

The Millennium in the Old Testament (2)

–J. van Dijk

In the first part of this article series, we have reviewed the use of the term "that day" in the prophecy of Isaiah. In this part we will take a look at the other Old-Testament prophets who spoke of "that day."

Ezekiel 39

In Ezekiel 39:17, the Lord foretells that some day He will judge the mighty of the earth in a slaughter on the mountains of Israel. It will be evident to all nations that their fall was not just the unfortunate result of some military miscalculation, but the Lord's judgment; His glory will be set among the nations. The outcome will be that "the house of Israel shall know that I am Jehovah their God from that day and forward" (v. 22).

This in itself should convince us that a future day is in view. So far it could never be said that from this day and forward Israel knew the Lord. At the end of the chapter, the Lord says, "And I will not hide My face any more from them, for I shall have poured out My Spirit upon the house of Israel." Today the Lord still hides His face from them, and the message of salvation, though also available to Israel, goes out to the Gentiles, while Israel is in rejection and as a nation does not know God. One day this will change, as we read here.

Hosea 2

Hosea also testifies of that day of blessing for Israel. He too sees a great change coming over his people. "And it shall be in that day, saith Jehovah, that thou shalt call Me, My Husband, and shalt call Me no more, Baali" (v. 16). At the same time, the Lord will bring about a great change in the animal world and He will remove the weapons of war. "I will make a covenant for them in that day with the beasts of the field... and will break bow and sword" (v. 18). It is evident that Hosea sees the same things Isaiah saw. And to show that this is indeed the end time, the Lord says, "And I will betroth thee unto Me forever" (v. 19). There will be a special relationship between heaven and earth, for "In that day, I will hear, saith Jehovah, I will hear the heavens, and they shall hear the earth" (v. 21). This new relationship between the Lord and the earth is alluded to again and again throughout the prophecies.

Joel 3

Joel begins by speaking of the terrible condition Israel was in during his days. But then, in chapter 2:12, the call goes out for repentance, and from then on the remainder of the prophecy looks to the time of the end. The people will be gathered at the time that the bridegroom, the Lord, leaves His chamber. Then the bride is no longer hidden. A cry of repentance rises from among them, and the Lord promises blessing. But first comes terror from the North. Yet the land need not be afraid, for its blessing is assured and the people will know that the Lord will dwell in Jerusalem.

Chapter 2:28 tells us how this will be. The Spirit will be poured out upon Israel. It will be an event similar to what was seen at Pentecost, as Peter has said. But beside the events seen at Pentecost, the sun will be darkened. In terror some will call on the Lord, and they will be saved. In those days and at that time the captivity of Judah and Jerusalem will be turned. The Lord does so by judging the nations, who are advised to beat their ploughs into swords. The Lord will harvest the earth in His wrath. It will be the end of the presence of strangers in Jerusalem. "And it shall come to pass in that day that the mountains shall drop down new wine, and the hills shall flow with milk" (v. 18). Then there will be blessing in Jerusalem. Judah will abide forever, and Jerusalem from generation to generation. The Lord will purge them from the blood of which they had not been purged; a reference to their blood-guilt on account of the death of Christ. And Jehovah will dwell in Zion.

Amos 9

Going to Amos, we hear what he has to say on this subject. "In that day will I raise up the tabernacle of David which is fallen." The house of David will be restored in its old glory. When has that ever taken place? We know that none of David's house ever came back to power after the exile. Sure the Lord is the seed of David. But of Him it does not need to be said that He will one day possess the remnant of Edom, for He is the possessor of heaven and earth. And even if we would be inclined to think that the verse speaks of the Lord only, then it is still evident that He will possess Edom in a new way, different from the way He possesses all things today.

But then the prophet speaks of a day of abundance; the harvest will be so rich that it is not brought in when it is time for ploughing. It will be a time in which the captivity of Israel will be turned, they will be planted in their own land and "they shall no more be plucked up out of their land which I have given them, saith Jehovah thy God." This must be a time to come. Israel, though partly in the land now, still does not dwell there in safety. They are still there without their God. In that day it will be different. That Israel is there now is only so that they may be there when that most terrible time of all will come over them, the time of Jacob's trouble. But the day is coming when they will be in the land because God has placed them there and blesses them.

Micah 4

Micah is not silent about that time either. In speaking of the "end of days" (v. 1), he mentions that Jehovah's house shall be the most prominent feature in this earth. From Zion will go forth the law, Jehovah's word from Jerusalem. Swords will be forged into ploughs, for a time of peace will come over the earth in the end of days. No need to say that we have not seen this yet. The Lord Himself says, "In that day... will I assemble her that halteth, and I will gather her that is driven out, and her that I have afflicted... and Jehovah shall reign over them in mount Zion from henceforth even for ever" (v. 6-7).

Micah 7

We will not say much about Micah 7 since it does not in itself carry sufficient evidence that it refers to that time. Only once we realize from the other prophecies that this time of blessing will be in the time of the end will we recognize that this portion also speaks of those days.

Zephaniah 3

Verses 14 and 15 speak of the removal of judgment from Israel and Jerusalem. "In that day it shall be said to Jerusalem, 'Fear not; Zion, let not thy hands be slack. Jehovah thy God is in thy midst, a mighty One that will save'" (v. 16-17). That this is not the time when the Lord was on earth is evident from the context. "Thou shalt not see evil any more." This statement does certainly not refer to any period of time before the World War II holocaust. One day the Lord will deal with all those who have afflicted Israel; then Israel itself will be a praise and name in all the lands where they have been put to shame. Clearly again, this time must be future. Then they will be brought and gathered, their captivity will be turned.

Haggai 2

"In that day, saith Jehovah of hosts, will I take thee, Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel, My servant, saith Jehovah, and will make thee as a signet; for I have chosen thee, says Jehovah of hosts" (v. 23). This prophecy is perhaps a little harder to understand. It speaks of Zerubbabel, and therefore seems to refer only to the past. The context however gives us good reason to think of Zerubbabel in this verse as a figure of one who is to come, for it will be a time when God will shake the heavens and the earth. These words remind us of the end time. The strengths of kingdoms and nations will be overthrown, the war equipment will be ruined. We will not say that this verse clearly demonstrates the coming time of blessing, though we are personally convinced that it speaks of that time.

Zechariah 2

In this chapter a call goes out to scattered Israel to flee from the land of the North, from Babylon. The result will be that Jerusalem will again be inhabited. The Lord will deal with the nations who have touched the apple of His eye, Israel, after He is seen in glory in Zion. "And many nations shall join themselves to Jehovah in that day, and shall be unto Me for a people; and I will dwell in the midst of thee [Zion], and thou shalt know that Jehovah of hosts has sent Me unto thee" (v. 11). This certainly is not the case today. The so-called Christian nations are now seeking to cast off every trace of Christianity in their public offices. They no longer want public prayer, or the reading of the Bible in their schools. No, today there is not one nation that is joined to Jehovah.

Zechariah 3

In the context of this chapter, the Lord speaks of bringing forth His Servant, the Branch. From Isaiah, we know that this is the Lord Jesus. When God introduces Him into public life, He will remove the iniquity of the land in one day. Do not think that this speaks of Golgotha (although the work the Lord did during the three hours of darkness is certainly the basis for what we read here), for "In that day... shall ye invite every man his neighbour under the vine and under the fig-tree" (v. 10). That did not take place when the Lord died. These words remind us of the time of blessing that we have seen in the prophecies we have already considered.

Zechariah 9

Many say that the event referred to in verse 9 took place when the Lord entered Jerusalem. And so it did, but that does not mean that this verse would not *also* speak of a future day in which this act will be repeated. We say this because of the Lord's own words. Matthew 21 records the event of the Lord's glorious entry into Jerusalem. Then in Matthew 23:39 the Lord says, "Ye shall in no wise see Me henceforth until ye say, Blessed be He that comes in the name of the Lord." Some say that Luke gives the correct order, but this is most doubtful, for Luke gives us generally the moral order. We will let that rest for now and look at the internal evidence of the prophecy.

At that time the weapons of war will be removed, God will speak peace to the nations, His dominion shall be from sea to sea. To those who say that this is so in our days, I would like to point out that if the words of the prophet refer to the Lord's providential reign as we know it today, the prophecy has lost all its significance, for at the time the prophet prophesied, yes, even since creation, God reigned providentially from sea to sea as much as He does today. To assert that this prophecy refers to His providential government is to remove every sensible meaning from it. No, Jehovah shall be seen over them (v. 14). "Jehovah their God will save them [His people Israel] that day as the flock of His people; for they shall be as the stones of a crown" (v. 16). No need to say that this cannot be said of them since the day of the Lord's entry into Jerusalem. It is therefore looking at a future day. The chapter ends with a description of the time of plenty that will accompany this.

Zechariah 12 and 13

Chapter 12 gives us again a good example of the previously mentioned order of things. First there will be a time of calamity, immediately followed by a time of blessing. Verses 4 and 6 speak of the coming terrors, but then verse 8 says, "In that day will Jehovah defend the inhabitants of Jerusalem." The weakest will still be strong. "The house of David [shall be] as God, as the Angel of Jehovah before them." The nations shall be destroyed and God's Spirit poured out upon the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem. This will take place after the cross, for they will wail because of Him whom they have pierced. It was for this reason that the Lord's side was pierced at Golgotha as John clearly states. At the cross, they did not wail, they did not mourn. But then they will do so, every family apart. It will be a very personal repentance wrought by God for each and every Jew that lives in those days.

"In that day there shall be a fountain opened to the house of David and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem for sin and for uncleanness. And it shall come to pass in that day, saith Jehovah of hosts, that I will cut off the names of the idols out of the land, and they shall no more be remembered; and also I will cause the prophets and the unclean spirit to pass out of the land" (vv. 1-2). Verse 9 then shows that this will be accomplished at a great loss for the nation as a whole, two thirds of them will perish, the third part will have to be refined. In their misery they will cry to the Lord and He will answer them, "This is My

people; and they shall say, Jehovah My God" (v. 9). Yes, if there is to be blessing for Israel, they too must repent, and they will do so in their great distress.

Zechariah 14

To refine Israel, the Lord will use the nations. They will come to Jerusalem, but then He Himself will fight with those nations. "And His feet shall stand in that day upon the mount of Olives" (v. 4). The mountain will split, providing a way of escape through the cleft. That day, night and day will be indistinguishable, as we have also seen in Joel. "In that day there shall not be light; the shining shall be obscured... in that day living waters shall go out from Jerusalem (see also Rev. 22)... And Jehovah shall be King over all the earth: in that day shall there be one Jehovah, and His name one" (vv. 6,8-9). This too cannot be in a providential sense, for as such He has always been King. Then He will be King in a clearly new and public way. So much so that "In that day shall there be on the bells of the horses, Holiness unto Jehovah" (v. 20). "And in that day there shall be no more a Canaanite in the house of Jehovah of hosts" (v. 21). But before it is this far, a terrible judgment will come over the nations, and over Israel in particular.

Malachi 3

The last book of the Old Testament speaks once more of that day. The Lord, after speaking of the terrible condition of Israel, says that there are some that pay attention to Him. Those are precious to Him, and they will be seen in that day when He comes to make up His jewels (cf. Zech. 9:16). But again we read in a very concise way that that day is a day of judgment as well, for He says, "And they shall be Mine, saith the Lord of hosts, in that day when I make up My jewels, and I will spare them, as a man spares his own son that serves him," inferring that others are not spared but condemned.

Conclusion

The unanimous report of the prophets is that a time of judgment is to come over the nations and apostate Israel. That time is frequently, directly or indirectly, referred to as the time of the end. Through great terrors the Lord will cause many in Israel to repent. Those who don't repent will perish, but those who do will enter the time of blessing. Then there will be no more need for weapons of war, the harvest will be plenty, the animal world will return to the condition found in Eden, and the Lord Himself will in that day reign in Jerusalem while all in Israel have received the Holy Spirit. All these things concern this earth, the earthly Israel, and Jerusalem. One cannot spiritualize all these references to that day of blessing and apply them to the Church, as so many try to do.

Several prophecies say that the Messiah will reign forever. Yet we know also that heaven and earth will pass away. This apparent discrepancy is solved when we realize that His reign will last until the earth is consumed by fire, and the new heaven and the new earth brought in. Then Christ's reign, the last epoch this creation will experience before eternity begins, transitions into the reign of God (2 Cor. 15:28), it continues in eternity after having assumed another character.

This agrees with Revelation 19, where we read of the marriage of the Lamb. Then the Bridegroom leaves His chamber (cf. Joel 3), and makes war with the nations, armies out of the heavens following Him. He treads the winepress of the wrath of God. Riding a horse, He bears the title King of kings and Lord of lords. The strong men are destroyed. All these things we also saw in the prophecies which speak of the end time.

Then we read in chapter 20 that Satan — who today is still going about as a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour (1 Pet. 5:8) — will be bound with a chain, he will be cast into the abyss, the abyss will be shut over him, and its door will be sealed for a thousand years. It is the end of all sober explanation to say, as some do, that, while Satan is bound and cast into the closed and sealed abyss, he goes about as a roaring lion.

The time of Satan's confinement is the time of reigning with Christ. Paul speaks twice of reigning with Christ, once as a future thing ("If we endure, we shall also reign together" — 2 Tim. 2:12), and another time, but then sarcastically, as a supposedly present thing ("Ye have reigned without us; and I would that ye reigned, [but you don't as yet] that we also might reign with you" — 1 Cor. 4:8). Today, while Christ is rejected, we are sharing in His sufferings rather than reigning with Him. Even He Himself does not reign yet (other than providentially as He has done since creation), and is still seated on His Father's throne

rather than His own. Thus the Lord says to John on Patmos: "He that overcomes... will I give authority over the nations... to him will [note: future] I give to sit with Me in My throne; as I also have sat down [note: present] with My Father on His throne." (Rev. 2:26; 3:21). His sitting on His throne is in the future tense. Now is the time in which the Father has said, "Sit at My right hand until I put Thine enemies as footstool of Thy feet" (Heb. 1:13). No, the Lord is not yet on His throne, and we do not yet reign with Him. Yet that day is coming, and will conclude earth's history.

And now it will become clear why we have looked at "that day" of blessing under the title THE MILLENNIUM IN THE OLD TESTAMENT. In Revelation 20 we read that Christ's reign, that day of blessing, will last a thousand years. Many object that only one passage in the Bible speaks of the Millennium. Yes it may be true that only Revelation 20 speaks of the length of that time of blessing, but a multitude of verses speak about a period of blessing under the reign of Christ following a season judgment, which is to occur in the last days. That same period is undeniably referred to in Revelation 20 as lasting a thousand years. Just as you don't have to tell me more than once how old you are; the Bible only needs to tell me once that the time of blessing under Christ's reign, of which we read more than fifty times in the Old Testament, will last:

A MILLENNIUM

The End

Remember Jesus Christ Raised From Among The Dead

Some thoughts on 2 Timothy 2

—A. E. Bouter

Introduction¹

Paul's Epistles to Timothy have predominantly, though not exclusively, a personal character (e.g., 1 Tim. 5:23; 6:21; 2 Tim. 4:22). Since Timothy had to pass on what he himself had learnt and received from the apostle Paul, these two Epistles are also given for our instruction, admonition and encouragement. Both speak about failure in the public testimony (1 Tim. 4:1), with the second Epistle having a more specific end-time character (2 Tim. 3:1). It brings before us the general state of ruin in which the Church is found today, reviewing its condition and history in the last days of the Christian testimony.

Comparing First and Second Timothy

In the First Epistle to Timothy, the Assembly, the Church of the living God, is seen as the House of God, as a house of prayer, as God's present dwelling-place on earth, and as a local testimony reflecting the global unity (Eph. 2:22). All is seen from God's perspective. God wants the Assembly to be expressive of His will, and to be for His delight here below. This Epistle, therefore, gives help for our conduct in this House according to the revealed will of God, during the apostle's absence.

But irremediable failure has come in, resulting in a mixed condition of things. This leads the apostle in 2 Timothy 2 to instruct the faithful Christian how to behave himself in that same house — though now called "a great house" because God's rights are no longer generally honoured in it. At the end of Paul's life, corruption in the midst of the Christian profession was found especially in Ephesus; today it is world-wide, although many faithful individuals still maintain God's rights.

Thus, in the midst of general failure and neglect of individual responsibility, Paul presents God's will. Practically, however, the doing of God's will is now limited to the faithful, individual Christian. Both Epistles give principles flowing from God's will and directions as to how to put these divine principles into practice. They are meant for the collective testimony, but more so for the faithful individual in a day when the progress of evil has become irremediable.

The difference between 1 and 2 Timothy is similar to that between the first three and the last four letters of Revelation 2 and 3. In 1 Timothy there is general faithfulness to God's will with individual failure, whereas in 2 Timothy the Church at large has failed beyond any possible restoration of the entire company. Under such circumstances it is up to the individual believer to be faithful and to carry out God's will.

¹ *The text of the Scripture references form an integral part of this article. We strongly suggest that the reader look them up and read them in full.*

This whole development was foreseen by the Lord. He Himself already spoke of it in parables; later He led several of His apostles to write about it. Paul did so in 2 Timothy and Acts 20, Peter in 2 Peter 2, and John and Jude in their Epistles.

Four tokens of the Lord's grace

1. Timothy worked at that time in Ephesus in Asia minor, and there God had given the unfolding of the truth concerning Christ and the Assembly through Paul's apostolic ministry. Yet, failure is first mentioned there (Acts 20:27-29f). Some have said that corruption of the best takes place first and progresses fastest. Thus, already in Paul's lifetime, many forsook the truth and, as a result, they also forsook Paul, who stood for that truth (2 Tim. 1:15).

2. In order to maintain the truth during his absence — which type speaks of the absence of the Lord — Paul had left Timothy in Ephesus at an earlier occasion (1 Tim. 1:3; 3:14ff). Later he had joined Paul during his first imprisonment in Rome (Heb. 13:23). Then it seems that during Paul's second captivity in Rome, Timothy went back to Ephesus where he received further instructions via the second Epistle.

3. Through God's grace, the apostle John worked in the same area about 20 years later. So we cannot say that the Lord did not give sufficient care to those meetings. In John's ministry the saints received what is needed to be overcomers in the midst of an empty Christian profession.

4. When John was exiled on Patmos, the Lord in His love sent His first letter via John to Ephesus (Rev. 2:1-7). Because they had forsaken their first love for Him, He warned and rebuked them in an effort to bring them back.

Truth or Orthodoxy

Humanly speaking, the Christians at Ephesus had many reasons to boast: their position, the truth they had received, and the servants the Lord had used in their midst. Despite all this, serious decline had come in. They had forgotten about the Lord, the Centre of gathering, the Ark of the testimony — to use the figurative language of the Old Testament.

What could be the solution? "Remember Jesus Christ raised from among [the] dead." Not: "Remember *that* Jesus Christ was raised from among the dead." An orthodox faith in the *fact* of resurrection does nothing for the moral condition of "believers." No, the Lord wants us to have right thoughts about *Himself in resurrection*, and to have corresponding affections towards Him. He wants to have His rightful place in our hearts first. Then our testimony, our walk, yes everything, will be in harmony with Him. In this vein Paul writes in the midst of rejection and sufferings, "I am not ashamed; for I know *whom* I have believed" (1:12). Not, *which doctrine or which belief system*, but *which Person*: the Lord whom he had presented all these years (Rom. 16:25; Acts 26:18).

The apostle always comes back to this central point, linking the truth with his Lord. Erroneous teachings, false doctrines, or whatever it may be, all should be considered in relation to our blessed Lord Jesus Christ: He is the truth (Jn. 14:6). Therefore, every deviation immediately affects Him.

Eight Resources

Remarkably, Paul was not discouraged, though he wrote his last inspired letter in such a difficult situation, just before his death (4:6-8).² This Epistle is, as it were, Paul's legacy to Timothy, his testament conferred to his child. Although Paul is again imprisoned in Rome — this time in much more sorrowful circumstances than the two years he had spent as a prisoner in a rented house (Acts 28:30) — he finds all his resources in his risen and glorified Lord. Once the Master had been rejected and placed among criminals; so was His disciple now (2:9). Nevertheless, Paul finds all he needs in Him. What a model for Timothy and us! In Paul's earlier captivity he had learnt to say, "For me to live [is] Christ" (Phil. 1:21); this had lifted him above his circumstances and needs (Phil. 4:11-13).

² When referring to 2 Timothy, only chapter and verse will be given as reference, unless the context would lead to confusion.

Before starting the actual study of chapter two, let us look at some of Paul's resources which he presents to Timothy, for him to pass on for use by today's faithful Christian, who lives at the end of this dispensation. The resources themselves are in God and cannot be affected by failure or corruption. Yet their practical enjoyment remains a matter of our own responsibility, affecting our testimony for God on earth.

God's will

At the end of his life, Paul still realised the importance of God's will (2 Tim. 1:1). At the very beginning of his Christian pathway he had learnt to say, "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?" (Acts 9:6), and he never forgot it. And so it ought to be for us: many things may change, our lives or families, our local assemblies or the testimony at large, our circumstances, but never our dependence upon God's will. We should study God's Word, training ourselves to see things first from God's viewpoint, seeking to know what pleases God. This will give us a clear understanding of our failures and help us to understand what, where, and how to correct things.

God's promise of life

A comparison of 2 Timothy 1:1, Titus 1:2; 3:7, and 2 Timothy :9b, will make it clear that Paul refers here to Eternal Life, which is in Christ Jesus, who Himself is the Eternal Life (1 John 5:20). Here is "something" from eternity that God shares with us even in the dark days at the close of the present Church period. It is significant that this resource flows from, and can only be enjoyed in "Another Man," in Christ Jesus, the Anointed Man of God's pleasure. This life is characterised by its power shown in 2 Timothy 1:10: "Our Saviour Jesus Christ, who has annulled death, and brought to light life and incorruptibility." What a mighty resource in a day of ruin!

The power of God

The power of God (2 Tim. 2:8) sustains all who, like Paul at the time, identify themselves entirely with "the testimony of our Lord." For all who acknowledge and maintain His rights in a scene where He is rejected, even at the risk of trouble in their own locality (see 2 Tim. 1:14-18), God's power is a mighty resource (cf. also 2:1).

How great this power — which was "available" for us before the ages of time, before the foundation of the world — actually is we see in verse 9f. The power has saved us and called us "in time," after it had been manifested "by the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ." This same power is now working in and with us, in a scene full of opposition and hostilities (cf. God's power for, in, and with us Eph. 1:19-2:6; 3:16-20; 6:10-20).

The grace of God

One more resource which was existing before the beginning of time, and which is still available in our present situation, is God's grace (1:9; see also 2:1). Here God's grace is linked with His purpose, as in Ephesians 1. Wonderful things can be discovered by studying and meditating on the theme of God's grace. It is one of the characteristics of our present dispensation. (cf. 2 Cor. 8:9; Rom. 5:21; 6:23; Heb. 13:9; 1 Pet. 5:10,12).

The Word of God

This is another resource for the present day, just as it was for the disciples in Acts 20:32, "the Word of God's grace." Several times Paul refers to this Word under different terms. In 1:13 he encourages Timothy to "have an outline of sound words," while stressing a suited moral condition ("in faith and love which [are] in Christ Jesus"). In 3:15 we read about "the sacred letters" — probably a reference to the Old Testament — which are able to make one wise. This presupposes a true faith (not found e.g. in the Pharisees who kept the sacred letters only in an outward way) that forms a living link with our glorified Lord (Jn. 14:1). In the next verse we read about "every Scripture," a term encompassing also the New Testament. What a wonderful resource we have in these Scriptures. They strengthen us in a day of decline and lift us up to the freshness and vitality of the unchanging, divine principles found within them. Another expression for the living and abiding Word of God is "sound

teaching" (4:3f; 1 Tim. 1:10; Ti. 1:9 and 2:1). It is similar to "sound words" (2 Tim. 1:13) and "faithful word" (1 Tim. 1:15; 3:1; 4:9; 2 Tim. 2:11; Ti. 3:8).

The Holy Spirit

The Holy Spirit has been given to dwell in us (1:14). In a sense this is the most characteristic privilege of the Christian, both on earth and in eternity (Jn. 14:16). By the Spirit we are brought into, and kept in the good of our blessings. Notice here again that (reverently spoken) this same "resource" is "available" at the end, just as it was at the beginning of the Christian era. As long as there are no hindrances, the Holy Spirit identifies Himself with our spirit to help us maintain the testimony of our Lord. "For God has not given us a spirit of cowardice, but of power, and of love, and of wise discretion" (v. 7). Here again it would take considerable study to understand and enjoy the full scope of this special Christian blessing. Through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit we are clothed with His power and brought and kept together in one body.

Our Lord Jesus.

In 2 Timothy there are about 16 references to Jesus being Lord. Paul stresses Christ's lordship in this instruction for disciples who want to represent Him in the midst of a Christian profession where He is practically rejected. His rights are despised by those who are, at least by profession, closest to Him. We can compare this condition with His rejection when He was on earth: "The wounds with which I was wounded in the house of My friends," (Zech. 13:6). At the end of Paul's life, not only mere professing Christians, but also true Christians denied practically (perhaps not in theory) the Lord His rightful place (see Phil. 2:21; 3:18f). They did no longer want to be identified with His apostle (2 Tim. 1:15), who was willing to give up everything in order to please His Master.

Our position in Christ Jesus.

In 2 Timothy the apostle refers seven times (a perfect testimony) to his and our position in Christ Jesus.

- 1) "Paul, apostle of Jesus Christ by God's will, according to promise of life, the [life] which [is] in Christ Jesus" (1:1);
- 2) "God... saved... and called us with a holy calling... according to [His] own purpose and grace, which [was] given to us in Christ Jesus before [the] ages of time" (1:9);
- 3) "Have an outline of sound words... in faith and love which [are] in Christ Jesus" (1:13);
- 4) "Be strong in the grace which [is] in Christ Jesus" (2:1);
- 5) "That they also may obtain the salvation which [is] in Christ Jesus with eternal glory" (2:10);
- 6) "And all indeed who desire to live piously in Christ Jesus will be persecuted" (3:12);
- 7) "The sacred letters, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation, through faith which [is] in Christ Jesus" (3:15).

The believer who is "in Christ Jesus" is not merely "in Christ," true as this is in itself, for as such we are placed under a new Head. This, however, is also true of Adam and all Old-Testament believers, who are under the blood of Christ (Rom. 3:25). They are now "dead in Christ" (1 Th. 4:16), and shall be made alive in the Christ (1 Cor. 15:22). But our position "in Christ Jesus," on the other hand, (and some say this is mentioned 48 times in the New Testament) would refer to God's purpose from before the foundation of the world (Eph. 3:6, 11) and would thus go beyond the portion of believers who belong to other families. Yet, seen from God's perspective, being "in Christ Jesus" means still more. It speaks of our being linked with God's glorified Man in heaven. This link cannot be touched by failure and corruption, although we are right in the midst of it as witnesses in the "great house."³ What a marvellous grace God has given us that He would accept you and me in His Anointed Man, whom He held in reserve, as it were, from before time began. God has revealed Him in the fullness of time to make us sons for Himself!

To be cont'd

³ This is the important difference with Heb. 13:13 where the Jewish Christians are called to leave Judaism.

Outline for Bible Study (49)

101. Rebuilding Jerusalem's Walls, Ezra and Nehemiah — Ezra 9 and 10

Outline

- | | |
|----------------------------------|------------------------|
| 1. The Second Return | Ezra 7-8 |
| 2. Separation | Ezra 9-10 |
| 3. Nehemiah's Prayer and Mission | Neh. 1, 2, 4:1-6,15-23 |
| 4. The Walls Rebuilt | Neh. 3-6 |

Explanation

1. Under Ezra a second group of Israelites returned from exile and Judah was to some degree restored.
2. Ezra separated the people from the nations by reacquainting them with their laws, statutes, and ordinances. He was an able scribe of God's law, which had been given by Moses.
3. Nehemiah was a concerned and prayerful man. Through God's grace the King allowed him to go and seek the welfare of the Jews.
4. Nehemiah rebuilt the walls of Jerusalem (a picture of the separation of the believers from the world).

Lesson

Both Ezra and Nehemiah identified themselves with the apostate people (Ezra 9 and Neh. 1:6,7 and 9:33) just as Daniel had done earlier (Dan. 9). The affliction and sadness about the apostasy and later the rejoicing in the Lord (Neh. 8:10) gave them strength to serve in those serious days. They were men of prayer and labour (Neh. 4:9) who trusted in Jehovah (Ps. 118:6-8).

102 Malachi — Malachi 1-4

Outline

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|--------------------------------------|--------|
| 1. Half-heartedly serving the Lord | Mal. 1 |
| 2. Unfaithfulness towards Others | Mal. 2 |
| 3. Blessing promised upon Repentance | Mal. 3 |
| 4. The Day of the Lord at Hand | Mal. 4 |

Explanation

1. After all God had done for His people, they still became half-hearted in serving Him. Their leaders were completely ignorant of the fact that they dishonoured Him.

2. The priests served only their own interests, and would not do the things in the house of the Lord from which they didn't derive any profit.
3. Yet, God still promises blessing to those who turn to Him. He observes those who are occupied with His things.
4. The Lord sets before the whole nation the terror of the coming day of the Lord. Yet, for those who wait for Him, the sun of righteousness will arise with healing in his wings.

Lesson

We too are apt to (or should we say: have) become so self-centred that we no longer see how we dishonour God. We too may fail to do right to the Lord and those around us. Among us too there may be only few that truly pay attention to the things of God. Malachi serves as a tremendous warning to all of us in the last days.

To be cont'd

Readers Write

In Volume 15, Issue 6 of Come and See, in the article "Questions and Answers" in A13 at the end of the first paragraph, it states, referring to the Apostle Paul, "as long as he was in the flesh." This is a violation of Romans 8:9 where we read, "But ye are not in flesh but in Spirit," which is positionally true of all who have the Spirit of Christ. "In his earthly tabernacle" (2 Cor. 5:1) or "in the body," (2 Cor. 5:6) would have been more scriptural.

A. B. at W. NJ

The phrase "in the flesh" (which occurs some 30 times in the New Testament) is used in two ways. In the first way "in the flesh" is the equivalent of "not spiritual." It is used this way in Romans 8:9 as an opposite of "being in the Spirit."

In Philippians 1:24 (just to mention one case), Paul says that it is more profitable for the Philippians if he abides *in the flesh*. He certainly does not mean that they would profit from his being unspiritual. From the context it is clear that the phrase is used in contrast to "dying" or "departing and being with Christ." More than half of all passages use "in the flesh" in this sense rather than in the sense of Romans 8:9.

We wrote: "As long as he [Paul] was *in the flesh* he would not possess [perfection]." We hope no one thought we meant: "As long as he was *not spiritual* he would not possess it," which would infer that if Paul had been spiritual, he would have been perfect. That simply is not the case; not even the spiritual Paul was perfect as long as he was in this body. The sense was: "As long as he was *in the body* he would not possess perfection." It goes too far to say that our statement violated Scripture; after all, Philippians 1:24 doesn't violate Romans 8:9, does it?

The Editor

Questions and Answers (7)

Q17. Does the Bible forbid any food? All things created by God are good (Gen. 1:31). Leviticus 11 and Matthew 15:11 seem to be contradictory. How do 1 Timothy 4:1-5; Romans 14:14; Mark 7:19-20; Colossians 2:20-23; and Titus 1:15 apply to this?

A17. Let us begin with Genesis 1. When God says there that all is very good, He does not mean to say: "... very good to eat." In verse 29 God gave Adam and Eve their diet, and in verse 30 He gave it to the animals. Notice that meat was not to be eaten by either. This changes for man after the Flood (Gen. 9). In verse 2 God says that from then on the animals will be afraid of man. And in verse 3 God says that all moving things shall be food for man, just as the green herb had been before that time. But God also puts a restriction, "Only, the flesh with its life, its blood, ye shall not eat."

Later God gave Israel more restrictive laws regarding food, such as we find in Leviticus 11. These laws had three purposes. First they were for their own practical good, since they were a people that travelled through the desert. Secondly, they tested their willingness to obey. And thirdly, they have a spiritual meaning for us.

When the Church age began, however, there was a special meeting recorded in Acts 15 where this question was addressed. The result of that meeting is recorded in verse 28, "It has seemed good to the Holy Spirit (who is God) and to us to lay upon you (all believers from among the Gentiles) no greater burden than these necessary things: to abstain from things sacrificed to idols (how could one eat idol sacrifices and serve God?), and from blood (God had told this to Noah and never lifted this ban which all men ought to observe), and from what is strangled (for then the blood cannot run out and the meat cannot be eaten without blood), and from fornication."

In Matthew 15 and Mark 7 it was not a question of what one could eat, but if one could eat with unwashed hands, as the tradition of the Pharisees (not God's law) taught. Today there are still the kind of people of whom Paul wrote in 1 Timothy 1:1-5. They say that we cannot eat this or that, but Paul tells us that this is not right. In Romans 14 he concludes that each one should do as his faith allows him before God, and in Colossians 2, Paul says that all such prohibitions are nothing but an effort to satisfy the flesh. Finally, Titus 1:15 confirms this thought. In summary then, Christians are not under the law of Leviticus 11 which was strictly for Israel, but they remain under the requirement of Genesis 9 as is evident from Acts 15. There are no further prohibitions for Christians.

Q18. Why did Paul advise Timothy in 1 Timothy 5:23 to drink a little wine, while Christians today are told not to drink wine? Can wine help to cure a disease or infirmity?

A18. Let us begin with the second part of your question. You say that *today* Christians are told not to drink wine. This is part of the Christian tradition in many places. But it is tradition, not Scripture. As we saw in the previous answer, the Bible speaks against commands that forbid food or drinks (Col. 2:20-23). Of course God doesn't want anyone to get drunk, so if you have a real craving for wine, it is better not to drink any so you do not get tempted to drink to excess. But wine is not prohibited in Scripture. It can indeed help against diseases and infirmities, but just as other things, it is not a cure-all.

Horror and Great Darkness — Thoughts on Christian Suffering

Genesis 15:12b

Abraham is the father of all who believe in God as the One who calls forth life out of death, and gives promises to the heirs with Jesus Christ. But God's Word shows us that such faith is worthy of testing! A living faith is a precious gift from God to those who do not trust in the flesh. God's Spirit teaches the elect to look entirely away from their own ability and will. God orders the circumstances in such a way that the believers have truly nothing left to put their trust in than the once given Word of Promise only.

God's Word shows believers entering into darkness and horror that manifestly belong to their God-given promise. All seems to be so contradictory, so conflicting with the Christian ideas with which so many of us have been brought up!

Yet, when we study God's Word a little better, we notice quickly that this is the rule; we recognize this way with all men of God. In the case of Joseph, the pit and prison were planted between the promise and its fulfilment. With Moses, forty years of desert-experience separated him from his ultimate charge. With Peter, a deep self-knowledge, learned through his denial, separated him from his call as shepherd of the flock that the Lord entrusted to him. And looking at the Chief Shepherd and Finisher of our faith, Jesus Christ... didn't He have to go through the valley of the shadow of death before He could enter the joy that was set before Him?

Abraham had to experience what it would cost the Lord to keep a large nation alive. He saw the suffering of his descendants in the fiery and smoking furnace. But he had also seen the light of the promised Son, who suffered with them in the glowing fire, experiencing in the body most grievous pains! He was the Sacrifice that Abraham had to keep from the unclean and hateful birds of Babylon (Rev. 18:2).

We read in Genesis 15:17, "And it came to pass when the sun had gone down, and it was dark..." How many believers experience in their soul what these words describe. All seems so entirely in contrast to the experience they had at their conversion when they first trusted God! Especially after an encounter with the King of Salem — whom Abraham had blessed as his superior — it can happen that you will meet another king, the prince of darkness, who offers you all the goods of this world for a mere bending of the knee for him! And after you have been able to gain the victory of faith in the power of the Spirit, hearing anew that God is your only Shield and Reward, then, suddenly, comes that horror and great darkness, that depression which can wash over you without warning...! But despite that struggle of Romans 7, and the experience that "the birds of prey" are after the Sacrifice by seeking to distract your mind from your Saviour, Jesus Christ, God's promise and victory remain, standing firm.

Abram, the heir of the promises, well knew the terror and shadow of the flame of fire and the smoking furnace. Only in this way, along the path of trial, will God display His own work. Only after we have endured this, will we by faith enter into God's glory!

The End