

THE ENEMY'S WORK

—*W. Kelly*

Some excerpts

This may be always remarked, that where there is a work of the enemy, even saints always fall into it if they do not treat it as such. It has power over the human heart, and where there is not in the soul the power of the Spirit to judge it as the positive mischief of the enemy (and so it will be where that power is), there the soul will fall into it, as if it were more perfect truth than what the Spirit teaches. See the early Judaising of the church, traced and detected in the Epistles to the Galatians and Colossians, and elsewhere. And see in the Galatian churches how the saints fell into it...

I do not call every evil I find a direct and positive work of Satan. Of course his hand is in there... [but] Satan originates nothing. This is God's prerogative. The work of Satan is to mar and break down what God has wrought, when this is left, as an effect produced, to the responsibility of man. God created Adam. Satan spoiled the work through man's folly... A testimony of some special truth may decay, or be lost, or lose its power by becoming mere established orthodoxy; but I do not call this directly or properly a work of Satan. I call it a work of Satan when, blessing and testimony having been brought in by the blessed Spirit of God, a systematic effort is made, producing a regular system. Often the power of a truth decays, faith really no longer carrying the soul out of the influence of present things. I call it a work of Satan when an effort is made to take up such truth, or some neglected truth generally, and, while it seems to adopt it as it stands in its basis as a fact, subverts and sets it aside. The effect of this is to throw the soul back on ground which is no longer a test of faith, though it be truth (for there Satan can adopt truth for a time). The means often is the bringing in apparent additional instructions, that really are subversive of the power of what the Spirit taught, thereby making the authority of this teaching sectarian, or superstitious, or both — though they will not last together. I am not speaking here of Satan's work in open infidelity.

There are two distinct characters of work which Satan does, which may nevertheless merge one in the other. Of these, however, one, if alone, will be ephemeral, the other lasting. First, where power is not the true power of the Spirit, so as to detect and judge Satan's imitation, there he can easily set up the imitation of power, and that even where there is a measure of true faith and owning of God; but subjection, intelligent subjection by the Spirit to the Word as of the Spirit, is not found. Where this is connected with the establishment of arranged human authority, this latter may subsist, but the work itself is ephemeral. Such work as this will probably be connected with some of the most right-feeling, if not right-judging, persons among Christians, who have the strongest feelings of the decay which occasions it, but there will be generally shipwreck of the faith in some point or other. Yet it will afford exceeding difficulty to those who cannot discern the work of the enemy in the midst of this right feeling...

But there is another form of Satan's working. In this, orthodox truth is in general maintained. Any pretension to the possessing of spiritual power is based on church position, not on any particular manifestation of power, and thus seems to honour the institution of the Church, and Christ in it. God is alleged to have set there, in that institution, the seat of blessing, and this also is an acknowledged truth, and the unity of the body of Christ is thereon connected with the institution. But the sovereign operation of the Spirit of God is set aside, and that which acts outside the actually formed institution is condemned as denying the authority of God's institution and schismatical sin. Thus the actual possessors of the power of the institution, in its then state, really take the place of God. His power is vested in them as far it acts on earth. Divine condemnation attaches to all who act independently of them. Direct dependence upon God is not allowable. And thus whatever puts individual faith to the test (for going with the crowd under authority does not) is condemned as self-will and presumption.

The system which so judges is alleged to maintain the unity of the church. This may exist in different degrees, and in different circumstances; but it always attaches divine authority, more or less, to official position, and thus puts man in the place of God by attaching His name to man. It is not spiritual energy in man putting souls through Christ in direct relation with God, with the Father. There spiritual affections are happy and blessed. It is man eclipsing God, getting between Him and the soul; not man revealing God, but the authority of God attached to man. Hence full love and grace will never be known. The Spirit of knowledge of Him will never be. It may survive such a system for a time, but it cannot be identified with such a system when matured. To be with God, while always rendering the soul submissive, must render it independent of man; that is, it asserts no rights, but when the need is, it says, "we ought to obey God rather than man."

The first of these works of Satan then is the pretence to the extraordinary operation of the Spirit. That is ephemeral. It is suited to the ill-directed but righteous cravings after that manifestation of spiritual power which was and is the only true source of living blessing on the earth, when that power has faded away. The other is the orderly establishment of men in the place of that power. This lasts. It is suited to unbelief, and in its full development always generates it.

(Bible Treasury, Vol. 14, pg. 7)

AUTHORITY IN THE CHURCH

—J. N. Darby

Authority versus Infallibility

Confounding authority with infallibility is a poor and transparent piece of sophistry. In a hundred instances obedience may be obligatory where there is no infallibility. Were it not so, there could be no order in the world at all. There is no infallibility in it, but a great deal of self-will; and if there is to be no obedience where there is not infallibility, no acquiescence in what has been decided, there is no end to self-will and no existence of common order. The question is of competence, not of infallibility. A father is not infallible, but he has a divinely given authority; and acquiescence is a duty. A police magistrate is not infallible, but he has competent authority in the cases submitted to his jurisdiction. There may be resources against abuse of authority, or in certain cases a refusal of it when a higher authority obliges us, as a conscience directed by God's Word. We ought to obey God rather than man. But there is never in Scripture liberty given to the human will as such. We are sanctified to the obedience of Christ. And this principle — our doing God's will in simple obedience, without solving every abstract question which may be raised — is a path of peace, which many heads who think themselves wiser miss, because it is the path of God's wisdom.

...There is judicial authority in the Church of God, and if there were not, it would be the most horrible iniquity on earth; because it would put the sanction of Christ's name on every iniquity. [Some who deny the existence of judicial authority in the Church plead]: that whatever iniquity or leaven was allowed, it could not leaven an assembly. Such views have done good. They have the cordial abhorrence and rejection of every honest mind, and of every one who does not seek to justify evil.

But the judicial authority of the Church of God is in *obedience* to the Word. "Do not ye judge them that are within? But them that are without God judgeth. Therefore put away from among yourselves that wicked person." And I repeat, if it be not done, the Church of God becomes the accrediting of every vileness of sin: and I affirm distinctly, that when this is done, other Christians are bound to respect it. There are remedies for fleshly action in it, in the presence of the Spirit of God amongst the saints, and in the supreme authority of the Lord Jesus Christ; but that remedy is not the totally unscriptural and miserable one proposed by [some] — the pretension of competency in every one who takes it into his head to judge for themselves independent of *what God has instituted*. It is, taken in its most favourable aspect, not as individual pretension, which is its real character, the well-known and unscriptural system... [of] Independency: one body of Christians being independent of every other as a voluntary association. This is simple denial of the unity of the body, and the presence and action of the Holy Ghost in it... I am perfectly satisfied that in every respect it is wholly unscriptural... There is not a trace of such independency and disorder in the Word. There is every possible evidence of, in fact, and doctrinal insistence on, there being one body on earth, whose unity was the foundation of blessing in fact, and its maintenance the duty of every Christian. Self-will may wish it otherwise, but certainly not grace, and not obedience to the Word.

Difficulties may arise; we have not an apostolic centre, as there was at Jerusalem. Quite true; but we have a resource in the action of the Spirit in the unity of the body, the action of healing grace and helpful gift, and the faithfulness of a gracious Lord who has promised never to leave us nor forsake us. But the case of Jerusalem in Acts 15 is proof that the Scriptural Church never thought of, and did not accept, the independent action insisted upon [by some today].

(The Collected Writings of JND, Vol. 14, pp. 304-306)

Weakness, Failure and God's Provisions

— An excerpt

Now we come to a practical point. Is there not much room for weakness and failure in the exercise of Authority? Yes, there is. But on the other hand, the weakest assembly truly gathered to the Name of the Lord has the guarantee of all the power of the Lord Himself to back up its decisions *as long as it keeps in the place of dependence*.

Perhaps an assembly is weak or there is ignorance as to principles, or it acts hastily without proper investigation of facts or with poor discernment as to the spiritual state, or as is possible when an assembly falls into a low or divided state, it may act in the flesh or by party spirit. Are all such acts binding and irrevocable? If yes, [wouldn't] then every assembly in a bad state bind its prejudices and fleshly acts upon the whole Church of God? If no, then who is to decide whether the act is binding or not?

We have no apostolic authority to give its authoritative pronouncements in such cases, nor have we any delegated body with authority to pass judgment on such cases, nor is there any authority to delegate such a body. If there were such a body this would relieve us of the necessity to walk by faith and also of the many exercises the walk of faith requires. But even suppose we had such a body, that could fail, as everything committed to man is liable to failure, and then we would be left without resource. No, the Lord was far too wise to give such an order for His Church. He has not delegated any authority to His Church to act independently of Himself, or to which one could have recourse without dependence upon Himself. He remains our full resource and our only recourse in the midst of failure whether it be individual or assembly failure. He is there in the midst of the gathered saints to back up with His power by His Spirit and through His Word what is of Himself in the hearts and consciences of His saints everywhere, and also to manifest what is not of Himself, and to exercise their hearts and consciences as to it, where there has been serious failure. And when He brings failure to light He gives then also the grace to confess and rectify it, or to deal in chastening with those who fail to do so. This the ruin and failure of the Church can never take away from those gathered to the Name of the Lord in their midst, be they reduced to but two or three.

He may use brethren with discernment whom he has exercised as to the failure to labour with the failing assembly, and by the ministry of the truth and the pointing out of the failure, to exercise the conscience of the assembly that it might acknowledge it and rectify it. Another assembly also may labour with it with a view to leading it to rectify its wrong acts. But if the assembly refuse all such ministry and insist in maintaining its wrong action after it has been definitely manifested to be wrong, it demonstrates thereby self-will and insubjection to the Lord. If such a course is persisted in after all efforts in grace to recover it, it would finally have to be disowned as an assembly truly gathered in the Name of the Lord.

It is not a question of cutting off an assembly. There is no authority to cut off an assembly gathered to the Name of the Lord. But by a course of self-will and manifest insubjection to the Lord and the authority of His Word it has given up the essential character of the Assembly, namely, subjection to the Lord, who is Head over all things to the Church (Eph. 1:22; See also 5:23-24). And therefore having lost the character of an assembly, its claim of being an assembly with the Lord in the midst and having His authority for its acts must be disowned. But such a step should not be taken till all efforts of grace seeking its restoration have failed.

This act of disowning an assembly can only be done authoritatively by another assembly gathered in the name of the Lord and acting in the unity of the body in subjection to the leading of the Spirit and the supreme authority of His Word. Such an act by the authority of the Lord and His Word would be ratified by His own power working by the Spirit in the hearts and consciences of those who call upon the Lord out of a pure heart.

Any independent rejection of an assembly action, whether by an individual or a group of individuals, would not have the sanction of the Lord working in power with them in the consciences of His saints. Nor would such independent rejection of assembly decisions rectify anything, but would only spread the confusion that always comes in where self-will and independent action are resorted to.

(These are the last pages of a longer article that embodies the substance of discussions on this subject at a conference held at Chicago, IL, Nov. 28, 1952.)

OUTLINE FOR BIBLE STUDY (32)

66. DAVID BECOMES KING AND BRINGS THE ARK TO JERUSALEM. MEPHIBOSHETH. — 2 Sam. 2-10

Outline

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| 1. King in Hebron and Jerusalem | 2 Sam. 1-4; 5:1-5 |
| 2. Victories over the Philistines | 2 Sam. 5:17-25 |
| 3. The Ark to Jerusalem | 2 Sam. 6:1-23 |
| 4. David Received the Promise | 2 Sam. 7:1-17 |
| 5. David's Kindness to Mephibosheth | Sam. 9:1-13 |

Explanation

1. After Saul's death David, in dependence upon God, asked Him for the way to the kingdom (2 Sam. 2:1).
2. The same dependence led him in the battles against the Philistines.
3. David had a heart for the things of God. His concern was the ark, and God allowed him to bring it to Jerusalem.
4. When God had given rest to David, he desired to build a house (temple) for Jehovah, but God promises to build a house for David. What a grace! What God has done in the past was great (grace), but the future held something even more wonderful in store (glory) (Ps. 84:11): Christ, the Messiah, would be the Son of David. This caused David to worship in God's presence.
5. At the pinnacle of his glory, David recalled his promise to Jonathan, and showed this in his kindness to Mephibosheth, a descendent of Saul.

Lesson

David's dependence upon God had blessed results for him. The first time he smote the army of the Philistines, he gave all the glory to God (2 Sam. 5:20). The second time Jehovah Himself went before him to smite the enemy (2 Sam. 5:24-25).

God had to teach David that in the things of God, good intentions are not enough; we must pay attention to the ways of God. This was a bitter lesson for David.

When David worshipped, he forgot his own accomplishments and considered only God's loving-kindness (Ps. 89:1-4).

In his kindness to Mephibosheth David is, as so often (think of Goliath), a picture of Christ who (seated at the right hand of God), in mercy remembers them who hated Him. Lodebar means: without pasture. The cripple Mephibosheth is a picture of the sinner. He received:

- a. kindness and mercy (2 Sam. 9:3),
- b. an inheritance (2 Sam. 9:7,9),
- c. fellowship and adoption (2 Sam. 9:7,11).

These three things every sinner receives who responds to the call of the Lord Jesus (Eph. 2:4-9).

67. DAVID'S GREAT SIN AND REPENTANCE — 2 Samuel 11-12

Outline

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| 1. David's Great Sin | 2 Sam. 11:1-5,14-27 |
| 2. Nathan Rebukes David | 2 Sam. 12:1-12 |
| 3. David's Repentance | 2 Sam. 12:13-23 |

Explanation

1. Idleness caused David to become an adulterer and a murderer.

2. He tried to keep his transgressions secret but God used (Ps. 32:3-4) Nathan to reveal them and announce God's judgment over them.

3. When he confessed his guilt (Ps. 32:5; 51), however, God forgave him and cleansed him (Ps. 32:1,2). God judged David in the death of his son. Yet, God also brought blessing out of this deep sin: Bathsheba became the mother of Solomon, the beloved of the Lord, and the ancestress of the Lord Jesus.

Lesson

David was not in the place which God had appointed for him (the battlefield). He thus became the target and later the prey of Satan (1 Peter 5:8).

In God's presence David was revealed as a sinner. The following sequence gives the steps to restoration:

- a. genuine repentance
- b. true confession
- c. abundant mercies and forgiveness of sins on the ground of the blood of Jesus Christ (1 Jn. 1:7, 9).

This account of David's experience is a warning to all believers (Eph. 6:13). It shows us that, although God will give repenting sinners eternal forgiveness, He does not always remove the sad consequences of the transgressions. The sword would not depart from David's house.

68. ABSALOM'S REBELLION. DAVID'S FLIGHT. — 2 Sam. 13:23-16:23

Outline

1. Absalom Steals the Nation's Affection 2 Sam. 15:1-6
2. The Insurrection and David's Flight 2 Sam. 15:7-19
3. Shimei Curses David 2 Sam. 16:5-14

Explanation

1. Through hypocritical charm, Absalom obtained, cunningly, the favour of the people, proving himself to be a disgraceful child and an unfaithful subject (Prov. 24:21, 22).

2. Fraudulently he used pretended piety as a cover-up for his evil intentions (he paid his vow, 2 Sam. 15:7). David, recognizing how the affections of the people were with Absalom, fled.

3. Shimei cursed David as a throne robber and tyrant; David however said, let him alone and let him curse me, and accepted it as a chastisement from the Lord.

Lesson

David realized that the rebellion of his vain and ambitious son, Absalom, who aspired to the throne was God's judgment on him (mourning); yet, he trusted that God would save him (Ps. 3).

To be cont'd

A SEED OF GOD

— A. E. Bouter

For four thousand years God looked down from heaven upon the children of man (cf. Ps. 14), to see if there was one who was good (cf. too Rom. 3:9-18). God had made man "in His image," as His representative and image bearer in this creation, and "after His likeness": in harmony with His being and nature. God had made man upright, but men have sought out many devices (Ecl. 7:29).

Again and again God did test man to see if there was something good in him. God gave him tremendous possibilities (Gen. 1 and 2), but man has completely failed. It is not my purpose in this study to consider in detail all phases and facets of God's "search" for such a seed of God among men. I just mention a few names and "dispensations" to illustrate this "searching" of God: Adam and Eve before the fall; the human race after the fall (Gen. 4-6); Noah after the Flood; the introduction of idolatry (Gen. 10-11); the call of Abraham and his failure (Gen. 12 etc.). We skip over many details in Isaac, Jacob, Moses, etc., to see how the people of Israel failed (Ex. 32-cf. Acts 7), the priesthood (the two sons of Aaron, Eli and his sons), the prophets, the kings (Saul, but later also the house of David). Also Nebuchadnezzar, the God-appointed head of the nations during the rejection of His people fails, and so did the remnant of the Jews that returned to Jerusalem (their condition and failure is clearly presented in Malachi, the book from which our title is taken).

Finally, when God sends the true Man after His heart, He is rejected by His own creatures, His own nation (Jn. 1:1-11). Every time when God introduces something new, we see how man fails. The same holds true for the church and its history (see e.g. Rev. 2-3). And what shall we say about ourselves, be it in the personal aspects such as our family responsibilities, or in our collective testimony for the Lord here on earth?

Even when Satan will be bound, the wickedness of the human heart will demonstrate itself, both during and at the end of that tremendous time of blessing, experienced under the direct government of the Son of man (Rev. 20).

All seems hopeless. Would God not find anyone who would answer to His desire, in whom He could recognize Himself: A SEED OF GOD?

God's Son (Lk. 1:35).

How accurately does God's Word show us that a Man has been born out of a woman (Gal. 4:4) who answered completely to God's desire for a seed of God. The details in Mathew 1, Mark 1, Luke 1, and John 1 together form a tremendous testimony about this "Seed of God." We could also mention Hebrews 1 and 2, Colossians 1, and other places besides these. It is worth every bit of effort to reread and reconsider these chapters before continuing this study.

Then there is the sevenfold testimony of the New Testament: God has found delight in this Man, as He was while here on earth — a Man with a perfect human spirit, soul, and body; God has the same delight in Him as He now is in heaven; and God will also have this delight when this Man will be seen during His openly manifested reign over the universe.

What a joy for the heart of God to find here on earth, in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, a Man with whom He can entirely identify Himself, with whom He can have perfect fellowship. One who answers completely to the desires of His heart. What a joy for the heart of the Father, to find His Son here (the One who always had been His joy — Prov. 8, who always is in His bosom — Jn. 1:18), but who now, as Man, completely executes and finishes the task the Father had given Him to do (Jn. 17:1-5). It is an unfathomable mystery that this perfect Man is at the same time God the Son, that God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit dwell in this Man and that the Father is seen and known in Him. Faith accepts it and worships!

I am fully convinced that the Lord Jesus has always perfectly met — and will always meet — all the plans and thoughts that God had for men, but wherein man failed. In other words: every test of God has been and is for man an opportunity wherein he fails, but for the Lord Jesus it is an opportunity to show who He is and how He satisfies God's holy demands, meeting all Gods rightful desires. With this, I am not merely thinking of the temptation in the wilderness where God demonstrated how perfect the Man was with whom He had identified Himself, but also of all the occasions in the past and the future whereby man fails and whereby the Lord Jesus as the "Seed of God" completely expresses and executes what is according to God's thoughts.

In this connection we can think of the place of Adam as head over creation, of Noah over the cleansed earth, of Israel (the vine, Jehovah's servant), the priest, the king, the prophet, the head of the nation's, etc. In short, in every position, function, task, responsibility, etc., in which the first Adam fails, God introduces the Man after His heart, the true Seed of God, who in all offices and tasks can meet with God's approval.

A seed of God (Mal. 2:15)

Against the background of failure of the remnant that had returned from Babylon, God places in Malachi 2 a seed of God that measures up to His thoughts and that in His relationship to God Himself, as well as to his neighbour, maintains God's rights.

With this, we have arrived at an important point, for we see how ever again God, while showing how man fails, has the perfect Man in view and displays Him. In Malachi 2:4ff God speaks about Levi, who has a history of failure, both personally and collectively (for Levi stands for the priesthood and the levitical service). But in this part of Scripture we don't read anything about this failure, for God focuses on what He intended to do with this priesthood and levitical service, on the way that He always had meant it to be. We therefore find here an important principle: God presents matters here in the way He had wanted them to be, and — so we can add to this — in the way that they have been and will be realized by the Lord Jesus.

Hebrews 11, and in general the entire New Testament, does not present the failures and shortcomings of those who are described in the Old Testament. I suggest this is because God wanted to show something *in these persons* of the perfections He has found and finds in the Lord Jesus. In other words, we see in these persons something of what God had formed in them for Himself: A SEED OF GOD! This is the second way we may apply this expression. It is my intention to see, with the help of a few passages of Scripture, how God throughout history has formed and protected this "seed of God," and how He expresses and finds something in these persons that is precious to Him, and that reminds us (in the light of the New Testament) of our beloved Lord Jesus.

Especially at the end of a dispensation (a period during which God tests man in a particular way, different from the previous or following test), it is for God a special joy to find a "remnant" in which He recognizes the traits of Christ, the true Seed of God. We find these characteristics throughout the book of Malachi (for that matter also in Haggai, Zechariah, Ezra, Nehemiah, and Esther), but besides the example referred to in chapter 2, I want to mention also chapter 3:16f where we can read about:

Some traits of the "Seed of God" at the end of a Dispensation

- a. The fear of God while walking in God's light in the realization of His presence. This is accompanied by true wisdom (Job 28:28; Hos. 14:10; Ps. 107:43; Jas. 3:17f).
- b. Fellowship with each other in practical separation.
- c. The thinking upon His name, the maintaining of God's rights, especially there where men profess to maintain these rights while they really don't.
- d. Serving God as slaves, although they are at the same time as sons before Him.

In the beginning of the New Testament, this remnant is presented, especially in Luke 1 and 2 (in seven persons), afterwards in those who are baptized by John, and later in those who follow the Lord during His walk here on earth. Later again we find it in the early Assembly (Acts 1 and 2). In Revelation 2 and 3 we find a remnant in those who hear: the overcomers. After the Assembly is taken up, God will once again find a "seed of God," just as He has had during all dispensations, to the glory of His name. In that time it will first and foremost consist of the believing Jews, in particular the teachers (*maschilim*). But also other "groups" out of the ten tribes and out of the sea of the nations will form part of it (cf. Rev. 7, 15, 19, 20, etc.). And finally, the descendants of those who will be introduced into the Millennium will display the same characteristics: "A seed will serve Him" (Ps. 22:31).

God gives expression to His delight in such a "seed of God" (Mal. 3:16f):

- a. Jehovah observes (His eye);
- b. He hears (His ear);
- c. A book of remembrance is written before Him;
- d. He counts them as His peculiar treasure (both during the tribulation and during the public reign of our Lord Jesus);
- e. He spares them, be it from judgment or in His governmental ways;
- f. They are His special delight: they are sons.

The seed of the woman

It is remarkable to see how God in Genesis 3 uses the failure of Adam and Eve as the starting point for the introduction of a "Seed of God." Genesis 4 shows that Adam and Eve themselves could not bring forth this "Seed of God." To the contrary! This line of their descendants (seed) ends in Lamech. There is no doubt that we see in this line also the seed of the serpent as mentioned in Genesis 3:15, in the light of what we learn from John 8:44. But God speaks first of all about a direct confrontation between Satan (who speaks through the serpent, identifying himself with it) and "this woman," who is the vessel that God uses to His glory despite the failure from her side. After that we read of the enmity between "thy seed and her Seed." The remainder of the verse shows that it speaks in first instance about the Lord Jesus Himself, the true Seed of the woman, in His confrontation with, and victory over the devil and his works.

In the second place we may see in her seed something of what God forms for Himself in the descendants of Adam and Eve in the battle against the seed of the serpent. In this sense we find then "the seed of God" (something of what we observe in perfection in the Lord Jesus) in the line of Abel and Seth, Enoch, Noah (Gen. 5, 11, etc.). In Genesis 3:16 we see *how* God would bring this about in four phases (I restrict myself to the spiritual application of these principles to us).

1. The great increase of sorrow or travail of the woman.

It is remarkable how, throughout Scripture, God uses the difficulties, sorrows, cares, and sufferings of His own to produce something that is well-pleasing to Him. Here it speaks of the woman, the subjective element in which God's thoughts are practically expressed through sufferings. This is a "line" that we recognize again and again, starting with Job, right through to the future faithful remnant. God exercises, tries, and purifies His own, all to produce something of "the seed of God" in them.

2. "With pain thou shalt bear children."

In a creation lying under the judgment of God, it requires special energy to introduce something of the new creation, to give a tangible form to "the seed of God" in an antagonistic environment. In this connection we can think of the travails of the apostle Paul among the Galatians where he sought to practically introduce Christ as the fruit of the Spirit, in contrast to the works of the flesh: "My children, of whom I again travail in birth until Christ shall have been formed in you" (Gal. 4:19). Think also of Colossians 1:28 - 2:5, "Whom we announce, admonishing every man, in all wisdom, to the end that we may present every man perfect in Christ. Whereunto also I toil, combating according to His working, which works in me in power. For I would have you know what combat I have for you, and those in Laodicea, and as many as have not seen my face in flesh; to the end that their hearts may be encouraged, being united together in love, and unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to [the] full knowledge of the mystery of God; in which are hid all the treasures of wisdom and of knowledge. And I say this to the end that no one may delude you by persuasive speech. For if indeed in the flesh I am absent, yet I am with you in spirit, rejoicing and seeing your order, and the firmness of your faith in Christ." We could give many similar examples.

3. "To thy husband shall be thy desire."

In the history of a soul with God, we see a sketch of this development in Romans 7. There is a relationship of love with Him who has been raised from among the dead. In some of Paul's other letters we see how this love relationship is formed in a collective sense between the Assembly and Christ (as the One who has died, who was raised, and who has been glorified).

4. "And he shall rule over thee."

This, no doubt, is the climax. Here we find an indication to the place Christ has as Lord and as Head. But in the type the issue is not the position as such, precious as that may be, but the realization *within us* of the place that He has. To say it differently: our practical subjecting to Him as Lord and Head. These are themes which are emphatically elaborated upon in the New Testament, against a background of a world full of temptations and attacks, in an environment of antagonistic ruses.

In the First Epistle to the Corinthians we learn how Paul places the functioning of the (local) assembly under the Lordship of Christ; there is not a single Christian privilege, not one Christian truth, that can be lived out if one fails to know and acknowledge Christ as LORD. Among others, the Epistle to the Colossians shows us the importance to acknowledge Christ as HEAD, to be dependent upon Him, to receive from Him, the Head, the impulses in each detail and for each member of His Assembly. It is important to understand this well, for it means that Christ (as He is now in the glory) can be seen in the members of the body of which He is the Head. Then too, we understand that God also looks for a "seed of God" today, and that He finds it in the members of His Assembly; not because of what they are in themselves (in the first Adam), but

because of what they are now in the last Adam as He reveals Himself in them. How precious must this be for the Lord Jesus, but also for God!

To be cont'd

THE MINOR PROPHETS (20)

—*R. Been Sr.*

Hosea 13 (cont'd)

v. 7

But Jehovah had known the people not just as miserable slaves in Egypt, but also as a by-Him-redeemed people in that great and terrible wilderness, in that parched land, where fiery serpents and scorpions lived, where it was dry and void of water. But He had brought forth water out of the hard rock (Dt. 8:15). Alas, how long ago was it that Israel followed Jehovah in the wilderness, as bride following her husband (Jer. 2:2). There the Shepherd of Israel had tended, fed and watered His sheep; they had lacked nothing.

vv. 6-8

These verses once more speak of the sin of the people and God's punishment over these sins. When the people were thus tended by Israel's Shepherd, they had been satisfied. This in itself would not have been bad, in that it manifested the many Shepherd's cares, for in the wilderness there was literally nothing. Bread, meat, water, all had been produced through the power of the Shepherd. But that in the midst of all this their heart had become proud, God had been forgotten, His gifts had been despised; that then they had become "fat" and had kicked back, that was so very, very sad (Dt. 32:15).

Because of this Jehovah became as a lion, as a lurking leopard by the way. He fell upon them as a bear bereaved of her whelps and rent the covering of their heart; as a lioness He devoured them. The wild beasts tore them. These are of course pictures that speak of nations that have been, earlier or later, the enemies of Israel whose attacks on the nation God used for discipline; they tore and devoured it in great cruelty.

vv. 9-13

The prophet didn't save the people. He held the mirror of history before them. Not only had they been rebellious in the wilderness, but also in the land. Their corruption caused them to turn their back to Jehovah, to Him who was their Helper. They brought thereby misfortune over themselves.

It is foolish to assume an enemy's position towards God, the only One who can help. But don't people today display the same disposition as Israel in the past? They want to satisfy themselves with the goods of this world rather than to turn to God the Saviour. But don't have false dreams! If one isn't for God, one is against Him. The vague notion of neutrality simply doesn't exist. If one chooses the friendship of the world one must of necessity turn to the world. Then one does already show an antagonistic attitude towards God, and quite properly is one classified as an enemy of God (Jas. 4:4).

Once they were in the land, the people had in self-will insisted on having a king. A king such as the nations had, a visible one, who would go before them. They didn't take account of God, their King and Helper. So Saul had become king, but it had not brought the nation any benefit, for leaning on the "flesh" doesn't bring real help. And since the prophet has here the ten-tribe nation, Ephraim, in mind, we may also think of the later kings from the house of Jeroboam that have ruled over this realm, such as Baasha, Jehu, and others. In general God had given kings to Israel in His anger, and He removed them again in His wrath. Zechariah, the last king of Israel out of the house of Jehu, and nearly all who came after him, died a violent death. None of these kings had been able to give real help, therefore, now that the judgment of the ten tribes is at hand, the prophet asks: "Where then is thy king, that he may save thee in all thy cities?" Only the King after God's heart, the true David, Christ, can help and bring salvation.

Ephraim didn't want to leave the paths of sin, it adhered to them, clinging to its iniquity and sin. God had done all to bring forth the precious fruit of humiliation and conversion in the midst of Ephraim, and though by times birth pangs had come over the people, no birth had followed, for the people did not rid itself of its iniquity and sin.

v. 14

This verse presents once more one of these sudden changes of direction which so often occur in the prophecy of Hosea. A turning from judgment to grace, to deliverance. After the darkness of the verses 9-13 follows the glorious light of verse 14.

God will not withdraw His hand from Ephraim. Certainly, the greater mass of this people will undergo a righteous judgment, but He will have mercy over a remnant out of the ten tribes, and deliver it from every power, even from the greatest under which men sigh, to which they are subjected, namely *death and hades* (the realm of the dead).

The KJV has translated two words, *hades* and *gehenna*, by hell. But *gehenna* is the place of future torment, also referred to as the lake of fire, whereas *hades* is the place where the souls of men go after death. One of the most powerful proofs that *hades* and *gehenna* are two different places is Revelation 20:14, where we read in the KJV that death and hell were cast into the lake of fire, which would really mean that death and hell were cast into hell. It should of course have been translated: death and *hades* were cast into the lake of fire (hell).

To be cont'd

GILGAL

—J. van Dijk

In Joshua 4:2-3 we read that the Lord said: "Take you twelve men out of the people, one man out of every tribe, and command them, saying, Take up hence out of the midst of the Jordan, from the place where the priests' feet stood firm, twelve stones, and carry them over with you, and lay them down in the lodging-place where ye shall lodge this night."

Joshua in turn instructed the people to do so, but he added the words, "That this may be a sign in your midst. When your children ask hereafter, saying, What mean ye by these stones? then ye shall say to them, That the waters of the Jordan were cut off before the ark of the covenant of Jehovah; when it went through the Jordan, the waters of the Jordan were cut off. And these stones shall be for a memorial unto the children of Israel for ever."

Immediately some interesting points are evident. Joshua told the people more than God had told him about these stones. It is evident that he understood God's purpose with this sign. There was no need for God to tell him all the details, communion with his God caused him to understand. And so Joshua shares his knowledge of God's thoughts with the Lord's people.

Another point is this. God used a positive sign for a testimony. These stones were as it were resurrected: they represent the believer who has gone through death and is now in Christ, a new creation. This new life and its qualities are to be a testimony to the coming generations.

But then Joshua did something strange. Without any apparent instruction from the Lord, he told the people to take twelve stones and place these in the Jordan. How fitting a response! It almost seems as if Joshua realized something of the significance of these signs. God sees us now in Christ, risen with Him. Yet we from our side must also mortify our members that are on the earth. And of this Joshua's action speaks.

Now think of the difference between the stones in the Jordan and those in the lodging place of Gilgal. Stones from a river bed are round and smooth, having been worn that way by the constant action of the water. The stones now in the river, on the other hand, were stray stones of the high land bordering on the river. These sharp-edged stones disappeared, never to be seen again. They were not, as their counterparts, to be a sign to generations to come. God uses, as we said, the positive side of what He has done for us to be a testimony. Although it is true that we have died with Christ, we are a testimony in the world through the presence of the new nature we have received, not through the absence of the old; through the fruit of the Spirit, not through the absence of the fruit of the flesh. A Christian should not be known by what he does *not do*, as unfortunately is often the case, but by what he *has become*. It seems that the monument at Gilgal still has something to say to you and me on this point.

Joshua in his days was wiser than we who are so privileged. God only set before him that which spoke of what God had made us in Christ, and he knew thereby that what spoke of the old nature had to be put into the place of death. The mere fact that God has to tell us: "Put to death therefore..." (Col. 3:5 and similar verses) shows that we need more than God's assurance that we have died and have been raised with Christ to prompt us to do what Joshua did. Through it all God shows that most of us lack the spiritual insight Joshua possessed, despite the Spirit's indwelling us. It is not that we *could* not know it, we simply lack Joshua's determination not to depart from God's "tent." Let us take it to heart and not forget to thank God for every Joshua among God's people today!

To be cont'd