

The Prophet Jonah (5)

—R. Been Sr.

God must have made the duration of forty days known to Jonah. The forty days allotted to Nineveh gave the possibility for repentance, sorrow, confession, and averting of judgment. What an unusual event was this message of penitence at Nineveh: an honourable man, an Israelite, who preached to people on the street, raising his voice, the message of coming judgment, indicating as cause their sins and unrighteousnesses.

The number forty speaks of a time of temptation, testing, purification, but also a time of responsibility.

The number forty as it occurs in Scripture:

1. The Flood	Gen. 7:4,12	Sin and judgment
2. Moses on Sinai	Ex. 24:18	Law-giving
3. Moses on Sinai (the second time)	Ex. 34:28	Grace
4. The spies	Num. 14:25	Faith and unbelief
5. In the desert	Num. 14:34	Results of sin
6. Elijah's flight to Horeb	1 Ki. 19:8	Man, weakness, and divine power
7. Nineveh	Jon. 3:4	Repentance and forgiveness
8. Jesus' temptation	Mt. 4:2	Conflict and victory
9. Days after the Lord's resurrection	Acts 1:3	Redemption and glory

The results of Jonah's preaching were extraordinary. There was not just a revival of one, but of all. The whole city, rich and poor, great and small, believed. Scripture relates it to us so simply, yet so profoundly: "And the men of Nineveh believed God, and proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth, from the greatest of them even to the least of them. And the word reached the king of Nineveh, and he arose from his throne, and laid his robe from him, and covered himself with sackcloth, and sat in ashes. And he caused it to be proclaimed and published through Nineveh by the decree of the king and his nobles, saying, Let neither man nor beast, herd nor flock, taste anything: let them not feed, nor drink water; and let man and beast be covered with sackcloth, and cry mightily unto God; and let them turn every one from his evil way, and from the violence that is in their hands. Who knoweth but that God will turn and repent, and will turn away from His fierce anger, that we perish not?" Later, the Lord Jesus did confirm the wondrous results of Jonah's preaching by saying that the men of Nineveh repented (Mt. 12:41, Lk. 11:32).

Jonah must surely have spoken very convincingly, and perhaps his person did also make an impression. But his conviction and especially his message took hold of the people. This is all the more remarkable since Jonah did certainly not in the first place present God's grace, but His all-consuming and overturning, imminent judgment. The essence of his message was: Yet forty days and Nineveh will be overthrown. There was no mention that if Nineveh repented, the judgment would not come. That remained a big question to the king and his great men. "Who knows," they say. The word of Jonah was primarily a message of penitence, to be compared with that of John the Baptist. We sometimes read in Scripture that the fear of the Lord fell on someone or on many. So it was also in Nineveh. That such a result was reached, we must ascribe especially to the working of God's Spirit, who very likely had already caused many in Nineveh to be apprehensive of the godlessness in the city. Confirmed by archeology, history relates that just then, Nineveh underwent a time of crisis, a thing that helped to make the people receptive.

Whether Jonah did speak of what he had experienced after he had sought to escape the first command of the Lord, we do not know. It is very possible that something of that had become known. It would have caused them to look on Jonah as one returned from among the dead. In any event, the glorious result at Nineveh cannot be ascribed to that. Even if one would rise from the dead, they will yet not be convinced (Lk. 16:31). We repeat, here it was in the first place the mighty working of God's Spirit.

We should, however, not think of new birth, of the receiving of new life from God, of the significance of the word repentance in our days. Here it was a question of national introspection, of a turning away from evil. It was a question of believing what God had spoken through Jonah. A strong cry to God for mercy accompanied the general fear for very

imminent judgment. Their sorrow showed itself in deeds. The people refrained from eating and did not even feed their cattle, which caused these to low. So man and beast cried for mercy. It surely proves how the word of Jonah had been heeded and believed. For there was as yet nothing that looked like judgment over the city.

Taking the eastern habits and mentality into account, we are still faced with the general belief in the coming judgment.

Neither should we forget that the general penitence was by the command of the king. But this king also confessed his guilt and took the lead in doing penitence, and this demanded it also of his subjects. He let it be known that all would repent of their wickedness and violence. Who knows if God would then stay the judgment! It remains also true that God saw their works, that they turned from their wickedness.

This gentile king demonstrates some knowledge of God. Would God not be gracious when its inhabitants would turn from their evil and do good? The king was not certain of this, but possibly the measure of Nineveh's sin was not yet full. The prophets Joel and Amos speak about Judah and Israel in the same spirit as the gentile king of Nineveh (Joel 2:14, Amos 5:15).

God takes every true confession into account. When the godless king Ahab humbles himself before the Lord (1 Ki. 21:27-29), God alerts Elijah of it, although He knows that it was more a sorrow about the consequences than about the evil itself. Yet, the evil over Ahab was delayed for some time.

Here we read, "And God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way; and God repented of the evil that He had said He would do unto them, and He did [it] not" (Jon. 3:10). Is God then like a man? Can He repent over something that He intended to do? Doesn't He know all things beforehand? We can answer these questions by pointing out that Scripture presents God to us in two ways. He it is whose counsel will stand, in spite of all deeds, deviations, and sins of men. But here He is portrayed as the One, who allows Himself to relent through prayer when He sees that there is turning, confession, and repentance. Here God is spoken of in human terms. Has God, who is a Spirit, hands, feet, nose, ears, or eyes? Naturally, no! Yet, Scripture frequently speaks of these. So it is also with repentance, the change in God's line of action when He sees that man repents.

When we read in Scripture that the Lord did not repent, it is always connected with His counsels. But when, as in Jonah 3:10, it says, "God repented of the evil that He had said He would do unto them, and He did [it] not," then it has to do with God's governmental ways with a person, city, or nation.

If we are to give a good answer to the question, Does God repent? We must first thoroughly understand what "repentance" of God is. The meaning of this word is best given by, "a change of thoughts."

God's repentance has therefore nothing to do with the repentance of men, which results from their wrong thoughts or acts. When God repents of something, it does not mean at all that He has come to see that He had wrong thoughts, words, or actions. This repentance means a change in thoughts and deeds in His governmental ways, because of a change with men, in their thoughts, words, and deeds.

After God promises a blessing to people who listen to Him, He must withdraw that blessing when those same people become disobedient — He repents of it, and this hurts Him. God expresses His sorrow over King Saul's behaviour and takes the once-given blessing of the kingdom away from him (1 Sam. 15:28).

When God has announced judgment over men, and these confess their sins and break with them, then God withdraws the judgment. Then He repents of the evil, the disasters, which He had said He would cause to come over them. Even when it shows up later that the sorrow of those people was not what it ought to have been, as in the cases of Ahab and of the Ninevites, then God still shows immediately His repentance.

In this connection we should read especially Jeremiah 18:7-11 and 26:2-3, where we find a detailed description of God's repentance.

We better be very glad and thankful that this is how it is with God. Otherwise, there would be no hope for us. He has said: "The soul that sinneth, it shall die" (Ezek. 18:4), and "It is the portion of men once to die, and after this judgment" (Heb. 9:27). If God kept these pronouncements, and did not change His thoughts, did not "repent" regarding these pronouncements, although men had clearly shown repentance of their evil deeds, then what? That would be most terrible. But, thanks be to God, this is not so!

Alas, the repentance of the Ninevites as a whole was not permanent. The prophet Nahum, who prophesied a century after Jonah, says that Nineveh was full of godlessness (Nah. 3:1). In Jonah's days, the Ninevites repented, but once the threat of judgment is past, the fear also soon disappears, and man falls back into his sins and godlessness. A repentance out of fear cannot stand. There must be a sorrow according to God. This means that there must be the awareness that He has been dishonoured and saddened. Sorrow must be, not about the consequences, but about the wrong deeds themselves. Where such true sorrow is found, the accompanying conversion will be permanent, "never to be regretted" (2 Cor. 7:10).

Two centuries later the sins and godlessness in Nineveh took on such proportions that it had to be removed from the earth. Then Nineveh was indeed overturned. In the year 608 BC the city of millions was destroyed by the father of Nebuchadnezzar. Today, when tourists come at the ruins of Nineveh they see two long ridges about twenty meters high; one of these is still called Nebi-Junus, which means Hill of Jonah. It is a reminder for all ages of God's judgment, announced by this prophet, delayed in his days, but later executed.

The history of Jonah described in the third chapter of his book, points again prophetically to Israel. The apostle Paul asks: "Is [God] the God of Jews only? is He not of [the] nations also?" He himself gives the answer to it, "Yea, of nations also: since indeed [it is] one God who shall justify [the] circumcision [i.e., Jews] on the principle of faith, and uncircumcision [i.e., Gentiles] by faith" (Rom. 3:29-30). Jew and Gentile stand therefore on the same basis. In the past Jerusalem and Nineveh were both spared by grace (1 Chr. 21:15,26-27; Jon. 3:10). Jonah in the fish is a sign of Christ in His death and resurrection. Jonah in Nineveh is a sign of Christ who, in grace, turns to the Gentiles.

Christ was not preached as Saviour, also of the Gentiles, before He had died and had been raised and been glorified in heaven. First the corn of wheat had to fall into the earth and die, then it would bear fruit plentifully. Christ did not die only for the nation Israel, but that He might gather into one the children of God who were scattered abroad (i.e., all who would believe in Him — Jn. 11:52). The Samaritans had already called Him the Saviour of the world (Jn. 4:42). And the Lord Jesus did say that He would give His life so that the world might be saved by Him (Jn. 3:17). This means that this was the motive of the Saviour; He does not refer to the salvation of the world as a fact.

Jonah in the fish is a sign of Israel. The remnant will come to acknowledgement of sin and guilt. It will call upon God in its distress, and will be saved out of the Great Tribulation and come to new life.

Jonah in Nineveh is also a sign of Israel. The remnant will bring the message of salvation among the nations. And the preaching of the remnant will be everywhere accepted just as the preaching of Jonah with its mighty results. In our days, the time of grace, something of such scope does not take place. Today, the net still rents (Lk. 5:6). But later, at the remnant's preaching to the nations, the net will not rent, although it is full of large fish, a hundred and fifty-three (Jn. 21:11). In the days of the Lord Jesus, there were, according to one historian, a hundred and fifty-three different nations on earth.

The remnant will proclaim among the nations the glad tidings: God is the Creator of heaven and earth, therefore, give Him honour and glory, for the hour of His judgment has come. This is called the eternal gospel (Rev. 14:6-7).

In the book Zechariah (ch. 8), we find that the new Israel will be set for blessing. Many from the nations will plead before the face of the Lord at Jerusalem. It will be so clear to the nations that God is with Israel that ten persons from the nations will take hold of the slip of one Jewish man's mantle, because they want to go with him since they have heard that God is with Israel. Many from among the nations will indeed share in the blessing of the Millennium.

To be cont'd

Some Men in the Epistles.

—N. Anderson

1. Our old man Rom. 6:6
2. The old man Eph. 4:22, Col. 3:19
3. The new man Eph. 4:24. Col. 3:10
4. One new man Eph. 2:15 5a.
- 5a. The inner man Rom. 7:22 b.
- 5b. The inward man 2 Cor. 4:16, Eph. 3:16
6. The outer man 2 Cor. 4:16
7. The hidden man 1 Pet. 3:4
8. The natural man 1 Cor. 2:14

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| 9. | Spiritual man | 1 Cor. 2:15 |
| 10. | The carnal man | 1 Cor. 3:1,3-4 |
| 11. | The first man | 1 Cor. 15:47 |
| 12. | The Second Man | 1 Cor. 15:47 |
| 13. | The first Adam | 1 Cor. 15:45 |
| 14. | The Last Adam | 1 Cor. 15:45 |
| 15. | The earthy man | 1 Cor. 15:48 |
| 16. | Heavenly man | 1 Cor. 15:48 |

Explanations

- Has reference to all that believers were in the flesh—they have died to that, in the death of Christ.
- Man, in general, under the headship of fallen Adam, or "sin in the flesh".
- What believers are "in Christ" — "a new creation". Note: Christ is nowhere said to be "the new man", for we read as to this, "which after God is *created* in righteousness and true holiness". Christ is not a creature! While this is true, it is quite correct to say that the new man is Christ, characteristically.
- Embraces all believers from among Gentiles and Jews.
- That which is formed in the soul by the sovereign operation of God in new birth. This is formed by the activity of a divine Agent — the Holy Spirit, who uses a divine instrument, the incorruptible seed of the Word of God, which liveth and abideth forever.
- What we are naturally and externally.
- That which has been wrought in us, in new birth, a new being. The graces of this hidden man of the heart are to be ornamented by obedience to the Word of God.
- This is the unbeliever — devoid of any work of God in him, consequently not born of God, nor sealed with the Holy Spirit.
- The believer, not only sealed with the Holy Spirit, but walking according to the Spirit.
- A believer walking according to the flesh.
- The order in which man was created.
- The order of our Lord's manhood — heavenly, holy, sinless.
- Adam, the fallen head of a fallen race.
- Christ, the Head of a race, taking character from Himself.
- The origin of the first man was "dust" — "Dust thou art, and unto dust thou shalt return". His character being commensurate with his origin, "earthy".
- The origin of the "Second Man" was "out of heaven". His character, as is that of all who are of His order, being spiritual and heavenly.

Let me use a quote from *The Bible Treasury*: "When the Spirit of God calls our Lord the Second Man, it is as good as telling us that all other men are but the reproduction of the first Man."

Our Lord Jesus Christ is different, distinct, and distinguished, from the *first man*. Truly man, spirit, soul and body, He has superseded and has thus displaced the first man entirely.

He has been raised from (among) the dead by the glory of the Father. Having accomplished redemption by His sacrificial death for sin at the cross, He has ascended up where He was before. Being by the right hand of God exalted, He has sent down the Holy Spirit to indwell His own, whom He has left in the world, to be for them, in His room and stead, "another Comforter". Also, as the Last Adam, he has given them life in association with Himself as glorified. Thus He has a company here in the world, from whence He has gone, in which, by the Spirit, He is reproducing His life with the beautiful moral traits which belong to it — "All like Thee, for Thy glory, like Thee Lord, object supreme of all adored." He is the "Heavenly One" — His own are the "Heavenly ones."

While Scripture teaches that "our *old man* is crucified with Christ" it never teaches that the *first man* has been crucified. Human relationships belong, not to the order of the *old man*, but to that of the *first man*, however sadly they have been marred by the features of the old man. These relationships shall continue for believers until our Lord shall come for us all, or until death shall supervene. While, in trusting Christ, we "have put off the *old* and have put on the *new man*" (Col. 3:9-10), we shall not put off the *first man* until we leave this responsible sphere.

Morally we are now of the order of the Second Man, and the Spirit of God, occupying us with Christ in glory, produces in us those features which, in Christ, ever delight the heart of God.

It is our privilege so to respond to this work of the Spirit that we introduce into the relationships of everyday life the graces of the heavenly man. Shortly we shall be with and like Him in the glory, then we shall certainly, and forever be done with the order of the first man. Believers are:

Heavenly in origin 1 Corinthians 15:47
Heavenly in character 1 Corinthians 15:48
Heavenly in destiny 1 Corinthians 15:49

"As we have borne the image of the one made of dust, we shall bear also the image of the heavenly One" (1 Cor. 15:49).

The End

Christian Symbols

—J. van Dijk

Introduction

In the Old Testament we find many symbolic expressions of spiritual things. We are all familiar with the tabernacle and its sacrifices. The chapters describing these are full of symbolic, spiritual significance. When God introduced these symbols, He warned His people not to be negligent in observing them. The whole creation is a symbolic expression of spiritual things God purposed by Himself. We see this in particular in the creation of man and woman in their interdependent relationship as husband and wife which speaks of Christ and the Assembly (Eph. 5:25).

We are quite certain that the Old Testament saints did not understand much, if anything, of the symbolism that was surrounding them. Did they understand why God prescribed the particular details that accompanied the sacrifices? Why was the blood of some brought into the Holy of Holiest? Why was leaven to be removed during the days of unleavened bread which accompanied the passover? Did they know, as Paul later explains, that leaven was the symbol of evil? We doubt it very much.

In short, the Old Testament people of God were surrounded by symbols of which they understood very little. To them, they all were simply legal requirements, which, if neglected, brought the displeasure of God over them. The judgment of God over Nadab and Abihu shows this. Their ignorance gave them no excuse to disregard the God-given details of their symbolic acts. Another great example is Moses beating the rock for the second time in Numbers 20:11. God takes such things most seriously.

God still does so in the day of grace. Ignorance of the significance of the symbols given to us, gives us no title to discard them. Because of the work of Christ, and the abundance of grace flowing forth from His sacrifice, God does not treat us with similar severity today. From this, however, we ought not to assume that God has become indifferent to what we do, or fail to do. God is still grieved when our symbolic actions display other things than that which God had intended.

We learn from the Old Testament that God loves symbols, and that He uses them for His own pleasure, so that He can look on them and be reminded of the truths they stand for. The symbols spoke of Christ and of the relationship of man through Christ with God. Seeing the symbols, God could endure the times of ignorance and give the time of grace, until the great eternal day breaks on God's creation. In the symbols, too, angels see the beauty of God's ways (1 Cor. 11:10).

We, Christians, too have been given symbols. But just as the people of Israel did appreciate them but little, so the majority of Christians do little value them.

Five Christian symbols.

I believe there are five symbols the Lord has given to the Christians. The first one is baptism. Baptism is still regarded as an essential and significant symbolic act by most Christians. As a matter of fact, superstition causes many who otherwise never attend a religious service, and even many who have no faith at all, to have their children baptized.

The second symbol is the Lord's supper, which is enjoyed at the Lord's table. Although most Christians do value this symbolic expression of the Lord's death, there are many true Christians who do not partake of it, and many also who have a completely wrong idea of its significance.

Then comes marriage, the relationship between husband and wife. This relationship which until recently was regarded as sacred, is today considered an unnecessary inconvenience by many non-Christians. Under the influence of these worldly trends, even many who call themselves Christians begin to ask whether or not it is really all that important.

Now we come to two symbols that may well surprise many of our readers, for generally they have long been neglected in the Christian community. The first of these is the hair style of men and women. The second, described in 1 Corinthians 11 in conjunction with the previous one, is the head covering of the woman who prays or prophesies. In that chapter, the Lord clearly speaks of these last two symbols.

Bible-believing Christians do not consider God's Word to contain non-essentials. So whether we understand these last two symbols or not, we should of course out of love to God, and simple childlike obedience, be ready to do what His Word tells us to do. Yet, we may well help each other by seeking to give greater understanding of the spiritual language spoken by these symbols. We will now consider these five symbols in the order we have mentioned them.

Baptism

Why is a Christian baptized? Many say that it is so that they may go to heaven. But the Bible teaches that only faith in the blood of the Lord Jesus, and that no act, not even a religious act, on our part can bring us there. Salvation is not of works, not of anything done by us. If it were, we would only boast (Eph. 2:9).

Some verses seem to indicate that baptism saves the soul. But symbols are often spoken of as if the symbol itself is the thing it stands for. For instance, the Lord, speaking of bread, says, "This is My body." Yet, the bread is no more His literal body than a door is the Lord Jesus, because He said: "I am the door." The bread symbolizes the Lord's body, and the door symbolizes the Lord. So baptism *symbolizes* the washing away of sins (Act 9). This washing itself is done by the blood of Christ (Rev. 1:5). God sees all who believe in the Lord Jesus as having died with Christ and risen with Him, and having a new, God-given life. Believers in the Lord Jesus show these things symbolically in baptism (Rom. 6:1-5). Baptism is not in the first place a testimony to others, but a symbolic acknowledgement in this world of things that otherwise remain hidden in the heart.

An example from daily life may help. A man who joins the army needs a uniform to be recognized by others as such. Even before receiving the uniform the man was accepted as a private, but when he received his uniform others said, Now you are really a soldier. So it is with baptism, the faith in the heart saves one's soul for eternity; in baptism one takes that place publicly on the earth.

The Lord's supper and the Lord's table

The Lord's supper and the Lord's table have also been often misinterpreted. From the Lord's own words it is clear that it was meant to be a simple symbolic act of remembering Him: "Do this in remembrance of Me." To the disciples it was a known loving act of memorial (Jer. 16:7). The Bible never presents it as a means whereby we receive grace. We partake of the bread and wine, symbolizing the body and blood of the Lord Jesus, in thankful memory of Him. This requires that each individual taking part truly belongs to Him.

The one loaf, however, also symbolizes the oneness of all believers, the body of Christ. We cannot properly partake of the Lord's supper when either of these two aspects are lacking: all who partake must belong to Him, and all who belong to Him, who are not hindered by defilement, must be able to partake.

Partaking of the Lord's supper is a symbolic act taking place at a symbolic location, the Lord's table. In the Old Testament this term was used for the altar of burnt-offering. The sacrifices offered there, the Lord called: His food (Mal. 1:12). At the Lord's table all that takes place should be in harmony with the thoughts of the Lord, just as your table at home is connected with all that you approve of in your home. It is the place of fellowship, expressed by communal eating, for the entire family of God. Wherever one partakes, all characteristics of the Lord's table must be present. The Lord attaches great value to these symbolic acts and places, and so should we.

Marriage

From eternity God had in mind to have a companion for Christ, and made that promise to Him (Tit. 1:2). It was the joy of the Father and the Son to look forward to the "time" when this would be consummated. Joyfully God created and laid in creation the symbol that would be to Him the constant reminder of what He would accomplish through creation. He made man and woman, whom He brought together as husband and wife. He set them in a mutual relationship that expressed symbolically what God had purposed in His heart. This symbolic creation of God was to foreshadow Christ and the Assembly in their eternal harmony.

God had a very special purpose with creation. He knew the days of grace would come, the days of the Christian era. It was especially during that time that on this earth, in God's creation, the all-various wisdom of God would be shown to the unseen spirit world (Eph. 3:10). Today, in a good Christian marriage, husband and wife relate to each other in symbolic fashion, just as Christ relates to the Church. Love is the banner, but love brings with it the relative position taken by each. The man takes the position as head, the woman takes the subordinate place, voluntarily, joyfully. She thereby displays how the Church relates to Christ. The authorities in the heavenlies look down and see this, and in it they see God's wisdom, and they marvel. They marvel when they see on earth a relationship that in its character and actions far exceeds things connected with a fallen creation.

The hair

The next symbol relates to the previous one. The Lord wants to see the headship relation between husband and wife expressed symbolically in hair of men and women. One of the most beautiful passages speaking of the Lord Jesus is found in Philippians 2. How beautiful is His voluntary taking a place of submission to God. Being equal to God, He made Himself of no reputation. We are all to emulate Him in our hearts, but then sisters are also asked to show what is hidden in their heart, by means of their long hair, for long hair symbolizes submission. Again angels look down and observe this. They know God's will and see hearts that are so knitted to their Saviour that they willingly display this symbol. Since Adam's fall they have seen rebellion as the norm. Full of admiration they see sisters wearing the symbol of submission, not out of a reluctant bending to a legal rule, but as an outflow of loving hearts desirous to show the all-various wisdom of God (Eph. 3:18; 1 Cor. 11:10,14-15).

How serious it must be in God's eye when Christian men, who represent Christ, display a symbol that speaks of submission rather than headship. They fail to show by their long hair the position that God has assigned to them. They are like army captains not wearing their insignias. How serious too, when Christian women symbolically display themselves as if they refuse to take their God-given submissive place. We know that is often not what is in their hearts, but God gave these symbols to display, and they are significant for Him and the angels.

In defence, some point to Paul's remark, "Does not even nature itself teach you, that man, if he have long hair it is a dishonour to him?" They say, nature does not teach us this, for *a man's hair can be as long as a woman's*. Obviously it is not in the ability of growing long hair that nature teaches us this. If I do not understand this declaration of God, I must be dull of understanding. This should cause me to be extra careful not to set my thoughts over against God's expressed will.

Is this portion of Scripture still applicable today? Regarding the law, the Bible clearly teaches that today's believers are no longer under it. But as to these things, *God* never said that they have no longer significance. Was this perhaps only Paul's view? That cannot be for God's Word is inspired. Could there be things in the Epistles that were only for that time? *We* would not write an instruction book containing things that only apply to some of the readers without making that clear in the text. Is God not wiser than we? In Colossians we read of a letter of Paul to the assembly at Laodicea which we don't have. Obviously it did not contain things that God meant for us, but only things important for the believers in those days. God keeps things of passing significance separate from those that remain valid. And hair will never lose its significance as symbol of headship and submission.

The head-covering

Now we come to the last symbol, that of the head-covering. Here too, there is much confusion and little understanding. It is very clear from 1 Corinthians 11 that it finds its basis in the question of headship. A man who covers his head while praying or prophesying puts his head to shame. On the other hand, a woman who fails to cover her head while praying or prophesying puts her head to shame. God says that it is equal to a woman who is shaved. I have known two sisters who were bald through treatment for cancer. They were very reluctant to show their baldness; they were ashamed of it. God

says that a woman may as well cut off her hair if she prophesies or prays uncovered to God; in God's eye it is just the same. It is clearly a matter of a symbol that is meaningful to God.

In verse 7 God gives us a reason for the head-covering. Man should not cover his head since he is God's glory. A woman, however, is man's glory. Then God refers to creation and says that since the woman is created for the sake of man (just as the Church has been formed for the sake of Christ), the woman has to be covered. This is God's reason. Even if we fail to fully understand it, we are not to set this symbol aside as insignificant.

Still, I believe that we can understand this symbol a little better. Galatians 3:28 says, "There is no male and female; for ye are all one in Christ Jesus." On the spiritual level, both male and female are equal before God. So when men and women together approach God in prayer, they stand there as equals before Him. Yet, man and woman together display things to God which can only be seen by means of a symbol. The man is God's glory, and should therefore not be covered. The woman is the man's glory, which ought to fall away in God's presence. God loves to see this expressed in the symbol of the woman's head covering.

Conclusion

At this point I like to ask a question particularly of each of my sisters. What is your reaction when you read an article of this nature? Some become irritated and resort to scoffing remarks; do you? If you do, you are obviously contentious about these things. Now contentiousness does not belong to the Church of God (1 Cor. 11:16). Don't go and speak with others about your irritation, but speak to God. He will take it from your heart. He will help you to understand His mind about it, and give you peace. Even if you do not agree with what you read, you should certainly be free from irritation.

Now I direct the remaining remarks to my brothers in Christ, for I believe that as brothers we have often failed to handle these matters in a godly way. We tend to forget that the beauty of these symbols is in their voluntary character, without which their inner beauty is completely lost. If sisters fail to see the beauty of these symbols, it is often because brothers have failed to teach their beauty and value. To patch up this failure by making legal requirements for sisters to have long hair and wear head-covering will, first, not bring out the beauty of the symbols, which rests in the willing heart. Secondly, it will introduce law, something fully contrary to the character of Christianity, which is liberty (not to do as one likes, but) to do the will of God from the heart. Those who stand in Christian liberty will not have difficulty to do the will of God also in this respect.

In the last century C.H. Mackintosh wrote the following significant lines on John 7:2 which also apply here:

*"The feast referred to in this lovely Scripture was the Feast of Tabernacles, called at the opening of the chapter, 'The feast of the Jews.' This stamped its character. It could no longer be called as in Leviticus 23, 'A feast of Jehovah.' **The Lord could not own it. It had become an empty formality—a powerless ordinance—a piece of barren routine—something in which man could boast of himself while God was entirely shut out.**" [Bold mine — the Editor]*

This is what would happen to the symbols we have been given if we resort to legislating the long hair and the head-covering. Br. Mackintosh continues:

"This is nothing uncommon. There has ever been a strong tendency in the human mind to perpetuate forms when the power is gone. No doubt power may clothe itself in a certain form; and, so long as the form is the expression of the power, it is all right and good. But the danger lies in going on with the mere outward form without a single particle of inward power. Thus it was with Israel of old; and thus it is with the professing Church now."

But so it will be with us if we legislate things which should be voluntary expressions of devoted hearts. All we gain by legislating is an outward appearance that all is well, while inwardly the heart has become lukewarm for the beauties the Lord has given us. Our brother continues to warn:

"We have all to watch against this snare of the devil. He will use a positive ordinance of God as a means of deceiving the soul and shutting out God altogether. But where faith is in lively exercise, the soul has to do with God in the ordinance, whatever it is, and thus the power and freshness are duly maintained."

If we *demand* the continuance of the symbol, nothing more will be accomplished than an empty form in which there is nothing found for God — no heart that relates to Him regarding the adopted form. I believe it is spiritually healthier to display the mistaken idea that we can disregard a God-given symbol without suffering loss, than to un-christianly legislate

a display that lacks the prompting heart behind it. Let not one person's error produce a responding error of others. It would only serve to show that neither have understood the heart of God.

Does this mean that we should become indifferent towards these things? Far from it! We dare not fail to speak out and present what God has given us as beautiful displays of inward things. For ever we need boldness and grace to address the consciences of those who, through negligence or willful ignorance, fail to do what God has asked them to do. We know that those who fail to observe these things dishonour themselves. We should ever be out to seek the blessing of all, and blessing is missed where God's desires are ignored.

May God give us, both brothers and sisters, such an appreciation for the things that are beautiful to Him that we may see a recovering of those symbols that today are largely lost in the Christian community.

The End

Outline for Bible Study (72)

145. The Discourse on the Way — The Comforter — John 16

Outline

1. The Holy Spirit and the world Jn. 16:7-11
2. The Holy Spirit and the believer Jn. 16:12-15
3. The Lord's departing, the Father's love Jn. 16:16-33

Explanation

1. In this chapter the Holy Spirit is not seen as sent, but as coming from Himself to serve both the world and the believers. First, He convinces the world of sin (v. 8) by giving it convincing proof of sin. Every one who fails to believe in the Son remains under God's wrath (Jn. 3:36). The Holy Spirit came into the world to testify of Christ while living in believers. This proves the terrible state of the world. It has rejected Christ and refused the grace offered in Him.

Secondly, the Holy Spirit convinces the world of righteousness, "Because I go away to my Father, and ye behold Me no longer" (vv. 8,10). The only righteous Man was crucified by the world, but God has glorified Him, and crowned Him with glory. That is righteousness! Now He is hidden from the world until it shall see Him as Judge. The Son of man seated on God's right hand and the presence of the Holy Spirit on earth are continual witnesses of God's righteousness.

Thirdly, He convinces the world of judgment, "Because the ruler of this world is judged." (vv. 8,11). Satan has tried everything to put the Lord of glory out of the way. Jews and Gentiles followed Satan in this battle. It seemed that Satan conquered when Jesus died, but the Lord rose again and triumphed (Col. 2:15). The presence and power of the Holy Spirit in the world give convincing proof of this judgment.

2. First the Holy Spirit causes believers to know all truth. So far the disciples were not able to comprehend God's counsels and thoughts. The Holy Spirit has brought all the truth to light as we now possess it in the Epistles.

Secondly, the Holy Spirit announces future things in the prophetic books: 2 Timothy, 2 Thessalonians, 2 Peter, and the Revelation. He also utters the midnight cry: "Behold, the Bridegroom comes!"

Thirdly, He presents Christ's rights and glory, witnessing of Him, and taking the things of Christ and announcing them to us: Light, power, and preciousness.

3. Then the Lord reminds the disciples anew of His going to His Father (v. 16). For a little while He would be hidden from them, but then they would see Him again and understand the relationship He had brought them into. When they fail to understand this, the Lord tells them that while He is away from them, they will have a time of weeping, but it will turn into great joy, because He will see them again.

Until now He had prayed for them to the Father, but then they would pray to the Father, who loves them (vv. 23,26-27). The Father has as much affection for the believers as the Lord Himself; they have a place in the Father's heart. If they, childlike, ask the Father in His name, their joy will be full (v. 24). Though *He* speaks about the Father (v. 28), *they* continue to speak about God (v. 30). He tells them that they will leave Him and be scattered, but the Father would be with Him. Immediately He comforts them again by saying: "In Me ye... have peace." He leaves them, as it were, a double inheritance: From the world's side tribulation, from Him peace, because He has overcome the world (v. 33). He has conquered Satan (Jn. 12:31; 14:30; Col. 2:15).

Lesson

From this chapter the believer learns that after Christ's death and resurrection they have come into a new relationship with God, who is now their loving Father. The Holy Spirit is the constant Comforter who is given to lead and guide them in all things.

146. The Discourse on the Way — The Lord's Prayer — John 17

Outline

1. The Lord and the Father Jn. 17:1-5
2. His care for the Disciples Jn. 17:6-19
3. His care for future believers Jn. 17:19-23
4. His sharing His glory Jn. 17:24-26

Explanation

1. This prayer actually does not belong to this world. It is an example of the Lord's heavenly work with the Father on behalf of His own who are still in the world. The Lord begins to speak about His personal relationship with the Father, which is the basis of all. He lifts up His eyes to the Father because the hour was come that the Son would be glorified in heaven after He had perfectly glorified the Father on earth. "The hour" which was come does not refer to the cross, but to His return to the Father. Though standing before the cross, in spirit the Lord placed Himself after it: the work was "completed" and He was as it were "no longer in the world." By His obedience the Lord had "received authority over all flesh" to give eternal life to all that God had given Him out of the world. All who know the Father and the Son have eternal life. Then we hear the wonderful words: "I have glorified Thee on earth, I have completed the work." On the basis of these two facts, the Son asks the Father to glorify Him with the glory which He possessed as the Son of God from eternity (cf. Phil. 2:6-11).

2. Then, in their presence, the Lord speaks to the Father interceding for His own, saying: "I have manifested Thy name." This is the name "Father." To Abraham God had manifested Himself as the Almighty (Gen. 17:1) and to Moses, as the I AM THAT I AM, JEHOVAH, (Ex. 3:14-15). The Lord Jesus has revealed God as Father; those who believe in Him are children of God (Jn. 1:12,18; 20:17). Besides this, the Lord has given them His Word. These are the two great blessings for those who have believed that the Lord Jesus came out from God: to know God as Father and to possess His Word.

Three reasons cause the Lord to pray for His own to the Father. "*They are Thine,*" "*I am glorified in them,*" and "*I am no longer in the world, and these are in the world.*" The Father had given them to Him out of the world, and the Lord desires that they may be one just as He and the Father are one. The Lord, therefore, directs His first request for them to the Father: "*Holy Father, keep them in Thy name.*" He, from His part, now entrusts them again to the Father to faithfully keep them in the world until the end. The Lord spoke these words while still in the world so that they might know how much they are loved and guarded by the Father and by the Son, so that His joy would be in them. The believers have God's Word, but in the midst of a world to which they do not belong. They, therefore, experience its hatred (cf. Jn. 15:19-20 and 1 Jn. 3:1,3). Twice the Lord says that His own are not of the world, as He is not of the world, showing how important this is. In view of this, He makes two additional requests: "*Keep them out of evil,*" and "*Sanctify them by the truth.*" The truth (God's Word) sanctifies and purifies of all evil (cf. Eph. 5:26). Holiness and truth must characterize all believers as witnesses of God in this world (cf. Rev. 3:7, where the Lord calls Himself "The Holy and the True"). As the Father has sent Him, so has He in turn sent His own into the world for the same purpose. The Lord sanctifies Himself for His own by going

to heaven (cf. v. 19 with Heb. 7:26). All those who believe in Him — who are, therefore, one with Him — are completely separated (sanctified) from the world, because He is enthroned in heaven.

3. The Lord then extends His request, including now those who in days ahead would believe in Him. For them He asks twice more that they may be one. The first oneness in verse 11 pertained to the common interests and purposes of the believers in walk, work, and witnessing. This second oneness (v. 21) concerns the inward link of believers with each other, by being one in the Father and in the Son, just as the Father is in the Son, and the Son in the Father. By their demonstrating this divine oneness, the world might *believe* that the Father had sent the Son. Unfortunately, this testimony is no longer what it should be. The third oneness (vv. 22-23) will be seen when all the redeemed shall enjoy the same glory. Then the world will *know* that the Father did indeed send the Son; then it must acknowledge that the Father has loved the redeemed as He has loved the Son!

4. Then follows the Lord's last request: *"I desire that where I am they also may be with Me, that they may behold My glory."* Till He has His own with Him where He is, the Lord is not satisfied. The glory He has acquired in saving us we may share with Him. The other glory, His personal glory which He enjoyed from before the foundation of the world as the beloved Son of the Father, we may see. This is our wonderful, glorious, and eternal portion. Thinking of the world, the Lord says: "Righteous Father." Speaking about Himself, He says only: "Father"; but when speaking of His own, He says: "Holy Father." Finally, the Lord says that He will make the glorious contents of the Father-name ever more known to His own, so that they will be able to enjoy His Father-love throughout their journey through this world. (v. 26).

Lesson

The Lord Jesus in this prayer speaks of our origin (v. 6), our present position and preservation (vv. 9-11), and of our future portion (vv. 22-24). Also it is very important to notice that the Lord Jesus does not pray for the world, but only for His own who are in the world (v. 9).

The Father has given all to the Son, and the Son has given all to His own; He has done all for them, and they themselves are given to Him: The work (v. 4), the words (v. 8), the Father-name (v. 11) the Word (v. 14) and the glory (v. 24).

To be cont'd