

## The Prophet Jonah (2)

—R. Been (Sr.)

### Chapter 1

#### *Jonah in the storm*

Twice in this short prophecy, the word of the Lord comes to Jonah (1:1; 3:1). The first time to give him the command to go to Nineveh and to preach against it, *for the wickedness of the inhabitants had come up before the Lord*. After Jonah had fled from this charge, and had been met by God and brought back, he received this charge for the second time, but now *the authority of the Lord* is accentuated.

Nothing is more necessary than for believers, and especially servants of the Lord, to listen to the word of the Lord. Many listen to their intelligence, their feelings, their arguments of expedience, but then they go their own chosen way and they finally end up in the "sea."

Nineveh was the capital of the great Assyrian Empire, situated on the Tigris. The city is mentioned as early as Genesis 10:11-12. The prophet Nahum speaks of Nineveh as a bloody city, full of lies, violence, and robbery (Nah. 3:1). There were more merchants in the city than stars of the heavens; the crowned (or wealthy) were as locusts (Nah. 3:16-17). Jonah had to preach *against* this city full of godlessness. It certainly was not a message of joy that he had to bring. God knew all its wickedness, which was not just sporadically present, here and there in the city, but had, as it were, been stacked up to heaven. Therefore the judgment of Nineveh could no longer be delayed. Now God could have done this in a moment, as He did at Sodom and Gomorrah. But here, He still allows the city to be warned first. He gives the people of Nineveh an opportunity to repent, that is to turn themselves away from their sins and wickedness.

The preaching entrusted to Jonah was a *last message* to this city. Although the entire city was wicked, the preaching was not *for* the city, or *to* the city, but *against* the city, yet every inhabitant remained responsible. It does not say that the wickedness of the *city* had come up to heaven, but that of its *inhabitants*. This charge by itself did not displease Jonah. Through the word of the Lord he had once before foretold that there would still come a time of blessing for the realm of the ten tribes. This time came in the days of King Jeroboam II.

However, a strong Assyria, Israel's great enemy, did not jibe with Jonah's ideas. He knew very well that, if the inhabitants of Nineveh repented, God would spare them and their city (4:2). He fully realized that his charge was not just to announce that judgment, but that the Lord wanted the testimony of a preacher as warning and salvation for the city and its inhabitants. God looked for personal and national repentance so that He would not have to send suffering and calamity.

Man is differently disposed, even the religious man. The Jews occupied a privileged, God-given place among the nations. They had to keep themselves separate from the other nations so that they might be a testimony of God's holiness, grace, and love in a world that is in rebellion against God. The Jews, however, had become proud about this privileged place. This was all the more hateful to God because they themselves did not keep the laws God had given them. They were just as sinful, and often even worse, than the Gentiles.

Jonah was first of all an Israelite; besides this he was a prophet. In full agreement he had fulfilled a previous charge the Lord had given him: to prophesy that there would still come a time of blessing for the ten-tribe kingdom. But this present charge concerned Gentiles, and that even the Assyrians, Israel's worst enemies. Did he, an Israelite, have to face it that these would share God's mercy, and that his word of judgment and ruin over Nineveh would not be fulfilled? They were liable to mock him!

Jonah was certainly a true believer. This fact by itself, however, does not keep from the working of the "flesh," the old, corrupt, human nature. If he had been a humble and true servant of the Lord, he would have listened to the word of the Lord without questioning. He would have been convinced that the Master knows better what is good than the servant.

This holds true for all servants of the Lord. Today it sometimes happens too that, when the Master says, "Go to Nineveh," the servant wants to go to "Tarshish." Of the angels we read that they, mighty in strength, go without reasoning where God sends them (Ps. 103:20).

Jonah, did rise up, but... to flee to Tarshish. He fled from before the face of the Lord. Tarshish in Spain stood for the end of the earth, as far as possible from the place where the Lord had sent him. Adam hid himself from God behind the trees of the garden of Eden; Jonah hid himself on a ship on the ocean. But who can hide himself from God, and flee from Him? (Ps. 139:7-12). Jonah had such a beautiful name, meaning "dove," but he did not honour that name, dove of peace.

The disobedient prophet plans to flee to Tarshish. To do so he has to go to Jaffa, or Joppa, then the only harbour of Palestine. Arriving at Joppa, there happens to be a ship ready to leave for Tarshish. Perhaps he did think: Remarkable, without delay I can set sail. He pays the price, and soon after the ship is mid-sea. Then, for the second time in one verse it says: "from the presence of the Lord."

Certainly, God took care that Jonah could sail immediately, but with an entirely different purpose than Jonah's. God will meet him on this very ship. The "fortune" of one who has departed from God is no fortune. This ship will be Jonah's "net" in which he will be caught. How many believers have left the way God had for them? How much do such persons deceive themselves, especially if their way seems to be prosperous. Don't they pray? Aren't they at rest?

Much later there was another Jew at Joppa who received a charge from the Lord to go to a Gentile with a message of grace and salvation. How much did it take before *he* followed those instructions (Acts 10)?

Hardly is the ship in mid-sea when Jehovah causes a great storm to rise up. He can still storms, but also raise them. Soon the ship is in trouble, it threatens to break up. The load is cast overboard to lighten the ship. The sailors are truly scared; they cry and pray, each to his god. *But in the midst of this great need Jonah is asleep.*

Spiritually applied we think here of the word of the apostle Paul: "*Wake up, thou that sleepest, and arise from among the dead, and the Christ will shine upon thee... for this reason be not foolish, but understanding what is the will of the Lord*" (Eph. 5:14-17). This is said to believers. It doesn't say that they are dead, spiritually dead, like the unbelievers, but that they sleep and must wake up. When a believer sleeps, showing similarity with one who is spiritually dead, he not only has an unhappy life, but also a *life that misses its goal*. If he "awakes" through the word of the Lord, he will repent, acknowledge his sin, his condition, and, judging it, break with it. If he merely awakes, that is, if he sees the wrong, but he *fails to arise* — that is, he does not acknowledge it, nor judges himself, he does not break with the wrong, then he will sleep again and his condition will aggravate.

Isn't this applicable to Jonah, a servant of the Lord? He ought to have travelled to Nineveh, but he flees to Tarshish. He understands the word of the Lord in this storm, and wakes up through that voice, but... he doesn't do a thing. He fails to arise, though he knows that this storm is there on his account. When the captain tells him that he, too, should pray to his God that they may not suffer shipwreck, we don't read that Jonah had done this. The sailors did so, although they called each to his god, since they were from various countries. True, it may have been a prayer of distress by which they sought to gain the favour of the gods of revenge, they may have called upon gods who couldn't help, yet, there was with them an acknowledging of a higher power. Meanwhile Jonah, who knew much better, didn't do a thing. He, the servant of the Lord, sleeps while the people around him are in trouble and pray. He, who knows that the people got into this trouble on his account, sleeps. The pious Israelite, the servant of the Lord must be spurred on by the Gentiles to pray.

If Jonah fails to do anything, God will show him up for what he is. For this He uses the notion among the sailors that there must be one aboard who is being punished by the gods for committed sins. To this end they cast lots. The lot finally falls on Jonah. The Lord, who directed the great storm also directed this lot (Prov. 16:33). Sometimes such notions are true, but hardly always, as the Lord Jesus has shown a few times (Lk. 13:1-5; in. 9:2-3). The Jews also had this notion about the Lord Jesus when He was on the cross. They thought Him to be stricken by God.

When the lot has fallen on Jonah, he has no choice but to acknowledge before these Gentiles that he is the cause of this great trouble that has come over them. He tells them that he is a Hebrew, and that He fears Jehovah, who made the sea and the dry land. A while earlier he had already told them that he was fleeing far from Jehovah. That must have been in general terms, and the sailors hadn't bothered any more about this flight for religious reasons. Now, however, being in severe trouble, they remember Jonah's words that he fears Jehovah who has made the sea and the dry land. They are deeply impressed by the power and majesty of that God. Realizing that He must also have the power to change the sea in an all-consuming water mass, they say: What is this thou hast done? Had he really had the nerve to try to flee from such a mighty God? They are wiser than Jonah (cf. Jer. 23:23-24).

The Lord could have kept Jonah back, for instance when he left home, or before he came to Joppa. But He allowed Jonah to go on for a time, meanwhile Jonah seemed to prosper. Then, at His own time, the Lord suddenly steps in under the most pressing circumstances. No, not to punish, but to save; although Jonah will experience the consequences of his

failures. That is how it is today as well. God does not allow evil among His children to go unpunished, because they are His children. To the contrary! Precisely because they are His children, He punishes, disciplines. How else could He, if He were to tolerate evil in His children, righteously judge those in the world?

God did also use the fear of the crew. They ask Jonah what they should do with him for the sea to become calm. Jonah must choose his own punishment. How he chooses will plead for him in the eyes of the Lord.

Then it becomes evident that Jonah is a believer in spite of all. He does not take his own life, like King Saul once did when he was in trouble. Nor does he himself jump overboard. He tells the men that they must take him and cast him into the sea. Then the sea will become calm, for he knows that this great storm came over them on his account. As it were, Jonah gives himself as a sacrifice for their life and safety. On the other hand, on the ship Jonah is dependent on what men may do, once cast overboard, he depends on what God will do.

He accepts the punishment for his sin. To be cast into such a raging sea means, by human reckoning, certain death. He accepts that. He bows, acknowledging the justice of the punishment. He does not make any demands, but gives himself over into God's hand.

This is also the path for the sinner. He must bow himself under God's justice, and acknowledge the judgment over him as righteous. If he does, then he plucks the fruit of the one, but sufficient sacrifice, once made by the Son of God upon the cross.

And it is also the way for the backslidden believer. One should not seek to save oneself from his trouble. Even if he would succeed, the Lord would only bring him in even greater trouble, until he accepts the punishment over his sin, until he bows under the hand of the Lord. It is written: "If then their uncircumcised heart be humbled, and they thin accept the punishment of their iniquity, I will remember MY covenant..." (Lev. 26:41-42). On the basis of the one sacrifice there is always salvation. When the sins have been confessed, God is faithful to forgive and to cleanse.

Jonah did this and he was restored, even in his service. Peter did so, and later the Lord entrusted to him His sheep and lambs. David did the same and he retained the kingdom. However, the kings Asa and Uzziah didn't do this and continued to experience the results. Uzziah remained leprous until his death.

When Jonah tells the men to cast him overboard, they do not immediately do so. They have been impressed by his words, and they still want to save him. First they try to save the ship, but they could not reach their goal, for the sea became ever more tempestuous. Then the men understood that the God, of whom Jonah had said that He had made the sea and the dry land, was against Jonah, and therefore now also against them. They knew they had to act. They call on the Lord asking that they may not perish because of Jonah, and that He may not charge them when they do what this man has told them to do. Now they do not each call upon his god, but to Jehovah, the name they had learned from Jonah. Then they take up Jonah and cast him into the raging waves. Then the sea became calm and restful, which caused the men to fear Jehovah even more. For now they saw His almighty power. They killed a sacrifice for Him and made promises. Jonah did not want to bring a message of judgment to the Gentiles, for God would be merciful to these Gentiles anyway. But now God had used the storm to preach against Jonah.

Jonah sank into the depth, but he did not perish. At that moment Jehovah prepared a great fish that swallowed up Jonah without wounding him. Three days and three nights Jonah was in the belly of this fish God kept him there, so that Jonah, though he lacked air, remained alive and conscious.

What a predicament Jonah now finds himself in! A prophet of Israel in a fish, in the depth of the sea! Not over Nineveh, but over this prophet had the displeasure of God come!

A few times we read in this book that God prepared something (1:17; 4:6-7). Man proposes, but God disposes. Man may think that he can prepare something, but in this he is, as in so many things, completely wrong. Yes, man can only weigh things over and propose something, but in the end it is only God who disposes and prepares what is needed. Man thinks to possess the ability to dispose of his power, money, time. But ever again God interposes. Then, man is often angry because he sees God as the One who obstructs him.

God's power once broke the strength of a wrong Jacob. To the perverse the Lord shows Himself to be contrary, a wrestler (Ps. 18:26). The prodigal longed to rid himself of hunger with pig's food, and even that he did not get. At times the Lord allows things to go far, but not with the aim to ruin, but to save.

In the introduction we already remarked that the whole history of Jonah is a prophecy portrayed in the person of Jonah. If we now trace how God has prophetically characterized Israel in the person of Jonah, then we see that this nation has always resisted the showing of mercy to the Gentiles, just as Jonah did. Because of their resistance the nation has ended up in the "sea," the sea of nations. It has been scattered over the entire earth, among all the nations. In Jonah's history the Gentiles were spared, but the judgment came over him. This is precisely what has happened many ages later to the nation Israel. Yet Jonah was not set aside for good, and neither is Israel. Jonah entered a "grave," in the fish. Nationally and spiritually Israel has entered into a condition of death, as in a grave.

*To be cont'd*

## **Joshua 1 (2)**

—H. L. Heijkoop

Verse 8: "This book of the law shall not depart from thy mouth; and thou shalt meditate upon it day and night, that thou mayest take heed to do according to all that is written therein; for then shalt thou have good success in thy ways, and then shalt thou prosper." What does the Word of God mean to us? What does the Word of God mean in our practical life? Do we do all that is written in the Word, or do we say: "I don't understand this," or: "I don't see the use of that"? There is an important principle here: We must act carefully following all that is written in the Word of God if we want to enter the land (the heavenlies) and take possession of it.

### *The Lord Jesus and the Word of God*

When the devil tempted the Lord Jesus, he said to Him: "If Thou be Son of God, speak, that these stones may become loaves of bread." To this, the Lord said to the devil: "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word which goes out through God's mouth" (Mt. 4:1-4). In John 4:34 the Lord Jesus said, "My food is that I should do the will of Him that has sent Me." Here we see what the Word of God meant for the Lord Jesus. He says prophetically in Isaiah 50:4 that God opens His ear every morning as one who is being taught. He listened to the voice of God. He spoke to God and listened, so that He could say "He has not left Me alone, because I do always the things that are pleasing to Him" (Jn. 8:29).

In this, too, the Lord Jesus is our perfect example. If we want to enter the blessings, we must conscientiously act according to the Word and not depart from it, neither to the right, nor to the left. The question for us individually is: What does the Word of God mean to me? Is the Word of God the end of all controversy? When the Bible tells me something, do I then bow to the Word of God? Has the Word still authority over me?

### *Keeping the Word*

In Revelation 3 the Lord says to the assembly at Philadelphia: "Thou hast kept My Word and not denied My name" (v. 8). A few verses later we read: "Because thou hast kept the Word of My patience, I also will keep thee out of the hour of trial, which is about to come over the whole habitable world, to try them that dwell upon the earth" (v. 10). The essentials are: "His Word," "His name," and "the Word of His patience." In John 14:23 the Lord Jesus says, "If anyone love Me, he will keep My Word, and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our abode with him."

### *What shall I do, Lord?*

Sometimes we are not sure whether it is the will of God to do something, wouldn't it then be safer to refrain from doing it purely out of love for Him? At other times we are not sure whether it is right to refrain from doing a thing, shouldn't we continue to do it for His sake? Surely, we would not like to do or refrain from doing something, and fail to meet His approval, nor do we want to be disobedient. We shouldn't obey slavishly, but obey out of love. The Lord's wish should be our command! My heart should long to do what is pleasing to Him. The first thing Paul said after his conversion (when he had come to know Jesus as Lord) was, "What shall I do, Lord?" (Acts 22:10). That is the language of the new life we received at new birth. The new life wants to do only that which pleases Him.

### *The Lord is with thee*

Verse 9 "Have I not commanded thee: Be strong and courageous? Be not afraid, neither be dismayed; for Jehovah thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest." So God commanded him, but also us, to be strong and be courageous. He can command this. The Lord Jesus has said, "All power has been given Me in heaven and upon earth... And behold, I am with you all the days, until the completion of the age" (Mt. 28:18, 20). If the Almighty is with me, then it is unbelief when I am afraid and lack courage. It is still true what the sons of Korah said, "Blessed is the man whose strength is in Thee, — they, in whose heart are the highways" (Ps. 86:5). Not for the eyes, nor for the intellect, but for the heart is the assurance that He is with me when I walk with Him. Then I will arrive safely, for He knows the way.

### *Be strong and courageous*

These words we saw in verses 6 and 7, and now we see them again in verse 9. Here there is the addition: "For Jehovah thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest." We are not strong because we ourselves have strength, but because He is with us and will be with us all the way we have to go. Here God says this to Joshua, who typifies the Lord Jesus, my Saviour who goes before me and wants to lead me. I only have to follow Him. Paul said, "Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ" (1 Cor. 11:1 KJV). When we follow Paul, we actually follow Christ, for Paul followed the Lord Jesus perfectly.

### *Preparing food*

In verses 10-11 Joshua gives the officers of the nation charge to go through the camp. They had to command the people to prepare victuals, for within three days they will cross the Jordan and begin to take possession of the land. The officers don't give the food to the people; they must take care of this themselves. Since they will enter the land within three days, they first need to prepare food, otherwise they would not have the needed strength. We, too, need food. This food we find in God's Word. If our spiritual life does not get food, we are weak and cannot be strong and courageous. We need strength, strength to walk through the wilderness, strength to go through the Jordan, and strength to take possession of the land.

### *To know the Lord Jesus better*

The Word of God must be my daily food. By reading the Bible, we learn to know the Lord Jesus better, for in it we see His glory. This has tremendous results for us: "We all, looking on the glory of the Lord, with unveiled face, are transformed according to the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Lord the Spirit" (2 Cor 3:18). I am therefore not changed morally in the likeness of the Lord Jesus when I fail to see His glory, when I do not read the Word of God. By reading the Bible I find the Lord Jesus. The whole Bible is really a description of the person of the Lord Jesus. All speaks of Him, from Genesis 1:1 till the end of Revelation 22.

### *The Lord Jesus in the Bible*

In Genesis 1 we see the Lord Jesus at creation in the image of the sun. We see Him in Genesis 3 in the image of the animals sacrificed to clothe Adam and Eve. In chapter 4 we see Him in the lamb sacrificed by Abel. We see Him in the type of Noah's ark, for all who were in the ark were safe from the judgment. We see Him in Genesis 22 when Isaac had to be sacrificed: "Take now thy son, thine only son, whom thou lovest." In Isaac's stead, God Himself appointed the lamb. We see Him in the lamb in Exodus 12, the paschal lamb, and in the sacrifices in Leviticus. We see Him in the Psalms (e.g., Ps. 22), in the Prophets (e.g., Isa. 53). We see Him in the Gospels, in the Epistles, and in Revelation. Everywhere in Scripture we see the Lord Jesus. When we seek Him, we will find Him. In the Old Testament we find more about His life here on earth, about His sufferings on the cross, and about His future reign over the earth. The glory of the Lord Jesus we see more in the New Testament—in the Gospels, in the Epistles, and in Revelation. To occupy ourselves with the Lord Jesus as He is presented in the Old and New Testaments, that is true food for our souls.

*To be cont'd*

## **From the Valley to the Mountaintop**

—A. Eijsink

"I haven't the foggiest! How that could ever come right again, I just don't know!" Is that also your experience, dear brother and sister? One can hear expressions like these on all sides.

Let us, you and I together, think back of times in our histories when we didn't have the slightest idea either how to go on, when we just didn't see it sit any longer, when we asked ourselves how things could ever come right again, in short, when our lives were bankrupt. What did we do then? We called for the Lord Jesus! Didn't He help us in a beautiful, inexplicable way? You must surely remember what He had to do for that: He had to become Man for you and me, had to suffer and die on the cross. My sins and your sins He bore in His body. He was made sin for you and me; forsaken of God, He shed His blood. You see, brother, sister, how He loved you and me. After He had died and had been three days in the grave, He rose, stayed a short time with His disciples, and returned to the Father. Now He is there, glorified. You and I are united with the glorified Man in heaven, with Someone who was and is stronger than the devil, death, and grave!

Perhaps even today you are downhearted. Shall we then read something together that will lift us up? Open your Bible at Mark 9:2-13. "And after six days *Jesus takes with [Him] Peter and James and John, and takes them up on a high mountain by themselves apart. And He was transfigured before them: and His garments became shining, exceeding white [as snow], such as fuller on earth could not whiten [them]. And there appeared to them Elias with Moses, and they were talking with Jesus. And Peter answering says to Jesus, Rabbi, it is good that we should be here; and let us make three tabernacles, for Thee one, and for Moses one, and for Elias one. For he knew not what he should say, for they were filled with fear. And there came a cloud overshadowing them, and there came a voice out of the cloud, This is My beloved Son: hear Him. And suddenly having looked around, they no longer saw any one, but Jesus alone with themselves. And as they descended from the mountain, He charged them that they should relate to no one what they had seen, unless when the Son of man should be risen from among the dead. And they kept that saying, questioning among themselves, what rising from among [the] dead was. And they asked Him saying, Why do the scribes say that Elias must first have come? And He answering said to them, Elias indeed, having first come, restores all things; and how is it written of the Son of man that He must suffer much, and be set at nought: but I say unto you that Elias also is come, and they have done to him whatever they would, as it is written of him."*

In verse 2 we see the glorious name Jesus. We have already seen what He has done for us. He saved us; but He wants to be more for us. In this Gospel we see Him as *the perfect Servant*. This is how He wants to be at our service when we are cast down, discouraged. When others get out, He stays! He wants to be with us especially during these difficult circumstances, so that we may discover more about Him.

The second thing that we read in this verse is that *He is the One who takes His three disciples with Him*. From where did He take them, and where is He going with them? Let's start with the latter question. He goes with them up the mountain. To come there you must come out of the depth, the valley, a canyon perhaps. We know such a valley from Psalm 23: the valley of the shadow of death. A valley lying between two mountains knows less light than a mountaintop. It often looks gloomy, dark, there! So gloomy that we lose sight of the Lord Jesus! How beautiful to notice then that He is there and wants to take us along to the mountaintop, alone with Him. Out of the valley with its shadowy gloominess. He says as it were, "Now you will see and hear something entirely different." Yes, let us just enter our own name in the place of Peter, James, and John.

Meanwhile, we have arrived on the mountain. What a view! Before us stands *the Lord Jesus in changed appearance*, in shining, bright white clothing. When He took us along, He had "the form of a servant," but here He shows us, His disciples, for a moment something of *His not-to-be-equalled glory*.

When Moses and Elias discoursed with the Lord Jesus, they spoke of His departure that He was about to accomplish in Jerusalem (Lk. 9:31). On the cross the Lord Jesus said, "It is finished!" (Jn. 19:30). Everything the Lord Jesus, Moses, and Elias then talked about is finished. That is why the Lord Jesus could return to the Father. We know that He is now crowned "with honour and glory" (Heb. 2:7). God has "highly exalted" Him and given Him the Name "which is above every name" (Phil. 2:9). This Lord has now our attention! He says that He will be with us and that all power is given Him in heaven and on earth. Did we say too much when we said, "What a view!"?

But it all becomes even more impressive. Out of the cloud that came over them comes a voice, the voice of the Father. Of whom does He testify? The Father speaks about the Son. Do we hear this, brother and sister? The Lord Jesus is the Subject of the testimony given by the Father. Here we can learn a few things about Him, who is also our Father: If we want to talk about another, then let the other be the Lord Jesus.

There is more to be learned from the Father. He says, "This is My beloved Son." He, the Father — and I write this with utmost reverence — looks and points, as it were, to His Son saying, "This One."

Shall we for a moment think back of the valley, to reconsider to whom we looked and to whom we — and I do not exclude myself in this — pointed? Didn't we look at ourselves, to see how difficult things were for us? Didn't we point to ourselves, because we thought ourselves to be so important? "Don't overlook me" is an expression that we all know, don't we?

When we looked or pointed at our fellow brother or sister, in what frame of mind did you, did I, do this then? Was it not often with a spirit of criticism, without the sympathy that characterized the Lord?

*Wouldn't we tell it all honestly to the Lord Jesus: that of looking and pointing at ourselves, that of looking and pointing at our fellow brother and sister in a wrong spirit? May be we need to go to this one or that one. Oh, beloved, if that is needed, then let us do it and not fail to do so.*

The Father pointed to Him who "is." He who is the image of the invisible God (Col. 1:15). Who is like Him? He is the eternal Son. Simultaneously He is the perfect Servant! Do you see the contrast united in Him?

"This is My beloved Son." Here we see *the Lord Jesus as the One who belongs to the Father*. We, too, through faith in the finished work of the Lord Jesus, are children of the Father; yes, we belong to Him.

"This is My *beloved* Son." The relationship between the Father and the Son is a relationship of love. It is Fatherly love, simultaneously divine love, yes, perfect love of which the Son is the Object. "On this account the Father loves Me, because I lay down My life" (Jn. 10:17).

The Lord Jesus Himself did say it: "The Father Himself has affection for you" (Jn. 16:27). The Father also loves us, with the same love with which He loves the Son. May our relationship towards the Father be marked by the same characteristics that mark the relationship between Son and the Father: Love, obedience, dependence.

"This My beloved *Son*." The word "Son" expresses a not-in-words-expressible intimacy that exists between the Father and the Son. I don't want to shortchange it in the least, and therefore I let the Word alone speak about it. He is: "the only-begotten Son, who *is* in the bosom of the Father" (Jn. 1:18). He is also the One who at the age of twelve said, "I ought to be [occupied] in my Father's business" (Lk. 2:49). In John 8:28 we read: "As the Father has taught Me I speak these things." He also could say in verse 29: "I do always the things that are pleasing to Him."

After having seen and heard all this, the disciples, you, and I receive the charge: "Hear Him." It is the Father's wish that we listen to His Son. The Son has heard so much from the Father, and now He longs to share this with His disciples, you, and me. Isn't the Lord Jesus *the One who is worthy to be heard*, in the first place because the Father says so, and in the second place for what He Himself is, and what He has done on Golgotha?

"Jesus alone." He was the only One who was and remained with them. The disciples had received a private lesson. So did you and I too! We are to look at Him *alone*, to point at Him *alone*, to testify of Him *alone*, to listen to Him *alone*.

Lord, let Thine image bright  
So fill our gazing sight  
That our poor hearts, quite overcome,  
May beat for Thee alone.

After this mountaintop experience, the way is downward again; so we read in verse 9. They descend. Who? The three disciples, you and I! But He, the Lord, goes with us! Isn't that an encouraging thought? He goes with us into the valley! Perhaps those things of the valley will all come at you again. But listen, brother, sister, the Lord speaks. He speaks about His resurrection from among the dead. He speaks about it that He must suffer much, and about His being "set at nought" — being thought nothing of. He intimates that it will go with Him too as it went with John: men will take Him too and do with Him what they like.

Is what the Lord Jesus had to endure not infinitely more severe than what you and I have to endure? It is simply incomparable! "Behold, and see if there be any sorrow like unto My sorrow, which is done unto Me, whom Jehovah hath afflicted in the day of His fierce anger" (Lam. 1:12).

The heaven was closed for the Lord Jesus when He hung on the cross during the three hours of darkness, but because of that the heaven is now open for us. Shall we once more point to Him of whom we read that we may cast all our cares on Him, because He cares for us (1 Pet. 5:7). We may cast them on Him who is enthroned at God's right hand, but who is at the same time with us until He comes to get us, so that we may be with Him forever.

## **Peace With God**

—R.K. Campbell

Peace is a subject of much interest in this turbulent world. Crudens Concordance lists over 225 passages in which the word occurs, so it is a topic which the Bible has much to say about.

### *What is peace*

A dictionary indicates peace is "freedom from war or hostilities, freedom from strife or dissension, freedom from mental disturbance, peace of mind, calm, quiet, tranquillity." The Greek New Testament word for peace means, "harmonious relationships between men, between nations, and between God and man which results in the sense of rest, quiet, contentment, and freedom from disturbing emotions." Truly peace is a wonderful and marvellous state of mind and heart. And peace with God our Creator is the most important and basic of all relationships.

### *The God of peace*

Six times the New Testament refers to "The God of peace." (Rom. 15:33; 16:20; 2 Cor. 13:11; Phil. 4:9; 1 Th. 5:23; Heb. 13:20). He not only has provided eternal peace for the sinner with Himself through redemption in His Son, but He is the very God of peace. He is the Originator of true peace. It is a prominent characteristic of His blessed Person. This wonderful title, "The God of peace," indicates that blessed peace is God's desire for mankind. Three of the above passages say, "The God of peace be with you all" (Rom. 15:33; 2 Cor. 13:11; Phil. 4:9).

### *War with God*

The opposite is hostility, rebellion, and warfare, which we see so much of in the world. This all started in heaven when Satan — Lucifer, the son of the morning — rebelled against God before man was created (Isa. 14:12-15; Ezek. 28:13-19). Then we find the devil as a serpent tempting Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden and leading them into disobedience and sin. Satan and sin disturbed the beautiful, peaceful scene of that perfect garden. Adam and Eve, the first human couple, were no longer at peace with God. When He came walking in the garden, they hid themselves from Him and were afraid. They had a guilty conscience, for sin, disobedience to their Creator's one commandment, had come between them and a holy God.

Yet, the God of peace came seeking the sinner. Though God had to pronounce judgment, He clothed Adam and Eve in animal-skins before putting them out of the wonderful garden. Soon their first offspring, Cain, manifested his fallen, sinful nature by hating his brother Abel and murdering him. Ever since, mankind has continued at war with God and his fellowmen. Paul has aptly described the course of the fallen race of Adam as "without intelligence, disobedient, wandering in error, serving various lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another" (Tit. 3:3).

### *There is no peace*

Isaiah twice declared, "There is no peace, saith Jehovah, unto the wicked" (Isa. 48:22; 57:21). Those who were unrepentant of their sins in Jeremiah's day had to say, "Peace is looked for, and there is no good" (Jer. 7:15). Ezekiel said: "The land is full of bloody crimes, and the city is full of violence... Destruction cometh; and they shall seek peace, but there shall be none... I will do unto them according to their way, and with their judgments will I judge them; and they shall know that I [am] Jehovah" (Ezek. 7:23-27). How true this is of our own day.

Paul summed it up by writing: "All have gone out of the way, they have together become unprofitable; there is not one that practises goodness, there is not so much as one... swift their feet to shed blood; ruin and misery are in their ways, and way of peace they have not known: there is no fear of God before their eyes" (Rom. 3:12-18).

There can be no peace until people face their sins in God's presence and get right with Him in repentance and faith. There is no peace for individuals or nations that revel in sin and ungodliness. They reap the fruits of their evil doings.

*To be cont'd*



*"The darkness is passing and the true light already shines."*

1 John 2:8

### **The shining light**

*The darkness is rapidly passing,  
For the true light shines bright above;  
Though evil its forces is massing,  
Our Lord rules in pure, holy love.*

*The world and its people are shaking  
In fear of some awful event;  
Eruptions, storms, the earth quaking—  
As warnings of judgment are sent.*

*But Christ who in mercy so tender  
Once suffered for sins on the tree,  
Now in holy, wonderful splendor  
Is exalted in great majesty.*

*Faith trusts Him and loves Him and serves Him,  
Not moved by the world's great unrest;  
But waiting expectantly for Him,—  
With Him to be evermore blest!*

L. M. Grant

### **Outline for Bible Study (69)**

**139. The Olivet Discourse—Testimony. The Great Tribulation. The Coming of the Son of Man. The Judgment of the Living.** — Matthew 24:1-31; 25:31-46: Mk. 13:1-27; Luke 21:5-28

#### *Outline*

- |  |             |
|--|-------------|
| 1. The Disciples' question               | Mt. 24:1-3  |
| 2. The Time of Testimony and Persecution | Mt. 24:4-14 |
| 3. The Great Tribulation                 | Mt 24:15-28 |
| 4. The Coming of the Son of man          | Mt 24:29-31 |
| 5. The Judgment of the Living            | Mt 25:31-46 |

#### *Explanation*

1. When the disciples show their love for the temple, the Lord prepares them for the coming destruction of Jerusalem. This causes them to ask a threefold question. When will this be? To them it could only be at the Lord's coming, so they ask about the sign of this. They knew also that when the Messiah comes He will restore all things, and a new "age" will begin. So they also ask, When will be *the end of the age* (not *the end of the world* as some translations erroneously read)?

2. The Lord's answer concerns the Jewish nation, not the Church (see v. 15-16). Christians have neither a holy place on earth, nor do they in general live in Judea. These things are true of Jewish believers only. From other Scriptures (Jn. 14; 1 Cor. 15; 1 Th. 4; 2 Th. 2) we know that first the Lord will come to take the Church to the Father's house. After that, He will again take up the cause of Israel (Rom. 11:25), and then He will come to begin His Millennial reign.

The Lord's answer points to wars, rumours, famines, and pestilences preceding His coming. Meanwhile *the gospel of the kingdom*, announcing the coming King, will be preached. Then the accent is no longer on the grace of God (Acts 20:24), or *of the glory of Christ* (2 Cor. 4:4) which accentuates today's gospel. The first title gives its earthly aspect, the second its

heavenly character. The gospel of the kingdom was preached to the Jews until they fully rejected Christ in stoning Stephen, and rejecting Paul (Acts 7; 28:25-28). After the rapture of the Church, those Jews who testify of Him will be cast into prison and hated, while lawlessness will abound.

3. In the end the abomination of desolation (or that causes desolation) will be set up in the Jewish holy place. Daniel speaks of it as immediately preceding Israel's restoration (Dan. 9 & 12). Other Scriptures show that the antichrist will set himself in the temple pretending to be God (Dan. 11:36; 2 Th. 2:4). This event signals the beginning of the Great Tribulation, a time worse than the World War II holocaust. It is God's judgment primarily over Judah in answer to their call: "His blood come over us and over our children." Yet as always, the Lord cares for His own, and tells them how to behave to escape the worst. Those in Judea are to flee to the mountains immediately. So terrible will be those days that God shortens them for the sake of those who believe in Him.

4. Immediately after those days the sun and moon will be darkened. The only time that the sun has ever been darkened was when the Lord was on the cross. Obviously the Lord doesn't speak of that here. That time is therefore still future (cf. Rev. 6). This darkening of the sun will immediately follow the Great Tribulation and precede the coming of the Lord to take up His reign. Christ sits on His Father's throne until His enemies are made a footstool for His feet. Now He will receive His own throne on which we will reign with Him (Rev. 3:21).

5. An early task of the Lord will be the judgment of the living (not yet of the dead recorded in Rev. 20—Acts 10:42; 1 Tim. 4:1; 1 Pet. 4:5). Here the nations (not the dead) are summoned before Christ's throne. They are judged, not as to their belief or unbelief, but as their attitude to the Jewish nation. Those who showed mercy will receive mercy, those who failed to show mercy will not enter into the millennial kingdom but be cast out, awaiting the day of the Great White Throne.

### *Lesson*

Though all these things concern the time after the rapture, this passage contains warnings for us. Today these events cast their shadows ahead. Watch and pray!

**140. The Olivet Discourse — The Call to Watch. The Parables of the Virgins and the Talents** — Matthew 24:32-51; 25:1-30; Mark 13:28-37; Luke 21:29-36

### *Outline*

1. The Parable of the Fig tree      Mt. 24:32-36
2. The Call to Watch              Mt 24:37-51
3. The Parable of the Ten Virgins   Mt. 25:1-13
4. The Parable of the Talents      Mt 25:30-30

### *Explanation*

1. As shown before, the fig tree is a picture of Israel. The events surrounding Israel signal the approaching day of the Lord. The coming of Christ may be delayed according to man's thinking, but it is as certain as the Word of God. Although we are warned to take note of these signs, we should not make the mistake of thinking that we can know the day. The day and the hour is only known by the Father.

2. Yet, that day will take many by surprise despite the signs. Noah building the ark took 120 years, still the deluge took most by surprise. So it will be again. It can easily be seen that the Lord's coming is near, yet most people will be taken by surprise. When the Lord comes, not all will enter the Lord's kingdom. It will be as in Noah's days, one will be taken away in judgment, another will be left to enjoy the kingdom.

To the unbeliever the Lord will come as a thief in the night, for they are children of the night. They have as little clue about the coming of the Lord as the master of the house has about the coming of a thief. They will lose all they possess.

Meanwhile, the servants of the Lord, all who say that they believe in the Lord, are to be faithful. Those who truly believe, know that the Lord can come any moment and will remain ready. The ones who merely carry a believer's label will think

that the Lord delays and will start to serve their own ends, thereby ill-treating their brothers and sisters. They will find their end in judgment.

3. In the parable of the ten virgins, the wise ones represent true believers who have the Holy Spirit (oil for their lamps), the foolish stand for mere professors. Their words may for a while be a testimony, but it will not last and since there is no reality, they lack the essential indwelling Spirit. Though all look alike in that they all fall asleep, the essential difference comes to light when the call of the Lord's coming is sounded forth. When the Lord comes, it will be forever too late for all who have not taken the message of salvation to heart. All are told to watch: the Lord is coming!

4. Yet, it is not only a question of watching. There is a work to be done for the Lord. The ability to work with the gifts the Lord has given each depends on the attitude towards the Lord. In the picture of the evil servant we see one who, though confessing to know the Lord, finds it too hard to serve Him. Whatever he has been doing in his life had no effect on what was entrusted to him; he merely served his own ends. Believers have been called to bear fruit for God, and true believers will do so. Lack of fruit marks the one who claims to be a believer without having genuine faith. Fruit is not just bringing others to the Lord, nor is it in the first place the accomplishing of great things. Fruit is primarily the showing forth of the qualities of Christ in the believer. Where Christ is seen, there will be other effects as well. A lack of fruit will cause the servant to be cast out.

#### *Lesson*

The parables the Lord gave on the mount of Olives are serious warnings to all who claim to be believers: now to the Church and after the rapture to the remnant of Israel. The Lord wants genuineness, reality in our lives. If we merely say that we believe, we will certainly miss the mark and suffer eternal judgment. If we truly believe in the Lord, He will deal with us so that we will bear fruit for Him. If we truly love Him, how can we help but long and watch for His coming?

*To be cont'd*