

## The Battle of Conquerors (5)

—G. H. Elbers

### Chapter 5

"Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might. Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places" (Eph. 6:10-12).

We will now study more closely the portion which describes the armour of God. The description begins, strikingly enough, with the word: 'Finally.' In other translations we also find similar beginnings: 'last of all' or 'in conclusion.' Perhaps this may seem to be an unimportant detail, but that is not so. Not without reason 2 Timothy 3:16 points out to us: "Every Scripture is divinely inspired, and profitable for teaching, for conviction, for correction, for instruction in righteousness"! So let's take a look and see what that little word 'finally' has to say to us.

#### *'Finally' or 'For the rest'*

If someone gives certain instructions, he may say for example: "You must do this, then you have to go to this or that person, then you have to take this and that into account." Then, if he wants to add something, he says: "Finally, don't forget..." or something similar. Everything that follows the word 'finally,' is a supplement to what came previously. Therefore, in this case, we must also look at what has been said previously about the necessity of putting on, the wearing, and using of the armour of God.

If we go back to Ephesians 1, we see that we are blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places. Chapter 2 teaches us that we have been seated in heavenly places with Christ. In the same chapter (v. 10) it is stated that we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works... so that we should walk in them. It is therefore clearly God's purpose that what we do or don't do here on earth (that is, our walk) is to be in agreement with our position in heavenly places. It's in this area that the enemy is more than pleased to attack us in order to disturb our personal, and the assembly life. That is why Paul wrote to the assembly in Ephesus: Now bear this in mind: (converted) Jews and (converted) Gentiles have become one in Christ (as explained in ch. 2:14 and 3:4-5). Therefore, walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called (Eph. 4:1). The Lord has made us one, hold on to this! He knew very well that the devil would use dissension, jealousy, ambition, and so on, as weapons against the Church, primarily in order to damage the Name of the Lord!

#### *The disposition of Christ*

Before the armour of God is mentioned in the Epistle to the Ephesians, Paul, led by the Spirit of God, brings to the attention of the Assembly an effective weapon to fend off the devil's attacks. In chapter 4:2-3 he calls the believers to be lowly and meek, longsuffering, loving, forbearing, diligent, and lovers of peace. These are 'attributes' we find in the Lord Jesus! He said, "I am meek and lowly in heart" (Mt. 11:29).

If we, as believers, would look more to the Lord and walk as He walked (1 Jn. 2:6), there would be far less disunity! Satan has already chalked up many triumphs because there was a lack of the disposition of Christ Jesus in the believers — the disposition of Him who humbled Himself to the shameful death of the cross. He didn't come to be served, to the contrary, He came to serve! He washed the disciples' feet; He sought not His own interests, but committed everything to His Father who judges righteously. He loved the Church and gave Himself for it (Phil. 2:5-8; Mk. 10:45; Jn. 13:12-14; 1 Pet. 2:21-23; Eph. 5:25). Do you see how important it is to pause and examine what is written ahead of that little word 'finally'?!

#### *Weak Points*

Paul was able to point out many more weak points. When he, led of course by God's Spirit, thought of that which could trip up the Christians in their personal lives, his attention was directed to the daily life. Wouldn't it please the enemy of God and man if he could hinder the working of God's Spirit in the Assembly because one or more believers walked

wrongly in their personal lives? In Ephesians 4:17 he also wrote: "Naturally, now that you are converted you must no longer walk as the Gentiles do." After that he summed up the things that would grieve the Spirit if found in the lives of believers: for example lies and sudden anger, or an inability to forgive each other. The apostle warned about bitterness, wrath, anger, clamour, evil speaking, and malice. For these things should be past history for the Christian! This is so, because by their conversion they have become totally different, because they have heard about the Lord Jesus and have been taught by Him. Read once again Ephesians 4:17-31. In this passage the weak points are named, the points at which Satan aims his fiery darts.

Yes, the armour is certainly necessary, but before he went on to define it, Paul first directs us to God and to the Lord Jesus (4:32-5:3). If we always have the Lord as our example, always having Him before our eyes, then Satan must retreat!

*One more time that walk.*

In Eph. 5:2, 8, 15 we are once more directed to the walk that the Lord asks of us as believers. Walk in love! Walk as children of light! Walk as wise ones!

If in fact we did this more, Satan would be the loser. Showing love as the Lord Jesus did (giving love!) bans quarrels and jealousy. Walking and dealing in the light protects us in advance against lying and cheating. He who follows the Lord Jesus, walks in the light (Jn. 8:12). The devil has 'no say' in the light, he belongs in the darkness. Finally, if we walked more as wise men, not so many temptations would come our way. Then we would be able to keep away from wrong places, avoid certain books and programs, and we would break off wrong friendships and habits. We would thereby give a good testimony, making it known to whom we belong through word and deed.

*Every facet of life*

Chapter 5:22-6:9 mentions again some facets of life in which, unfortunately, the devil quite often gets a chance to bring about unrest and even sin. We read there about the relationships within marriage, the family, and community life. Countless marriages gone on the rocks because God's standards are cast aside. Men treat their wives as second-class people. Women don't want to know anything about submissiveness and respect. Children are consciously disobedient and are not willing to receive admonition. Fathers try to exert their authority by force and a heavy hand. Employees are rebellious; employers abuse their employees. Yes, these are the things that Paul writes about! God's Word is very up-to-date. Worst of all, such things are also found among believers. And so the enemy achieves victory after victory.

*It can be different!*

The spiritual battle is a heavy battle. Fortunately, the Lord has made it possible for us to stand firm in the place He has given us. But then the Christians must not only meditate about the armour of God, but also prayerfully examine their lives to see if there are things in their personal or Assembly life which are not according to God's will. When the Lord shows those wrong things, it is high time to confess them. Then there will be forgiveness and cleansing and spiritual power to withstand Satan (Jn. 1:7-9)!

If we have seen this, then Paul says to us: "There is something else..." or, in other words: "Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. Put on..."

*To be cont'd*

## **On the Outlook for God**

—C. B. Beekhuizen

When the heavens rent, and God appears "*Oh, that Thou wouldst rend the heavens, that Thou wouldst come down — that the mountains might flow down at Thy presence — as fire kindleth brushwood*" (Isa. 64:1-2).

Snugly between two high mountains lay a small Austrian airport. In the arrival hall a few people looked intensely at the thick, low-hanging cloud cover. At any moment the clouds could part and they would see the shining appearance of an airplane. They listened to the heavy drone of the plane's engines above the clouds, announcing the approach of the

shining "bird." Strange, the sound of the engines suddenly increased and rather than beginning its final approach, it seemed that the pilot halfway into his effort to land had changed his mind. The tense audience held their breath, for, combined with the poor vision, a landing that had begun too late could very well be fatal! The cloud cover would indeed rend, show the silver bird for a moment, but in seconds it would blow apart in an enormous fireball!

### *The necessity of good ground radar*

Their fear had not been without reason, so I heard later. As passenger I felt something of the tension of the people below, and of the cabin personnel in the airplane. It was remarkably silent; everyone looked tense. My fellow passenger and employer had become deadly pale and held his head between his legs, obviously prepared for the crash that had to come. He knew the dangerous airfield, I didn't... His white knuckles told me that he was very ill at ease, a thing he later acknowledged to me. Only after we had landed safely on a nearby military airfield, I understood how great the danger had been. The airstrip of the small airport was short and, due to the low-hanging clouds, vision was extremely bad. Because of the lack of good ground radar, the pilot had not dared to continue the landing and decided to make a "through-start," something that, as I learned later, had nearly led to fatal consequences.

### *God's shining appearance*

The feelings of the upward-looking, tensely waiting people on the airfield must have resembled that of the prophet Isaiah. He tried to imagine how it would be when the Lord would descend from heaven in His shining appearance. Would people welcome Him in the right manner? Would their "ground radar" be tuned in on His coming? Isaiah was ready for it, longed for God's appearing in glory, but he also longed for the restoration of the by-sin-disrupted relationship between God and His people. Therefore he cried out:

*"Oh, that Thou wouldest rend the heavens, that Thou wouldest come down — that the mountains might flow down at Thy presence — as fire kindleth brushwood, as the fire causeth water to boil, to make Thy name known to Thine adversaries, that the nations might tremble at Thy presence! When Thou didst terrible things which we looked not for, Thou camest down, and the mountains flowed down at Thy presence. Never have men heard, nor perceived by the ear, nor hath eye seen a God beside Thee, who acteth for him that waiteth for Him" (Isa. 64:1-4).*

In Africa a similar cry led to a revival among the Zulus, a revival that has continued for more than thirty years! But it went along the narrow road of humiliation, cleansing, confession of guilt and a deep contrition!

### *What God in His grace desires to give*

About 740 years after Isaiah uttered his heart's cry, the well-known apostle Paul would again put the longing and faith of Isaiah into words (1 Cor. 2:9). But now God had descended, and that in the form of a man, the Man Christ Jesus! The people who expected Him were not disappointed and knew now "the hidden wisdom of God." Just as the psalm writer they exclaimed:

*"Oh how great is Thy goodness, which thou hast laid up for them that fear thee, which Thou hast wrought for them that trust in Thee, before the sons of men! Thou keepest them concealed in the secret of Thy presence from the conspiracies of man; Thou hidest them in a pavilion from the strife of tongues. Blessed be Jehovah; for He hath shewn me wondrously His loving-kindness in a strong city. As for me, I said in my haste, I am cut off from before Thine eyes; nevertheless Thou heardest the voice of my supplications when I cried unto Thee" (Ps. 31:20-22).*

So, the psalm writer, Isaiah, the apostle Paul, and all who await the Lord God have looked for the coming of the Redeemer, Jesus Christ, "God revealed in flesh" (1 Tim. 3:16)! In Him God revealed both Himself and His counsels, the plans which, right through the judgment, would be executed!

### *Waiting for God, in the midst of His way*

When Moses met God at the burning bush, He heard that God would descend to redeem His people out of slavery and sin. Isaiah and Paul had similar encounters with God. True, they were accompanied with deep humiliation whereby they lost all thoughts of self-conceit as well as their carefully built self-respect. Therefore Isaiah cried out: "Woe unto me! for I am undone; for I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the

King, Jehovah of hosts" (Isa. 6:5). And Saul fell to the earth with the words: "Who art Thou Lord?... What shall I do Lord?" (Acts 22:8,10).

### *Waiting for God's Instructions*

After their encounters with God, Moses, David, Isaiah, and Paul, all had to wait for *the instructions regarding "God's way."* Self-chosen ways were abandoned because they were brought by God Himself to walk *"in the path of righteousness."* Of that way God had said that all who wanted to walk that (narrow) way would be rewarded; *"that I may cause those that love Me to inherit substance"* (Prov. 8:20).

Later Peter would say: *"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who, according to His great mercy, has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from among the dead, to an incorruptible and undefiled and unfading inheritance, reserved in the heavens for you, who are kept guarded by the power of God through faith for salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. Wherein ye exult, for a little while at present, if needed, put to grief by various trials, that the proving of your faith, much more precious than of gold which perishes, though it be proved by fire, be found to praise and glory and honour in the revelation of Jesus Christ."* (1 Pet. 1:3-7).

Moses, David, Isaiah, and the apostles Paul and Peter did await the Lord in *this* manner, even if He had by times to descend from heaven with fire, so that both Moses and Peter saw two "believers" judged, because they had brought *strange* fire into the sanctuary (Lev. 10:2; Acts 5:9,11; 1 Cor 11:29)!

### *Waiting with an anxious, yet joyful, heart*

When Isaiah asked for an opened heaven, he did so with an anxious heart. The condition of the people asked for this (Isa. 63). Although the prophet experienced a revival under king Hezekiah, there were great cares and troubles. The son of Manasseh sought Isaiah's life. The people committed idolatry with the god of fortune, that sort of idolatry we now see returning in the games of chance (Isa. 65:11). Moreover, Manasseh's later conversion had not brought a general reveille (2 Chr. 33:17). Even God's wrath over Manasseh's sins continued to burn despite the great reformation that came about under the King Josiah (2 Ki. 23:25-26). Therefore the prophet Jeremiah would later cry: "Jehovah, my strength and my fortress, and my refuge in the day of distress, unto thee shall the nations come from the ends of the earth, and they shall say, Surely our fathers have inherited falsehood and vanity; and in these things there is no profit. Shall a man make gods unto himself, and they are no-gods? Therefore, behold, I will this once cause them to know, I will cause them to know My hand and My might; and they shall know that My name is Jehovah" (Jer. 16:19-21).

Both Moses and Isaiah had become acquainted with that name in a special way. That name made them glad in their exercise of righteousness (Isa. 64:5). Just as Paul very specially pronounced God's righteousness, the truth of it being *"more blessed to give than to receive"* applied also to the prophets of the old covenant. They stood firm for the truth and the maintaining of God's righteousness, to ward off with their own life, if possible, the judgment (Acts 20:35; Jer. 17:12-16; Ezek. 22:30; Dt. 9:25). They were people who cried with Isaiah: *"Yea, in the way of Thy judgments, O Jehovah, have we waited for Thee; the desire of our soul is to Thy name, and to Thy memorial"* (Isa. 26:8)! What do we think when people fall away around us, or when they, by unpleasant or slandering suspicions, add tribulation to our bonds? Do we then say with Paul: *"At any rate, in every way, whether in pretext or in truth, Christ is announced; and in this I rejoice, yea, also I will rejoice"* (Phil. 1:17-18)?

### *There is salvation in God's wrath!*

When we experience God's chastisement, says Hebrews 12:11, there is little joy to be found in our hearts. We need faith in God's love and faithfulness to be able to endure to the end. When Job nearly drowned under God's purifying judgment, partly because of the loss of his wife, children, and friends, God Himself had to step in to keep him from total darkness and embitterment. As preparation for His dealings God sometimes uses an unprejudiced witness, perhaps someone who we do not immediately see as "friend." This, however, only happens after everyone around has fallen away, also because of the way we ourselves deal so often with suffering and problems. Sometimes we, like Job, think that "friends" just have to accept that our faith in God's righteousness, love, and faithfulness languishes. A modern rendering of the Book of Job says namely: "One ought to have pity on a friend who suffers, even when he loses the awe for the Almighty. My brothers are as unreliable as a brook that rises when there is ice and snow, but dries up when it becomes hot..." (Job 6:14-17).

But Job too had to learn to *humble himself under the mighty hand of God* (1 Pet 5:6), just as Isaiah did this on behalf of the entire nation. In the Authorized Version it is beautifully expressed that God's wrath also contains salvation, for Isaiah says: *"Behold, Thou art wroth; for we have sinned: in those is continuance, and we shall be saved"* (Isa. 64:5 KJV). Precisely the acknowledgment that follows this cry from the heart ought to speak to us, Christians of this decadent twentieth century: *"We are all become as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags; and we all fade as a leaf and our iniquities, like the wind, have carried us away; and there is none that calleth upon Thy name, that stirreth up himself to take hold of Thee; for Thou hast hidden Thy face from us, and hast caused us to melt away through our iniquities"* (Isa. 64:6-7). For God's children there is, however, salvation in this 'wrath of God.' For when we bow humbly under the judgment, which according to Peter "begins at the house of God," there is hope and a future for those who believe (1 Pet 4:17)! The prophet Ezekiel saw it so when God spoke to His angel: *"Go through the midst of the city, through the midst of Jerusalem, and set a mark upon the foreheads of the men that sigh and that cry for all the abominations that are done in the midst thereof. And to the others He said in my hearing, Go after him through the city, and smite: let not your eye spare, neither have pity. Slay utterly the old man, the young man, and the maiden, and little children, and women; but come not near any man upon whom is the mark; and begin at My sanctuary. Then they began at the elders who were before the house"* (Ezek. 9:4-6).

*God can be found by them who ask for Him*

When faced with chastisement or correction, as described in the foregoing cases, we all have the tendency to begin excusing ourselves. Even when we sense in our conscience that the accusation is correct we will still seek to put the blame on others or on the circumstances. In the worst case, we, like Adam and Job, blame God Himself: *"The woman, whom Thou hast given to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I ate,"* or in Job's case: *"Were I perfect, He would prove me perverse"* (Job 9:20). That's how we are! We need a true encounter with God, as did Job and Saul, to come to see that indeed we all carry the sinful trademarks of our flesh, as Isaiah calls them: *"We are all become as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags."*

Therefore we all need to return to the Source, God's uncovering Word, that in the Lord Jesus has become flesh and blood. We all need to ask again "after the way," ask what is *His* way. Only on that way can we expect the fulfilment of God's promise: *"To this man will I look: to the afflicted and contrite in spirit, and who trembleth at My Word"* (Isa. 66:2).

*All are guilty!*

If we are honest, we must therefore acknowledge that we all have been guilty of "gossip," which is one of the reasons why brothers and sisters are driven apart. We quickly have the tendency in our heart to think evil of another, certainly when we hear a negative remark about a brother of whom we are critical already. A thorough investigation "whether these things are so" is then entirely out of question, and our memory retains a false picture. Is it not for this very reason that the Bible warns us so often about such behaviour (Jas. 4:10-11; Zech. 7:10)? The victims sense such an attitude and it results in a position of isolation. Unbelievers frequently deal better with the "power of positive thinking" than we Christians practice what Paul wrote: *"Whatsoever things are noble, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are amiable, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue and if any praise, think on these things"* (Phil. 4:8)!

*The beam in our own eye*

With such a beam in our own eye it is not possible to remove the mote in the eye of the other of whom we are critical (Mt. 7:1-5). Happily, the Lord Jesus speaks only of one eye, so that, in the land of the blind, we can, despite this, still practice our "kingship and priesthood" (1 Pet. 2:9).

To be aware of the beam in one's own eye makes one meek and humble. Such a beam is namely a whole complex of motes, and we must be willing to see it that way. Only then we understand why Isaiah pleads: *"Return for Thy servants' sake, the tribes of Thine inheritance. Thy holy people have possessed it but a little while: our adversaries have trodden down Thy sanctuary. We have become like those over whom Thou never barest rule, those not called by Thy name"* (Isa. 63:17-19).

With the acknowledgement that we all have failed, God can do something! He can reveal Himself to those *"that sorrow for the solemn assemblies"* as *"a mighty One that will save."* God gladly allows Himself to be found of people who know

themselves to be "*miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked,*" but who want to continue to "trust in the name of Jehovah" because that name is a "*is a strong tower,*" a hiding place (Zeph. 3:18, 17; Rev. 3:17-21; Zeph. 3:12; Prov. 18:10).

### *Looking at the light*

Believers who stand on their "watchtower" or on the "double high place" of Ramathaim-Zofim, can at times look very far ahead (1 Sam. 1:1; Hab. 2:1-4). They watch in the night and have "heavenly light in themselves" through the Word of the Lord Jesus. They look for a "cloud as a man's hand," to immediately act upon it, for they know that God will again give His grace to those who are poor and cast down in spirit (1 Ki. 18:44ff; Mt. 5:3). Sometimes Christians too must complain: "[God] gave His strength into captivity, and His glory into the hand of the oppressor" (Ps. 78:61). A time will come in which the believers who have insight in the present weak condition of Christendom will sing with the psalm writer: "*O Shepherd of Israel, Thou that leadest Joseph like a flock; Thou that sittest between the cherubim, shine forth*" (Ps. 80:1).

### *Restoration of broken walls*

There may well be the "bread of tears" (Ps. 80:5), and people in the world may say scoffingly: "Where is the promise of his coming?" (2 Pet. 3:4). Yet, there is hope for those who "wait upon God," also in days like these, when judgment begins at the house of God! It is true, we need *restoration* and *redemption* (Ps. 80:7). Stronger yet: our protecting walls have long since been broken, so that all Christendom lies open to the enemy. The psalm writer asks himself: "*Why hast Thou broken down its fences, so that all who pass by the way do pluck it? The boar out of the forest doth waste it, and the beast of the field doth feed off it*" (Ps. 80:12-13). God's people is here compared with a vine that was transplanted from Egypt into a fruitful field. However, the psalm writer also sees God's "menacing look" because the vine does no longer bear fruit. When we are born again, it holds true for us as well that God has transplanted us "out of darkness into His light," but that testimony is in danger of being lost. It spoke of "the Son of God's right hand, the Son of God's love." The once wild vine branch was grafted into the Son — just as Israel's olive tree was linked to the root, the Lord Jesus Christ — who carries and nourishes her (Ps. 80:15; Jn. 15:5; Rom 11:18).

### *God's searching love*

The Bible shows us that God is love. He sent His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, who "was delivered for our offences and raised for our justification." This Son of God's love has, after He was risen from among the dead, searched for us, poor sheep for the slaughter (Zech. 11:4,11), and gathered us anew around Himself, even "*in the cloudy and dark day*" (Ezek. 34:12). He Himself will give the love that His sheep missed within the fold. He will bind up the wounded souls, using His holy anointing oil for restoration. He will raise up a "fiery wall" around His own to keep them from the evil surrounding them and, while "turning His hand upon the little ones," will purify and prove their *faith*, but also *comfort* and *encourage* them (Zech. 13:7,9). Therefore we understand Isaiah's yearning for the rending of the heavens so that the Lord could appear in all His majesty. Soon that will happen indeed just as Isaiah expected it.

But Christians await the Lord Jesus in the air, before the judgment is executed upon the earth! "*For the Lord Himself with an assembling shout, with archangel's voice and with trump of God, shall descend from heaven; and the dead in Christ shall rise first; then we, the living who remain, shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air; and thus we shall be always with the Lord*" (1 Th. 4:16-17). And when this indeed happens at the end of days, we will say with Thomas: "*My Lord and my God*" (Jn. 20:28).

When present-day trials direct our eye and heart anew to heaven, we again begin to long for an encounter with God. Wouldn't that be worth everything? "*So then do not let us sleep as the rest do, but let us watch and be sober... putting on the breastplate of faith and love, and as helmet the hope of salvation; because God has not set us for wrath, but for obtaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, who has died for us, that whether we may be watching or sleep, we may live together with Him*" (1 Th. 5:6,8-10).

## **The Prophecy of Nahum (5)**

—R. Been Sr.

### Verse 13

Nobody had been able to withstand the Assyrians. But just Jehovah's speaking is sufficient to destroy the entire military and political power of the Assyrian. The sword of the Lord, in Babel's hands destroyed the "young lions" of Assyria. All offspring of Assyrian royalty lost its life at Nineveh's fall. The voice of Asshur's ambassadors would be heard no more. We recall how once, scoffingly and mockingly, Rabshakeh, Sennacherib's ambassador, had spoken against Hezekiah and God.

Of course, Nineveh's fall did not bring peace on earth. That will only come after the Lord Jesus has assumed His royal reign over the whole earth. Secular history tells us very little about the limits of Nineveh, but excavations have shown its tremendous extent. Yet, no inscription speaks of the fall and the calamity that came over the city. This seems to prove how, until the very last, they held the city to be unconquerable.

Only God's Word speaks loud and clear about the judgment that befell Nineveh. And only that Word, and the prophecy of Nahum in particular, turns our view from the historic Nineveh, fixing it on the future, prophetic Assyrian. Then this power will again play a short role in world events, showing its hatred for God and His people, only to be destroyed forever.

## Chapter 3

### *Recompense*

In this chapter, the sins of Nineveh bring down the recompense on their heads. Just as the unrighteousness of the Jewish people at Jerusalem who had shed the blood of the prophets aroused the recompense of the Lord, so also are their idolatry, falsehood, pride, violence, and rapaciousness recompensed to Nineveh. The spirit of the sins of Nineveh was the spirit and sins of the entire population and the kings of Assyria.

### Verse 1

Nahum pronounces only one woe: the destruction of Nineveh. For that matter apart from a word or so about the restoration of Israel, this prophet's entire service concerns only Assyria. The Lord's judgment over Nineveh is so firm, so definite, that chapter 2 already gives a sketch of its execution, although it had not yet taken place then; and so does the third chapter.

Again and again we read what the Lord *will* do. All the power of proud, haughty Nineveh, that considered only its own importance, and that by its pomp and glory, by its boasting of its own grandeur and power, showed itself to be an enemy of God, had to be brought to naught.

### Verses 2-3

Here we find the same manner of presentation as in chapter 3 verses 4-7. It is as if the prophet is present at the destruction of the Nineveh. He points to the snapping of the whip, to the noise of the rattling wheels, to the rushing of the horses and to chariots slamming into each other. He sees the flaming sword and the lightning spear, he sees the awesome mass of fallen soldiers, so many that one has to be careful not to stumble over them.

### Verses 4-7

One characteristic of Nineveh's unrighteousness comes much to the fore in this chapter: the sin that was directly against God, namely *idolatry*. The city is presented as a charming prostitute, a master in sorceries, who sold nations by its fornication (idolatry), and families by its sorceries. Many conquered nations had bowed down to the gods of Assyria. Through the demise of their own country, they had seen that their gods had not been able to help them against the Assyrian; they even had taken their gods away.

Rabshakeh, the Assyrian general, had thought to apply the same tactics in Judah when he asked the representatives of Hezekiah: "Where are the gods of Hamath and Arpad? Where the gods of Sepharvaim? and have they delivered Samaria out of my hand? Who are they among all the gods of these countries that have delivered their country out of my hand, that Jehovah should deliver Jerusalem out of my hand?" (Isa. 36:19-20). But this tactic was left without success at that

time, and soon Rabshakeh became all too well acquainted with the power of Jehovah. Not only was Jerusalem saved, but in one night 185,000 men of the Assyrian army were killed by the angel of the Lord.

By his idolatry, the Assyrian had, sinned greatly against God. No wonder that God would judge this. He would debase Assyria in the eyes of all nations. Chapter 1:14 already mentioned this debasement. Now here God says that He will show the Gentiles the abomination, filth, and shame of the Assyrian as a warning example. When the judgment over Nineveh would have been executed, everybody would flee from her saying: Who will have pity on such a city?

Where could the Lord find comforters for Nineveh? How could He send comforters to a city that had despised Him to the utmost, mocking Him? It is a very prime principle with God that He will not comfort as long as there is no repentance, no sorrow. In the days of Jonah, there was sorrow and repentance in Nineveh; then the Lord saved the city, comforting it.

The Assyrian's idolatry is one of the most important subjects covered in prophecy. Assyria in its pride considered its own graven images, its own religion better than that of Jerusalem and Samaria, yes, better than God Himself. Just read the bragging language of this usurper recorded in the book of Isaiah (10:8-11).

The final defeat of the Assyrian, who in his pride would even subject God to himself, is mentioned by Isaiah (14:24-27). There not just the historical defeat, but also *the prophetic, the future one* is mentioned. One of the judgments that would come over the Assyrian was that "thy nakedness shall be uncovered, yea, thy shame shall be seen" (Isa. 47:3). All the nations would see this. A similar judgment is pronounced over *Babel*, and also over *Judah*, that had followed the idolatry of the nations (Jer. 13:26-27). Jerusalem was "the house swept with brooms," but in which a fullness of idolatry would be found under the Antichrist's leadership in the last days. Thus, in the future, one and the same judgment will be poured out over all idolatry — over the great mass of apostate Jews, over Babylon, and over the Assyrian.

#### *Verses 8-10*

The Assyrian will receive the same judgment that he executed over No. (No-Amon of Thebes, capital of Upper Egypt). The natural lay of Thebes was similar to that of Nineveh. Thebes, too, lay "among the rivers" — a reference to the valley through which the Nile with its many branches flows — just as Nineveh lay in the valley of the Tigris. Thebes, too, had "the sea" as a wall, just as the Tigris was a "sea" to Nineveh. Besides this, Thebes was protected against enemy attacks by Ethiopia, Egypt, Phut and Lybia. Yet, the city had been conquered by the Assyrian, and its fate is recorded in an inscription. The Assyrian subjected it to itself and its gods, and robbed it literally of everything. Terrible cruelties were committed. Children were crushed at the street corners; the rulers were either killed or taken captive. The Assyrian's thirst for blood was great, and yet, this people prided itself on a high degree of civilization and culture.

#### *Verses 11-19*

There is an *eternal* recompense. Yet, we see in Scripture that for many nations and persons there is often a recompense already *here on earth*. That was the case with Nineveh. Just as Nineveh had made many nations "drunk," inebriated, defenseless, so it happened to this city. It, too, will seek a hiding place from the enemy. Her defenses will be of no help to her, for they are compared to a fig tree with early ripened fruit. When one shakes the tree, the fruit falls by itself into the mouth of the eater. That is to say, Nineveh's fortifications would, as it were of themselves, fall into the hands of the enemy. The people in the city are compared to fearful women. The "gates of the land," the great caravan routes will be "opened." This means that the enemy will be able to use those routes. Fire will consume the bars bolting the city's gates, so that these can no longer be closed.

The Assyrian had caused many kings and nations to fall. He had said that he, by the power of his hand and by his intelligent wisdom, had removed the boundaries of the nations by adding their territory to his own. He had robbed the supplies of the nations; as a strong beast he had cast down the inhabitants. Like one who empties a nest of eggs, he had taken the wealth, the possessions of the nations. Yes, he had gathered the entire earth. No one had been able to resist him (Isa. 10:13-14).

But now, the same fate would fall upon Assyria, in particular upon Nineveh. Just as God had made use of the Assyrians to chastise the nations, He would now make use of Babel to destroy the Assyrian. Let Babel call upon its gods for help in the incursion into Assyria; the Assyrians do the same thing. They call upon their gods for help against Babel. But the true God executes His plans through Babel, even calling the Babylonians His "heroes" (2:3).

Just like Babel, Nineveh would not be rebuilt. Yet in the last days the same powers will appear once more upon the world stage, though, as far as Babel is concerned, in a different form. The *Babel of the future* is not a real city, but a *religious setup, a system*, characterized by Babel's principles. The Lord will effectively and absolutely judge this system, causing it to *disappear for good*. The prophetic Assyrian, the king of the North, however, will only be destroyed as far as its military might is concerned. As a nation, as a people, Assyria — or to put it more accurately, a remnant of it — will exist during the blessed reign of Christ, naturally no longer with its earlier rapacity, violence, and lust for prey. We read namely that in those days — which is during the reign of Christ — Israel will be "the third with Egypt and with Assyria, a blessing in the midst of the earth; whom Jehovah of hosts will bless, saying, Blessed be Egypt my people, and Assyria the work of my hands, and Israel mine inheritance!" (Isa. 19:24-25).

During Christ's reign the remnants of the three nations, Israel, Egypt, and Assyria — which together make up the midst of the earth — will be made a blessing for the whole world. In the past the two countries, Egypt and Assyria, always warred with each other for the sovereignty. And in the last days there will again be a struggle between these two countries involving the region of Palestine (Dan. 11:40-45).

Naturally, in Christ's Millennium there will not be three superpowers. Then there is only one power, one sovereign: Christ. The centre of that power will not be in Europe, nor in America, but in Asia and Africa, and in particular in the region of Palestine, which will be, in a ruling and law-giving sense, "*the heart of the earth*." Then the capital of the world will not be London, New York, or Paris, but Jerusalem. Not the sons of *Japheth*, but the sons of *Shem* (Israel and Assyria) and the sons of *Ham* (Egypt) will be the chief people. Yet, only of Israel, we read that it is Jehovah-Sabaoth's, the Lord of host's, *inheritance*.

Still, as far as the historical destruction of Nineveh is concerned, we read that the city, despite her resistance during the siege, will be destroyed by fire and its inhabitants will be annihilated by the sword. The flood of enemies will "devour" the Assyrians just as cankerworms and locusts devour a whole region. Earlier the Assyrians had done the very same.

In the prophecy of Joel and other prophets, locusts are often used as a type showing the power of the Assyrian. It is a characteristic of locusts that they devour everything and then fly away. So it would be in the case of Nineveh. The captains of the Assyrian power, used as they were to glorious victories, would "fly away," saving themselves the trouble of defending Nineveh (14:17). The shepherds and other leaders, too, would no longer fulfill their task of governing, but abandon the city to its fate. In short, there is no more hope for Nineveh; it will fall. All who will hear about her fall will clap their hands, saying that the same fate that befell so many nations by the hand of Assyria has befallen her (vv. 18-19).

In this chapter we see therefore that there is a recompense. A simple truth that is so easily forgotten by many. Yet, here it is displayed that they who have persecuted God's people will be punished for their deeds quite apart from the fact that God's people were guilty and therefore the Lord had to chastise them. With regard to the believers of the Assembly it is written: "It is a righteous thing with God to render tribulation to those that trouble you, and to you that are troubled repose with us, at the revelation of the Lord Jesus from heaven, with the angels of His power" (2 Th. 1:6-7).

*The End*

## **Samson as Type of Christ (2)**

—H. Bouter Jr.

### *The strong One and the Stronger One*

"He arose at midnight, and seized the doors of the gate of the city, and the two posts, and tore them up with the bar, and put them upon his shoulders, and carried them up to the top of the mountain that is before Hebron" (Judg. 16:3).

This story, too, contains a beautiful type of Christ's victory over His strong opponent, the devil, the one who had the power over death (Heb. 2:14). For now we leave Samson's sad failure as a Nazarite and as judge of Israel for what it is and concentrate on the subject: Samson as a type of Christ. In essence it contains here the same lesson as in the story of the conquered and dead lion, but the accent falls differently. In the story of Judges 14 it was a matter of personal conflict with the enemy, a "man-to-man" confrontation, and a complete victory gained by God's Nazarite.

In Judges 16 the issue is not directly a personal opponent, but victory *over a city*. This city with its gates symbolizes the power of the enemy that he exerts over all who find themselves on his terrain. Here the collective aspect is in view; this we hope to look at in greater detail. It concerned, naturally, a Philistine city, for that was the enemy Samson fought

against. He judged Israel "in the days of the Philistines twenty years" (Judg. 15:20), which means: during the days that the Philistines ruled over the Israelites (cf. v. 11). The event with which chapter 16 begins probably played at the end of his career. Samson went to Gaza. He went, so to speak, to the lion's den, and his enemies plotted to kill him there. Gaza was the most important of the Philistines' five royal cities. Gaza also means 'the strong one.' The final act of Samson's life, with which this chapter ends, took place in this capital of the Philistines (16 :21).

In this strong city we have a picture of the tremendous might of the devil who held the power over death. When Christ died, penetrating the last bulwark of the enemy, the devil sought to keep Him prisoner. However, the crucified and dead Christ gained a mighty victory. The 'strong city' of the adversary has now been laid low, his fortress lies open and its power has been annihilated. True, Christ descended into the lower parts of the earth when He was laid in the dust of death, but now He has been exalted. To use the words of Ephesians 4: He that descended is the same who has also ascended, and, having ascended up on high, He has led captivity captive (vv. 8-10).

His triumph is complete — just as Samson's, who rose up in the middle of the night, and, laying hold of the doors of the city's gate, tore them loose with their posts and bars (16:3). The barred city gate could not stop Samson. Just as little could death keep hold of Christ. He broke even the bands of death. His name is: Prince of life. When He awoke from His sleep of death, He gained a glorious victory by leaving death and the grave for good behind Him. He is risen and He is also the One who has ascended above all heavens. That is also much higher than Samson, who, with his trophy, climbed to the top of the mountain lying before (or perhaps: in the direction of) Hebron. This city reminds us of God's continuing faithfulness toward His people. He will never forsake His own, not even in times of deepest decline — of which the end of the Book of Judges speaks all too clearly. From Hebron, the token of Samson's mighty victory was very well visible: one could see the doors of Gaza's gate lying on the distant mountain top.

Similarly we see, with the eye of faith, the triumph that Christ gained (for now we still walk by faith, not by sight). Therefore, we can sing about His victory and about the token of victory that He has captured:

IMMANUEL! He has to hell's great portals  
Displayed His might. From them their power He took  
When He did die instead of guilty sinners  
Whose names are now recorded in life's book.

There is here, however, also a collective aspect. This we want to stress now. It is not only a question of the personal salvation of the sinner and personal assurance of the Christian, important as these may be. Scripture teaches us that *the Assembly as whole* has been built on Christ, the Rock, the Son of the living God. And according to the Lord's words, because He is the cornerstone, the foundation of the Assembly, Hades' gates shall not prevail against it (Mt. 16:16-18).

The *gates* symbolize the power and authority of the enemy. But Christ has risen. Now no power of death and grave, of sin and Satan, can conquer God's people. Captivity has been taken captive. The doors of the last bulwark of the enemy are open wide, and his captives have escaped. The gates of bronze have been broken, the bars of iron cut asunder. Therefore we give thanks to the Lord for His loving-kindness, and for His wondrous works to the children of men (Ps. 107:15-16). Can you join in the singing of this song of praise?

### *The dying Conqueror*

"Samson said, Let me die with the Philistines! And he bowed himself with might; and the house fell on the lords, and on all the people that were therein. So the dead that he slew at his death were more than those whom he had slain in his life" (Judg. 16:30).

The end of Samson's life is also a remarkable type of Christ's victory over the power of the enemy. *In his death* lay the secret of his last, his greatest victory. This important principle held true for Samson, for we read here that he slew more enemies at his death than during his life. This, however, is much more applicable to our Lord Jesus Christ, who, dying, gained His greatest victory by far over the powers of Satan, sin, and death. He is now the Living One, the One who has been dead, but who now lives for all eternity. He has the keys of death and hades (Rev. 1:17-18).

However, we see here also that the Old Testament type fades in the light of the full New Testament reality. Samson died *with* his enemies, but Christ died *for* His enemies. Samson wanted to avenge himself upon the Philistines and so perished with them, whereas Christ died out of love for the lost ones. Samson was buried in the grave of his father Manoah, and that was the definite end of his career. But Christ has risen from the grave, and we, his previous enemies, are risen with

Him to a new life. About 3,000 Philistines died with Samson, but when the Assembly was born on Pentecost, about 3,000 souls were saved (Acts 2:41).

To the redeemed Assembly, nothing is as important as the Lord's death. His death is a wonder that we will never be able to fathom, but it brings us, ever again, to admiration and worship. So we announce His death — the first Assembly did this daily — until He comes (for the dying Conqueror is also the living and coming Lord). And with it we marvel ever again about the great mystery of His death, which became our death too, and which has given us life:

O, may the death Thou hadst to taste, Lord,  
Remain before our eyes—always.  
Thy blood alone has purified us  
And opened us the heavenly lays.

Thy love, Lord, never can be fathomed.  
It touches, stirs us, 'gain and 'gain.  
By death we are with Thee united!  
To Thee alone does praise pertain.

For the rest there is, of course, morally a world of difference between Samson and Christ. The type proves in many respects to be more one of contrasts, as is the case with so many Old Testament examples — starting with Adam (cf. Rom. 5:14ff). The failure of the first man causes the perfection of the second Man to shine forth all the brighter.

This contrast reveals itself in more than one aspect. The true Nazarite never disclosed the secret of His devotion to God. He was faithful unto death. He only did the will of His heavenly Sender and did not for a moment depart from the path that His God and Father had set out for Him. Samson, on the other hand, repeatedly gave in to the temptations. Twice he disclosed his secret under the pressure put upon him by a woman: in chapter 14 to the Philistine woman at Timnath, and here in chapter 16 to Delilah. The strong hero who could conquer a city could not rule his spirit (Prov. 16:32).

Christ went up to Jerusalem to present Himself there voluntarily as a sacrifice. With Samson, however, we see a descending line — literally but also figuratively. He descended into the valley of Sorek (vine), where he once more took up a relationship with a Philistine woman (16:4). Here there is no longer any mention of a legal marriage as in chapter 14. Delilah (sensuous) had him sleep upon her knees and had his seven locks of hair cut off. He was robbed of his power, of his freedom, and of his sight. The Philistines led him away to Gaza and threw him into prison. There, like a slave, he had to turn the mill to grind wheat.

The only token of hope in this sad story is found in verse 22: "But the hair of his head began to grow after he was shaved." The special strength of Samson was, after all, linked to this outward token of his complete devotion to God, yes, even the presence of the Lord Himself was linked to this (16:19-20). For the New Testament believer, who enjoys the abiding indwelling of the Holy Spirit, entirely different principles hold true — although our inward devotion will certainly be seen in our outward behaviour.

So Samson was slowly prepared for the last confrontation with his enemies. When his hair grew again, his dependence upon God also grew again. In prison he learned to pray again, and his last request, to die with the Philistines, was indeed fulfilled. For one last time God gave him back his supernatural power after he had first been an object of amusement to his enemies (just as the Lord Jesus has been mocked before He died). It was not merely a question of rehabilitation for Samson himself, but just as much a matter of confrontation between Dagon, the god of the Philistines, and the God of Israel: the living and true God. Dagon, to whom the Philistines ascribed their victory over Samson, was slated to have the worst of it. When Samson bowed himself mightily, the idol temple fell and buried the Philistines with their idols.

Glory be to our Lord!

*The End*