

## THE HEAVENS (1)

—A. E. Bouter

### *Introduction*

In the following articles we hope to consider some lessons about heaven that can be learned from the Book of Acts.

In the creation account, the heavens are mentioned first (Gen. 1:1). But from then on God's attention is mainly directed towards the preparation of the earth for the first man. Sad to say, this man failed in his charge to keep the garden for his Master. God, who had initially revealed Himself as Creator (Elohim), had subsequently also taken the character of Sustainer in His relationship with His creature and the creation (Jehovah Elohim). But after the fall He maintained His right as Judge. In this character we see Him immediately after the fall, during the Flood, and at the Tower of Babel.

On the basis of Noah's burnt-offering and God's covenant with creation that flowed from it, God shows patience towards man (who is not better than before the Flood — Gen. 8:21; Rom. 1). But how can the heavens maintain a link with the earth through which God can reveal Himself as Light and Love (not just as Sustainer and Judge, as He did in connection with the rainbow)? To make this possible, God needs a heavenly people that is prepared to acknowledge His rights and to maintain these in a world waiting for His judgment. God, therefore, reveals Himself in the election and calling of Abram. In His promises, God shows Himself to be the One who brings life in the scene of death (Gen. 21; Rom. 4) in true resurrection power (Gen. 22; Heb. 11). He reveals Himself as the Almighty who keeps His own for Himself in such a world, and as the Most High who presents Himself to them in all the rights and glory in which He will display Himself to the whole world in a coming day. All this is reality to faith, a truth we see developed in the life of the father of all believers.

But at various times, and in various ways, Abraham's descendants have broken or rejected this link with heaven. When the true Man came from heaven, they didn't recognize Him, and after many proofs of His heavenly origin and mission, they finally rejected Him. Heaven, however, proclaims its delight in this Man: at His birth, at the beginning, and at the end of His public service, but in a special way in His resurrection and His ascension into heaven.

Now there is a Man on the throne of God! What is the significance of this salvation truth for us? In considering this, we will limit ourselves to the few verses we find in the Acts.<sup>1</sup>

### *Who is now in Heaven?*

Our Lord Jesus! He was the only Man on earth who was the Object over whom the heavens opened, the only One who was the delight of the Father and the rejoicing of God.<sup>2</sup>

Despite this, He is rejected on earth and in the world (Jn. 1; Mt. 11f). Therefore, already early in the gospel of Luke, we are told that this Man will be received into heaven (9:51), in contrast to the earth which had no place for Him. Thus, He had not only to suffer and to be glorified (Lk. 24:26), but heaven had to receive Him (Acts 3:21). There He was saluted by God, and crowned with glory and honour He has set Himself on the throne of God as proof of the glory of His Person, who is God to be praised forever.

The Father has given all things into His hands; He is the Centre of heaven. Just as He was the Lord of glory on earth (1 Cor. 2; Jam. 2), in whom the fulness of the Godhead was pleased to dwell (Col. 1:19), so He is also now the Lord of glory in whom the fulness of the Godhead dwells bodily (Col. 2:9). He is there in heaven the image of God (2 Cor. 4:4) in whose face we now learn to know the glory of God.

Doesn't His Person have a tremendous appeal so that we have no other desire, but simply must be occupied with Him? We all, looking on the glory of the Lord, with unveiled face are transformed according to the same image from glory to glory, even as by [the] Lord [the] Spirit (2 Cor. 3:18; see also Phil. 3:9).

<sup>1</sup> The verses referring to "the heavens" or "heavenly" in Acts are: 1:10f; 2:2,5,19,34; 3:21; 4:12,24; 7:42,49,55f; 9:3; 10:11f,16; 11:5f,9f; 14:15,17; 17:24; 22:6; 26:13.

<sup>2</sup> Mt. 3:17; 12:18; 17:5; Mk. 1:11; Lk. 3:22; Col. 1:19; 2 Pet. 1:17—altogether 7 times.

In Acts this moral and spiritual process of transformation is illustrated in Stephen; later we see it practically and doctrinally displayed in Paul. To the degree that we, through grace, enjoy even the least of the present glory of the Lord, to that degree we are suited to display something of His moral glory by the way we follow Him on the path He went on earth. In Philippians 2 we see this with Paul, Timothy and Epaphroditus. We read also about it in Philippians 3:10f.

We are still in the desert, no matter how far we have come along. There we experience that all things work together for good to them that love God. Yet, we may rejoice in the glory of the Lord, in whom we see even now, realized what God's counsel has in store for us (Rom. 8:28-30). Meanwhile God sees us already as accepted IN THE BELOVED (Eph. 1:6). To Him be all the praise!

*What is the significance of His presence there for us?*

In a sense, the answer is quite simple: EVERYTHING! If He is everything to God, (we saw this previously) then He is that for us as well (cf. Col. 3:11). This should be reflected in our behaviour. It did so with the disciples (Acts 1:10f); they literally stared into heaven where their Master had gone. It shows how they were attached to Him! I dare say that it presents the attitude of true disciples as we find them described in the Acts, and the Lord still expects it from us today. They were heavenly citizens, because their Lord was in heaven. But at the same time they, as His ambassadors, must render a faithful testimony of Him in this world, no matter what situation He may place them in.

If we want to follow the Lord here and now as true disciples, we obviously must be attached to Him, for He is everything for us (Gal. 2:20). From this, our position in the world is completely clear: we must be DEVOTED TO HIM and SANCTIFIED FOR HIM (as the Nazarite in Num. 6). So to say, our eyes must be filled with Him alone (cf. Ps. 45).

If this is so, could we then join a system in which He has no place, for instance, the world of idolatry (1 Cor. 10; 2 Cor. 6:14ff; Rev. 2; 17f), or with the world of Judaism — be it directly or indirectly — (i.e. Heb. 13), or with the world of those who are Christian in name only? But the same question confronts us when it becomes a matter of joining a system set up by true Christians who have only the best of intentions, as we may assume. How can we join them in systems that infringe on the rights of our Master, that tamper with His authority; in systems wherein self-will, expedience, and similar things are active. Surely, we cannot join ourselves with these either. In 2 Timothy 2:19 these things are explained to us: "Let every one who names the name of [the] Lord depart from iniquity." Whether or not we can be faithful to this principle depends on our first love for our Master. The disciples in these first days displayed such love and so it behooves the "conquerors" of today.

One can mock such disciples, as has often been done to disciples who clearly displayed their attachment and faithfulness to their heavenly Master, but no matter what: their living link with Him cannot be taken from them. From Him, their glorified Head, they receive everything (Col. 2:19; Eph. 4:7-16). All their springs are in Him. The head of the political and religious world, Satan, the prince and the god of this age, has nothing to offer them.

*Whom has He sent from heaven?*

"And there came suddenly a sound out of heaven as of a violent impetuous blowing, and filled all the house where they sat" (Acts 2:2). The apostle Peter explains this event in verse 32f, where we read: "This Jesus has God raised, whereof all we are witnesses. Having therefore been exalted by the right hand of God, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He has poured out this which ye behold and hear."

The doctrinal exposition of these things we find especially in the epistles of the apostle Paul, but also in the various foretellings of the Lord Jesus in John 13-16. In the Acts we see the practical result of the coming and working of the Holy Spirit in its various aspects and ways. The book might rightfully be called the Acts of the Spirit (though also, quite appropriately, the Acts of the glorified Lord in heaven — cf. Mk. 16:20).

The Lord Jesus is now in heaven as LORD and as CHRIST (the Man anointed by God — Acts 2:36). Of this the Holy Spirit is the Witness and divine Ambassador. At the same time He is the One who comforts (coming along side, encouraging, teaching, and guiding) the Lord's disciples here on earth, while the Lord Himself is their Comforter in heaven.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> *The Father would send them another Comforter (parakletos — Jn. 14:16). While the Lord Jesus Himself would serve them in a special way as their Advocate (parakletos — 1 Jn. 2: 1f) in heaven, another one would be with them on earth.*

The Holy Spirit always presents us the beauties and the glories of the Lord Jesus, those of the past, the present, and the future. He is a divine Person, representing here on earth a Man in glory, who is also the eternal Son of God; to whom be eternal praise.

The Spirit of God unites us to the Lord Jesus in heaven, making us one with the glorified Son of man, and He associates us with God the Son as His companions. We are united to our Head in heaven with ties that cannot be broken. Besides, as members of the family of God we have fellowship with the Father and the Son. It is also through the Holy Spirit that we possess the life of the glorified Lord in heaven (Col. 3:1-4), while we, as members of God's family, also possess the life of the Son (through whom the Father has been revealed), having become partakers of the divine nature. None of this we receive apart from the Holy Spirit.

The Spirit of Christ (returning to Acts 2:33,36) fills us — through faith from our side — with the moral beauties of the Lord Jesus, with His Person (cf. Ps. 45). In Stephen (anticipating the next section) we are given a very good example of a believer who is full of faith and the Holy Spirit (6:5); and in Barnabas (11:24) one of a disciple full of the Holy Spirit and of faith. These two present to us, as I see it, God's ideal for a disciple of the Lord Jesus on earth. On the one hand he is known for his faith (everything God gives us in this dispensation is realized by faith), he is full of faith, or filled with faith (there are no other motives or longings within him); on the other hand he is marked by the Holy Spirit, practically filled with the Spirit of Christ, entirely guided by Him, entirely under His control. In the one case our responsibility comes first (faith) — though all is grace — and in the other God's acting in sovereignty. Both sides, however, are presented in total harmony with each other. The one aspect is not dominant over the other, nor the one at the cost of the other. What a divine balance! Oh, that this might be found more among us, to His glory! In this way we receive through the Holy Spirit — by whom we are in living contact with heaven — the power to walk on earth as disciples of the Lord (and also with Him, but this aspect is more the subject of Matthew).

*To be cont'd*

## **OUTLINE FOR BIBLE STUDY (26)**

### **53. SAMSON'S FURTHER HISTORY — Judges 15-16**

#### *Outline*

- |                                      |                |
|--------------------------------------|----------------|
| 1. Samson Seeks to Visit his Wife    | Judg. 15:1-2   |
| 2. His Revenge and the Consequences  | Judg. 15:3-8   |
| 3. Samson, Judah and the Philistines | Judg. 15:9-20  |
| 4. Samson at Gaza                    | Judg. 16:1-3   |
| 5. Samson and Delilah                | Judg. 16:4-22  |
| 6. His Death                         | Judg. 16:23-31 |

#### *Explanation*

1. Samson persisting in his worldly ways, failed to pay attention to the Word of God (Dt. 7:3).
2. His revenge was an act that was displeasing to God (Rom. 12:19-21). It did not bring relief to his people.
3. Judah joined the Philistines, the enemies of God, and bound their deliverer (Judg. 15:9,13). Samson did not attribute his victory to Jehovah; he called the name of the place Ramath-Lehi (hill of the jawbone). The Lord in His mercy, however, answered his call when he was thirsty.
4. His worldliness brought him into danger in Gaza. In grace the Lord had given him strength, he used it to satisfy his own worldly pleasures.
5. Finally, Samson gave away the secret of his strength and caused his own downfall.
6. In his misery he humbled himself and God used him again as the tool for the deliverance of Israel.

## *Lesson*

Although God could through Samson punish those who harmed His people, there was no real deliverance for Israel. Yet, Samson was, though weak, a picture of Christ, when Jew and Gentile combined against him, when he single-handedly conquered the enemy, when he removed the doors of Gazah, and when he triumphed over the enemy in his death.

## **54. RUTH — Ruth 1-4**

### *Outline*

- |                              |                               |
|------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 1. Ruth's Fidelity           | Ruth 1                        |
| 2. Her Diligence and Modesty | Ruth 2:1-13                   |
| 3. Ruth's Reward             | Ruth 2:14-23; 3:9-13; 4:13-17 |

### *Explanation*

1. Strictly by law, Ruth could not expect anything for herself in Israel; yet she loved Jehovah and Naomi, and remained faithful to her and her God.
2. Ruth was most diligent in the simple task of gleaning.
3. Her faithfulness was abundantly rewarded when Boaz proved to be a willing and able redeemer for her.

## *Lesson*

In the time of the judges Israel was in a sorrowful state, but during that very time the story of Ruth presents a beautiful picture of God's grace. Israel was under Jehovah's discipline (famine) however, later it was tested in mercy (rich harvest). Elimelech's departure was not an act of faith and not pleasing to God (deaths).

Orpah truly loved Naomi but she lacked faith and therefore the strength to separate herself from idols (Heb. 11:6).

Ruth revealed a precious faith, that did not shrink from difficulties. She was determined and steadfast (Mt. 19:29) and made herself one with God's people. In the field we notice her modesty, diligence and gratitude (Prov. 10:4). God blessed her abundantly with His grace (Boaz's goodness, 1 Tim. 4:8). She became the ancestress of the Lord. Boaz represented our Lord in His blessing and as a fountain of praise and thanksgiving (Ps. 36:5-9). Boaz and Ruth, who became the great-grandparents of David, called their son Obed, which means worshipper.

*To be cont'd*

## **THE BOOK OF ENOCH**

—H. L. Heijkoop

Since most contemporary writers, and even some church fathers, write openly that verses 14-15 of Jude have been taken from the above mentioned apocryphal book, it seems good to look a little closer at this matter.

From the writings of some of the fathers, one could deduct that even at an early date, there must have been a Greek book with this title. But for about a hundred and fifty years it remained unknown in Europe. In 1773 the discoverer Bruce brought three copies of an Ethiopian translation with him! One of these he kept at Kinnaid House, the second he gave to the Bodleian Library in Oxford, and the third to the Royal Library in Paris. There they stayed unnoticed for 25 years. In 1800 a Roman Catholic priest, Sylvestre de Sacy, published a book in which he included a Latin translation of the first sixteen chapters. In 1821 Archbishop Laurence published an English translation of the whole book from the manuscript in Oxford. Seventeen years afterwards he published the Ethiopian text of this manuscript. Later several other manuscripts

were discovered. Besides these, a fragment of a Greek manuscript was found in Akhim in 1886-7 which has since been kept in the Gizeh Museum in Cairo. This latter one was published by M. Bouriant in 1892, it contains the first 32 chapters. Then there are also two small Greek fragments, one of which is in the Vatican Library (it covers only a part of chapter 89). The Ethiopian text was published in a more complete form in Leipzig in 1853 (Das Buch Henoch, by Dr. A. Dillman), and, together with an English translation, in London in 1902 (The Book of Enoch, by R. H. Charles). These are the most authoritative versions.

From the Ethiopian copies it is abundantly clear that they are translations from the Greek. Many believe on good grounds, however, that the Greek in turn is a translation from the Hebrew or Aramaic; it is not clear from which.

The content of the book supposedly consists of revelations that would have been made to Enoch and Noah. One finds for instance references to the fallen angels and how they related to Enoch. After this, a journey of Enoch through the universe is described. Altogether it is quite clear that it is an apocryphal book. But at the same time this exposes its composer as a deceiver, for he pretends that Enoch was the author.

Those who have studied the book are agreed that it is not the work of one author but that several portions have later been combined into one. They are not agreed upon its time of origin. Some say it was in the time of the Maccabees; others claim it was during the reign of Herod the Great; others again that the different portions were written at various times. But similar to the pattern found among the critics of Scripture, most use only those arguments that discredit Scripture, by claiming that Jude would have used such an apocryphal piece as his source. With this I don't mean to say that all do so knowingly, but we do notice how, perhaps subconsciously, the enmity against God and the influence of Satan controls their thoughts and causes them to prefer a certain direction.

There are also others. Even in 1860 Professor Volkmar of Zurich tried to show that the book was produced in the days of Bar Cochba (first half of the second century), by a follower of Rabbi Akiba. Darby and Kelly were largely in agreement with this idea; they were convinced that the book was compiled after the destruction of Jerusalem. Alford writes about this: "As far as I can see, the arguments of Professor Volkmar are not easily refuted." Much later, a Dr. Stanton, among others, tried to show in "Jewish and Christian Messiah" that it originated after Christianity had become known. As argument he uses for instance the use of the title "Son of man," which was unknown among the Jews, but had been used by the Lord Jesus. In doing so he refers to John 12:34.

Now the words Jude supposedly took from this book are according to the Ethiopian text: "Behold He cometh with ten thousand of His saints, to execute judgment upon them, and to destroy the wicked, and reprove all the carnal for every thing which the sinful and ungodly have done and committed against Him."

We see that even on the surface, this departs significantly from what is said in Jude 14 and 15. True, we can see points of similarity, but the points of distinction are greater. Jude says, "The Lord has come," rather than "He cometh." Jude has "ten thousands" in the plural (myriads). Jude knows nothing of destruction of the wicked. And the book of Enoch says nothing of the hard things which ungodly sinners have spoken against Him. And so we can mention even more points. But to him who does not only read this with erudition, but also with spiritual discernment, will not only see great distinctions, but even contrasts.

Enoch was a man who walked with God and pleased God (Heb. 11:5). The prophecy that the Holy Spirit ascribes to him teaches things which later have been confirmed by hundreds of other Scripture portions. His teaching is given in words that are entirely in agreement with the thoughts God has unfolded only many ages later; yet, even today many Christians are ignorant of them. The mentioned book, however, brings a doctrine that conflicts with revealed truth. It says that the Lord comes from heaven with His holy ones to execute judgment *over them*. Just ponder this for a moment! The Lord comes with His own from heaven to judge them here on earth. This completely conflicts with the Word of God that says, "He that hears My word, and believes Him that has sent Me, has life eternal, and does not come into judgment, but is passed out of death into life" (Jn. 5:24).

True enough, God's Word does know judgment over God's people! But that is the discipline of the Father over His children, or of the Son over His house, of God in His government over this earth. But the thought that the final, definite judgment would also be executed over believers is entirely in conflict with God's Word as we saw. This also is clearly shown by John 5:28-29! Those who have done evil come out of the graves to the resurrection of judgment, but the others to the resurrection of life! (See also 1 Cor. 15:20-26).

There we see the error that betrays the activity of the devil in the work of these deceivers. Isn't it deceit to write a book under the name of someone who has a better name? And how serious is such deceit when one seeks to present one's own fantasies as the Word of God, and that knowingly!

It is not a question of language, as some have tried to make out! Charles, in his edition of 1952, has changed the words so as to say "to execute judgment over all." Of course, I cannot check this with the Ethiopian, for I don't know that language. It certainly seems very doubtful, to say the least, for three other translations as well as his own previous editions all have "His own." Besides, this does not affect the definite doctrine of the book in the least, for other portions say also that the judgment will come over all, *especially over all the righteous*! Even the Old Testament believers knew better. David already said, "Enter not into judgment with Thy servant; for in Thy sight no man living shall be justified" (Ps. 143:2). God never judges a matter twice. God's judgment will never come over something for which the Lord Jesus has already borne the judgment. We don't escape the judgment because we are good, but the Lord Jesus, who will execute all judgment (Jn. 5:22; Acts 17:31) judges no one for whom He has borne the judgment. Therefore 1 John 4:17 says, "Herein is love perfected with us, that we have liberty in the day of judgment, that, as *He* is, so are *we* in this world." Here on earth, we possess already the same righteousness that He now possesses in glory! For He is our righteousness and our holiness (1 Cor. 1:30).

The above mentioned Charles thinks to find in the book connections with the Gospels, Acts, some epistles of Paul (Hebrew e.g.), the epistles of Peter, Jude and Revelation. From this he immediately concludes, and most others gladly take it from him, that the writers of these books knew and used the book of Enoch. We see the spirit of which this testifies. If those connections are there (some seem as far as I am concerned far-fetched), why do they then have to be copied from the book of Enoch and not the other way around? When comparing two books of which the one is trustworthy (and here I leave entirely aside the fact that the Bible is the *Word of God*) and the other the work of deceivers, it is only normal to assume first of all that the deceiver has committed plagiarism. But it seems that when the Bible is involved one begins with the thought that the Bible is in the wrong. The above mentioned Professor Volkmar concluded for instance that the book of Enoch was written in the second century. From this he immediately concluded that Jude had to be written later, although it was quite obvious that the authors of Enoch had copied from Jude.

Reading the Book of Enoch without prejudice, but knowing the Bible and history, everything indicates that it has been written after the destruction of Jerusalem. The Jewish authors sought to encourage the Jews with the hope that God would be with them in spite of the fall of Jerusalem and the obvious advance of Christianity. Well, this God will do, be it in a different way than the book indicates. For they recognize the Messiah only from a Jewish perspective, and from that direction no salvation is to be expected.

The book speaks for instance of the destruction of the temple at Jerusalem, and then the author says that he could not observe whether or not they entered that house again afterwards. But this he says after he has spoken of the destruction by Nebuchadnezzar, and of the seventy shepherds that would be called after that event. He also speaks very clearly about Ezra and Nehemiah and the restoration of the temple. Could this subsequent destruction of the temple then refer to anything but the one by Titus in the year 70, the only destruction not followed by rebuilding? And we find more of such indications.

It is not important what else we find in the book of this deceiver. Certain is that Jude has *not* quoted from it. Perhaps the author quoted Jude, this is even likely. But since he was an unbeliever and did not understand anything of the truth of God, he quoted it *in his own way*. This meant that, as he wrote it, it was a word corrupted by Satan.

But how then could Jude have received this revelation of Enoch if it is not recorded anywhere else in God's Word? For those who know God, this question does not present the least problem. The Holy Spirit can just as easily cause Jude to write what will happen three thousand years later as what did happen three thousand years before, or what Jude saw with his own eyes. How Jude received it from God, we don't know. It is quite sufficient *that* he received it from God. And of this we are certain.

*The End*

## **THE MINOR PROPHETS (13)**

—R. Been Sr.

Hosea 7

*Blind to evil*

*"When I would heal Israel, then the iniquity of Ephraim is discovered, and the wickedness of Samaria: for they practice falsehood; and the thief entereth in, [and] the troop of robbers assaileth without. And they say not in their hearts [that] I remember all their wickedness: now do their own doings encompass them; they are before My face" (vv. 1-2).*

All service of the Lord's prophets had as its goal *the restoration, the healing of the nation*. God's purpose with this service was to reach the conscience, so that the nation would see its sin and guilt, and come to true repentance. To this end Jehovah "arose early and sent." But this all the more displayed how corrupt the nation was. For though the prophets spoke and testified against the evil, the people plugged their ears. God from His side sent indeed the prophets, but the people or their leaders in their heated hatred against Jehovah killed these ambassadors. And so God's healing process served mostly to uncover more and more of the people's wickedness. Shamelessly the most serious sins were committed. They mocked Him whose "eyes are in every place, beholding the evil and the good" (Prov. 15:3), and who is "of purer eyes than to behold evil" (Hab. 1:13). This then is the actual condition of men who, despite all God has done for their salvation, choose to go their own way. They forget that God remembers all unrighteousness, and that man will soon be judged according to the works he has done.

This chapter speaks only of Ephraim, the ten tribes, upon whom the judgment would soon descend. In Ephraim robbing and plundering was going on, crime was piled upon crime. Syria, Egypt, and Assyria would soon attack the ten-tribe nation. Now it was its turn to be robbed and plundered, and to be moved into exile. With its evil deeds it stood before God's face and He was not going to turn this judgment away from them. How tragic! If only the nation had come with repentance and conversion to God, it would have been able to obtain redemption and salvation.

vv. 3-7

These verses tell how *general* this practicing of sin was. All, rich and poor, prominent and plain, rulers and subjects, all, without exception had turned away from Jehovah. They joined hands when it was a question of walking the sinful paths, though one might do so in a different way than another.

Hosea uses here the image of a baker's oven that *continues to burn* although the baker no longer tends the fire because he is kneading the dough, and is waiting till it is entirely leavened. Ephraim's leaders went very carefully about things. They put "leaven in the dough," and kneaded it until it was entirely leavened. The risen dough had to be properly baked and they took great care that the "oven" was not fired up too hot, for they wanted the end-product to be acceptable. They thought to be able to escape the judgment through their serving Jehovah according to form. Like the baker, they refrained from stoking the fire more, so that their "bread," their product, would come out of the oven in good shape. *But religious corruption produces moral corruption*, it leads one to mock holy things and ends with unrighteousness and violence. *Then the evil can no longer be turned away*. In a sly way the people had their hearts all fired up like an oven. Their "baker," their conscience sleeps. In the morning they will be consumed by the flames of fire which have flared up while their conscience was asleep; then there will be no escape. *That fire consumes the people, their leaders and their kings*. It was not a fire of zealotry or of love for Jehovah, but a fire of the unleashed will and lusts of the people that could no longer be reined in by the leaders and the kings, and which consumed them all together. The Scripture record confirms the sad picture given here by Hosea of the ten-tribe nation, under the kings that followed Zechariah, the last of the house of Jehu.

vv. 8-9

In these verses we are told that Ephraim mixed itself with the nations, it is like a cake not turned. Strangers consume its strength, and it is not aware of it, although it has become old it is still not aware of what is happening.

After the previous verses laid bare the moral condition of the entire ten-tribe nation, the prophet points here at Ephraim's sin of mixing itself with the surrounding nations, particularly with Assyria. In the fifth chapter, Hosea had pointed at the wrong deed of Ephraim in seeking help and assistance from Assyria (5:13). It would be grievously disappointed in it. But here it is shown what God will do now that Ephraim has mixed itself with the nations, something that was entirely against the will of God.

*God's people has nothing in common with the nations*, for it is a separated people that belongs to Him. How could God ever share His ownership right with the nations? Therefore the people are not allowed to mix themselves with others. To the degree that they mix themselves with foreign elements, they remove themselves from God, the Source of power and holiness, and "strangers consume their strength." Light and darkness cannot go together. Either there is light, or darkness.

Righteousness and unrighteousness cannot exist one beside the other. There is either the one or the other (2 Cor. 6:14-18).

All half-heartedness is an abomination to God. Mixed principles are hateful in His eyes. To teach His people this, God told the Israelites not to sow their fields with two kinds of seed, or to wear clothing made of two kinds of materials, nor to plow with an ox and an ass together. *God desires that in the life of His people and their relationship with Him everything is definite and without ambiguity.* He desires truth in the inward parts which will automatically display itself outwardly. Abraham was a man who kept his way straight, far from any ambiguity. Sure, he made errors, at times was even unfaithful. But Lot did wear clothing of two kinds. He was a righteous man, but meanwhile his heart longed for the treasures of Sodom. He mixed himself with the ungodly inhabitants of Sodom, and so his testimony lost all of its power; even his sons in law didn't take him seriously (Gen. 19:14). Jonathan too, though an entirely different man than Lot, sowed his field with two kinds of seed. He entered into a covenant with David, whom he knew would be king over Israel according to God's thoughts, but he remained at the court and in the army of the by God rejected Saul. And so it came about that Jonathan found his end together with Saul on the mountains of Gilboa.

Ephraim, the ten tribes, he mixed himself with the nations. He is as a cake not turned. A raw cake isn't an honour to him who has baked it, and it is no joy to eat either. This is a most serious picture. Believers are still in this world as witnesses for God, for His glory and for usefulness and blessing to their fellow men. Are they as cakes that are baked on both sides? Is their testimony enjoyable, pleasant, because they testify through their entire manner of life that they are separated from evil? Does the world, although it hates their testimony, have to acknowledge that they are true Christians in word and deed?

Further we read that strangers consume Ephraim's power while he is not aware of it. Even when Ephraim has become old, he still does not realize it. There are believers who wish at all cost to maintain peace with everyone. In itself that is laudable enough, but when we do so, through the fear of men or the wish to please men, at the price of a definite and unambiguous confession of Christ, then it is to be condemned. *Such believers are unturned cakes.* Their testimony lacks power. Others are good friends with the world, and forget that friendship with the world is enmity against God. They establish connections that are forbidden by the Word of God; they put on an unequal yoke with unbelievers. They think that they will be able to maintain their heavenly principles, or perhaps that they will be able to win souls for Christ through their connections with the world. *But the world consumes their power.* Their testimony is not taken serious. The believer who has joined the world will not be able to pull the unbeliever along, but just the reverse, the unbeliever will pull such a believer along with him.

And so today's Christendom does not realize that it cannot possibly give a good testimony because of its connections with the world. For a long time already, it has lost its strength: the world has consumed it long ago. It possesses, however, *worldly* strength and power, holding souls under its corruptive influence. Its desire is to improve the world by means of cooperation of all, but it fails to realize that the world consumes its power, or that what is supposed to be its power. Even now that Christendom has become old, it does not realize this.

Verse 10 says of Israel that *its pride testifies against it.* Israel thought quite a bit of its own religion, no matter how corrupted it had become. They did so, though the fire of judgment had already been lit. The same goes for Christendom. She has everything, is rich and enriched, but does not realize that she is wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked. Israel did not repent of its wickedness, neither will Christendom.

In verses 11-12 there is mention of *the lack of understanding of Ephraim.* Pride always goes together with ignorance. Ephraim has become as a silly dove, without understanding. They call for the help of Egypt and go to Assyria. The kings and leaders of the nation fancy themselves good politicians by looking alternatively for help from one or the other neighbouring nation. Already in chapter 5 the prophet had declared that Assyria would not be able to help them and that they would be grievously disappointed in them. Now, however, it will be shown them what the Lord thought of their mixing with the nations, of their pride, their ignorance in turning to Assyria, their worst enemy. The Lord would *spread His net upon them*; they would be caught as birds. This has been literally fulfilled when the ten tribes were taken into exile by the Assyrian and their nation found its end. Often enough they had been told, it had been *heard in their assemblies*, during their considerations. They who thought to be free as the birds would be caught and chastised. Their mixing with the nations would bring two consequences with it: *the Assyrian (the world) would disappoint them and God would come against them.*

The end of this chapter, verses 13-16, shows *the heart's condition of the people.* Though God had redeemed, trained, and empowered them, they had abjured Him, transgressed against Him, uttered lies to Him. When in trouble, they had not called to Him with repentance and conversion, but had cried because of the lack of corn and new wine (fermented grape juice). Time and again they had rebelled against God, always imagining mischief against Him. They had always fought



against Him, as a deceitful bow. No matter how God treated them, everywhere He was met with indifference, lies, and resistance. Their fall and that of their shameless princes was unavoidable. They had turned to Egypt but now they became a subject of mockery to this nation.

Believers, who perhaps have walked a long time in God's ways and acted according to His thoughts, always meet contempt, and by times even open mockery from the world when they suddenly seek the friendship of the world after they have turned away from the Lord (cf. Gen. 19:9). Rather than giving friendship, the world mocks such Christians, especially if their previous testimony has been firm. The world has no use for such.

What will it be when in a future day Israel will enter into a proper relationship with God. With repentance, conversion, and humiliation it will approach Him. Then, and no sooner, God will surround this people with joyful songs of deliverance and with His mercy.

*To be cont'd*

## **JUDE (13)**

—H. L. Heijkoop

*Raging waves of the sea, foaming out their own shames; wandering stars, to whom has been reserved the gloom of darkness for eternity. — v. 13.*

The word "raging," doesn't refer as much to what they *do*, as to what they *are*. I believe that the Holy Spirit alludes to Isaiah 57:20-21. "The wicked are like the troubled sea, which cannot rest, and whose waters cast up mire and dirt. There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked." The sea is an image of continual unrest and incessant motion. Isn't that the condition of the entire world today? Now Scripture applies it here to the people of whom it was speaking. How could they have rest, without having a single thing to hold onto: they are rooted up trees! But, though they are dead and without fruit, they are not quiet. Nor do they want rest, for that would give rise to the question where they are going; they would come to the realization that they are heading for the pit. Therefore they are pictured by the raging sea which continuously stirs and menaces and roars in a permanent effort to bring about destruction. Theirs is a lawless condition beyond bounds.

Revelation 21, and for that matter all prophecies, explain how this condition is contrary to God's thoughts. The sea always stands for a condition of the nations in disarray. As soon as a degree of order becomes evident, they are referred to under the type of land or earth. Soon, on the new earth, there will no longer be a sea. God is not a God of disorder but of peace (1 Cor. 14:33).

Just as the sea during a storm stirs up the things lying on the bottom, so it is with these people. Through their stirring, they themselves reveal what lives within them: all the impurity and corruption of their wicked lusts. "For out of the heart come forth evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witnessings, blasphemies" (Mt. 15:19). How could any good be found with them, seeing they are not only "natural men" (v. 19), but willing instruments of Satan besides? To believers one can say: "Wherefore, laying aside all filthiness and abounding of wickedness, accept with meekness the implanted Word, which is able to save your souls" (Jas. 1:21). But these people glory in their shame (Phil. 3:19). That which the Holy Spirit and every "spiritual" believer would call impure and shameful, they call their glory. We should, therefore, not think that these things will be seen as shameful by natural, unconverted people, though they will be seen as such by spiritual men (1 Cor. 2:14-15).

*"wandering stars, to whom has been reserved the gloom of darkness for eternity."*

Stars speak of persons or powers in a subordinate position whom God has given a certain place to spread heavenly light on earth. The sun is a type of the highest authority and the moon of derived authority. Stars have an independent light, but they only give light during the night (cf. Isa. 40:26; 14:12; Gen. 37:9; Dan. 12:3; Rev. 1:20, etc.). Now, these persons present themselves as if they will spread a heavenly light as if they are firm beacons whereby one can find his way in the dark. They appear as if they will give light, but in the darkness, they immediately disappear. They have left their prescribed course and wander uncontrolled and uncontrollable about. Anyone taking a clue from them for his direction will never arrive at his destination.

God uses the fit expression "the gloom of darkness" to accentuate the terrible judgment that awaits these men. No ray of God's light will penetrate that darkness. Yet these people are now in the assembly, and for this reason they are "partakers

of [the] Holy Spirit" and "tasted the good Word of God" and "the heavenly gift" (Heb. 6:4-5). In this epistle, not the open and acknowledged enemies of the truth of God are described by the Spirit of God, but confessing Christians *within* the assembly, not outside of it, who move freely among the believers and take part in their meetings. True, in their heart they are hypocrites and apostates, but only those who are led by the Holy Spirit and who are able to discern as He discerns can see right through their deceiving form. How needful to stay close to the Lord to be kept in such times and under such circumstances. The Lord knows those who are His. When we are close to Him, we will know them too. Meanwhile this word remains true: "Let every one who names the name of [the] Lord withdraw from iniquity" (2 Tim. 2:19).

*To be cont'd*

### **Hast Thou Known Him?**

Hast thou heard Him, seen Him, known Him?

Is not thine a captured heart?

Chief among ten thousand own Him,

Joyful choose the better part.

Idols once they won thee, charmed thee,

Lovely things of time and sense;

Gilded thus does sin disarm thee,

Honeyed lest thou turn thee thence.

What has stripped the seeming beauty

From the idols of the earth?

Not a sense of right of duty,

But the sight of peerless worth.

Not the crushing of those idols,

With its bitter void and smart;

But the beaming of His beauty,

The unveiling of His heart.

Who extinguishes their taper

Till they hail the rising sun?

Who discards the garb of winter

Till the summer has begun?

'Tis the look that melted Peter,

'Tis the face that Stephen saw,

'Tis the heart that wept with Mary,

Can alone from idols draw:

Draw and win and fill completely,

Till the cup o'erflow the brim;

What have we to do with idols

Who have companied with Him?

*Ora Rowan*