

THINK :- DO

—M. J. Arentsen

"For the rest, brethren, whatsoever things are true, 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. What ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, these things do; and the God of peace shall be with you" (Philippians 4:8, 9).

We not only have to do with God in difficulties and anxieties but in every circumstance of our daily life. We always have to do with Him—in our connections with our brothers and sisters in Christ, in our relationship to the world, or as to the secrets of our own hearts. Why is there so much envy and jealousy in this world? It is on account of the wicked heart of man. What causes wars and fights among believers? (cf. James 4:1). Is it not because each one of us often forgets the words of the above verses? Even after our conversion we have our natural heart. Therefore we must always go to God with all our desires and we must be taught of God even in our daily walk and thoughts.

Brothers and sisters, if we are so apt to forget these verses let us, for our own benefit, list the things the apostle presents to the Philippians. When we are inclined to wrong thoughts let us then go over these verses. It helps! The Word of God washes us clean, it controls our thoughts, which are not free but ought to be subject to Scripture.

First of all we have to think of: whatsoever things are true. Would this not bring us immediately into the presence of the Lord Jesus Himself, the One Who is the Truth? In Him was no falsehood. All His acts showed Who He was and what He thought. His thoughts were always good. He always depended upon God. We are not like that. That is clearly shown in Romans 3:4: "Let God be true, and every man false." For this reason we can only learn to 'think on things that are true' in His presence, since we have a new nature that desires to do so. The world cannot live without a lie, but we cannot live without the Truth.

Further we ought to think of *royal, lofty things that are noble*. This certainly contrasts sharply with the actions of the world out of which we have been taken.

Whatsoever things are just can alone be learned from the only Righteous One, Who always acted in righteousness (Acts 3:31; 7:52; 22:14). This is not according to our old nature, hence the instruction to think of it.

Whatsoever things are pure begin with our thoughts. If we think of unclean things we are on one level with the world and not on the high level of God. We must condemn this unsparingly in ourselves. We are in need of the service of the Lord Jesus. He Who cleansed us from all unrighteousness must again be occupied with us, but now as patron or advocate (1 John 2:1), and must bring us to confession of guilt. On our journey through this wilderness it is quite possible that we suddenly come in contact with something speaking of death. We must then apply the water of separation mentioned in Numbers 19. Although it is beyond our control that the sand of the wilderness sticks to our feet, because we must walk through the desert, we must still be cleansed from it before we can serve in the sanctuary. We are in need of the wash basin. We should have clean thoughts and we should think of whatsoever is pure. Whether a wrong thought flashes through our mind or whether we cherish the unclean thing, we must condemn it. Only in this way is the fellowship with the Father restored.

To the list Scripture gives us here belongs *whatsoever things are amiable*. This word only occurs here. But what a word it is! Love is its source. Who is love but God alone? Again, man cannot teach it to us. Yet it is true that love, Godly love working in man, produces love in return. Thus by thinking amiable things about every thing, also about other Christians, we are kept from much evil. The Lord died for other Christians too!

Whatsoever things are of good report terminates the list of words starting with *whatsoever*. May God grant us to think of those things which are pleasing to His ears.

Finally, if there be any virtue and if any praise, think of these things. Before all else this includes the virtues, the excellencies of Him Who has called us out of darkness to His wonderful light, but it also embraces the things He has wrought in the lives of His own. In the first place there is the praise of God and of Christ Jesus, but after this also those things that are worthy of praise in our brothers and sisters (see 2 Corinthians 8:18).

From whom then had the Philippians learned these things? From the Lord, of course. They did not have all this from themselves but had received it from the Lord, through the hand of the apostle. What they had learned, they could practice. They had heard it out of the mouth of Paul and they saw it in his life, he was their example. He could say:

"Be imitators all together of me brethren, and fix your eyes on those walking thus as you have us for a model" (Philippians 3:17).

However, they, as we, could not practice what they had not heard or learned. We may practice what we possess. And so we come to this: Let us continue to walk in the same path, the footprints of our Saviour.

Then the God of peace shall be with us, then we will not be alone. Then our companion is no longer the peace of God as in verse 7, but the God of peace. He Who longs to give rest and peace will then Himself be with us. May this motivate us to think of and do in our practical life the things written in these verses. Then we will have the God of peace with us.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

The following question is one that we found answered in a Christian magazine. We expect that many may well have questioned themselves how it was possible that Simon was baptized, and yet received not the Holy Spirit.

Q. What is the significance of Acts 8:13? Should baptism not follow upon conversion, which would mean after the Holy Spirit has been received?

A. The Samaritans were definitely converted when they were baptized. But this verse is an indication that the questioner makes an incorrect assumption. Conversion and the receiving of the Holy Spirit are two entirely different matters which never go hand in hand. Repentance and conversion are connected with new birth, the first thing. Afterwards a person must believe the Gospel and after that he receives the Holy Spirit indwelling in him. See Acts 2:38 and Ephesians 1:13. The Apostle Paul was converted and born-again for three days before he received the Holy Spirit.

Addendum:

Some confusion arose from this answer and we would like to remove at least some of this confusion (*Later, in the will of the Lord, we may possibly give more attention to this, in view of the many letters received*).

Some thought we intended to allow for a delay between believing and receiving the Holy Spirit. This was not the intended thought, we would have done well to state, "Afterwards a person must believe the Gospel and immediately afterwards he receives the Holy Spirit indwelling in him."

—The Editor

THE FUTURE (3)

— H. L. Heijkoop

The Future of the Assembly

In 1 Corinthians 10:32 the Word of God classifies all men under three headings. It refers to the Assembly of God, the Jews and the Greeks. The latter ones are those that are neither Jewish nor belong to the Assembly or Church. They are called "the nations" in many other places.

In the prophecies we find the same classification. The larger part of prophecy concerns the people of Israel. Other parts concern the nations. And then there are parts which deal with the Assembly. We will see in subsequent articles what God says about the future of each of these groups. During this study we will arrive at a glorious result, a complete display of all the perfections of God, as they are found in the names by which He has revealed Himself in connection with man.

To the Jews He made Himself known as Jehovah (Exodus 6:1-7). Consequently we find God in His character as Jehovah in those prophecies that relate to Israel — His faithfulness and all His attributes connected with that name — for the name

Jehovah is characteristic of their relationship with God. As a result of that special relationship the Lord Jesus is presented to the Jews as the Messiah, the centre of the promises and blessings which Jehovah gave to them.

In the prophecies dealing with the Assembly we find the name "Father" revealed, for the Assembly is connected with the Father (1 Corinthians 12:13; Romans 8:15 and Galatians 4:6; Ephesians 1:23). Hence the Lord Jesus is in these prophecies referred to as the Son of God. He, the firstborn among many brethren (Romans 8:29) gathers His brethren to Himself (Hebrews 2:12) and makes us to share the privileges that flow from His titles. We are namely children of God and joint heirs with Christ, the Heir (Ephesians 1:10-14; Romans 8:17), Who is the expression of all the glory of His Father (Hebrews 1:3).

Finally, in the dispensation of the fullness of times, when God will head up all things in Christ (Ephesians 1:10), the name by which God revealed Himself to Abraham, the father of all believers, will be completely realized: the Most High God, Possessor of Heaven and Earth. Melchisedec worshipped Him by this name. He is a type of the Royal Priest, Who will be the centre and assurance of the general blessing on an earth that will have a continuing link with Heaven (Hebrews 7; John 1:51; Genesis 28:12).

Did the Old Testament Saints also belong to the Assembly?

Many believers are of the opinion that the Assembly is the continuation of Israel. If they meant to say that the Assembly occupies the place of Israel as the witness of God on earth, after Israel itself had been rejected, this would be partially correct. But generally they mean that the Israelites also belonged to the Assembly. It is even frequently thought that the Assembly started with Adam, and that it will remain on earth until the last judgment. That would then mean that all believers that ever lived on earth, or those that are still to come, would belong to the Assembly. This is not so, according to the clear statements of Scripture.

Ephesians 3:9-11 says very clearly that the Assembly was a mystery, hidden in God from all ages. Colossians 1:24-27 confirms this truth. Colossians 1:18 says that the Lord Jesus as firstborn from among the dead, is the beginning of the Assembly. Ephesians 1:22 teaches us that He became Head of the Assembly after His ascension. Ephesians 4:8-16 relates that He after His ascension gave gifts to the body, the Assembly. Ephesians 2:19-22 states that the Assembly has been built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, while chapter 3:5 shows us that this refers to New Testament prophets. In 1 Corinthians 3 the Apostle Paul says that he laid the foundation. Both Ephesians 2 and 1 Corinthians 3 confirm that the Lord Jesus is the cornerstone or the foundation, which are the beginning of any building.

In 1 Corinthians 12:13 the event at which the Assembly begun is mentioned. There it is clearly stated that the Assembly came into existence through the baptism of the Holy Spirit. And Acts 1:5 leaves no doubt as to when this took place: At Pentecost, as described to us in Acts 2. And don't such verses as 1 Corinthians 3:16 and Ephesians 2:21, 22 confirm this most decidedly? It says there that the Assembly is the temple of the Holy Spirit Who dwells in it. Could that have been possible before the Holy Spirit descended?

Furthermore the words of the Lord Jesus prove that the Assembly was not yet in existence when He walked on earth. In Matthew 16 He says that He will build His Assembly. If the Assembly already existed at that time He would have said: "I have built" or "I built". But He uses the word "will" and that could only refer to the future. Therefore at that moment the Assembly did not yet exist.

The distinction between the Assembly and Israel.

We already referred to the distinction between Israel and the Assembly in their relationship to God. Israel He approached as Jehovah. The Assembly knows Him as Father. This, however, is not all. This only characterizes the difference in position. But the peculiarities of this position are made clear to us in hundreds of facts. We will cover a few of these.

To start with, it is said that God spoke to Israel on the earth but to the Assembly He speaks from heaven (Hebrews 12:25). This makes the difference clear. Israel is a nation belonging to the earth, and having its place there. The Assembly is heavenly and belongs in heaven. All the peculiarities of its position will bear this out.

To Israel an earthly country was given as inheritance and dwelling place. God had already given this promise to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob (Genesis 12:7; 15:7, 18; 17:8; 26:3; 28:13, etc.), and He confirmed it to the people themselves (Exodus 6:7; 13:5; 15:17; Leviticus 25:2, etc.). To the saints making up the Assembly it is said that they have an inheritance kept in

heaven (1 Peter 1:4). Their calling is heavenly (Hebrews 3:1; Philippians 3:14) and their citizenship or commonwealth is in heaven (Philippians 3:20). They have already been set in the heavenlies in Christ Jesus (Ephesians 2:6).

The blessings of Israel all belong to this earth and in the land of Canaan. When we read Deuteronomy 28 it strikes us that there is not even one spiritual blessing in it: "Blessed shalt thou be in the city, and blessed shalt thou be in the field. Blessed shall be the fruit of thy womb, and the fruit of thy ground, and the fruit of thy cattle, the offspring of thy kine, and the increase of thy sheep. Blessed shall be thy basket and thy kneading trough. Jehovah will command blessing on thee in thy granaries, and in all the business of thy hand; and He will bless thee *in the land which Jehovah thy God giveth thee*" (vs. 3-5, 8). The blessings of the Assembly are all spiritual and in the heavenlies: "Who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenlies in Christ" (Ephesians 1:3).

The enemies and battles of Israel were on the earth, in Canaan (Numbers 13:29; 33:51-56). The enemies and warfare of the Assembly is: "not against blood and flesh, but against principalities, against authorities, against the universal lords of this darkness, against spiritual power of wickedness in the heavenlies" (Ephesians 6:12).

From these observations we can easily see that Israel and the Assembly belong to two different dispensations (a period in which the Divine government takes a specific form). We must therefore be careful not to apply prophecies relating to Israel to the Assembly, or the other way around for that matter.

What is the future of the Assembly?

We have seen that the Assembly is a heavenly people. Their citizenship is in the heavenlies (Philippians 3:20). Their calling is a heavenly one (Hebrews 3:1; Philippians 3:14). Their blessings are spiritual and in the heavenlies (Ephesians 1:3). In Christ they are already set in the heavenlies (Ephesians 2:6). Their warfare is in the heavenlies, against the-dark spiritual powers (Ephesians 6:12). Their inheritance is kept in the heavens (1 Peter 1:4). And together, as Assembly, they form the body of the glorified Man at the right hand of God (Ephesians 1:20-23).

Could the Assembly then have an earthly future? Is it possible that the body would always remain on the earth while its Head is in heaven? Is it conceivable that the future of the Assembly could be anywhere else than in the heavenly land where it is a citizen, where the body would be completely united with its Head? We sense that the future of the Assembly must be in heaven and, what is more important irrefutable expressions in Scripture confirm this.

After it is said in Philippians 3:20 that our citizenship is in heaven the Holy Spirit continues immediately: "From which also we await the Lord Jesus Christ as Saviour, Who shall transform our body of humiliation into conformity to His body of glory, according to the working of the power which He has even to subdue all things to Himself." And in praise of the Thessalonians it is said that they expect God's Son from heaven (1 Thessalonians 1:10).

In 2 Corinthians 5 the Apostle Paul says that the Christian ardently desires to have put on their house from heaven (v. 2). In John 14 the Lord Himself says to His disciples as consolation in view of His departure: "I am coming again and shall receive you to myself, that where I am you also may be" (v. 3). And in Revelation 3:11 and 22:20 we hear the voice of the Lord again saying consolingly: "I come quickly." And the answer of faith is: "Amen; come, Lord Jesus" (Revelation 22:20).

Yes, the Assembly will not always remain on the earth. Her homesickness for her Bridegroom, for her homeland will be satisfied when the Lord Jesus Himself comes to take her "and thus we shall be always with the Lord. So encourage one another with these words" (1 Thessalonians 4:18).

How will the Lord Jesus come for His Assembly?

In 1 Corinthians 15-45-53 and 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 very clear descriptions are given that answer this question. The first verses teach that we are already heavenly persons and that we soon will bear the image of the heavenly One (Christ). "But flesh and blood cannot inherit God's kingdom, nor does corruption inherit incorruptibility." Just as we are, with our mortal bodies, we cannot enter into heaven. Do we then all have to die first? No, the apostle says: "I tell you a mystery: We shall not all fall asleep, but we shall all be changed, in an instant, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet; for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed." And the letter to the Thessalonians adds to this, that the Lord Himself shall come to effect this. All those believers who have died will be raised first and the believers which at that moment are still alive will be changed. Then they will be taken up together to meet the Lord in the air. "And thus we shall be always with the Lord."

These are clear descriptions. It will not take a long time before all is ready. In an indivisible moment (an instant) all will take place. At that moment all the members of the Assembly will be together, for all the believers from the day of Pentecost on will be present. Together they will go to meet the Lord in the air. Just as at one time Rebecca met Isaac on the way (Genesis 24:65), so the Assembly will meet the Lord Jesus, her Bridegroom, on the way and will be brought by Him into the house of the Father with its many mansions.

We should not confuse this with such verses as Revelation 1:7 and Matthew 24:30. There the Lord Jesus comes on the clouds of heaven to the earth and all eyes shall see Him. In 1 Thessalonians 4 the Lord Jesus does not come on the clouds to *the earth*, but we go in the clouds to *Him*! The world will not see that. The meeting of Bridegroom and Bride will not be visible to the unbelieving world.

When will that meeting take place?

The Lord Jesus says: "I come quickly" (Revelation 3:11; 22:20). And in several letters of the Apostle Paul we see that he, and the believers of those days, expected the Lord daily. In 1 Thessalonians 1:3 he gives thanks that the believers were persevering in the hope of our Lord Jesus. In verses 8-10 he writes that even the gentiles knew that they expected the Son of God from heaven. In Philippians 3:20 it says: "The heavens, from which also we await the Lord Jesus as Saviour." And in the places we already referred to, 1 Corinthians 15 and 1 Thessalonians 4, we see that the apostle did not expect all the believers to whom he was writing to die before the Lord Jesus came.

The prophecies also confirm this. In the prophecies we find a hundred and one things predicted that must take place here on earth, but we never find any indication that any specific event must occur while the Assembly is still on earth. We rather find the opposite, there are innumerable things recorded which can only take place when the Assembly is in heaven. Let us take Revelation as an example.

Revelation is the only book in the New Testament entirely consisting of prophecies. It may be known that in chapter 1:19 we find the divisions of the book:

1st. "What thou hast seen."

2nd. "The things that are."

3rd. "The things that are about to be after these."

"What thou hast seen" can only refer to chapter 1, for it is a perfect tense. What has to be understood by the term "the things that are" is indicated by the book itself. Chapter 4:1, clearly states that the third part starts at that point, it says: "I will show thee the things which must take place after these things." In the second and third chapter we must therefore find "the things that are."

Before the third part begins with the prophecies of the judgments which will come over this earth, chapters 4 and 5 give a description of what will be going on in heaven during the time of those judgments. We see the elders in heaven. They are not angels since these are separately referred to in verse 11 of chapter 5. They are redeemed sinners for they sing the new song. But they are glorified, they sit on thrones, are clothed in white and on their heads are golden crowns. The resurrection and the rapture (i.e. the being caught up together in the clouds referred to in 1 Thessalonians 4:17) are evidently viewed as having already taken place; at that moment the Assembly is already in heaven.

In chapters 7:13; 12:10; 14:3; 19:4 etc. we see that this really is the time during which the judgments described in Revelation will take place. From all verses mentioned we learn that the elders are in heaven. This further appears from chapter 19. The marriage of the Lamb takes place in heaven and afterwards the Lord comes with His own out of heaven on the earth (Revelation 19:14; 1 Thessalonians 3:13). They can only come from heaven with Him if they have been there before, can't they? All we find after Revelation 5 must consequently take place after the Assembly is in heaven.

No, the Word of God has not revealed anything to us that must take place before the Lord Jesus comes to take us. With longing hearts we may look for Him and expect His coming any moment.

"The Lord direct your hearts into the love of God, and into the patience of the Christ" (2 Thessalonians 3:5).

"*He that testifies these things says, Yea, I come quickly. Amen; come, Lord Jesus*" (Revelation 22:20).

To be cont'd

THE PAST — THE PRESENT — THE FUTURE

The past may awaken a sigh,
When we think on our life's former ways;
Unworthy, alas! of His love,
Whose grace should adorn all our days.

The *future* on earth may be dreary,
Though it end in the glories of heaven;
Let the *present* be spent in His praise,
Who the *past* has so freely forgiven.

From Hymns and Sacred Poems by J. G. Deck

"CHURCH" OR "ASSEMBLY"?

—J. van Dijk

Our readers must have observed that we make a consistent use of the word "Assembly" wherever they might have expected the word "Church". Those that possess the New Translation by J. N. Darby will have noticed that this translation uses also the word "Assembly". Since COME AND SEE is a Bible study MAGAZINE we like to use words that resemble as close as possible the thoughts contained in the original Hebrew or Greek. The word "Assembly" gives a better rendering than the word "Church" of the idea behind the Greek word it translates, *Ekklesia*.

First let us take a look at the present value of the word "Church". We realize that it has a few different thoughts contained in it. Webster's dictionary lists 10, among which are: An edifice for Christian worship; Any edifice for religious worship other than Christian; The body of Christians who have made a public confession of their faith; An organized body of Christians occupying the same edifice. Whatever we may think of the correctness of each of these definitions, it is clear that they simply cover a different ground, partly if not entirely, than the word God chose to define the Body of Christ.

The word "Church" is derived from the Greek word *Kuriakos* which means "the Lord's". As such it is easily to understand that this word found its way into the vocabulary of many countries. However, this word occurs only twice in the New Testament, once in 1 Corinthians 11:20 and the other time in Revelation 1:10. We find there two things that belong particularly to the Lord, His Table and His day. The "Assembly" is never, as far as we are aware, called the "Assembly of the Lord". We find frequently the "Assembly of God" or at times the "Assembly of Christ" and the "Assembly of the living God". The reason for this is that Christ is the Lord of the individual and the Head of the "Assembly", which are relationships that are edifying to look into at the appropriate time. Here we just want to observe that, either in its English or in its Greek significance, the word "Church" is not a suitable identification of the Body of Christ in a Scriptural sense.

The word we are trying to translate, *Ekklesia*, occurs some 115 times in the New Testament. In the majority of cases by far (112) it has been translated by "Church" with the remainder of instances (all in Acts 19, referring to the gathered citizens of Ephesus) translated by the word "Assembly". It is clear then that God in His wisdom did not see need to use a distinct word for the Body of Christ. We believe this to be so because the basic idea of the word *Ekklesia* has a meaning particularly suited to God's purpose. The word signifies "They that are called out."

Although some might argue that the word "Assembly" does not completely cover this idea either, yet it must be conceded that it approaches the basic thought much closer, without having unfortunate secondary meanings. The Body of Christ are those assembled, called out, by God Himself.

When we speak in our Bible studies of the "Assembly", we do not mean the sum total of all organized Christian churches, we mean that what God calls *Ekklesia*, which is the Body of Christ, consisting of all born-again believers everywhere in any denomination over the entire earth, to the exclusion of all those who are so-called church members but are not born-again. We only refer to those that are called by God, the called saints (Romans 1:7).

It seemed to us that in this manner we could draw, in a Godly way, the reader's attention to the distinction that exists between that what God has in view in His Word and the practical situation that man has made. When at any time we need to speak of the practical structuring of the denominations as we know them today we will resort to using the word "church".