

## Receive Ye One Another

—William Kelly

We are bound to receive one another, but only, as Christ received us, to the glory of God (Rom. 15:7). Does this mean to receive one who brings not the doctrine of Christ, or those that receive such a one to the dishonour of the Father and the Son?

The principle of welcoming every Christian, walking as such, is consistent with the resolute refusal of all who dishonour His name, whether morally, doctrinally, or by association. First Corinthians 5 is no plainer for rejecting an immoral professor, than 2 John is for refusing those who do not hold a true Christ. Their alleged good qualities ought not to accredit them; the Word of God as clearly bars it, as Christ's person and work demand our subjection. To be neutral, where the truth is at stake, is to partake of the evil deeds of His adversaries.

Second John is decisive that it is not enough to be sound personally in the faith. Even a woman, the elect lady, and her children, are carefully warned by the apostle of their direct responsibility, if they received one who did not bring the doctrine of Christ. "If any one cometh unto you, and bringeth not this teaching, receive him not into [your] house, and give him no greeting; for he that giveth him greeting partaketh in his evil works" (vv. 10-11). Thus distinctly is the principle laid down by the Holy Spirit, that the simplest saints who show regard for the confessor of a false Christ partake of his evil deeds, even without imbibing the evil doctrine. A spiritual mind would feel that, dreadful as it is to fall into such heterodoxy, in a certain sense more guilty is he who, professing the truth of Christ, consents to fellowship with one that denies it. "Now ye say, We see; therefore your sin remaineth" Neutrality in such a case is heinous sin, and this proportionate to knowledge.

Thus 2 John proves that absolute refusal of this worst evil is due to the Son of God. The evil admits of no hesitation or compromise. Had the elect lady, spite of the apostolic warning, obstinately received into her house one who brought not the truth of Christ, she must have identified herself with the deceiver and its consequences. Vain the plea that she had been a dear child of God, both in faith and walk; the written Word nevertheless pronounces her a "partaker of his evil deeds"; and God's Word is better than all our reasonings and all our feelings. What ever the motive, she had knowingly disobeyed and committed herself and her house to high treason against Christ. She had more or less sanctioned that which to the last degree denied and dishonoured the Lord of glory. Hence, till she cleared herself from the sin in the sight of God and His saints, she had sunk morally into complicity with it. The better her light, the worse to behave as if she had none. To receive her in such circumstances would be to participate in similar wickedness, however men may ridicule it to their own shame. Indeed, to receive her thus would be His shame, because it is barefaced indifference to the affront put on His Son. "Whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father." "He that honoureth not the Son honoureth not the Father which sent Him."

From the first those called "Brethren" have proved that they do not make light of ecclesiastical evil, by separating from all unscriptural associations, even if Christians join therein. But they have hitherto refused to put *indifference to the Christ of God* in the same category with *offences against the unity, or the discipline of the assembly*. Party spirit on either hand may seek to class all — offences to the Christ and offences against the unity or discipline — together. *But it is as unscriptural as it is unholy so to exaggerate ecclesiastical offences* (of which all sects are guilty), or so to extenuate deep and damnable denial of Christ, which characterises only the worst antagonism to God. His Word warrants and demands this distinction, which no sober saint used to doubt, and none would now, unless carried away by worthless theory, or by straits of false position.

Evil doctrine against Christ has given us most trouble... Because we renounce all fellowship with such ways and persons, we are covered with the bitterest reproaches possible! We are taxed with "new tests," and I know not what; whereas, on the face of the matter, it was the beloved apostle, not we, who wrote 2 John. And if he introduced no new test when he insisted on uncompromising rigour wherever a false Christ was in question, how charge us with it who are very simply carrying out the Word of God given through him? Those who plead for laxity in such a case, would be more consistent if they denied the authority of God's Word here altogether...

It is no question of receiving Christians in Christ's name, graciously dealing with ecclesiastical ignorance. This we have always held (save a few who played an unhappy part in the late disasters) to be thoroughly of God: and I trust we shall ever so continue, believing and acting on it as due to Christ. ...If [one] goes so far as to reject individuals for independency,

he must, to be consistent, abandon all the largeness of heart which marked Brethren from the first, and the principle which their best and wisest leaders cherished to the last — our title of grace to welcome godly saints out of any orthodox denomination, though independency is stamped in various forms on all. No denomination, as such, great or small, does or can stand on the "one body and one Spirit" of Scripture for principle and practice alike. This demands living faith ecclesiastically, and an entire superiority to the world and flesh, which must have independency open or latent but real.

...There might be individuals wholly and honestly ignorant that [their denomination] is founded... on indifference to a true or false Christ. Where this is certain, one would seek to deal pitifully with them... Timid men, ever prone to sectarian barriers, have, alas! refused even such... [Those] who are ready to break bread at [various places] if they were allowed... are the worst of all, and can only corrupt as they are already corrupted. They are on a free-and-easy ground, which admits of everyone's will, and tries nobody's conscience... To receive saints in Christ's name was never meant to let in such as dishonour His name; which is as mighty to detect those who treat Him lightly, whatever their pretensions, as to encourage the godly who may be ever so ignorant... [A] plea of ignorance... whenever true, would not be used in vain...

[Some mock] the idea that the whole Corinthian church was leavened, and... see absurdity, if so, in calling upon it to purge out the leaven... It was exactly because they were as a whole leavened by the little leaven allowed in their midst, that the apostle commanded them to purge out the old leaven that they might be a new lump, "even as ye are unleavened." *This* is their true standing in and by Christ; and, because they are thus unleavened before God, they must purge the leaven out; for it leavens, not the one offender only, but the whole lump... It is a question, not of every individual in the Corinthian church becoming incestuous... which *is* truly absurd, but of the whole assembly being defiled by the evil they knew and did not judge. Hence the restoration was, not merely through discipline nor only self-judgment of the wicked person, but by a deep work in the assembly also: "in all things ye have approved yourselves to be clear in this matter" (2 Cor. 7:11)...

Dean Alford [A well-known Anglican Theologian of the last century] disproves and rejects the same unholy lack of intelligence...: "*Are you not aware that a little leaven imparts a character to the whole lump?*" That this is the meaning, and not 'that a little leaven *will*, if not purged out, leaven the whole lump,' is manifest from the point in hand, namely the inconsistency of their *boasting*: which would not appear by their *danger of corruption hereafter*, but by their *character being actually lost*. One of them was a fornicator of a fearfully depraved kind, tolerated and harboured: by this fact, *the character of the whole was tainted*." (The Greek Text. ii. 507, Fifth Ed.).

May truth work in godly consciences to their deliverance by God's grace.

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## **Colossians 1:9-23**

—An Address given by H. L. Heijkoop

When we sang our hymn, I thought of this portion. I asked the Lord, and He gave me liberty to read it. To me that was not too remarkable, for my heart was filled with this Bible portion. Just last week, Saturday and Sunday, we meditated on it during the conference at Vevey. Our hearts enjoyed the glory of the Lord Jesus as we see it here.

There was another reason why this portion made such an impression on me. Saturday afternoon and evening we had meditated on these verses. That night a group of young brothers returned to their own town. They were so happy and glad that they sang hymns about the Lord. At about a quarter past eleven they arrived at home and stayed a little together, then each went his way. One hour later the young brother who had been driving the car was with the Lord. The Lord had suddenly taken this young brother home — 39 years old. It made a deep impression upon all, especially because we had been so much occupied with the glory of the Lord. We had meditated on who the Lord Jesus is. All hearts had been so happy and glad. Then suddenly this young brother was taken from this earth to be with the Lord in Paradise where he may see the glory of the Lord while occupying himself with it in a much better way than we can do now.

True enough, God's thoughts have been fully revealed to us. But it is also true that we, because of the weakness and limitations of our bodies, are not yet able to enjoy all in the way we will enjoy it later in the Father's house. We cannot even do it like the saints who have fallen asleep. This becomes evident when we read 2 Corinthians 12, which speaks of the Paradise of God, the third heaven, where the ones who have fallen asleep are. The apostle Paul had been there and there he had heard words that he was not allowed to share on earth. This shows that the subject of their conversations there is so glorious that it is not suited for us. It is too lofty for us. It was so even for the Ephesians, for in the letter to

them there is no mention of it. The apostle Paul was not allowed to speak about it here on earth. How lofty, then, must these conversations be. And then to know that the saints in Paradise are not yet in their perfected condition. They are now, as we know, only souls and spirits who are with the Lord. Only later they will again be reunited with their bodies and taken into the Father's house. How glorious must it be there then! How much will we see then! In 1 John 3:2 it says: "We will see Him as He is."

Our body and the earthly circumstances hinder us from enjoying Him as much as we will do in eternity; that is true enough. Yet, don't we have the experience that also here our hearts can be happy in Him, and that, when we are occupied with Him, our hearts are truly filled with His glory? And when we meditate upon Him the way He is put before our eyes in these verses then we can understand that this really ought to be the result. Therein lies the whole secret of our growth in faith, our growth in spiritual understanding, as we read that the apostle Paul prayed for the saints in Colosse: "...that ye may be filled with the full knowledge of his will, in all wisdom and spiritual understanding, [so as] to walk worthily of the Lord unto all well-pleasing, bearing fruit in every good work" (vv. 9-10). How is that possible? By "growing by the true knowledge of God."

We read, and I hope to come back to this, that the Lord Jesus is the image of the invisible God. That, therefore, we can only know God through the Lord Jesus and in Him. That is, as you will recall, what we read in verse 19: "For in Him all the fullness [of the Godhead] was pleased to dwell." Chapter 2:9 tells us that now also, all the fullness of the Godhead dwells in Him, so that we come to know God only in the Person of the Lord Jesus when we are occupied with Him. Here, He is presented to us in His glory so that we may behold Him. Only in beholding His glory do we grow in faith, do we grow in spiritual insight, becoming wise, as it says: "filled with the full knowledge of His will, in all wisdom and spiritual understanding, [so as] to walk worthily of the Lord."

Comparing this epistle with the Epistle to the Ephesians, we see some differences. These two epistles, and that to Philemon have been written more or less at the same time. They were possibly taken by the same brothers from Rome, *where* Paul was imprisoned. In the Epistle to the Ephesians all the glorious blessings that are our portion are displayed to us. "In Christ...chosen before the world's foundation, that we should be holy and blameless before Him in love; having marked us out beforehand for adoption through Christ Jesus to Himself...blessed...with all blessings in the heavenlies" (Eph. 1:4-5,3). There we are told that we will rule with Him over the universe, that we will be a member of the body that has received Him as Head, so that we can enjoy all that was in God's heart to give us.

The saints at Colosse, just as the Ephesians, had been addressed as "holy and faithful." Yet we notice that their hearts were not so close to the Lord and so fully occupied with Him that the apostle Paul could open his heart to them, as he had to the Ephesians, and occupy them with their blessings. Therefore, in this epistle we do not find the glory of the body of Christ, the Assembly, but the glory of the Head. For only looking on the Lord Jesus brings our hearts closer to Him, changing us into spiritual men. Just as we have seen here that only the growing in the knowledge of God gives us wisdom and understanding so that we may walk "worthily" of the Lord, so it is also through occupation with the Person of the Lord Jesus and His glory that our hearts are made willing to give up all to live for Him alone.

That is logical too. The Lord Jesus says for instance that who does not hate his father and mother, his wife and children — that is what it says — "for My sake" is not worthy of Him. And who is able to do that if his eye is not directed to the Lord Jesus? If those things had been demanded from us as a law, for instance also, "...all that is in the world... is not of the Father" (1 Jn. 2:16), and we had to see that as our duty, how cruel a life would the Christian life be! Infinitely worse than Judaism which had a law that no one could fulfil. But when our eye is directed to the Lord Jesus, and we see His glory and see all that we have received from Him, then the heart becomes willing, doing these things readily. When the heart really sees His glory — and that can only be when we look at the place where He is now, seeing Him there — then we are readily prepared to let go of all that is not connected with Him and the place where He is at present. Don't we do the same with little children? When they grab something dangerous, it is best to show them something that is even more attractive to them. Then they drop the other thing readily. God's Word does the same.

Let us look at the glory of the Lord Jesus. The brothers of the Lord Jesus lived with Him from the day of their birth. Yet, John 6 says that they did not believe in Him. When, however, one is born again, having received life from God (and for us this also means having received the Holy Spirit, who is the power whereby we can see Him and whereby we can enjoy His Person, the eternal Son of God and His glory), he says with the apostle John: "We have contemplated His glory, a glory as of an only-begotten with a father, full of grace and truth." Yes, full of grace, for in Him we see all that God means for us and that He has done for us. And also full of truth, which means, all has been revealed in Him. Looking at Him, we see through Him the true condition of all things: who man is, what the world is, who the Father is, what heaven is, and what the things of heaven are. So we can truly discern all things and obtain wisdom as we read: "be filled with the full knowledge of His will, in all wisdom and spiritual understanding."

Then our heart is fully taken in with it, so that it is our love that only does what is pleasing to Him and we give up all other things. This is the only way in which it can be achieved, also with us. That is also the way used by God's Word.

Because the hearts of the Colossians were not occupied with Him alone, and other things had crept in, the Holy Spirit directs their hearts, their eyes, to the Person of the Lord Jesus and shows them His glory to thereby draw them to Him. When we know the contents of this epistle, we see a wonderful fact. Here, in the Epistle to the Colossians, we read that we have died with Christ and been risen with Him. That means that we have died out of the natural world in which we were born, and have been translated into a new world, a resurrection world. But that means that we are separated from all in which we lived before we were converted and in which the natural man lives, after which also our flesh, our old nature, hankers. It means that we have been translated into a new world, a world that we knew not.

Can we then give up all things? God's Word says in 1 John 2:16: "...all that is in the world... is not of the Father." Also, James 4:4 says that "friendship with the world is enmity with God." We also know the example found in Numbers 6, the Nazarite who was not allowed to drink wine or eat anything that was connected with the vine. We all know that wine is not a picture of wrong things. God's Word says that wine cheers the heart of God and men. That which cheers the heart of God cannot be wrong in itself. Wine speaks of good things found in nature, which God has created, as it says in Genesis 1, "And God saw that it was good." Yet, a Nazarite was not allowed to eat of it. To give up all that is here on earth, to let go of all that, taken by itself, is good in creation, how is that possible? The only way is, as I said a little earlier, just as we do with little children, to show them something that is nicer still, so that they long to get a hold of that, thereby forgetting the other things. That is what is meant here.

Colossians 3:1 says: "If therefore ye have been raised with the Christ, seek the things [which are] above," that is in heaven! But what is there? Yes, that is what it is all about: "Where the Christ is, sitting at [the] right hand of God: have your mind on the things [that are] above, not on the things [that are] on the earth; for ye have died, and your life is hid with the Christ in God." To set our mind on things above is to think of Christ in this new world into which we have been translated, the resurrection world. There is Christ and there alone He is, no longer on earth. He has died and is risen, and now He is in a new world, the resurrection world. Yes, He really is there in the resurrection world in heaven. This Epistle to the Colossians shows us the glory of the Lord Jesus, as He is now on the other side of death, yes, as He is now in heaven, so that we see His glory and our hearts long to be with Him. That is how we become willing to give up everything for being occupied with Him. So we are prepared, like the children of Israel, to readily leave the wilderness, going through the Jordan to enter the land. Going through the Jordan means: to make it a reality in our lives that we have died with Christ and have been raised with Him. And more..., as it says in Ephesians, "made [us] sit down together in the heavenlies in Christ Jesus" (Eph. 2:6).

But how can I long for heaven if I have no idea what heaven is like? Don't we often see that even believers long to continue to live on earth? One can only draw one conclusion from this, namely, that the things on this earth are still more attractive to them than the things in heaven. And that means that they have not really seen the things in heaven. Had they seen them, their heart would long to go there to get a better look at the wonderful things mentioned in 1 Corinthians 12 that I referred to. These glorious things are already experienced and enjoyed by those who have fallen asleep in Jesus, even though they have not yet received their bodies back. These things are too lofty for us here on earth — even for the greatest believer on earth.

Only now we are told what our part can be there. In verse 12 we read, "Giving thanks to the Father." That is, therefore the first thing: God has become our Father. Our relationship to Him is as a child to its father. That is even now a wonderful reality. And immediately our heart is led to think of heaven as the house of our Father, as the Lord Jesus calls it in John 14. Our thoughts are immediately directed to this: God has become our Father. It is not a strange God we will find there. It is our Father! And what has this Father done for us? He has made us fit to have part in the inheritance of the saints in light. A wondrous fact! God is light and in Him is no darkness at all, as 1 John 1:5 says. And we are worthy to be in His presence where we may take possession of what is found there. That is what is mentioned in Ephesians 1:3: "...blessed with all spiritual blessings in the heavenlies." "With all spiritual blessings" means with all blessings that are in heaven, without one exception. The Father has prepared these for us so that they would be our portion. And here it says that we are fit to take possession of them.

No, when I look at myself I say, "That is impossible." But God's Word tells me so, and what God's Word says is always true, even when my brain tells me that it is not true, that it cannot be true. God says it, "fit for sharing the portion of the saints in light." Everyone who has been converted, has been born again, has peace with God, is fit to be in God's presence. God is light and in Him is no darkness at all. And yet, we are fit to be there in His presence to take possession of what is found there. What a wondrous fact!

But that is not all! Afterwards it says in verse 13, "Who has delivered us from the authority of darkness, and translated [us] into the kingdom of the Son of his love." Delivered out of the power of darkness, which means out of the power of Satan and of the world. Satan is the prince of darkness. Darkness is that in which God cannot have a part, all that is separate from Him. It therefore includes also the world.

This we read in John 1. When the Lord Jesus came upon earth, He was the light that shone upon every man. In John 9:5 He says: "As long as I am in the world, I am [the] light of the world." Ephesians 3 tells us that we were darkness but now have become light in the Lord. He has delivered us "out of the power of darkness." We have been delivered from this power of darkness that held us captive, Satan, sin, the world — out of these we have been delivered and "set in the kingdom of the Son of His love." "Kingdom" speaks also of power. We were, so to say, in the kingdom of darkness, that means Satan's, there where darkness is and where we would have had to remain eternally if He had not delivered us. Reading Revelation 20 we see that the dead who are standing there before the Great White Throne were cast in the lake of fire, that is the second death. In connection with this the Lord speaks of darkness. There is a difference: an outer darkness and an inner darkness, but still "darkness," because *there* there is no longer found anything for God. Just as we, before we were converted — born again — were darkness. We were so dark, it says in 1 John 1:5, that we could not even see the light, and so we would have remained eternally. Out of this realm He has delivered us and set us in the other realm, the kingdom... Remarkable, it does not say here "...of light," that it said in verse 12, but "...of the Son of His love." In that realm there are rules, for "realm" speaks of governmental power, there is the law of the love the Father has for His Son. It is called the "kingdom of the Son of His love." It is therefore the kingdom of Him who is and was the subject of all the Father's love, as He is called "the Beloved" in Ephesians 1:6. So it is here also. It is the kingdom into which we have been transferred, therefore linked to Him, with Him who is the subject of all love and pleasure of the Father. To this we have been translated.

That gives us liberty to be occupied with the Lord and to meditate upon His glory. Otherwise we would not have had the courage to do so. We are worthy to enter there, for the Lord *is* in the glory. We are fit to enter there, and not just fit, but we are even the subjects of the Father's love. The Father has brought us there, in the surroundings that speak of the complete preciousness of the Son to Him, the subject of all His love. — "Translated into the kingdom of the Son of His love." That is the first thing that is made clear to our hearts. No, no fear of entering into the glory, no fear now, nor later. Yes, what will happen to us when we enter there in the glory where there is light and no darkness at all? When we will meet the Lord there, when we will see God there, meeting Him — what will then happen to us? We are worthy, fit to enter. And that is not all! It is not a strange God who meets us there, but the God who loves us, as much as He loves the Lord Jesus (Jn. 17:23). He loves us with the same love. He loves us with that love that the Father has for His Son; "translated into the kingdom of the Son of His love." What liberty does that give us to enter into God's presence, to enter into this new world, the resurrection world, there in heaven, where the Lord is now, and there to be occupied with all that is found there.

And then we see also: In the Son we have redemption "the forgiveness of sins." There is therefore no longer judgment for us. And then: Who is this Son? "The image of the invisible God." That means that we can only come to know God through Him and in Him, as I earlier quoted from verse 19 and as it is written in chapter 2:9: "In Him dwells all the fulness of the Godhead bodily." Therefore, when we want to see God, then we can see Him, we *must* see Him, He is *the* image of God. Not *an* image, like Adam, but *the* image of God. That means that God has only revealed Himself through Him; and when we know Him, the Lord Jesus, then we know God. When we see Him, then we see God. In Him is He as He is. The Lord Jesus is the image of the invisible God, the image of God under which God has revealed Himself. What a wonderful Person! That is the Son of the Father's love.

*To be cont'd*

## **The Prophecy of Micah (7)**

—R. Been, Sr.

### *Chapter 4*

The new and strong nation of Israel will walk according to the Lord's thoughts. He will reign in power and glory.

With verse 9, a new part of this prophecy begins. After the vista viewing the glorious condition during Christ's reign of peace, the prophet returns to the condition of Judah in his days, a condition that prevented God from executing His counsels, so full of grace, *at that time*. Yet, that is not the end of Israel's history. In future days it will become apparent

that the Lord's power was able to draw Israel out of that sinful condition and to restore it completely, though this had to be through judgment and misery.

Two of God's powerful instruments used for judgment over Judah are mentioned here: *Babel* (4:9-13 — included in this are the other world powers) for the time when Judah would be set aside, and the *Assyrian* for the time at the end of days (4:14-5:5).

Why would Judah no longer have a king? Why would there come a complete collapse of this realm? Because of the sins of king and people; the measure would become full. This was the *first cause* of the judgment over Judah. God pronounced His "Lo-Ammi" (not My people) also over Judah, setting it aside, just as it had already happened to the ten tribes. The two tribes were taken into exile into Babel, to which the reign over the world was entrusted. Babel was the "golden head" of the four Gentile world-powers. At God's time a remnant of Judah returned to the land, but it remained under foreign rule. This remnant had to wait in the land for the coming Messiah, but He was rejected by them. As a judgment over this, Jerusalem was destroyed, even the temple, while the Jews, in so far as they had not fallen, were scattered throughout the whole world. The rejection of the Messiah was the *second cause* of the judgment over Judah.

Then, in the last days, God will use His *second instrument* for judgment over Judah, namely the prophetic Assyrian. This one will conquer Jerusalem, while a terrible judgment will come over the great mass of unbelieving and apostate Jews who have returned to the land. Yet, a remnant will be saved. After this second instrument has completed its service, it will be destroyed.

*Now why dost thou cry out aloud? Is there no king in thee? is thy counsellor perished, that pangs have seized thee as a woman in travail? Be in pain, and labour to bring forth, O daughter of Zion, like a woman in travail; for now shalt thou go forth out of the city, and thou shalt dwell in the field, and thou shalt go even to Babylon: there shalt thou be delivered; there Jehovah will redeem thee from the hand of thine enemies (vv. 9-10).*

The little word: "Now" is remarkable in this portion. We find it five times (4:9,10,11; 5:1,4). It refers to the events shortly after the days of Micah and also, apparently without interruption or transition, to the events in the last days (cf. v. 9 with 11; 5:1 with 4). As in so many prophecies, Micah, too, saw in the events of the last days a repetition of those of the past. Those in the past were but shadows, those in the last days were the complete fulfilment. Judah is seen here as a woman in the anguish of labour. What would her pains bring forth? The guilty royal house over Judah would be destroyed, the people would be taken from the city and dwell in the field (during the journey) and arrive at Babel. Yet, there it would be delivered and set free from Babel. In just a few words, we find therefore a description of the being carried into Babylonian exile of the two tribes by Nebuchadnezzar, and the deliverance from there by means of the Persian King Cyrus. *That was the "now" in days past.* But that did not end their history.

*And now many nations are assembled against thee, that say, Let her be profaned, and let our eye look upon Zion (v. 11).*

*That is the "now" of the last days.* Between the "now" of the past and the "now" in the last days lies a certain course of time of twenty-six centuries. During the "now" in the last days, many nations will be gathered against Judah who have the ruin of the people and the destruction of their territory in view. But the Lord will deliver the remnant.

Since the conquest of Nebuchadnezzar Jerusalem has remained trodden down of the Gentiles. But in the future it will be precisely the reverse. Then Israel will tread down the nations.

*But they know not the thoughts of Jehovah, neither understand they His counsel; for He hath gathered them together as the sheaves into the threshing-floor. Arise and thresh, daughter of Zion, for I will make thy horn iron, and I will make thy hoofs brass; and thou shalt beat in pieces many peoples; and I will devote their gain to Jehovah, and their substance to the Lord of the whole earth (vv. 12-13).*

In the last days many nations will gather against Jerusalem to desecrate it, but they don't know the Lord's counsel. Jerusalem will become a cup of bewilderment to all these nations who will come up against her to destroy her. Thereby they themselves will be destroyed. They will not realize that God has set them for destruction, that He has gathered them as sheaves on a threshing-floor. (Isa. 17:12-14; Joel 3:9-12; Obad. :15-16; Zech. 12:1-4; Ps. 83:2-8).

At the appearing of the Son of men, the *armies* of nations that have then gathered in Palestine will be destroyed by Him. But afterwards, in the early days in which Christ's reign of peace will be established, such *nations* as Edom, Moab, Ammon,

and others beside, will be disciplined by restored Israel. Regarding these nations the Lord says to Israel: "*Arise and thresh.*" The power (horn) given to Israel by the Lord, will be great, their "hoofs" would be of brass. As we know, in the East grain is threshed by sending oxen over it who crush the ears with their hoofs. So Israel would "thresh" these nations and devote the "grain," so obtained (the unrighteously obtained possessions of these nations) to the Lord, just as had been done in the past when Canaan was conquered under Joshua.

## Chapter 5

*Now gather thyself in troops, O daughter of troops; he hath laid siege against us: they shall smite the judge of Israel with a rod upon the cheek* (v. 1 — In the German and Dutch translations this verse is chapter 4:14, causing all verse references for chapter 5 in these translations to differ by one)

Chapter 5 of Micah gives an entirely new viewpoint on the events in the last days. In this part, reference is made of a second power, that is, another power than that of the restored Roman Empire that will take part in the last battle, namely the *prophetic Assyrian*.

The "daughter of troops" refers to this Assyrian. Just as Judah is often called "daughter of Zion" so here by contrast, the Assyrian is given the label "daughter of troops." This will be used by the Lord as a disciplinary rod for the great mass of apostate Jews who will have returned to their land and be completely taken up in the idolatry of the Antichrist. The Assyrian, also called the King of the North, will lay siege to Jerusalem and take it.

Verse 1 is an incomprehensible verse as long as one does not understand *that the words in it are spoken by different persons or groups of persons*. The words: "*Now gather thyself in troops, O daughter of troops*" are a call of the Lord to the Assyrian to join the other armies that will fight against Israel, for instance Edom (cf. Ps. 83:1-8). The *faithful remnant* out of Judah, which sees how unavoidable the judgment of the Lord over the idolatry of the great mass of the Jews is, will say: "*He (the Assyrian) hath laid siege against us.*" It sees in the siege a judgment of the Lord. Not a judgment against them as remnant, but over the whole Jewish nation to which they still belong. In the third place *the prophet Micah* speaks. He declares the cause of the judgment, the chastisement of the Lord by saying: "*They shall smite the judge of Israel with a rod upon the cheek.*" This does not refer to the past physical violence against the Lord Jesus, but to the *hatred and despising of the great mass of the apostate Jews in the last days* against the Messiah and King of Israel. Figuratively this is expressed as their smiting the Judge of Israel with the rod on the cheek. It does not say: "*They have smitten*" (in the past), but: "*They shall smite.*" When in history violence was done to the Lord Jesus, He was not a *Judge*, but a *Saviour*.

*(And thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, little to be among the thousands of Judah, out of thee shall He come forth unto Me [who is] to be Ruler in Israel: whose goings forth are from of old, from the days of eternity.)* (v. 2)

This well-known verse is an interjection. Verse 1 says what the Jews have done with the God-given Ruler. And now verse two says in an interjection *what blessing* God wanted to give the people, when He gave them a Ruler after His own heart.

The chief priests and scribes quoted this verse to Herod when he asked where the Christ would be born (Mt. 2:3-6). In the quotation, however — certainly under the Holy Spirit's guidance — the word "*Ruler*" is replaced by "*Leader*." The scribes did not quote this verse literally from either the Hebrew Bible or the Septuagint; they rather gave a summary of the thought from Micah 5:2 and 4. If the Lord had then appeared as Ruler, the nation would have been lost.

Bethlehem, earlier called Ephratah, was "little among the thousands of Judah," insignificant, but it pleased God to choose that place as the birthplace of the Ruler.

Micah says: "Out of thee shall...come forth unto Me..." God's counsels would be fulfilled in and through this Ruler, in Him, "Whose goings forth are from of old, from the days of eternity."

*Therefore will He give them up, until the time when she which travaileth shall have brought forth: and the residue of his brethren shall return unto the children of Israel* (v. 3).

The "*Therefore*" with which this verse begins, continues the words: "*They shall smite the judge of Israel with a rod upon the cheek,*" in verse 1. God's grace wanted to give Christ as Ruler to Israel, but Judah had rejected Him and all through the ages fostered hatred against Him. Judah is therefore "given up," set aside, "until the time that she which travaileth shall have brought forth." This means that Judah would be in fear and anguish until the tribulation would be past. Here it is not

of importance what then would be born, *but rather the continuing sorrow and anguish of Judah* (cf. 4:9-10). At the end of the tribulation a remnant from among those returned from Babylonian exile would repent, just as a remnant out of the ten tribes would.

At the start of the Assembly's formation there is also mention of a remnant from among those who had returned from Babel. It is referred to as "those that were to be saved" (Acts 2:47). It was then added to the Assembly on the basis of faith in the Lord Jesus. Actually, after that, they no longer belonged to Jewry, but to the Assembly of God, wherein is no difference between "Jew and Greek."

*And He shall stand and feed [His flock] in the strength of Jehovah, in the majesty of the name of Jehovah his God. And they shall abide; for now shall He be great even unto the ends of the earth. And this [Man] shall be Peace. When the Assyrian shall come into our land, and when he shall tread in our palaces, then shall we raise against him seven shepherds, and eight princes of men. And they shall waste the land of Asshur with the sword, and the land of Nimrod in the entrances thereof; and he shall deliver [us] from the Assyrian, when he cometh into our land, and when he treadeth within our borders* (vv. 4-6).

Verse 4, then, gives a description of the Person of the King, as Shepherd of Israel. After the judgment over Jerusalem will have been accomplished, the once-smitten Judge, He whose goings forth are from of old, will stand there, shepherding His flock. On his death bed, the patriarch Jacob had already foretold this.

Christ, once despised and mocked, will stand there in the power and majesty of the Lord and shepherd His flock. He is the mighty God, Father of Eternity, Prince of Peace. Is there a more peaceful scene than a shepherd pasturing his flock? This is the work He will do who "shall be great even unto the ends of the earth." He "shall be peace." One day He who has denied Himself, emptying Himself to finish the word of atonement and redemption, will rule over Israel and all the nations. Then it will be seen that God has therefore exalted Him. This is the faithful Shepherd of His dear people.

*And the remnant of Jacob shall be in the midst of many peoples as dew from Jehovah, as showers upon the grass, that tarrieth not for man, neither waiteth for the sons of men* (v. 7).

The remnant of Israel, the new nation, under the reign of Christ, will show the characteristics of their King. It will be in the midst of the nations as a dew, which does not require any human effort, a blessing from God not dependent on any man. It will be a blessing for the whole earth. Israel is no more than a channel through which that blessing will reach the nations. The Giver of all blessing is the heavenly King (cf. 2 Sam. 23:4; Prov. 16:15; Hos. 14:6).

*And the remnant of Jacob shall be among the nations, in the midst of many peoples, as a lion among the beasts of the forest, as a young lion among the flocks of sheep: who, if he go through, treadeth down, and teareth in pieces, and there is none to deliver* (v. 8).

In the early days of the kingdom of peace judgments will still be executed over the neighbour nations of Israel. These will be executed by Israel, with Judah, the royal tribe, at its head. The tribe of Judah is often compared to a lion (Gen. 49:9). This is, therefore, an entirely different character of the remnant than that sketched in the previous verse. Israel will punish these nations. Just think of the judgment over Edom. No one will be able to deliver from this. But here, too, the new Israel shows a characteristic of Him who is called "the Lion of the tribe of Judah" (Rev. 5:5). Through Him Israel can act in this manner.

*Thy hand shall be lifted up upon thine adversaries, and all thine enemies shall be cut off* (v. 9).

In this manner will the remnant speak to the Lord. It will give the honour to Christ alone, being aware that in itself it lacks the power to display the characteristics of its King, to be a blessing for the nations, to execute judgment over the enemies. It has itself gone through the judgments, but has thereby been purified and learned no longer to have confidence in self.

*To be cont'd*



## 161. Peter at Lydda, Joppa, and Caesarea. The Centurion. — Acts 9:31-11:18

### *Outline*

1. The healing of Aeneas Acts 9:32-35
2. The raising of Tabitha Acts 9:36-43
3. Peter and Cornelius Acts 10:1-48
4. Peter's Defence Acts 11:1-18

### *Explanation*

1. There was already an assembly in Lydda (northwest of Jerusalem). Believers are called "saints" because God sees them as separated from the world (Gal. 1:4; Eph. 2:2). Aeneas means "praise." Could this mean that this lame man, during his long-lasting sickness did not murmur or complain, but praise the Lord? When he complied with the Peter's invitation, his faith showed itself (cf. Lk. 17:14; Mt. 9:29).

2. In Joppa (now called Jaffa, a suburb of Tel Aviv) lived a faithful disciple called Tabitha (Gazelle). The Holy Spirit gives a beautiful testimony of her. The Christians may not have understood why the Lord took such a faithful disciple to Himself. It was to glorify God's power which revealed itself in her resurrection. As a result many believed in the Lord. "For all things are yours...life or death" (1 Cor 3:21).

3. Caesarea lies on the coast north of Joppa about a day's foot journey. The centurion was a Gentile, yet he prayed to the living God, whom he had come to know through the Jews. He had a beautiful testimony. His friends and kinsmen gave heed to his invitation (Acts 10:24). He related all things to his household, servants, and soldiers (Acts 10:7-8). He cared for the poor and needy (Acts 10:2). Yet he was not saved (Acts 11:14), though he was an upright man (Ps. 11:7). Earnestly he had searched for peace (fasting and prayer); he had been faithful "in the unrighteous mammon;" now God gave him "the true" (Lk. 16:11-12), salvation. It is all, however, the work of grace. God's love could not leave this man in the dark.

God had to prepare Peter for the conversion of the Gentiles. The Lord Jesus had commanded the disciples: "Go and make disciples of all the nations," In Old-Testament days God had commanded the Jews to keep separate from the Gentiles (Ex. 19:6; Dt. 7:1-8). Yet, even then it was told that the Gentiles would share in Israel's blessings (Isa. 49:6; 65:1; Mal. 1:11), For the Jewish Christians it was still hard to accept Gentiles, for it seemed against the law of God. Now that the Jews had rejected Christ and the testimony of the Holy Spirit (Stephen), God began calling out both Jews and Gentiles, uniting them in one body of which Christ is the Head (Eph. 2:14-22).

Cornelius wanted to worship Peter, but Peter objected; for it belongs to God alone. The centurion relates what God had told him in a dream: Peter as God's messenger was to tell them everything so that all present could hear all things that God had commanded Peter (v. 33). Peter told them what God had done in giving His Son, announcing peace. Christ had revealed God in His goodness and love, and shown His power over the devil (v. 38). The Jews had rejected Jesus; God, however, had raised Him. Now He will be the Judge of the unbelievers, but the Saviour for those who believe (vv. 42-43).

Cornelius and all who heard the word believed and received the Holy Spirit without circumcision and before baptism. God showed His desire to accept the Gentiles and to anoint them with the Holy Spirit (Gal. 3:25; 4:6).

4. Notice Peter's humble willingness to explain to the brethren and the other apostles what the Lord had done. This is how the peace and unity was kept.

### *Lesson*

The Lord had promised to give Peter the keys of the kingdom of the heavens (Mt. 16:19). At Pentecost Peter had unlocked the kingdom of the heavens for the Jews. At Cornelius's house he unlocked the door for the Gentiles (Eph. 2:13-17).

Cornelius is a warning for those who want to live and even die trusting their keeping of the "Golden Rule"—"Give each his own!" Many prayers remain unanswered because the heart is not upright towards God; those of Cornelius went up for a memorial before God (Acts 10:4).

God's instruments are often insignificant. For Naaman it was the Jordan river, for the one born blind, slime; for Cornelius, an unimportant fisherman living with a tanner.

When those who speak, speak faithfully, and those that hear take in, then God's blessing will not fail.

Lack of humbleness and meekness is often the cause of regrettable rifts and separations amongst believers (Eph. 4:1-4).

## **162. The Church Persecuted. Peter Arrested. — Acts 11:19-12:24.**

### *Outline*

- |                                  |                |
|----------------------------------|----------------|
| 1. The Church in Antioch         | Acts 11:19-30. |
| 2. Herod killed James            | Acts 12:1-5.   |
| 3. Peter in prison and delivered | Acts 12:6-17.  |
| 4. Herod's illness and death     | Acts 12:18-23. |

### *Explanation*

1. With the Holy Spirit descending upon Cornelius, the Gentiles were introduced into the Church. What had begun in Ceasarea, continued in Antioch when the Christians from amongst the Jews who had come from Cyprus and Cyrene communicated the gospel to the Greeks. The assembly in Jerusalem approved of the work and sent them Barnabas, who had the beautiful testimony of being full of the Holy Spirit and of faith. He exhorted them to abide with the Lord and taught them the way of salvation. The Holy Spirit used this gifted brother to close the gap between Jews and Gentiles. At other occasions, too, He acted as mediator (Acts 9:27; 15:2).

When Barnabas discovered that his feeble power was not sufficient for the great work in Antioch, he went, led by the Holy Spirit, to Tarsus to seek Saul. The bond between Jerusalem and Antioch was strengthened through the support Antioch gave for the poor in Judea during the great famine (Heb. 13:16; Prov. 19:17).

2. Herod (Agrippa I) was a wicked man. He persecuted the saints to gain the favour of the Jews. The Jews hated him, but they formed a united front with him against Christ and His followers. James, the brother of John, had a prominent place in Jerusalem, for he was an apostle. He was allowed to share the fate of his beloved Lord in dying a martyr's death (Mk. 10:38-39; Mt. 5:10,12).

3. Then Herod imprisoned Peter. But he was miraculously released by means of an angel in answer to the unceasing prayer of the assembly to God. This enabled Peter to continue the testimony on earth (Lk 21:12; Ps. 34:7). Though saints sent up fervent prayers, they were astonished at the answer. Herod had the guards executed, probably because he thought that they had been bribed! We trust Peter brought them the gospel when he lay chained between them. After having related his release to the saints, Peter left Jerusalem; in this he acted according to God's plan (Mt. 10:14-15, 23).

4. Herod had resisted God's power. While in Caesarea he accepted honour as a god, immediately God's judgment smote him (Prov. 16:5; 29:1; Ps. 5:4). In this Herod is a type of the future Antichrist; he persecutes the saints and he allowed himself to be venerated, showing himself to be a god. Just as Herod, the Antichrist will also be judged immediately (Mt. 24:15-21; 2 Th. 2:3-8).

### *Lesson*

Though unbelievers may be enemies of each other, when it comes to dealing with Christ or His followers, they often join hands, just as Herod and Pilate did.

How often is our faith weak! How good then that God is faithful, graceful, and mighty to answer prayer (Prov. 18:10; Mk. 11:24).

*To be cont'd*