things had caused the people of Ephraim *to be proud*. Now we understand a bit better why every one trembled when Ephraim spoke (13:1).

Though Ephraim insisted much on the blessings and privileges it possessed, but the behaviour of this tribe was not in harmony with it. *Ephraim did not drive out the Canaanites*, as the Lord had commanded. *Once, they even turned in the battle*, though they were armed with the bow. Among their forbears had been *robbers of cattle*. The history of this tribe from beginning to end has been very sad, despite their relationship with Levi. The Kohathites had received cities in Ephraim. From the very beginning the people of Ephraim had *committed robbery* towards the Philistines, a thing that the Lord disapproved of. To enrich oneself through theft from the Canaanites, who had to be destroyed, was directly contrary to the commandment of the Lord. Later the Philistines of Gath killed Ephraimites because they had stolen their cattle. These Philistines were driven away by the valiant men of Benjamin (1 Chr. 8:13). *What Ephraim ought to have done, was done by Benjamin*.

When God gave a great victory and deliverance from the yoke of the Midianites by means of Gideon, who was from the tribe of Manasseh, the people of Ephraim couldn't rejoice about it, but contended much with Gideon because they felt *passed by*. They said, "What is this thing that thou hast done to us, that thou calledst us not, when thou wentest to fight with Midian?" (Judg. 8:1). Gideon, a softhearted man, turned away their wrath with a soft answer (Judg. 8:23). Here it came to light that *Ephraim refused to acknowledge a God-given leader*, just because he didn't come from Ephraim. Today there are also many people who are forever watching whether others give them sufficient honour; they never learn to forget themselves or to lose sight of themselves.

A good hundred years later, at the occasion of Jephthah's deliverance, this sickness of Ephraim had even grown worse. *They would never acknowledge an illegitimate son from Gilead as a God-given deliverer*, but wanted to burn him and his house. Now Jephthah was not quite so softhearted as his predecessor Gideon. He met the "hurt I" of Ephraim with a "fleshly I." The result? A terrible civil war in which 42,000 men of Ephraim fell (Jud. 12:1-6).

Later, Ephraim chose the side of Ishbosheth, the son of Saul, who had been rejected by God as king (2 Sam. 2:9). When some time later David was acknowledged as King by the other tribes, Ephraim did so too, but not wholeheartedly.

The jealousy of Ephraim led, under Jeroboam, to the rift of the kingdom into ten and two tribes and to the worship of calves (1 Ki. 12:25-33), to which Scripture refers again and again as the "sin of Jeroboam, wherewith he made Israel to sin." That the Lord, because of his sins, had said to Solomon that He would rend the kingdom from him and give it to his servant is the other side of the truth, but this does not take away the responsibility of the servant.

In the days of King Ahaz of Judah, *the realm of Ephraim joined itself with Rezin, the King of Syria, to war against its brother nation, Judah*. But then the patience of God with Israel is at its end. After 65 years, Ephraim would be broken; it would no longer be a nation (Isa. 7:5-8). This judgment was executed when the ten tribes were led captive into Assyria.

Yet there is still hope for Ephraim, the ten-tribe nation. True, it would never be restored as a nation; only a remnant of the ten tribes will be saved in a future day. Then it will be united with the remnant of Judah under one Head, Christ (Hosea 1:11).

Let us continue the exposition of verses 1-3. Ephraim had exalted itself in Israel. This tribe had received authority from God and it occupied a prominent position. But through the idolatrous worship of the Baals and calves, Ephraim lost

everything. Because of it, it had become guilty; morally it had plunged itself into death. It had, despite the threatenings and warnings of the Lord, persisted in those sins. It had made itself gods of silver, products of the corrupted human mind and of the political system which was supposed to strengthen the ten-tribe nation. It had kissed the calves, which means that they had worshipped them, and they had made this an ordinance for everyone who came to sacrifice. Compare what God once said to Elijah regarding the kissing of Baal (1 Ki. 19:18).

No wonder that the wrath of the Lord was kindled against Ephraim and the nation was threatened with total destruction. Nothing would be left of it. As a morning mist, as an early dew, it would evaporate. As chaff of the threshing floor, as smoke out of the chimney, it would be blown away. Unexpectedly, decidedly, overwhelmingly would judgment fall upon Ephraim. Search for the ten tribes; where can one find them? One might as well try to recover a morning mist, an early evaporated dew, some chaff from the threshing floor, or the smoke out of the chimney. So it all came over the ten tribes up to today. God's Word is most accurate.

vv. 4 and 5

Here we find once again one of these sudden reversals that occur so often in the prophecy of Hosea. Jehovah reminds His people who He has been since He delivered them from the bondage of Egypt. It is remarkable that the Lord reminds them so often of Egypt after He said in Chapter 11:1, "Out of Egypt have I called My Son." He reminds them that He is Jehovah, the eternally faithful One, their God from the days of Egypt. For this reason they had known no other God than Jehovah only. There was after all no other God besides God; there is no Saviour besides Jehovah, is there? The Baals and the calves for which they had bowed down, were in the end nothing more than a piece of forgery, covered with silver or gold.

To be cont'd

LEADERSHIP

—J. van Dijk

From the New Testament we can learn that elders in the assemblies were appointed to their position by an apostle, or by someone who had been specially charged by an apostle to appoint elders in specified assemblies (Acts 14:23; Ti. 1:5). From this it is evident that then assemblies were not to choose or elect their own elders.

Lacking specific instructions, assemblies in our days cannot resort to electing elders if they want to be guided by the Word of God. Nor can anyone else ordain elders, for no one has been charged to do so by an apostle. We don't even have apostles, for no one living today has seen the Lord, which is one of the qualifications of apostleship (1 Cor. 9:1).

For these reasons we cannot have Scripturally ordained elders in the assemblies today. Yet, when reading 1 Timothy 3:1-7 we realize that there may be in the heart of a brother a longing to be used of the Lord as elder. Any brother who has this desire can approach the Lord about it. The Lord in His grace may indeed give a brother the qualifications which the Holy Spirit has presented in these verses. Thereby he would be fully equipped to guide and lead. True, official appointment would be lacking, but what can an appointment by men provide that has not been received from the Lord Himself?

Today all believers know through the Word of God that they must obey those to whom the Lord has given leadership qualities. We have Scriptures that speak of elders, shepherds and leaders: "Obey your leaders, and be submissive; for *they* watch over your souls as those that shall give account" (Heb. 13:17). "Likewise [ye] younger, be subject to [the] elder, and all of you bind on humility towards one another; for God sets Himself against [the] proud, but to [the] humble gives grace" (1 Pet. 5:5). These verses, which charge the leaders themselves to be humble in their task, instruct the others that they need to be aware that there is God-appointed leadership in the Assembly to which they are to be subject, though it be exercised in humility.

In the early days, when the Word was not yet given, the appointment by the apostles made it clear to the saints in those days that there was such a thing as God-given authority among them. But even then, meaningful leadership in the Assembly had to be moral and spiritual in character; leaders ought to have a moral, spiritual authority in the midst of the saints by virtue of their conduct and spiritual understanding. If these qualities are lacking, no appointment or election by men can make up for them. If they are present, no appointment or election by men can add to them. A person who has these qualities can be used of the Lord in the function of elder, but the day he fails in it, he stops to be useful for this task.

How different things are when there is appointment. When an appointed person fails in his personal relationship with the Lord (I trust that if he falls into open sin, he would be at least relieved of his office by those who appointed him), he nevertheless retains his office by virtue of his appointment.

No doubt there is another great significance in the verses that speak of the qualifications of an elder. Every sincere Christian reading verses like these cannot help but ask him or herself: "Can these things be said of me?" But now I want to look particularly at one of the difficulties many god-appointed leaders are facing, especially now that leadership is so often despised. Having prayed about a certain practical matter, an elder has arrived at what he sincerely believes is the Lord's mind in the situation. However, when he shares his thoughts with his brethren, he finds that they are not willing to follow the path presented by him. It becomes clear to him that most believe another way to be more according to the Lord's mind. Opinions differ and, since there is no Scripture that clearly applies, it becomes a question as to whose view will prevail, his or that of his brethren. Had he been appointed to the office of elder, he might have made use of his position to assure that his view is acted upon. But also, if he has a domineering character, he might press his thoughts and insist that the assembly follow his directions. Often brethren have, for the sake of peace, allowed such leaders to have their way. The question is whether it is godly to do so.

There are two verses that seem to me to have a bearing on such situations. First, Philippians 2:3. "Each esteeming the other as more excellent than themselves." Certainly, one can only press one's thoughts if one is convinced that they are better than those of one's brethren. To do so can only be on the (not-expressed, of course) basis that one considers himself to be more spiritual, or to have better spiritual insight, than one's brethren. True as it may be that the Lord often makes His thoughts known to certain brethren who He has specially equipped for their task as leaders, there is no certainty that He will always do so. It is even unlikely that God would *always* use the same brother, for it would tend to give him thoughts of himself that are above what he ought to think.

The next verse that is helpful here is 1 Peter 5:3, "The elders which [are] among you I exhort, who [am their] fellow-elder... shepherd the flock of God which [is] among you, exercising oversight, not by necessity, but willingly; not for base gain, but readily; not as lording it over your possessions, but being models for the flock" (1 Pet. 5:1-3). Lording it over others, this is exactly what a leader does who, convinced of the correctness of his own thoughts, insists that they be followed rather than the expressed mind of the assembly at large. It is to be feared that some who have expounded this verse have nevertheless fallen into this serious danger for leaders. In the end it creates a restless and discontented flock. Often, when the Lord takes such a brother to be with Himself, an assembly stays behind that is either spiritually weak, or pharisaically strong, which amounts to the same thing. At least, if the assembly does not fall apart into just so many fragments, each one going where it seems best to him or her. In short, spiritual disaster is the end.

But what other choice does a spiritual leader have? How can a leader with spiritual insight follow a path that he sincerely believes not to be of God? Can he join the assembly on a path that goes against his own conscience? First of all, let us make clear that in this article, we do not think of matters that would degrade the Lord's Person or His work, nor any matter that touches on the purity of doctrine, but rather matters of secondary nature. So, apart from these, how can a leader go along with a path he believes not to be of God?

He can do so, if he thoroughly understands the importance of the Lord's words: "Where two or three are gathered together unto My name, there am I in the midst of them" (Mt. 18:20). The Lord knows better what is needed in an assembly than anyone of us. There are times when, in His ways, the Lord lets His own go a path that is indeed not what He would have for them. But because of their practical condition He must let them go the path they desire, to teach them who He is and who they are. Let us see how God used His great leaders, when they were faced with the difficulty of leading people who were set on following a doubtful path.

It may, for instance, be a turning again into the wilderness (and a godly leader ought to testify against it), but that way is needed for the edification of the people; Moses experienced this. True, it may be only because, given the low spiritual state of the assembly, the place seems too strait to the brothers and sisters, but nevertheless, God wants to use the new place to teach His people the lesson of the swimming iron. Whatever God's plan, Elisha knew he had to go with them, and he refrained from using his authority as prophet to force them in the way that would have been more pleasing to God. Samuel too did not refrain from participating in the choosing of a king, though he clearly testified against the basis for their choice and warned for the results it would bring. He nevertheless went along with them, even taking a responsible part in it, and eventually he mourned sincerely when this king after man's heart failed so severely in being what a king ought to be. These lessons teach us something about the path for the leader. How needful for him to be in utter dependence upon the Lord!

It is obvious that leaders, more than any, should be aware that the Lord remains in control. The Lord, who has promised to be present in the midst of those gathered unto His name, knows how to incline the hearts of His own, not always to find

the path that is really His desire, but often too, to bring them on that path which will provide the best training for His people. (Not necessarily the path of most blessing). Though training is always a blessing as well, it is generally bitter to experience, not in the least because a greater blessing has been forfeited by our slowness to learn.

To be abundantly clear it bears repeating before we close: we have not in mind such matters of prime importance as maintaining holiness, and purity of doctrines, but rather questions about the perfection of our practical path — not the giving up of principles, but the way in which the principles are worked out. Granted, it is difficult to discern where the one transitions into the other. But those who consider themselves leaders should have wisdom from above to know the distinction between these two. The Lord, who gives leaders, will certainly equip them with this prime requisite for their difficult but beautiful task (James 1:5). May we on our part — both all who are led and all whom the Lord has called to lead — seek His face, so that our leaders may receive from Him such a discernment of His will.

OUTLINE FOR BIBLE STUDY (31)

64. DAVID WITH ACHISH AND AT ZIKLAG — 1 Samuel 27,29-30

Outline

1. David with Achish 1 Sam. 27:1-12
2. David Kept from Fighting Israel 1 Sam. 29:1-11
3. Ziklag Burned 1 Sam. 30:1-6
4. David Pursues the Amalekites 1 Sam. 30:7-31

Explanation

1. The flight of David to the Philistines shows us his weakness; he had no confidence in God's protection.
2. When required to go out to battle against Saul, but forced to return by the princes of the Philistines. This proved again to what depths unfaithfulness can bring the believer (1 Sam. 29:8).
3. David's unfaithfulness had sad results for those who relied upon him, and those who were dear to him. It brought about a great material loss.
4. God used the Amalekites to bring David back into fellowship with Himself (1 Sam. 30:6-31).

Lesson

David's weakness did not fail to bear results: he became very cruel and untruthful (1 Sam. 27:8-12). God could not be pleased with the way in which David was acting; He had to lead him back with bit and bridle (see Ps. 32:9). Yet, no failure so great, or God restores the soul that humbles himself before Him.

65. SAUL'S END — 1 Sam. 28, 31; 2 Sam. 1

Outline

1. Saul is Afraid 1 Sam. 28:4-6
2. Saul and the Witch of Endor 1 Sam. 28:7-25
3. Saul's Death 1 Sam. 31:1-10
4. The Men of Jabesh 1 Sam. 31:11-13
5. David Receives the Message 2 Sam. 1:1-16
6. David's Song of Lamentation 2 Sam. 1:17-27

Explanation

1. Saul was fit for judgment; God had left him (Jer. 15:6).
2. In his despair he departed completely from God ways by inquiring about the future in a most ungodly way.
3. He ended up by committing suicide (Ps. 55:23). Jonathan also fell by the hand of the Philistines.
4. The men of Jabesh showed their gratefulness to Saul.
5. The man who brought the message of Saul's death seems to have expected a reward for killing David's enemy.
6. Saul's shameful death caused deep sorrow to David although Saul's hatred for him had been deadly.

Lesson

In Saul we see how it is not sufficient to follow God only in an outward way. Because inward reality was lacking he found himself more and more in conflict with God, and his life ended in great tragedy.

Jonathan, though a man of God, sought to fill a place at the court of his godless father. This cost him the place of honour with David he had hoped for (1 Sam. 23:17).

David shows himself to be entirely impartial, he meets out a righteous judgment. As man of God he genuinely mourned for Saul, a man whom God had once anointed.

To be cont'd