

The Prophecy of Amos (3)

—R. Been Sr.

Till now, the author has given an overview of the content of Amos 1:3 through chapter 2. In general terms he has described how God's judgment would come over the various nations who had involved themselves with Israel. He also explained from Scripture the character of God's judgment, showing that God is longsuffering. Now he takes a closer look at the prophecies contained in chapter 1 concerning each of the nations.

Chapter 1 (continued)

Judgment over Syria (vv. 3-5)

Once, King David had sent ambassadors to Ammon to convey condolences to King Nahas at the death of his father. The princes of Ammon had claimed that these ambassadors were spies, and Nahas had treated them shamefully. He had sent them back with half their beards and clothing cut off. In fear of David's revenge, Nahas had allied himself with the Syrians. In the battle that followed, Israel — under Joab — had beaten the allied armies. Yet this victory had remained fruitless, for the Ammonites had been able to flee to their royal city, Rabbah, and the Syrians had reassembled themselves. Then David himself had gone out and had beaten the Syrians in a decisive battle (2 Sam. 10). Shortly after, David had taken Rabbah.

It seems that David had given free rein to his feelings when taking revenge. He had placed the crown of the king of the Ammonites on his own head — earlier he had consecrated all precious things to the Lord (2 Sam. 12:30; 8:11) — and he had been very cruel toward the Ammonites. Before his sin with Bathsheba, he had never acted in such a way, but since then he lacked the fine-tuned, spiritual discernment he once possessed.

Amos' prophecy shows the cause of the judgment over Syria to be its thrashing of Gilead with thrashing instruments of iron. It is true that God has used the Syrians as a rod to chastise Israel in the days of Jehu, because of Jehu's sins (2 Ki. 10:32-33). Then the Syrians, taking control of all boundary regions of Israel including Gilead, had committed great cruelties. Elisha had already spoken of these when he told Hazael that he would become king of Syria (2 Ki. 8:12-13). Hazael had become king by murdering Ben-Hadad; he had obtained the kingdom unrighteously. Now God's judgment over this and over the cruelties he had committed against Israel was sure to come down upon him.

The Lord would send a fire into the house of Hazael that would devour the palaces of Ben-Hadad. That fire came when the king of Assyria conquered Damascus about sixteen years after the death of Uzziah, during whose reign Amos prophesied. Then the bar that safeguarded Damascus was broken, leaving the city a helpless prey to the Assyrian. In men's eyes Damascus was a Beth-Eden, a house of enjoyment, a paradise. In God's eyes, however, the entire region around Damascus was a Beth-Aven, a valley of destruction. Bethel in Israel is also named Beth-Aven, a house of unrighteousness that leads to destruction (Hos. 4:15; 5:8; 10:5). The people of Syria would go into captivity in Kir. This happened under the Assyrian king Tiglath-Pilezer (2 Ki 16:9; Isa. 17:1-3). Later, in the last days of the realm of Judah, Jeremiah prophesied in a similar way against Damascus, but then Nebuchadnezzar was to be the executor of the judgment. Then too, the Lord sent a fire within the walls of Damascus (Jer. 49:23-27).

Judgment over the Philistines (vv. 5-8)

The entire history of Israel shows how great the hatred of the Philistines was against Israel. Only when King David came to power were they completely subjected. Under Ahaz' reign they invaded Judah again. Hezekiah fought against them. Philistea's main guilt was their selling many people of Israel and Judah as slaves, delivering them into the hands of Edom, the arch-enemy of Israel. Joel says that they also sold prisoners from Israel and Judah to the Greeks. Therefore, Philistea would be judged, particular its main cities: Gazah, Ashdod, Ashkelon, and Ekron, and its responsible persons. This judgment would be executed by Egypt. Afterward, Egypt and Assyria quarreled over the possession of the Philistine cities, so that these were conquered, then by the one and then by the other. Finally nothing but ruins were left and the Philistines were destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar. In the last days, the Philistines will again appear on the world-scene to receive their final judgment.

Judgment over Tyre (vv. 9-10)

The Syrians and Philistines were two nations that were entirely foreign to Israel and Judah. Tyre, however, once had a brotherly relationship with Israel, when King Hiram acknowledged the God of David and Solomon. He had made a covenant with Israel to help in building the temple. The person of David, and the power and wisdom of Solomon, but especially their faith had not left the heart of Hiram, King of Tyre, unmoved. He had understood that the Lord was their Object. He also had seen their efforts to build a house that was worthy of God. Possibly, this accommodating attitude of Hiram, his brotherly relationship with Israel, had been forgotten by the kings of Tyre that succeeded him. But God had not forgotten it. God held the successors of Hiram responsible for not maintaining this good relationship with Israel.

How did this friendship, this brotherly relationship, make place for hatred over the course of the years? Tyre, predominantly a merchant city, had hoped to derive profit from a league with the Philistines against Israel by bringing it into bondage. Tyre didn't care that the captured Israelites were sold to Edom, the most bitter enemy of Israel. The thirst for money choked every other consideration. The slave trade was very profitable in those days (Ezek. 27:13). Later the Philistines and those of Tyre repeated their godless act and sold Israelites to the Ionians (the Greeks —Joel 3:6). Besides profit, these two nations had another motive: they wanted to depopulate Israel by sending its people into captivity so that they could lay hold of its territory. In doing so, they forgot that Israel's land really belonged to God, that the Lord had chosen it as His inheritance in the midst of the Gentile countries (Ps. 108:9). Tyre and the Philistines had the temerity to touch this inheritance of the Lord, His silver and His gold. They brought His precious things into their temples (Joel 3: 5). It is true that God used Tyre and the Philistines to chastise Israel, but that did not give them the right to act as they did.

Here too, we see the law: What a man [or a nation] sows that shall he [it] reap. Tyre and Philistea, nations who sold the Israelites as slaves to Edom, were themselves given up to the Assyrians and later to Nebuchadnezzar. In the last days Tyre, Sidon, and Philistea will be judged also (Joel 3:4).

In our days too, we see that nations form leagues to lay hold of territories that don't belong to them by deporting the inhabitants. They plunder their wealth without the least thought that "the earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof" (Ps. 24:1).

Judgment over Edom (vv. 11-12)

Edom, as well as the two nations that follow, Ammon and Moab, were related to Israel. This relationship, although only by natural descent, put these three nations under a special obligation. It should have kept the reins on their feelings of hatred and enmity. But their deeds were just as evil as those of the entirely foreign nations. Edom (Esau) is judged for its continuous deadly and merciless hatred and wrath against the descendants of his brother Jacob. Edom made use of Tyre and Philistea, nations to which it was not related, to subject Israel, its brother nation according to the flesh. Through this, Edom showed its inbred hatred against the descendants of Jacob. It still could not forget that the birthright had been given to Jacob, a right that Esau had scornfully bartered away. Edom also showed his rebellion against God's pronouncement: "The greater (the older) shall serve the lesser (the younger)" (Gen. 25:23). When Edom had conquered Israel, it took possession of the central part of Palestine (Idumea) and added it to its own territory. This was against the express will of God, who had established Edom's domain (Dt. 2:5). Ezekiel mentions the vicious revenge of Edom over Judah (25:12-14). Edom's desire to conquer Israel and Judah aroused the wrath of the Lord. (Ezek. 35:10).

Syria, Philistea, and Tyre received a lesser judgment than Edom. The entire history of Edom shows the righteousness of the Lord's word: "I hated Esau" (Mal. 1:3). Esau will not have a remnant left after the judgment (Obad. :18). His posterity will be eradicated (Jer. 49:10). For Moab, Ammon, and Elam there is still restoration, not for Edom (Jer. 48:47; 49:6,39). Mount Seir was destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar. In the last days, Edom will again be present (Joel 3:19), but only to be entirely exterminated (Isa. 63:1-6).

The judgment over Ammon (vv. 13-15)

The relationship with Edom stems from Isaac's days. That of Ammon and Moab from the days of Abraham, through Lot. The latter was therefore of an older date than that of Edom. The relationships with Ammon and Moab, however, were based on incest. With Ammon we find a terrible cruelty toward the tribes of Israel living beyond the Jordan (Ruben, Gad, and the half tribe of Manasseh — Num. 34:14-15). Their purpose was to eradicate the male descendants of these two tribes. To that end they didn't refrain from molesting pregnant women. This is the way Ammon took possession of Gilead.

Just as Edom, Ammon forgot that God had given the land of Gilead to the two-and-a-half tribes. Therefore, a heavy judgment would come over this rapacious kingdom "in the day of battle, with a tempest in the day of the whirlwind." The judgment would come over the entire population, but especially the responsible leaders would go into captivity. Once the prophet Elisha had wept over such misdeeds as the Ammonites had committed (2 Ki. 8:12). Would the Lord not punish such deeds? Initially the Ishmaelites or "the tribes from the East" were to be the executioners of the judgment over Ammon (Ezek. 25:4,10), later Nebuchadnezzar would complete it (Jer. 49:2).

To be cont'd

John, the Beloved Disciple (2)

—H. Bouter Jr.

The author has taken us through three of the verses that speak of "the disciple whom Jesus loved." We have seen him in the upper room (Jn. 13:23), at the cross (Jn. 19:26), and at the empty tomb (Jn. 20:2). Now he takes us to the Sea of Galilee, where twice more the apostle John is referred to as the disciple whom Jesus loved.

At the Sea of Galilee (Jn. 21:1-25).

I will make you fishers of men

Christians are closely linked with the risen and glorified Christ. As His followers we must serve Him till He returns. The last chapter of John's Gospel clearly shows that He is the Leader of His disciples. John 19 focuses our attention on our union with the crucified Christ. John 20 stresses our union with the buried and risen Lord. Finally, John 21 shows us our relationship with the Lord in heaven, distributing the gifts and commanding us to work for Him until the day of His return. The fourth and fifth mention of John as the beloved disciple (Jn. 21:7,20) teach us important things about the position and task we have as disciples of the Lord.

John 21 is obviously an epilogue. The last verses of chapter 20 state the purpose of this gospel: "That you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name." Chapter 21 describes how the Lord made His disciples to be fishers of men, involving them in His service.

Peter's initiative to go fishing on the sea of Tiberias (v. 3), of course, related to normal fishing. Apparently he had forgotten that the Lord expected him to be a fisher of men. Years earlier the Lord had told him so, when calling the first disciples (Mt. 4:18-22; Mk. 1:16-20; Lk. 5:1-11). Peter wanted to resume his old profession, but his encounter with Christ changed everything. The Lord used the miraculous catch as the basis for Peter's restoration among the other disciples, and to reestablish him in the Master's service. Thus the closing chapter of this gospel reminds us of the original calling of the disciples, shedding new light upon it. The risen Lord makes a new start with His followers; now they definitely learn to know Him as their Leader.

It is interesting that John 21:14 says, "This is already the third time that Jesus had been manifested to the disciples, being risen from the dead." The first and second appearance to the gathered disciples are described in the previous chapter. Besides these three occasions, the Lord also appeared on a more private basis to some — Mary Magdalene, Peter, and the two on the road to Emmaus. So, in total, the risen Lord manifested Himself more than three times. Chronologically, this third appearance to the gathered disciples, which took place at the sea of Tiberias, probably was the seventh appearance of the Lord since He had risen from the dead.

This passage teaches us that in our work as His disciples, we are fully dependent on the Lord's instructions. Without Him we can do nothing, and all our efforts are in vain. What a painful lesson this can be! Headed by Peter, the disciples fish a whole night without catching anything (v. 3). Then, in the morning mist, they see a Man on the beach whom they don't immediately recognize. He asks them whether they have anything to eat (v. 5). Some translations use the words "meat" or "fish", things that could be eaten with bread to make it tasty. In short, the Lord asks them whether they have caught anything. They have to admit that all their efforts have been in vain. They still don't recognize the Stranger, but He speaks with such authority that they obey His command, and cast the net on the right-hand side of the boat. The result is miraculous: they can no longer haul the net in because of the great number of fish (v. 6). Once before they had cast out their nets at the word of the Lord (Luke 5:6-7). Now, in contrast to what happened then, neither the boat sinks nor the net tears. Immediately, John, who knew the Lord so well from being close to Him, understands intuitively that this must be the Lord. He says to Peter: "It is the Lord!" Once again, Peter shows his impulsive character by jumping overboard to reach the

Lord as quickly as possible. He had shown the same desire before, when the Lord walked on the sea (cf. Mt. 14:28). The other disciples then come in the boat, dragging the net with the fish, and Peter drags the net ashore, full of fish, 153 in all.

This miraculous catch of fish portrays the work the disciples would be doing in dependence on the Lord. They were to cast out the Gospel net and to gather God's elect; the Lord knowing the exact number of His own.¹ As confirmed in the Acts, Peter held a very responsible place in this task of fishing for men. He was, so to speak, to cast the net of the Gospel into the sea of the nations. When he drew it up again, it was full of converts, both Samaritans and Gentiles (Acts 8, 10, and 11). In the work among the Jewish people, Peter and John acted together (Acts 3, 4, and 8). They had been partners in their old profession as fishermen (Lk. 5:10). In their new activities, they also follow the Lord in close relationship with each other, though with distinct ministries. The Lord refers to this after Peter's restoration. Each one personally had to follow the Lord wherever He would lead, and John's ministry was to extend until the end time.

Sure, it is not easy to serve the Lord and to be a fisher of men. We see here that the Lord wants to train His disciples for it. If we pay attention to His commands, the result will be remarkable. Perhaps the miraculous catch is also an allusion to the great response among the nations to the future preaching of the gospel of the Kingdom. This will happen after the rapture of the Assembly which, although not seeing, yet believes. It will follow the conversion of the remnant of Israel, who will see the One whom they have pierced. All this is typified in John 20 by the gathered disciples and Thomas' initial unbelief respectively.

The restoration of Peter

The catch of fish is followed by a meal with the Lord and the public restoration of Peter. The Lord Himself had already prepared everything for the meal. When the disciples come ashore they see a charcoal fire with fish and bread on it (v. 9). As the Host, Christ invites His disciples to eat with Him. This He had done so often during His sojourn here on earth. By now, all are convinced that it is the Lord (v. 12).

Is this not a valuable lesson for us as we follow Him? We should be active as His servants, but it is also important to fellowship with Him. We need to strengthen and refresh ourselves with all the good things He Himself has prepared for us. In His presence, and enjoying fellowship with Him, we shall always be impressed with His greatness and glory.

This charcoal fire may well have reminded Peter of the fire in the court of the high priest. There, while warming himself, he had so seriously denied the Lord (Jn. 18:18,25). The Lord's asking him the same question three times must have been a painful reminder of this threefold denial. This is evident from the contents of the questions. When the Lord had foretold that all disciples would forsake Him, Peter had boasted that he would remain faithful to Him until death (Mt. 26:31-35; Jn. 13:36-38). As it turned out, Peter was not any more faithful than the others; his pride had gone before his fall.

Therefore the Lord now asks him: "Simon... do you love Me more than these?" (v. 15), referring to Divine love. Peter can only acknowledge his failure and answer very timidly. "Yes, Lord, You know that I love You," using another word for "love" than the Lord had used. He has to acknowledge that his love for the Master is no greater than that of the others. Yet, he did love the Lord, and was truly attached to Him. Then the Lord asks him the same question, and receives the same answer. The third time, the Lord uses the word Peter had used twice for "love": "Do you love Me?" Now Peter is so grieved that he totally bares his heart, saying, as it were, "Lord, You know me thoroughly. You look all the way to the bottom of my heart, and You know that I really do love You." He admits that only the Lord's omniscience can assess this: "Lord, You know all things; You know that I love You."

This confession is sufficient for Peter's rehabilitation. So that the other disciples also may understand that the Lord wants to use Peter again, He gives him a special task after each answer. He was to feed the lambs of Christ's flock, and he should both shepherd and feed the sheep. That which lambs need most is food, whereas sheep also need to be guided (back) on the right track.

In the miraculous catch we saw Peter's task with regard to the nations, now we see his care for the Jewish flock (cf. Jn. 10:3-4; Gal. 2:7-9; 1 and 2 Pet.). Love for the Lord is to be the motive for such service, as it is for all service (cf. 1 Cor. 13). Do we really love the Lord? Well, then He would like us to take care of His sheep.

¹ *In contrast with Matthew 13, here we have only good fish. There are no nominal confessors but only genuine believers. The mention of the exact number suggests that the Lord knows all His own; all His elect are saved. Many have speculated about the number 153. Augustine regarded it the number of the elect who are gathered within the Church. Jerome linked it with the proclamation of the Gospel to all the nations of the earth, since 153 different kinds of fish were known by the ancient Greeks. Interestingly, 153 is the sum of all numbers from one to seventeen inclusive.*

Peter and John

Then Peter is told about the price he would have to pay for being a disciple. Now he could do what he wanted to do in the upper room, he could follow the Lord (Jn. 13:36-38). In this pathway of imitation — a path of suffering — he was going to be like Christ, for he was to glorify God by his death (v. 19).

Then our attention is drawn again to John, the beloved disciple. The Lord orders Peter: "Follow Me," just as He had called Him before to come after Him and follow Him. Peter, however, turns around and looks at John. Seeing that the beloved disciple is also following the Lord, he becomes anxious to know what will happen to John. Will he also have to die a martyr? Jesus' answer to this is: "If I want him to remain until I come, what is that to you? You follow Me" (v. 22). John followed the Lord of his own account, he didn't need a special order to do so. In this context, the Gospel writer reminds us of what had happened in the upper room (v. 20). Because the beloved disciple had occupied a place of confidence with the Lord, he had no trouble understanding the will of the Lord, and following Him was a matter of course for Him.

It is clear from this passage that discipleship is first of all a personal matter. Although we all have a common Master, each has to follow Him personally. Our interest in each other can easily degenerate into meddling. Therefore the Lord exhorts each of us separately: "You follow Me." Each disciple has his particular place and his particular task. The Lord is the only One to decide what will happen to someone else, and the way in which He leads our path is good. That does not mean that we are to be independent of each other. This is shown by the example of John and Peter who repeatedly worked together in the Master's service (Acts 3:1; 4:13; 8:14). Yet, each of these two apostles had his own place and service; this is clear from the inspired Scriptures they wrote for the Assembly.

We have already seen that the apostle Peter was entrusted with the care of the flock that Christ would lead out of the Jewish sheepfold. Beside these, there were other sheep to be added (Jn. 10:16) — the believers from the nations. For them Peter was to open the door of faith. He was to cast the net of the Gospel into the sea of the nations and to draw it ashore.

John, however, received a different, less eye-catching task. His ministry was more concerned with the Person of the Lord. This was already suggested by his place of intimacy. The apostle John writes about knowing the Son of God who became truly Man to grant us life; about the eternal Word who became flesh, and dwelt among us. This knowledge of Christ is life-giving and results in a fellowship of life (Jn. 17:3; 1 Jn. 1:1-4). The truth of Jesus Christ having come in flesh is the firm foundation that will remain. It remains in spite of the decay of the Church and its failure to respond to its heavenly position.

While Peter's ministry relates to the beginning period, and Paul's to the days in which the Assembly flourished, John's ministry relates to the end time. To this the Lord's meaningful words, "If I want him to remain until I come" allude. John's task was to span all time till the second coming of Christ. Just think of Revelation, the book that gives insight in the things of the last days. It also reminds us of the Gospel of John and his Epistles that deal with the things that remain. They contain truth that will be unaffected by human failure until the glorious moment of Christ's return. They speak of eternal life, which was revealed here on earth, and is now our portion in the Son.

When the Lord called His first disciples, Peter was casting a net out into the sea, whereas John was busy mending nets (Mt. 4:18-22; Mk. 1:16-20). These different activities are typical of the distinct ministries of these two apostles. Peter is the one to cast out the net: he started the work of the gathering together of the Assembly. John, however, is to mend the nets: his ministry provides the truth necessary to continue the work when it is threatened by evil influences, and when decay has entered the Church. We see this in his battle against the false teachers who were assailing the truth concerning the Person of Christ. He writes about the many antichrists who deny Christ having come in flesh (1 Jn. 2:18; 4:1-3).

Finally, John's example teaches us that as disciples we are to look forward to the return of the Lord. One servant may have to lose his life for the sake of his testimony — like Peter. Another may remain until the coming of the Lord — like John. We do not know which path the Lord has mapped out for us. It all depends on His will: "If I want him to remain until I come..." (v. 22). Each of us must personally follow the Lord and serve Him while waiting for His imminent return. Perhaps He will leave us here till the moment of His coming. Then we will be changed and caught up together with the raised dead to meet the Lord in the air (1 Cor. 15:51-52; 1 Thes. 4:15-18). John represents the first category, the people who will remain until He comes. Peter represents the second, those who have died but who will be raised at the voice of the Lord.

The final verses of John 21 confirm that the beloved disciple is the author of this Gospel. "This is the disciple who bears witness concerning these things, and who has written these things" (v. 24). How thankful we can be for the glad tidings he

has written regarding the Son of God, in whom we too, by faith, possess eternal life. May the example set by John, the beloved disciple, stimulate us to be better followers of Christ. May we, like he, learn to have fellowship with our Lord on high, to side with the crucified One, to live on earth in the power of His resurrection, and to wait for His return while working for Him!

The End

Prevailing Peace

*"The peace of Christ," O precious gift
Of sovereign, matchless, tender love:
Peace which has wondrous power to lift
Our souls from earth to heaven above.*

*Peace in the midst of fear and hate:
Serene and calm tranquility
In Christ, whose love so pure and great
Has conquered every enemy.*

*Peace given to us because He died —
A perfect sacrifice for sin —
And lives, in heaven glorified,
Receiving all who trust in Him.*

*This peace be yours, and ours, dear friend,
Through all the turbulence of time;
Until soon comes our journey's end,
With Christ our Lord, in peace sublime.*

L. M. Grant

Propitiation and Reconciliation (1)

—J. van Dijk

Some words in the Bible don't mean very much to many of us. We don't use them in our everyday language and, besides, they signify abstract thoughts that are not so easily explained. Propitiation and reconciliation are two examples. We tend to skip over these. That's a pity, for properly understood they convey ideas that are very important. Knowing their meaning helps us to understand God's dealings with us and with the world around us. We will explain the significance of these two words. We hope this will help our readers.

Propitiation

The different Bible translations use a variety of words to translate the Greek verbs, nouns, and adjectives related to this word. Therefore, we must first have a look at these words in the Greek. Since I am not a Greek student, Vine's Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words has been a great help in this.

Hilaskomai, the Greek verb related to propitiation, is used in Luke 18:13. The words "be merciful to me," should read: "be propitiated as to me." It is also used in Hebrews 2:17 where the words "to make reconciliation" should read: "to make propitiation," which, as we will see, means: "to give satisfaction."

Hilasterion is a related noun that is best translated "propitiatory," the place where God finds satisfaction. In the Septuagint, the Greek Old Testament, it is used for the mercyseat, the place where God could meet with man. Hebrews 9:5 uses it this way (NIV: "the place of atonement"), and so it should be translated in Romans 3:25. However, the KJV gives it there as "a propitiation," the NASB as "propitiation" — or in the margin as "a propitiatory sacrifice, which amounts to the same thing — and the NIV as "a sacrifice of atonement." In other words, they all present it there as the sacrifice, rather than as the place, or the ground on which God can meet with man. The sacrifice and the place where the blood is

presented are of course closely related, but the distinction is better kept in mind for a proper understanding of what God tells us.

Hilasmos is the noun that is properly translated "propitiation." It occurs only twice, in 2 John 2:2 and in 2 John 4:10. The NASB renders it in the margin as "satisfaction," which is the basic thought. The NIV gives: "atoning sacrifice."

Now you likely didn't expect that there is a connection between these Greek words and the English word "hilarious." Our word comes from the Greek "Maros" meaning "cheerful" or "glad." Though the English "hilarious" is connected with uncontrolled laughter, the root of the word describes the mood we are in, our disposition. This comes very close to the meaning that is useful to us in our study. At any rate, the most important thing to note is that the word itself has nothing to do with sacrifice but with a satisfied disposition. Of course, it is the sacrifice of Christ that established the satisfied "disposition" (I say this reverently) of God toward the sinner.

I purposely put "disposition" in quotes, for I am not completely happy with it. Really, God's disposition to the lost sinner has always been one of outgoing love. Nothing ever changed with God. Although God's disposition was favourable toward the sinner, the question of sin prevented God from showing it. When Satan caused man to fall, he made, as it were, a move that seemed to put God in a losing position. If God showed His holiness in executing a righteous judgment on Adam, He would fail to show that He is love. If, on the other hand, God showed mercy to Adam, God would fail to maintain His holiness. So to say: God could not move without losing. As long as God had not shown how He was going to deal with this dilemma it *appeared* that God did not have a "disposition" of grace toward the sinner. Now you see why I was not satisfied with the word "disposition." It might have been better to say "the apparent disposition." Even this is somewhat faulty, however, in that already in the Old Testament God showed to those who had faith that He was merciful. Only, His mercy could not flow out unhindered until the sacrifice that propitiated God had been brought.

What could be done to remove the dilemma? God Himself gave the answer in sending His Son. When Christ died, it became clear how God could show mercy and yet maintain His holiness in the finest detail. This act propitiated God; God could now show His grace and mercy toward vile sinners. Now the declaration goes out to all, God has been propitiated. He has been vindicated. The smear that our sins seem to have put on God has been removed. God is light *and* God is love!

Now let us look at John 2:2, which reads: "He is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours alone, but also for the whole world." Several translations add the words "the sins of" in the last clause. The Greek does not have these words. True, the English may read better with these words added, but they are omitted to show the difference between us, the believers, on the one hand, and the world on the other. The Lord Jesus bore our sins upon the cross. This could not be said of the world in general. Our sins had made propitiation necessary. For believers, Christ's work of propitiation finished the entire question of their sins. This cannot be said of the sins of unbelievers. Therefore, though propitiation is also available for the whole world — anyone can come — the sins only of those who do come were included. It depends entirely on their coming to God at His invitation. We will have more on this when we look at reconciliation.

I like to give an example to show what propitiation is. Suppose that my neighbour and I have spread the news that you assisted us in some crime so that all people in town shun you. There was no truth in what we said, but it was so generally believed that your name has become a disgrace in the community. What we did to you, resembles a little what man has done to God. You are prepared to forgive us, but if you act friendly toward us, everyone will say about you: "Look how friendly they are with each other, that just proves that this man is guilty too." Now someone comes who, beyond a shadow of a doubt, proves that you were not involved in the crime at all. Your name is vindicated, your honour restored. Then you can say that through what that person has said or done you have found propitiation, satisfaction.

Your propitiation will have a tremendous effect on your behaviour from that moment on; not that it changed you, but it changed your situation. If you now show your friendly disposition to us, people will talk differently. They will say, "What a gracious man, he does not even hold a grudge against those who clearly have done him such great wrong." This shows one effect of propitiation.

You then declare that you will forgive us if we come and ask for forgiveness. My neighbour comes and you forgive him. His sin has found propitiation, it is covered by the satisfaction you have found. Suppose I refuse to come. Although in principle propitiation is there for me too, yet, my sin never finds propitiation. As long as I don't avail myself of it, my sin remains my sin, unforgiven.

So it is with the world. The statement toward the world cannot be as detailed as for Christians. Those who refuse to repent have to pay for their own works. Their end will be in the Lake of Fire (Rev. 20:11-15). Propitiation affects them too, for without propitiation God would appear to be unloving if He judged them. Their *sins*, however, will never be propitiated, unless they repent.

This shows how carefully chosen the words in the Bible are. It also shows how careful translators have to be not to add thoughts in an attempt to make the English (or any language for that matter) read better. Lord willing we will look at reconciliation in our next issue.

To be cont'd

We Wish To See Jesus

—B. Eysink

Some Greeks expressed the desire to see Jesus. Such a desire, we, both you and me, may have as well, so that we may come to know Him better. Do we know the Lord Jesus better today than when we first accepted Him? To the apostle Paul there was nothing greater than the knowledge of the Lord Jesus. He said that he counted "all things to be loss on account of the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord" (Phil. 3:8). How precious must the Lord have been to him!

Let us open the Word with the intent to learn something new about the Lord Jesus. Carefully read John 1:35-51, a passage containing beautiful things about the Lord Jesus. Reading each verse, let us ask ourselves the question: In what character does the Word portray the Lord Jesus?

Verses 35-36 show the Lord Jesus as *the Lamb of God*. John had already identified Him as such in verse 29. He was the Lamb that God Himself would provide (Gen. 22:8), the perfect Lamb (Ex. 12), but also the Lamb that is led to the slaughter (Isa. 53:7). He is also "the Lamb that has been slain" and that is worthy "to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing" (Rev. 5:12).

Verse 37 says, "The two disciples... followed Jesus." Here the Word presents the Lord as *the One who goes before*. He went as the First One. When no one followed Him, because all had fled, then He still walked on. He went into the judgment, and received the strokes that I and you deserved. He also went before us after He had finished the work, and returned to the Father. He left you and me the promise, "If I go and shall prepare you a place, I am coming again and shall receive you to Myself" (Jn. 14:3).

In verse 38 we read: "Jesus having turned... says to them, What seek ye?" Here we see Him first as *the One who turns*. Later the Lord did so once more, namely when Peter denied Him. How sad must the Saviour's face have been! We also see Him in this verse as *the One who is interested*. Even today He is interested in what you and I are seeking. What do you seek; what do I seek? How deeply sad it is when the apostle Paul has to observe that "all seek their own [interest], not the things which are Jesus Christ's" (Phil. 2:21). We also may ask the Lord Jesus this question: "Lord, what do you seek?" His answer is recorded in Luke 19:10, "For the Son of man has come to seek and to save that which was lost." His interest in you and me was so great that He "emptied Himself, taking on a bondman's form, taking His place in the likeness of men; and having been found in figure as a man, humbled Himself, becoming obedient even unto death, and that the death of the cross" (Phil. 2:7). Should we not display more interest for Him and the things concerning Him? Is He not worthy of this?

In verse 39, the Lord answers, "Come and see." *The inviting One!* The Lord Jesus wants to have the disciples with Him. He wants to have fellowship with them. That day the disciples stayed with Him. For you and me too, it is important to be with Him daily. He too, likes this, now and ever. What a great privilege that we, through grace, may know the place where He Himself has promised to be present. There, in His immediate presence, we may announce His death, hear and meditate upon His Word, and pray. He Himself invites us! In John 17:24 the Lord says, "I will that those be with Me..." That is His desire. We know that in this verse these words refer to the Father's house. Would it not be His will too, that we be at the place which He Himself has given us on earth, where He, according to His promise, is in the midst?

Verse 41 shows the Lord as *the Messiah*. We know that "Messiah" means "Anointed One." In the Old Testament three persons were anointed:²

- a. The priest (Ex. 40:13)
- b. The king (1 Sam. 16:12-13)
- c. The prophet (1 Ki. 19:16)

² Editor's note: These three were anointed in preparation for their office. Besides them the cleansed leper was anointed on the day of his cleansing — Leviticus 14:13.

We know that the Lord Jesus holds these three offices. We will not go into details on this now. Just consider what it must have been for Him to realize that He was not wanted: not as Prophet, not as King, not as Priest.

Then in verse 42, Jesus said, "Thou art Simon..." The Lord knows Simon's name. Isn't it encouraging to think that the Lord Jesus is *the One who knows us*, you and me, by our own name? We see this too in John 20, where Mary, overcome by her sorrow about the Lord, was called by her name by the Lord.

Perhaps you are in sorrowful circumstances, just like Mary. Through her sorrow she could not see the Lord. Has that ever happened to you? It has to me! Perhaps right now you are in a situation that robs you of your view of the Lord. Well, while you are reading this, He says to you, "Fear not, for I have redeemed you, I have called you by your name; you are Mine" (Isa. 43:1).

In verses 43-44 we read: "Jesus... says to him, Follow Me." Here He is presented as *the One who asks that we follow Him*. So He also calls you and me to follow Him. Very pointedly we could ask what this request precisely means for our daily life. It is a question of ears, eyes, mouth, hands, and feet. If I follow the Lord Jesus, would I want to:

- a. hear something that He would not want to hear?
- b. see something that He would not want to see?
- c. say something that He would not want to say?
- d. do something that He would not want to do?
- e. go somewhere where He would not want to go?

In verse 47 the Lord says, "Behold one truly an Israelite, in whom there is no guile." The Lord Jesus doesn't just make some kind of remark about Nathanael. He knows him thoroughly. *He is the One who knows the hearts*. He knows you and me. How do you and I react when we realize that He knows our hearts? Are we at ease, or do we become restless? Are there things that do not add up? If so, let us set things in order, confess them to the Lord and to one another.

Finally we look at verses 49-51. First Nathanael discovers something about the Lord Jesus: "Rabbi, Thou art the *Son of God*, Thou art *the King of Israel*." When we, like Nathanael, have seen something of the Lord, then His only desire is to increase our knowledge of Him, so that we may know Him better. This He did with Nathanael. After he had seen that the Lord Jesus is the Son of God and the King of Israel, the Lord showed Himself to him as *the Son of man upon whom the angels of God ascend and descend*.

Now let us consider a few questions. Once we have seen the Lord Jesus in this way, don't we long to be more like Him? Let us give honest answers:

- a. Does the Lord Jesus have the first place in my life?
- b. Does the Lord ever have to "turn around" because of me?
- c. Am I really interested in the Lord Jesus and His things?
- d. Do I long to have fellowship with the Lord by prayer and the reading of His Word?
- e. Am I truly on the Lord's side? The world has rejected Him!
- f. Am I truly obedient to His call to follow Him?
- g. What can the Lord find for Himself in my heart?

The End

Outline for Bible Study (57)

115. The Paralytic. The Centurion at Capernaum. The Calling of the Apostles. — Matthew 8:5-13; 9:1-8; 10:1-4; Mark 2:1-12; 3:13-19; Luke 5:17-26; 6:12-16; 7:1-11.

Outline

1. The paralytic Lk. 5:17-26
2. The centurion Lk. 7:1-11
3. The calling of the apostles Mt. 10:1-4

Explanation

1. First, the Lord dealt with the man's sin and his need to be forgiven. His noting the faith of the paralytic's friends encourages believers to lead their loved-ones to the Lord. The Lord's revealing the thoughts of the Pharisees, and healing the sick man, body and soul, proved Him to be God, who is able to forgive sin. It was a testimony of His grace and power.

2. The God-fearing centurion loved his servant. He sent the Jewish elders to the Lord, then his friends (Lk. 7:3-6) and finally he came himself (cf. Mt. 8:5). His love for the Jews was seen in His building their synagogue. The Jews, who hated the Romans, responded to his love. The servant was healed because of the centurion's faith not because of his virtues. Though he was a Gentile, he bowed down before the Lord's greatness.

3. We are to pray the Lord to send forth laborers into the harvest (Mt. 9:38), but it is He who calls them. Before calling His disciples, He prayed (Lk. 6:12). The Lord even had to call Judas Iscariot who delivered Him up. The Lord ever said, "Lo, I come to do Thy will, O God" (Heb. 10:7).

Lesson

The paralytic is a picture of the sinner (Ps. 51:5).

Through faith the centurion shared in the blessings of Israel.

We, who are dependent upon God, should pray in all we do.

116. The Sermon on the Mount — Matthew 5-7

Outline

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| 1. | The mark of those entering the kingdom | Mt. 5:1-12 |
| 2. | Their relationship with the world | Mt. 5:13-16 |
| 3. | The law explained | Mt. 5:17-48 |
| 4. | Giving of alms | Mt. 6:1-4 |
| 5. | Praying and fasting | Mt. 6:5-18 |
| 6. | Separation from the spirit of this world | Mt. 6:19-34 |
| 7. | Fault-finding (the mote and the beam) | Mt. 7:1-6 |
| 8. | Confidence in our heavenly Father | Mt. 7:7-12 |
| 9. | Entering into the kingdom | Mt. 7:13-14 |
| 10. | Characteristics of false teachers | Mt. 7:15-23 |
| 11. | The necessity of obedience | Mt. 7:24-29 |

Explanation

1. The nine beatitudes show the character of those entering the Messiah's kingdom (Ps. 72). They divide into three groups. Four deal with inner qualities, three with the attitude toward others. Of the last two, one relates to the first four — it has the same blessing as the first, the other relates to the second group.

2. The Father's qualities must be seen in every believer. Here God is called "Father" because He is the Creator. Since Christ is glorified we know God as Father more intimately: as sons of God.

3. The Lord came to fulfill the law. By their traditional interpretation, the scribes had robbed the law of its power. These hollow traditions they kept zealously.

4. The Lord rebuked the hypocritical Pharisees. Only alms given in love for Him and one's neighbor are rewarded.

5. Since the disciples had not yet received the Holy Spirit, the Lord taught them how to pray. The title, "The Lord's Prayer," is not appropriate, for it is a prayer for the disciples. The first three requests will be fulfilled in the kingdom. The one for daily bread speaks of dependence, the last three of the need for forgiveness and help against the *enemy* (the antichrist). The doxology is not in the best manuscripts.

Fasting is a temporary abstaining from food so as to commune closer with God. Fasting to impress men is far from God's will.

6. One whose eye is single only wants to please God. To such, God gives clarity about everything. God loves us and wants us to be free from worry. Since it causes our hearts to lose trust in God, anxiety is sinful and foolish (Ps. 37:1-11).

7. God alone can judge hearts (Jas. 4:12; 1 Cor. 4:4-5). If we judge our neighbour, God will judge us. Since we are sinners, all we deserve is to be condemned (Heb. 12:29). Motes are errors, beams are big vices. The holy things, the pearls, the precious truths of God, are not for unbelievers. To them we must preach the gospel.

8. The Lord taught the disciples to present all their needs to God with childlike confidence in His goodness.

9. To enter the kingdom takes energy (Lk. 13:24). With determination the sinner must set aside all that is of self.

10. False teachers will always pretend to teach God's Word. Their behaviour is often attractive (sheep's clothing), but they will prove to be destructive (ravening wolves). Though they may well do miracles in the name of Jesus, their works are evil. It is therefore important to know the Word and how to apply it.

11. Blessed are those who are obedient to God's Word. (Ps. 119:2-3). Unlike human wisdom, this Word exercises a powerful influence on the hearts (Heb. 4:12-13).

Lesson

These qualities can only be found in those who are born again.

To be cont'd