

**THE OFFERINGS (21)**

—H. L. Heijkoop

*Leviticus 4:13-21*

Sometimes we sing that we belong to the Lord and at other times we ask Him in our songs to keep us. I think of this now that we are going to take a look at the case in which the entire assembly has sinned.

It is a glorious fact that we belong personally to the Lord. Every one of us who knows the Lord as his or her Saviour may say: "The Son of God who loved me *and has given Himself for me*," and we may call God our Father. He is *my* Father and I am His child. When we think of this wonderful relationship we will find it increasingly sorrowful to do something that mars it. This we find particularly in the portion that we are now going to consider. In Ephesians 5:25-27 we read, "Christ also loved the Assembly, and has delivered Himself up for it, in order that He might sanctify it, purifying it by the washing of water by the Word, that He might present the Assembly to Himself glorious, having no spot, or wrinkle, or any of such things; but that it might be holy and blameless." The Lord spared no effort to present the Assembly blameless before Him. How terrible then when an assembly has defiled itself. True, the case at hand is that of an inadvertent sin, and it even adds that the matter had been hid from the eyes of the congregation. Nevertheless it is something that was done against any of all the commandments of the Lord. The assembly was therefore guilty, and consequently there was something between her and the Lord.

Here the concern is not in the first place a local assembly (although it obviously has its application to a local assembly), but the entire assembly of Israel. We may compare it with Revelation 2 and 3 where the Lord sees the entire Assembly before Him and He searches whether all things with her are in agreement with the relationship into which He has brought her. For this reason we cannot read those chapters without thinking of what is written in this portion.

In the seven letters of Revelation 2 and 3 the assemblies are told five times that they have to repent. This proves how serious the condition was which the Lord saw. Reading our portion we cannot help but think of these letters.

Even in the first letter, the one to Ephesus, we find that the assembly has left her first love. As soon as we fail to think with love of the Lord, as soon as our hearts are not entirely consecrated to Him, we can be sure that we will wander away, for only the immediate presence of the Lord can keep us. Therefore the Lord had to tell the assembly in Ephesus that she had left her first love and that she had to repent.

Reading further, we notice that what was said to Pergamos shows that they had left the presence of the Lord; the assembly dwelt where the throne of Satan was, she was established in the world over which Satan reigned.

In Thyatira the Lord was denied His authority. The assembly herself had taken the position of teacher; she wanted to teach. We also notice that the doctrine of the Nicolaitanes had come to full fruition. Nicolas means "conqueror of the people," and speaks of sway someone may hold over people. It is clear evidence how the rights of the Lord have been rejected.

How has the Assembly of God been established upon earth? We know that the work of the Lord Jesus is its foundation. And what is the significance of the work of the Lord Jesus? When I ask this I have particularly in mind what we find here in Leviticus 4. It concerns the sin-offering, and what it stands for. It represents God's judgment over human nature. Not just over the deeds of man, but over his character. This we can see in 2 Corinthians 5:21, "Him who knew not sin He has made sin for us, that we might become God's righteousness in Him." And in Romans 8:3 the Word of God says that God has judged sin in the flesh in the Lord Jesus. Man's condition was so corrupt that God could only condemn him, and on the cross the judgment of death has been applied to the old man. Christ's work on the cross is the foundation of the Assembly. He, as the One who was dead and has been raised, is now glorified in heaven and is the Head of the Assembly; and as Head He has the authority in the Assembly. Besides this we know that the Assembly is the house of God. These are the two characteristics of the Assembly:

1. The glorified Christ in heaven is her Head.
2. God the Holy Spirit dwells in her.

In Revelation 2 and 3 we see that both these things were denied. The authority of the Lord was rejected and the natural man had received a place. Man wanted to regulate everything in the Assembly. They even wanted to decide who had to perform the service; the guidance of the Holy Spirit was put aside and the natural man had taken His place. These things were of course not done consciously, not as if they acted deliberately against the Lord's commandment. Undoubtedly it was done with good intentions, but nevertheless these things are infractions of the commands of God. The Lord then occupied Himself with the Assembly to bring it back. He did so, and still does so (as it says in Eph. 5:21), "by the washing of water through the Word," and (as Rev. 2 and 3 show) by commanding her to repent. We know however that the Assembly (the Church) did not repent at all.

In Leviticus 4 we had first of all the case of the anointed priest who had sinned. There was no mention that it had to be made known to him that he had sinned; someone who is always in God's presence notices it when the fellowship has been broken. But an assembly never consists of spiritual brothers and sisters only, some may be spiritual, but there are also children in Christ and frequently also carnal believers. The Lord however is always occupied to manifest the wrong. He does this by means of the ministry of the Word, applying it to the consciences, so that they may come to repentance.

When we take a look at church history we see the result. Time and again the Holy Spirit showed His light, but it was always in part only. Some things were judged, but never was there a return to the foundation. But some one hundred and fifty years ago God worked, and when we read the literature of these days we see that the authors were well aware of the sin of the Assembly (the Church) and several of them were prepared to bring a sin-offering. They addressed the entire Church, nevertheless the Church at large was not prepared to follow the path they took. But those who saw the evil were prepared to bring a sin-offering and to humble themselves before the Lord. Because not everyone agreed, there was only one thing left to do for them: to follow the instructions of 2 Timothy 2:19f. When admonition fails to bring about results, only personal responsibility remains and one has to separate himself from that which is contrary to the will of God. God, in His grace, helped these brethren. They found others that went the same way and God gave them back their previous position, where they could acknowledge the true character of the Church and the rights of the Lord and of the Holy Spirit. In that place it is clearly confessed that the work of the Lord Jesus upon the cross is the Church's foundation and that His death means the end of the natural man.

Of this verse 21 speaks, "And he shall carry forth the bullock outside the camp, and burn it as he burnt the first bullock: it is a sin-offering of the congregation." These words, which apply to the old man, the natural man, show the true character of the sin offering. God could not tolerate the natural man in His presence, therefore he had to be burned outside the camp. This foundation of everything is the subject of Hebrews 13:11-13. In this portion the apostle, thinking of the sin-offering, explains that we can only be at two places if we want to stay close to the Lord Jesus. The first place is the sanctuary, where the blood is brought. When we enter that holy place, we find there the Lord Jesus in the presence of God.

But there is yet another place, for the body of the sin-offering was burned outside the camp, which means: apart from every religious organization of man. This part of the sacrifice speaks of the end of the natural man through death. Just as in the sanctuary the blood speaks of death, so outside the camp the body of the sin-offering speaks of death. In this manner both places show us the end of the old, the natural man. If therefore we want to be close to the Lord Jesus, then there are only two places where there is no room for the natural man but only for the new man, that new life we have received through new birth.

We know however how weak we are, how completely dependent upon the Lord, and the same holds true as far as the life of the Assembly, the Church is concerned. By God's grace we have received this place, but we are in danger to forget what this means. We tend to forget that the natural man has no place there, that God has given all authority to the Lord Jesus and to the Holy Spirit. By times we fail, perhaps with the best of intentions, to act according to the commandments and prohibitions of the Lord. How good it is to always listen to the voice of the Lord! Here we notice how He occupies Himself with the Assembly. The entire Assembly has sinned by straying away and it remains hidden from their eyes. But there comes a moment in which it becomes evident. We know that the Lord is always occupied with us and when we have sinned we have an Advocate with the Father. John 13 says that the Lord Jesus washes our feet, that is to say that He cleanses us from all that is not fitting in His presence. We see this clearly in the story of Peter. The Lord prayed for him before he had sinned, that he might return afterwards. But it may take a long time before the ears of an assembly open up. In Revelation 2 and 3 it is repeatedly said, "He that has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the assemblies." Every believer has received ears, and every assembly has ears. But are they always open to listen? That can only be the case if they are open to the Word of the Lord.

In the last letter of Revelation 3 Laodicea boasted to be rich and enriched, but the Lord stood outside! He used to be in their midst, for in the Epistle to the Colossians the assembly at Laodicea is mentioned. Once they gathered unto the name

of the Lord and then He was in their midst. But in Revelation 3 He was there no longer and the most terrible thing is that they had not noticed it. Their eyes were so directed toward themselves, to the natural man, and their ears were so full of attention for what they themselves said, that they had not noticed that the Lord had gone out of their midst, and that they did no longer hear His voice. For this reason it is repeatedly said, "He that has an ear, let him hear."

We are well aware of the fact that we are not always spiritual, and there is a constant danger that we do things that are not in order. But the Lord is always occupied to bring this to our attention and to show us the wrong we have done. If our ears are open, it does not need to take long before we know what is wrong. Perhaps a priest may notice it first of all, someone who is habitually in God's presence. Usually such a person will notice sooner than others that something in the assembly is not quite in order. Seen from our side, the worst thing is that when the assembly has sinned the fellowship with God has been broken, the golden altar is defiled and God can no longer receive the incense brought upon it. Laodicea had not understood that God could no longer accept their incense. Leviticus 4, however, explains very clearly that blood had to be put upon the horns of the golden altar of incense.

However, if the assembly has opened ears; then the Lord will take care that the sin is acknowledged and judged, and then we see here in what way the fellowship can be restored. The assembly had to offer a young bullock as a sin-offering. God may expect of an assembly that she possesses much knowledge of the work of the Lord Jesus. There where the Holy Spirit is free to act, and where the Lord is the centre (because they are gathered unto His name), He gives light concerning His Person and His work. The same holds true for every individual believer as we can see from John 14:21, "He that has My commandments and keeps them, he it is that loves Me; but he that loves Me shall be loved by My Father, and I will love him and will manifest Myself to him." When the Lord finds love for Him in a heart, then He will reveal Himself to that believer so that he may come to know the Lord better. As a result this person will come to love the Lord even more. The same holds true for an assembly. The Holy Spirit has come to glorify the Lord, and where the Holy Spirit is at liberty to act as He will, He glorifies the Lord by presenting His glory and the glory of His work before the souls. But the Holy Spirit can only do so if there is no need for Him to occupy Himself with sin.

Thus God may expect a large sacrifice of an assembly; she is able to know the value of the work of the Lord Jesus, and to know how great a price the Lord has paid to redeem us. That is expressed here, "Then the congregation shall present a young bullock for the sin-offering, and shall bring it before the tent of meeting" (v. 14). The tent of meeting is the place where God invites His people to meet Him, that is to say the place where we are gathered unto the name of the Lord Jesus. This is what is first of all mentioned here.

When a sin has been discovered, one is not allowed to remain quiet about it. This we know from 1 John 1:9, "if we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins, and cleanse us from all unrighteousness." The same holds true for an assembly that has sinned; without confession she will never be cleansed. Such a confession must be made publicly, in the assembly. I am speaking here of the case in which the assembly has sinned; this does not mean that, when an individual has sinned, he has to announce it in the assembly; that is an entirely different matter.

The elders of the assembly had to lay their hands on the head of the bullock; in doing so they, typically, made themselves one with the Lord Jesus as the One who has died under God's judgment. They had to do so "before the Lord" (v. 15). In type they declared before His face that the Lord Jesus had to die also for this sin. Then the bullock was slaughtered before the Lord. In this manner they were directly confronted with the death of the Lord Jesus, and they realized that He not only had to suffer for sin, but that He also had to die. They expressed that the entire old nature of man had to die before God's face, and that their transgression had been produced by the flesh.

Then we read that the blood of the bullock was brought into the tent of meeting and applied to the horns of the altar of incense. Thereby the fellowship with God was restored and the incense could once again be brought. After this all the blood was poured out at the foot of the altar of burnt-offering. We saw that this altar represents the table of the Lord, its place was at the entrance of the tent of meeting. It stands for the place where we meet unto the name of the Lord, and at that place the blood was poured out. The manner in which the place of meeting was made clean again reminds us of the fact that it could only be cleansed on the basis of the death of the Lord, the great foundation of all cleansing. Only by judging ourselves are we cleansed. However, we only come to a true self-judgment by realizing that the Lord had to suffer and die for that sin under the judgment of God. As soon as we become thoroughly aware of this, we see also that the sacrifice of the Lord was sufficient and that the place of meeting can be cleansed by this sacrifice.

In verses 19 and 20 it says, "And all its fat shall he take off from it and burn it on the altar. And he shall do with the bullock as he did with the bullock of sin-offering: so shall he do with it." It is the same as in the case of the peace-offering; in type it speaks of restoration of fellowship. Then in verses 20 and 21 we find the basis of what has been said earlier: Restoration only takes place when the assembly really recognizes that God has judged the old man upon the cross, so that only the new man has a place in God's Assembly. The new man always acknowledges the rights of the Lord Jesus and of the Holy

Spirit. This then is the last thing that we find here: the sin has been atoned, the cleansing brought about and the fellowship with the Lord restored.

In this manner the Lord desires to keep us and to lead us back to Him. We must look up to Him and ask for His thoughts. For Him to show us what is not good, we should have open ears, only then will we be able to follow the path indicated by His Word. This path will lead us once more into full fellowship with Him, then we will be safe, possessing true peace we will be able to enjoy fully all things God has given us in His grace.

*To be cont'd*

## **CHRIST FORMED IN YOU**

*—Notes of a lecture by N. Anderson*

"When it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb, and called me by His grace, to reveal His Son in me, that I might preach Him among the heathen; immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood" (Gal. 1:15). "Now I say, that the heir, as long as he is a child differeth nothing from a servant (a bond servant), though he be lord of all; but is under tutors and governors until the time appointed of the father. Even so we, when we were children, were in bondage under the elements of the world: but when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth His Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons. And because ye are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father. Wherefore thou art no more a servant (no more a slave), but a son; and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ. Howbeit then, when you knew not God, ye did service unto them which by nature are no gods" (Gal. 4:1-8). The first verses of Hebrews 2 speak of things we do not see, but then, in verse 9, we are told what we see: "We see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; that He by the grace of God should taste death for every man. For it became Him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the Captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings."

Dear readers, I believe, I trust from Scripture, that the service or the work of the Spirit of God is complementary to the service of our blessed Lord at the right hand of God today as the Leader of our salvation. And I would say this: that God has more to do in us than He has to do by us. That is not just a casual remark, it is true. Now I am going to refer first of all to the passage in Hebrews as a matter of interest.

"We see Jesus": a blessed sight! Jesus; that gracious precious name! I heard someone say that this is one of the names that even an infant can lisp: Jesus. We do not have any difficulty in saying Jesus. What a precious name it is. This name the grace of God used, to woo us and to win us and to bring us out of the darkness and the distance into the light and the nearness. It speaks of the intimacy and sweetness of the place in which we are described as being in in Hebrews 2.

Just think of it; "We see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death." The Passover is the basis of everything, the blessing of your soul and mine. Certainly, we ought never to forget that the death of our Lord Jesus, in answer to the Passover, is the basis of everything, for the establishment of the will of God, for the glorifying of God. One of the features in which His will is established and in which He is glorified is described to us here in consequence of our blessed Lord having been down into the depths of death at Calvary. It is found in the next verse.

"For it became Him (that is God — it was becoming to God), for whom are all things and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons to glory..." Perhaps you were taught that God was only concerned about saving you from hell, were you? I was. Do you realize that your conversion was a step on the way to *glory*? God takes the most impossible, and of course, the most unlikely material, but He fashions it Himself.

"For it became Him..." It was becoming to God; think of it, something becoming to God! Such language, were it not supplied from the Word of God, would be blasphemy on your lips and mine, to talk about what is becoming to God! "It became Him, for whom are all things and by whom are all things." Everything suggested to us in the 10th verse of Ephesians 1 in heaven and in earth is going to be gathered up, to the satisfaction of God, in the blessed Man of His purpose; *all things*!

For it became Him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory..." God is going to surround Himself with intelligent beings. Intelligent as to His own intentions, intelligent as to the knowledge of Himself, intelligent as to the greatness of the glory and also intelligent as to the value of the work that the blessed Son has done. God is going to surround Himself with intelligent beings in order that they might intelligently, and I must add:

affectionately, respond to Him. Do you think God would be satisfied with things? No! He created all things by Jesus Christ to the intent that now, by the Assembly, might be made known the all various wisdom of God.

God's interest is in men, and because God's interest is in men, His Son became Man. So we read here: "in bringing many *sons* unto glory," not many slaves. I enjoyed a remark I once heard: Pharaoh would be satisfied with slaves, with bodies; God is satisfied with sons. Because of this, through infinite grace, sons were brought by Him into companionship with the Son, with the Lord Jesus Christ; speaking of course of our Lord on the side of His manhood. There is that about Him, relating to deity, with which you and I can have no companionship. We can revere Him, we can look at Him, we can marvel at Him, but we must remember that there remain always the two thousand cubits between ourselves and the ark.

"In bringing many sons unto glory, to make the Leader (the Prince) of their salvation perfect through sufferings." What does that mean? The Lord Jesus Christ was made perfect? Was He not perfect? Oh, if you talk about sinlessness, certainly and always! But to be the Leader of the salvation of the many sons, to have them with Himself where He is in the glory, He must thoroughly fit Himself for the position *in* which He found them, or *from* which He leads them, and, I should say also, *to* which He leads them. I cannot measure these sufferings of His, neither can you. Yet, every heart should be bowed in the contemplation of the fact that the Leader of our salvation has been made thoroughly fit through sufferings. Certainly He suffered in His early pathway here. The climax of His suffering was at the cross. "We see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death." Yes, He has suffered, but He was being fitted through suffering to take the place that He exercises today: leading many sons to glory. Oh, *you* would be content, wouldn't you, if He led you through the testings of the way, but He won't be content until He leads you to glory. I am going to join Him there one day, but, brethren, He is there!

I know, Hebrews 2 is speaking a little different language, for this Epistle is speaking on a different line. It says, "Where the Forerunner has entered for us" (He. 6:20). I know that is within the veil. But that involves not only that the presence of God is open to us (unlike in the Old Testament tabernacle days, where the presence of God was closed to men) but also that we can reach, in the power and Spirit of God, in our spirits the blessedness of responding to the invitation "let us draw near." Now we can draw near consciously, intelligently and affectionately. Not only is the presence of God so opened to us, we are going to be translated from this sphere and we are going to find ourselves in the company of the Leader of our salvation. We are going to be in the presence of God where every circumstance is commensurate with the blessings we find in Ephesians 1, because we are going to be with Christ in the presence of God for evermore. He is leading many sons to glory. Now that we have seen what God has done *for* us let us go to Galatians so that we may learn what He is doing *in* us.

"When it pleased God who set me apart even from my mother's womb to reveal His Son in me." He does not say, "*to* reveal His Son to me, nor *by* me. The man who was used of the Spirit of God to pen this Epistle was saved as the fruit of seeing the light from heaven, of hearing the voice from heaven, and of being brought into contact with the glorified Man. I know that when he was saved he immediately went into the synagogues and he preached Jesus, that He is the Son of God. I know he revealed the blessed truth that Jesus is the Son of God but he is not saying this here. We can see it in the next part of the verse, but I am not going on to it. But here he said, "When it pleased God to reveal His Son *in* me." Brethren, I repeat, God has got more to do *in* us than He has to do (and I say it reverently) *for* us and *by* us. He is revealing His Son in the likes of that man and in the likes of you and me. But what does it mean? It means that God working in the power of His Spirit has (complementary, I repeat, to the work that our Lord Jesus Christ Himself is carrying on at the right hand of God) to form an intelligence and an affection in our souls that embraces gladly, livingly, this blessed Person. God wishes our intelligence and affection to embrace this blessed Person not just as the lowly Man by Sychar's well, but as the Son of the Father's love found in Colossians 1. God forms, and He is working by the Spirit to form, an apprehension and an appreciation of this blessed Person in you and in me. What use can we be for God, what can God do *by* us unless He first of all forms us. And He forms us by producing affectionately in our hearts the knowledge of His Son. He reveals His Son in us who are the subjects of His own blessed calling. I will not say anything more about this, I would spoil the verse. The verse speaks more powerfully, potently, plainly than I can say anything about it.

Maybe a remark or two on that other passage. I do not want to dwell on the first two verses which are an illustration drawn from real life. Verse three is the application. "Even so we, when we were children, were in bondage under the elements of the world." This is undoubtedly a reference to those who have been under the law. But the truth of it is being applied in this Epistle not only for such but for those who never have been under the law, but who, foolishly, were putting themselves under the law.

"Even so we, when we were children, were in bondage under the elements of the world." Do you know what the elements of the world are? Oh, you say, riotous living, debasement, intemperance, Certainly, these are parts of the world system, but they are not the subject of the Galatian Epistle. The elements of the world in this Epistle is the religious world, it is the respectable world. What characterizes the world described to us in Galatians is that it has no room for that blessed Person

who is the dearest object of the heart of the Father. If you turn to Revelation 3, you find Him to be outside. *He is outside!* They might have well put Him out politely, but He is outside. I am not going to dwell on the elements of the world as described to us in Galatians.

"But when the fulness of the time was come." We should not confuse this with a similar expression in Ephesians 1, which is a little different to this: the fulness of the times; it is in the plural. Here it is the fulness of time, singular. What is the fullness of time? The moment had arrived in which it was demonstrated conclusively that man on probation could never merit or satisfy the requirements of God. Man could never put himself before the presence of God.

"And when the fulness of time was come, God sent forth His Son. Last of all God sent His Son. He had only one Son, His beloved, He said, "They will reverence My Son." What did they say? "This is the Heir; come, let us kill Him, and let us seize on His inheritance." And that is what they did, they killed Him, but they could not seize on the inheritance because the inheritance, as can be learned from Ephesians 1, is in the hand of God the Father to give, and He gives it to Christ, and He gives it to those who are the companions of the Christ (I know there is a closer link than companionship in Ephesians 1).

"When the fulness of time was come God sent forth *His Son*." It does not say, "The Son," but His Son. It expresses what He is to Him. Does it enter your soul that the Lord Jesus Christ, as Son, is such to the heart of the Father? We are living in days when the choicest things of the truth of God, the very heart of the Christian faith, are being assailed on every hand. They have been for years of course. The devil has been set on it for years, for centuries, to undermine the truth of what the Lord Jesus Christ is to the heart of the Father. Here we read, "God sent forth *His Son*." The Son of God, made of a woman; Son of man, made under the law; Son of David. Oh, dear readers, whilst there is that which is official about our Lord Jesus in this verse, there is also that which is personal: "His Son." Sonship in our Lord Jesus Christ is neither assumed nor given, it is personal. There is an emphasis in Scripture on eternal relationships in the Godhead. God sent forth His Son.

"Because ye are (not slaves, but) sons." Oh, the spiritual elevation of the position that God in infinite grace has brought us into: "Because ye *are* sons." And in another passage we read, "Ye are all God's sons by faith in Christ Jesus."

"Because ye *are* sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father." The work of the Spirit, I repeat, is complementary to the work of the Son, in the fashion I referred to in Hebrews. Here the work of the Spirit is related to the desires of the heart of God the Father. The Lord Jesus told us in John 4 that the Father seeks worshippers. And the way that the worshippers are found is by the presentation in the power of the Spirit of the greatness and the glory and the sweetness and the affection of the Son of the Father's love to the hearts of the believers. Therefore God has sent forth the Spirit of *His Son*, or the Spirit of Jesus, for Jesus is the Son. It is not the Spirit of Christ, for Christ is the Servant.

"God hath sent forth the Spirit of His *Son*." God would emphasize to us that there is a ministry being carried on by the Spirit of God today that brings us into the consciousness, and the intelligent appreciation, of the unique relationship in which the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son, subsists with the Father. God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son in order that there might be emphasized to us not just the dignity of our position as sons, but also the sweetness, the warmth, and the intimacy of this holy relationship in which we stand before God. At the place called Calvary, every impediment to that position has been taken into full consideration and was settled to the glory of God. Now He has us before Himself in the blessed result of this work, in which He has dressed us for our blessing (certainly there is no blessing like it) and for His pleasure. Just think of it: "God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father. Wherefore thou art no more a servant but a son; and if a son, then an heir." We are sure to inherit with Christ, as we also see from Ephesians 1, but here the sweetest thing in these verses is this: *The Spirit of His Son in our hearts*.

I trust you will pardon my following remarks; I am not thinking of anybody in particular. I might go out on the street and I might pick up a boy, I might adopt him. I can give him all that comes with the position of a son, give him the comforts, give him the education that I think he should have, but there is something I can not do. I cannot give him the spirit of the relationship. I can give him the place, I can give him everything that goes with it. He might turn out well; he might turn out poor, but he has got the place. But I cannot give him the spirit of sonship. What man cannot do for man, God in infinite grace is doing for man. He is giving them the Spirit of His Son into their hearts.

And what is the issue of the Spirit's service in the hearts of those to whom the Spirit of God's Son is given? The issue is, that they cry, as a babe to its father in its first breathing, so to speak, of intimate affection. The tenderest words a baby begins to utter when it says, "Father." "I write unto you little children, because ye have known the Father." Oh, the blessedness, the heart of the Christian revelation, is the revelation of the Father in the Person of the Son. And the power through which we are able to apprehend our association with the Son of the Father's love, and through which we are able to respond to it, is the Spirit of *His Son* in our hearts; thereby response is elicited. Now we can cry, "Father."

What a delight it must be to the Father's heart to have men on earth addressing Him as such. We do not call Him "heavenly Father," although He is the heavenly Father, for that name belongs to the synoptic Gospels, to the region of our need. "Your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things" (Mat. 6:32). But in John's ministry we are lifted by the Spirit's power beyond the region of creature needs, above the sphere in which the heavenly Father exercises His care. There we are let loose, as it were, in the blessed atmosphere of eternal life. And what is characteristic of eternal life? "This is life eternal, that they might know Thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom Thou hast sent" (John 17:3). Jesus Christ is in His elevated place now, as glorified in the presence of the Father. He has the conferred dignity upon Him that is going to be seen shortly, when God will gather together everything in heaven and in earth in Him. Thank God He is in the position now from which He will soon exercise that authority and power, but even *now* He is exercising that authority in the giving of eternal life to as many as the Father has given Him. This neither sin nor death can touch!

We respond in the company of the Son of the Father's love to the Father. We praise, we worship, we adore Him in the power of the Spirit of His Son. This is neither inferior nor impractical, because, according to the measure in which we get the spiritual gain of these things, we meet practically around our Lord. We do so, for the pleasure of God, as sons and not as menial slaves, crawling, so to speak, before Him. We will walk before Him in the blessed consciousness of divine and eternal favour, and we will be reproducing, through the Spirit's power, those blessed graces so pleasurable to God in that blessed Person when He was down here. Paul says a bit further on in this chapter: "My children of whom I travail in birth again until Christ be formed in you" (v. 19).

## THE FAITH TO CONTEND FOR (9)

—R. K. Campbell

### *8b. The Church of the Living God — Its Hope.*

Having previously considered the character of the Church, we shall now inquire as to its hope.

On the last night that the Lord was with His disciples at the Passover supper, He told them about the Father's house of many mansions and that He was going to prepare a place for them. He then spoke of the blessed hope of His coming again in these precious words: "And if I go and shall prepare you a place, I am coming again and shall receive you to Myself, that where I am ye also may be" (John 14:3). This was a new hope, something not spoken of in the Old Testament or previously in the Gospels. It was the promise of the Lord's coming again to bring those who believe in Him to the Father's house, that they might be with Himself there in the glory above. Hitherto, in the Old Testament and in the Gospels, the promise of the kingdom of Christ on earth was given, especially for Israel. But here in John 14 we have the hope and promise given of a place in the Father's house *before* the kingdom on earth.

This is the proper hope of the Church as we also learn from the special revelation given to the apostle Paul. He wrote to the Thessalonians: "For this we say to you in the word of the Lord, that we, the living, who remain to the coming of the Lord, are in no way to anticipate those who have fallen asleep; 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 Thessalonians 4:15-17). Here the prospect and hope is given to all believers, both dead and living, of meeting the Lord *in the air* at His coming and being forever with Him. We will be caught up together to meet Him as our Bridegroom.

In the book of Revelation the true Church of Jesus Christ is seen in heaven in chapters four and five as part of the four and twenty elders, the worshipping company. Then the marriage of the Lamb and His wife, which is the redeemed Church, is announced in chapter 19. Following that the vision is given of the Lord coming as "*King of Kings and Lord of Lords*" accompanied by armies. He then smites the nations on earth and rules them with a rod of iron (19:7-21). This is the Lord coming *with* His saints in judgment to set up His kingdom on earth. This is also spoken of in 1 Thessalonians 3:13. "The coming of our Lord Jesus *with* all His saints," and in Jude 14, "Behold, the Lord has come amidst His holy myriads, to execute judgment against all."

So the scriptural hope of the Church is for the Lord to come, to meet her in the air as His engaged bride and to bring her into His Father's house. Then He will come to earth with His saints and holy angels and the Church will reign with Him over the earth. Revelation 21:9-27 gives us a description of "the bride, the Lamb's wife" as the great city, and holy Jerusalem, the heavenly capital as it were, of the Kingdom of Christ on earth. Thus the apostle Paul wrote to Titus, "Awaiting the blessed hope, *and* appearing of the glory of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ" (ch. 2:13). The blessed hope is the

coming of Christ *for* His saints, His Church, which will be followed by His glorious appearing in judgment to reign on earth as King of Kings *with* His bride, the Church.

The eternal portion and hope of the Church of Christ is to be His bride and to be the tabernacle of God, His dwelling place in the new heaven and new earth as described in Revelation 21:1-7.

All the foregoing gives us the positive hope of the Church as the bride of Christ according to the holy Scriptures. Reverting to negative thoughts, it may be needful to say that the Bible never presents us the hope of the true Church of Christ being victorious on earth with the gospel and the whole world becoming converted. The seven parables about the kingdom of heaven which the Lord gave in Matthew 13, show the progress of evil and of the Lord's coming in judgment at the end of the age and the casting out of His professed kingdom "all things that offend, and them that do iniquity." The vision given was not of the kingdom of Christ being brought in by the preaching of the gospel by the Church, but by the coming of the Lord in judgment. The Epistles of Paul and Peter speak of increasing apostasy from the Christian faith, as we pointed out in our first article of this series. So the hope of the Church has always been set forth in connection with the coming of Christ, its Bridegroom.

In developing the scriptural hope of the Church, we have anticipated and spoken somewhat of our ninth and last important article of the Christian Faith we are to contend for, which we will now consider.

### *9. The Coming of the Lord for and with His Saints.*

The coming again of the Lord Jesus Christ is a prominent theme throughout the Bible. Many prophecies as to His kingdom reign on earth are found in the Old Testament which are yet to be fulfilled. When the Lord was here in His first coming as the Saviour, He spoke of signs connected with His second coming and the end of the age and said: "They shall see the Son of man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory." He also spoke of the time "when the Son of man comes in His glory, and all the angels with Him, then shall He sit down upon His throne of glory, and all the nations shall be gathered before Him" (Matthew 24:30; 25:31-32). These and many other scriptures in the New Testament speak of the public manifestation of the Lord when He comes to earth in judgment to reign in power and great glory. This is His coming in relation to the nation of Israel and to the gentile nations. His coming for His Church will take place before this as we have indicated.

When the Lord ascended up to heaven, two angels assured the disciples that "this Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven, shall thus come in the manner in which ye have beheld Him going into heaven" (Acts 1:11). The apostle Peter preached that God will "send Jesus Christ, who was foreordained for you." Another time he said, "He it is who was determinately appointed of God to be Judge of living and dead" (Acts 3:20; 10:42). When the apostle Paul was at Thessalonica and preached Jesus Christ, those who opposed him said he preached "that there is another king, Jesus" (Acts 17:7). And when Paul was at Athens he preached that God "has set a day in which He is going to judge the habitable earth in righteousness by the Man whom He has appointed, giving the proof of it to all in having raised Him from among the dead" (Acts 17:31). The effects of Paul's preaching at Thessalonica was that many "turned to God from idols to serve a living and true God, and to await His Son from the heavens, whom He raised from among the dead, Jesus, our Deliverer from the coming wrath" (1 Thessalonians 1:9-10).

The apostle Peter in his second Epistle declared that: "We have not made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, following cleverly imagined fables, but having been eyewitnesses of His majesty... being with Him on the holy mountain" (ch. 1:16-18). And in the third chapter he wrote, "that there shall come at the close of the days mockers with mocking, walking according to their own lusts, and saying, Where is the promise of His coming? for from the time the fathers fell asleep all things remain thus from the beginning of the creation" (vv. 3-4). The apostle then added that such scoffers are willingly ignorant of facts as to the destruction of the world of old by the great flood in Noah's day. He further stated, "The Lord does not delay His promise, as some account of delay, but is longsuffering towards you, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. But the day of the Lord will come as a thief" (ch. 3:9-10).

Dear friend how do you stand in relation to the coming again of the Lord Jesus Christ? Do you ask like the scoffers, "Where is the promise of His coming?" and doubt this great Bible fact of the Lord's coming in judgment? It is important to realize that the delay in the Lord's return is because He is longsuffering, not willing that any should perish in judgment. His desire is that all should come to Him in repentance and faith and accept Him as the Saviour who died for their sins. Once the Lord comes for His redeemed Church, His bride, the door of salvation will be closed to those who have not received the love of the truth that they might be saved, but had pleasure in unrighteousness (Luke 13:24-28; 2 Thessalonians 2:10-12). If you have not as yet accepted the Lord Jesus as your personal Saviour, please do so right now and you will be ready for His coming in the air for His redeemed ones and you too will be taken to His Father's house in heaven.



In considering the subject of the coming of the Lord, we must heed the word of the apostle Paul and study to show ourselves approved to God, "*Rightly dividing the Word of Truth*" (2 Timothy 2:15). The many scriptures that speak about the Lord's coming again are not all about the same aspect of this great event. As we have pointed out in connection with John 14 and 1 Thessalonians 4 and other verses, there are those that point to His coming *for* His saints in the air to take them to the Father's house. This will be before the tribulation period according to the promise in Revelation 3:10: "Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee out of the hour of trial, which is about to come upon the whole habitable world, to try them that dwell upon the earth." Then other scriptures which we have been quoting point to the Lord's coming to earth with His saints in power and great glory when every eye shall see Him. Truly, then, the truth of the coming again of the Lord Jesus Christ is a vital tenet of the faith for which we are earnestly to contend.

Now in review of our series of articles on our most holy faith, we would recall the items we have noted from Scripture as most important tenets of the Christian faith.

1. The complete, verbal, divine inspiration of the Scriptures.
2. The Persons of the Godhead, the Triune God.
3. The gospel of the grace of God and man's need of it.
4. Eternal salvation of believers and eternal judgment of unbelievers.
5. The Person and work of the Holy Spirit in the Church and in the believer's life.
6. The two ordinances of baptism and the Lord's supper.
7. The separated life of God's people; separation unto God from evil.
8. The Church of the living God; its character and hope.
9. The coming of the Lord for and with His Saints.

May we value these important truths of Scripture and contend for our most holy faith.

*The End*