

THE
SUPREME
NAME

THIRD EDITION

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THE SUPREME ^{23/} NAME

Introduction: FAITH IN JESUS CHRIST

Never has a more elevated subject than ours moved the pen in the hand of a mere man. Is it even possible for such limited and mortal beings as ourselves to contain and to express the unlimited depths that are in the precious Name of our Lord?

Is it not but a weak response to His infinite love, when the redeemed ones begin while here below that eternal praise to His honor? and soon will not all heavenly and earthly regions resound with hallelujahs to Him who alone is worthy? Not until, in speechless admiration we kneel before Him and cast our crowns before His feet, shall we know even as we are known. Only in this spirit of worship should we enter into the Holy of Holies and speak about His glories, and although the Holy Spirit teaches and guides us with the purpose of a full apprehension, we can speak here below only imperfectly (1 Cor. 13:11), as an infant that is only able to stammer...

The Creator of heaven and earth has made known His eternal counsels in the Holy Scriptures, wherein from the beginning to the end all speaks of the blessed Person and work of the Son of God, Jesus Christ. But not every man is able to see in the Scriptures the marvellous beauties of the Son of God, as for this the reader needs a personal and living faith in Him. In spiritual things all depends on faith. Personal possession of faith, the sovereign gift without condition of the God of all grace, gives the key to a heavenly walk in the midst of a polluted world.

The great object of faith is the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God. God has given His highest treasure in order to save the lowest of all his creatures in the universe-the lost sinner. And God's intention is that all may believe on Him, Christ...But what does this mean, to believe on Christ?

To have confidence in the skill of a physician has this effect, that you go to him with the assurance that he will restore your health. Confidence in a teacher will lead to this, that a man will accept his teachings and follow him. The reputation of a banker may cause our confiding to him all our

money. But faith in the Lord Jesus means far more than all this: it is to put confidence in Him for the salvation of the soul for time and eternity and to accept His help for all needs. And then Jesus desires to be all for us.

As Son of God He is our Creator, and became the Saviour of sinners on Calvary's cross. He is now the glorified Man, who teaches us by the Holy Spirit; He is the Bread of Life to nourish our souls. He is the light of the world to guide us through a dark scene. He is our Great High Priest to keep us from falling; and the beloved Bridegroom for Whom we wait. Now to believe really on Him means that we receive Him in the fulness of His glorious Person, and this in a personal way. To believe on Jesus as our Saviour gives us the assurance that all our sins are forgiven. As Deliverer from the power of sin He can say: "If therefore the Son shall set you free, ye shall be really free." (John 8:36). He is the only divine Teacher, speaking the words of God (John 14:10), and we can accept His teachings as infallible, the essential thing for a perfect education in the school of God. Christ has all power in heaven and on earth. To accept Him as our Lord is to acknowledge His rights over us, to submit ourselves to His will, saying with Paul: "What shall I do, Lord?" (Acts 22:10) In order to possess through Christ all things, we must search the Scriptures with the object of finding HIM, "For in Him dwells all the fulness of the Godhead bodily, and you are complete in Him." (Col. 2:9,10).

1. The Name of Jesus Christ

Our name distinguishes us from other persons, but a title contains a further distinction, relative to our position and work. Now when God gives a name to some one, it will always express his character as God sees it. Proofs that the name and character go together in Scripture, are seen when God changes the names of several men of the Bible upon a change of position or a moral change occurring in their lives. Thus Abram obtained the name of Abraham, Sarai became Sarah, Jacob was called Israel, Simon was called Peter and Saul of Tarsus was baptised Paul.

Jesus is a name and Saviour is a title. The name of SON of GOD expresses His eternal relationship, which is His eternal Person. Now, we can address one by his name only when we

know him personally, and to call on the Name of Christ means to profess that you know Him in a personal way. The Name of Christ speaks of power, holiness, love and wisdom: "His name is called Wonderful, Counsellor, Mighty God, Father of Eternity, Prince of Peace." (Isaiah 9:6)

The Name of Jesus has been exalted above every name since He was raised from the dead and is ascended to heaven. "Wherefore also God highly exalted Him, and granted Him a name, that which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus, every knee should bow." (Phil. 2:9-10). It is with this Name that He shall compel every knee to bow to Him. The Name Jesus is Saviour whose "power" is Love. His Name above all names is a Name of power. And by that power will be enforced the decree that all in heaven and on earth and in what is below it, must bow to Him and confess that lovely Name—so dishonored on earth—, my Lord Jesus, now confessed by grace in salvation, but then in glory and judgment.

SALVATION BY THE NAME OF JESUS.

"And salvation is in none other, for neither is there another name under heaven, which is given among men by which we must be saved." (Acts 4:12). "He that believes not has already been judged, because he has not believed on the name of the only begotten Son of God." (John 3:18)

In the Name of Jesus is hidden the infinite love and grace that is in the heart of God our Father. Christ has revealed the love of God; He is the only begotten Son in the bosom of the Father, the eternal habitation of love and delight. But in the Name of JESUS, which means "Jehovah is Saviour" also lies hidden His completely accomplished work of salvation, His atoning death on Calvary's Cross. Thus His Name expresses the whole way of salvation and becomes the object of faith that saves.

We are lost if we do not take shelter in this name. Salvation is not in ourselves, in our character, works or merits. It is not in the different religions and creeds, though there are among men many names that pretend to be saving names, as Mohammed, Buddha, but really are not so. This is the exclusive glory of the Name of Jesus, that it is the only Name whereby we can approach to God.

This Name is not only a peerless Name in HEAVEN, but

a blessed Name also UNDER HEAVEN. It is given AMONG MEN, who need salvation; men who are ready to perish in their sins, and for whom this Name is the only refuge, the only strong tower to flee into.

Those who do not believe in Him ARE already condemned. Their sin is aggravated by the matchless dignity of the Person they slight: they believe not the Name of the only-begotten Son of God. Unbelief is sin against the dearest object of God's loving heart.

GATHERING IN THE NAME OF THE LORD JESUS

"For where two or three are gathered together unto my name, there am I in the midst of them." (Mat. 18:20)

"Let every one, who names the name of the Lord, withdraw from iniquity." (2 Tim. 2:19).

The precious promise of the presence of the Lord is vouchsafed to the two or three gathered to His Name. In this way the Lord adds the seal of His approval to the weakest company of believers, provided, their association with the Name of Christ is faithfully realized, that is on the ground of simply being members of His Body, the assembly. Need we further assurance, that He, in whom are hidden all treasures of wisdom and knowledge is in our midst with all His riches and blessings? The Name of the Lord Jesus is sufficient to characterize at all times the true Church of God.

PRAYER IN THE NAME OF THE LORD.

"If ye shall ask anything in My name, I will do it" (John 14:14). "And this is the boldness which we have towards Him, that if we ask Him anything according to His will, He hears us." (1 John 5:14).

Prayer is the deepest need and highest privilege of every believer. Poor, weak and helpless as we are, prayer gives expression to our dependance upon Him to whom we turn. Our needs must drive us to the mercy seat and then the Name of Jesus gives the assurance that we will be heard, when we appear by faith in the presence of our God and Father. Our eyes are thus fixed upon Jesus. In His Name, on the basis of what He is before the Father, we come into the most holy place, and we are there, by Jesus, certain of the favour of God. When I offer a draft at a bank, I demand the value in the name

of him that signed it. In the same manner, Christ will subscribe to the prayers which we send up to the Father. God will hear all our supplications, for it is the joy of His heart to glorify the Son. "If ye shall ask anything in My Name"; the promise is absolute and without limitation. But this Name, which expresses His character, expresses also His will and mind; and thus asking in His Name is the same thing as asking according to His will. Now this will we find pointed out in the Word of God. So if guided by the Holy Spirit, we shall ask of the Father such things as Jesus Himself desires from His Father, in view of the realization of His eternal counsels of love.

THE NAME OF "JESUS"

There is a very special sweetness in the Name of "Jesus." It is not His official title, but His personal Name; and this personal Name of the Lord has for our hearts a particular beauty and attraction. The Holy Spirit is very precise in the use of the names and titles of the Lord.

The name of "Jesus"—"Jehovah is Saviour"—is chiefly used in connection with His humiliation, His human life here on earth. He was called "Jesus of Nazareth." In the description of His earthly sojourn in the four gospels, the name "Jesus" is used 566 times, whereas the name "CHRIST" is found only 36 times. But now the name of "Jesus" is not only associated with His humiliation, but also with His exaltation (Phil 2:10), for this exaltation is the divine answer to His humiliation.

This Name is used in the epistle to the Hebrews in relation to His High-Priestly glory and office. Under the name of "JESUS" He is presented in this epistle as the glorified Man. (Heb. 2:9), the Forerunner (Heb. 6:20), the Surety (Heb. 7:22) and as the Apostle and High Priest of our confession (Heb. 3:1); also as the Leader and Completer of Faith (Heb. 12:24) the Mediator (Heb. 12:24) and the Sanctifier (Heb. 13:12).

THE NAME OF "CHRIST"

The literal signification of this name is "ANOINTED." During his earthly life His title was. "Christ," being synonymous with the title "Messiah" for Israel, and we learn that by His exaltation His Name is now Jesus Christ. In the

Gospels we have Jesus Christ personally, as He was anointed and sent by God. In the Gospel of John Jesus never calls himself Christ. Others spoke in such manner of Him, but He Himself does not do so. This is because in this gospel He was conscious of His rejection from the beginning as Messiah, God's anointed One (John 1:12). He gives Himself the title of Son of Man being Son of God, a glory that ought not to be rejected by any man, being His creature. Before natural man was set aside by the cross it was impossible that Christ could be accepted as King of Israel. In the Acts of the Apostles, it is officially announced that "JESUS IS THE CHRIST" (Acts 2:36,5:42), and in the Epistles we find "Christ" as the mystical Head of the Body, the assembly. The believers, therefore, are individually members of His Body, and collectively referred to as "THE CHRIST" (1 Cor. 12:12), and in the epistle to the Ephesians the believers are seen "IN CHRIST." Christ is the source of their life and of all their blessings. They are blessed with every spiritual blessing in the heavenlies IN CHRIST. It is striking that in this beginning of the epistle to the Ephesians we have 7 spiritual blessings IN CHRIST, and that in the latter chapters we have 7 responsibilities IN THE LORD. These blessings in Christ are: (Ch. 1:3-14).

- 1) Chosen in Him before the world's foundation.
- 2) Marked out beforehand for adoption.
- 3) Taken into favour in the Beloved.
- 4) Having redemption through His blood.
- 5) Heaving made known to us the mystery of His will.
- 6) We have obtained an inheritance.
- 7) Sealed with the Holy Spirit, the earnest of the inheritance.

In the epistle to the Colossians we learn that CHRIST IS IN US: "The riches of the glory of this mystery among the nations, which is Christ in you the hope of glory." (Col. 1:27). Christ in heaven is the Anointed One, and all heavenly blessings are now centered in Him. And thus all those who are "In Christ" possess in Him an unlimited measure of love peace, joy, light and power, because Christ himself possesses these in unlimited measure, and because we are united with Him. This union is realized practically by our fellowship with Him.

2. Jesus Christ our Saviour

Is there a more thrilling Name for ear and heart of the redeemed than the lovely Name of Jesus, which means: "Jehovah is Saviour"? Nothing is more able to inflame our hearts with deepest thankfulness, than this peerless Name, which speaks to us of Him who rescued us from the bottomless pit, from the lake of fire, plucking us out of it as brands, and bringing us into perfect safety! In Him we have obtained a shelter and an eternal and perfect salvation.

The language of the Eskimos is said to be very rich in synonyms, chiefly of words expressing salvation from their many dangers in fishing. A missionary once questioned an Eskimo with the purpose of finding the best translation for the word SAVIOUR. He uttered a series of words and at the seventh expression the Eskimo gave the following explanation: "Someone has fallen from a ship in the midst of the ocean. Nobody has seen him, the ocean is measureless and there is no boat on the horizon. At that moment just when all hope seems to be lost, a mysterious hand comes from heaven, seizes the wretched person and takes him with power to a safe shore. Instead of leaving him there, the arms of the saviour take the astonished man to a comfortable house, where all is prepared for his comfort and there a new life of happiness and abundance begins."

Now our Jesus is such a Saviour and infinitely better, not being a product of popular imagination, but a real and divine Person, the Son of God, who came to earth to save us from a real and terrible eternal fate and to bring us to everlasting delight and glory.

The Scriptures themselves give different shadows of our salvation in men of faith who found a shelter from a deadly danger; for instance Noah. God made of him a monument of mercy in showing him a way of salvation, before the waters of the deluge carried away the unbelievers. "For I, behold I bring a flood of waters on the earth, to destroy all flesh under the heavens in which is the breath of life...Go into the ark, thou and all thy house." (Gen. 6:17,7:1). "By faith, Noah, oracularly warned concerning things not yet seen, moved with fear, prepared an ark for the saving of his house." (Heb.11:7)

In order to understand how precious such a salvation is, we must first be convinced of the terrible judgment, which, like the sword of Damocles, hangs over this sinful world. Above a world which consummated its hatred against God in crucifying His beloved Son! Ceaselessly God now proclaims, through pure grace, with warning voice, the gospel to this doomed world.

JESUS SAVES FROM THE COMING JUDGMENT

"Now is the judgment of this world, now shall the prince of this world be cast out." (John 12:31). "Jesus, our deliverer from the coming wrath." (1 Thess. 1:10).

This world is condemned because it has crucified the Lord of glory and its destruction is near. Salvation, through faith in Christ assures us of a shelter from the coming wrath. The apostle Paul standing on the Areopagus warned the inhabitants of Athens, crying to the idolaters of that city: "God, therefore, having overlooked the times of ignorance, now enjoins men, that they shall all everywhere repent, because He has set a day, in which He is going to judge the habitable earth in righteousness by a man whom He has appointed, giving the proof of it to all in having raised Him from among the dead." (Acts 17:30,31). God's voice is urgently calling, for soon the door of grace will be shut and Jesus will come to take the redeemed to be with Himself. For those who through unbelief remain outside salvation a time of terrible tribulation will take place, finding its culminating point at the very moment in which Jesus Himself comes back in glory and power and majesty to take revenge upon all His foes. "At the revelation of the Lord Jesus from heaven, with the angels of His power, in flaming fire taking vengeance on those who do not obey the glad tidings of our Lord Jesus Christ; who shall pay the penalty of everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of His might." (2 Thess. 1:7-9).

UNBELIEVERS MOCK AT JUDGMENT

In the time of Noah men were too busy with temporal things to pay any attention to the warnings of the preacher of justice. In the days of Lot they continued in their gross sins until Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed with fire and brimstone.

And this modern world prefers to forget all about danger, and to drown God's voice in the turmoil of commercial and cultural life and in the allurements of pleasure, rather than to hearken to warnings like that of Peter: "The day of the Lord will come as a thief, in which the heavens will pass away with a rushing noise and the elements, burning with heat shall be dissolved, and the earth and the works on it shall be burnt up." (2 Peter 3:10).

SAVIOUR or JUDGE?

"For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost." (Luke 18:10). "He that believes on Him is not judged, but he that believes not has been already judged." (John 3:18).

Since Jesus Christ came to seek and to save all those who were lost, all who believe on Him will be saved from the coming wrath and sheltered from the judgment of the Great White Throne. All unbelievers will be cast into the terrible pit of fire and brimstone, where they will be tormented eternally. The day approaches in which all unconverted sinners will appear before the face of Him whom they rejected as their Saviour. There before the great white throne Herod and all the mockers, Pilate and all the cowards, Judas and all the traitors, Annas with all the hypocrites and Pharisees will discover with trembling that their only opportunity of salvation has been eternally forfeited, because they despised the voice of Jesus and mocked and accused falsely and crucified the Lord of glory. To-day, my dear reader, Jesus stands as a Saviour before you. What will YOU do with Jesus? May He indeed by faith be your personal Saviour, that He may not be tomorrow your unrelenting JUDGE...!

A SAVIOUR WHO DID NOT SAVE HIMSELF

Let us consider Him as He was put on that accursed tree of Calvary. The high priests and scribes, mocking between themselves, said: "He saved others, himself He can not save. Let the Christ, the king of Israel, descend now from the cross, that we may see and believe." (Mark 15:32) How full of pride were these Jews, proud that they had attained their object. Man, deceived by Satan, thought to have got rid of God, whose presence hindered them. They shook their heads saying:

"Others He has saved, He cannot save Himself." Nothing reveals more clearly than these words how terrible is the sin of man, hatred against a loving God. All were obliged to acknowledge that Christ, during His life on earth, had shown divine power by all sorts of wonders and even by the resurrection of the dead. But though, by their words they acknowledge His saving power, they reject God, who was the source of it. They deny the love of God in Christ, they have, as Jesus said, **"Hated both me and my Father."**

The Lord Jesus sacrificed Himself voluntarily rather than take care of Himself. The same love which had delivered others from their earthly sufferings now went farther. He gave Himself for us in death. So to faith this terrible mockery changes to praise. It was not a natural, but a moral impossibility to come down from the cross. The scribes would say that He could not descend from the cross because the executioners had accomplished too well their sinister task, because the nails which pierced through His hands and feet were too well attached. But if Jesus had desired to come down, all the nails and ropes of Jerusalem would not have kept Him on the cross. What were nails and ropes for Him who could appease the storm by one word of His mouth? His love for sinners alone was the power, that kept Him there upon the cross. Nobody could take His life from Him; He gave Himself as a voluntary offering. Perfect love for His Father, obedience to the will of God, infinite love for us, these were the reasons why He did not save Himself. He could have demanded the help of twelve legions of angels, but He did not make use of them. There was only one path by which to save others, and from this narrow and difficult path He did not deviate even one hair's breadth.

A young doctor, who had taken on himself the noble task of caring for sufferers of cholera, at the age of 32 years fell a victim to this terrible disease. He had freely undertaken the task, but not a voluntary death, for he had always hoped to escape from the disease. But Jesus had no desire to escape from the death of the cross. He had taken the cup from the hands of His Father and had determined to empty it to the very bottom.

A SAVIOUR FORSAKEN BY GOD

"And when the sixth hour was come, there came darkness over the whole land until the ninth hour, and at the ninth hour, Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying: 'Eloi, Eloi, lama Sabachthani? which is being interpreted, My God, My God, why hast thou forsaken Me?'" (Mark 15:34).

When Jesus had endured the mockery of men during the three hours of suffering on the cross, God caused darkness to come over the whole earth and men withdrew. Jesus was now alone with God. During the three hours of darkness the work of redemption was accomplished. He became sin for us, He submitted to the blows of divine justice.

Nothing could avert or assuage them. All His life He had enjoyed perfect fellowship with God, but now He must be without this comfort. Where love for His Father was His constant joy, how great is His feeling of horror for this hour, wherein the curse fell upon Him who was holy, pure and without spot! What human being is able to measure the moral sufferings of Christ during the three dark hours on the cross? He drank the bitter cup of the judgment of God against sin. His matchless suffering, the burden of the sin of the world, the remoteness of a holy God, who could have no contact with sin, all this pressed Him to utter this cry,—a cry which we are allowed to hear, that we may know what happened there: the reality of redemption.

When He cried "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me", it was because He was made sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him. In this way He turned away the judgment and wrath of God from all those who believe on Him as their Saviour. Thus He delivered us from the wrath to come. After this cry, the darkness of His soul passes away and He can say: "Father into thy hands I commend My Spirit." And after having said this, He dies. All is accomplished.

And now, we have only to accept the blessed consequences of the death of Christ. Grace and pardon can be preached freely to all men. Eternal life is given freely to everyone who believes on Him.

3. Christ, our Redeemer

Having considered the Lord Jesus as our Saviour, it may seem as if that title means the same as "Redeemer"; however "Redeemer" expresses other aspects of His work and of our needs, which the word "Saviour" does not express.

Redemption, the payment of a ransom to deliver us, had to be accomplished before Christ could be presented as a Saviour. He can save only on the basis of the ransom that He paid on the cross. Thus, from God's side, redemption precedes salvation; but as to the order in which our souls receive Him, we must first be saved before we can fully enjoy the blessed liberty, which is the consequence.

The title of "Redeemer" as such is not found in the New Testament, but it says that **He** redeemed us, and that we have redemption through His blood.

In the Old Testament we find the word "Redeemer" frequently. (Job. 19:25, Ps. 19:14, 78:35, Isaiah 41:14, 43:14, 44:6) The fact that Christ has redeemed us is found in all the books of the New Testament (Rev. 5:9).

In Hebrew there are two words: the first means "to buy again" by the payment of a ransom (gaal) and the second means "to loose or deliver" (padah).

In the New Testament there is one word that covers the two Hebrew ones: "to deliver by a ransom", expressing first that the ransom has been paid, and next the full deliverance which is the consequence of it; a position of entire liberty, obtained by the redemption on the cross.

Redemption is therefore the deliverance from the penalty as well as from the power of sin.

Not only were we sinners committing acts of sin (Rom. 5:12) and were indebted to God; not only by sin DEATH has reigned everywhere, but Satan gained power over us by Adam's fall: he handles the power of death to force to sin and slavery (Heb. 2:14), and he became the prince of this world. We were captives sold through sin to the enemy of our souls, without any strength in us to get out from that awful condition. (Eph. 2:1-2).

How much man realizes that he is a slave can be seen by the fact that nothing is more desired by the peoples of the

earth than liberty. For example how many WARS have been fought for the pretended purpose of "LIBERTY", how many revolutions and social struggles have shaken the world with the goal of more outward liberty!

Natural man likes to choose freely the life he wishes to live, and he thinks that he is able to choose. Man was once free, when he had at his disposed all the good things in the garden of Eden, and when he freely hearkened to the loving voice of God.

But after having eaten, seduced by Satan, and in disobedience to God, the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, he became the slave of Satan, and the whole human race shares this bondage under the power of darkness, the tyranny of the God of this world.

The apparent liberty of man in certain countries which makes him think that he does what he likes, is no real liberty, because all men are under the bondage of Satan, and under the slavery of sin in one form or another.

Real liberty, Christian liberty, is the condition of those who have escaped from the power of Satan, and who are enabled by the power of God to live according to the desires of a new and heavenly nature which finds its DELIGHT in doing the good and perfect will of God.

TYPES AND SHADOWS

"This Moses.....him did God send to be.....a deliverer" (Acts 7:25:35).

Moses, as deliverer of the people of Israel out of their bondage in Egypt was a striking type of Jesus in Scripture. Egypt is a picture of this world, the sphere of Satan's power, opposing against God and His people. The prince of this world desires that the people of God live and labour for corruptible things instead of being consecrated to the Lord's service. "The creature has been made subject to vanity, not of its will, but by reason of him, who has subjected the same." (Rom. 8:21).

God's will is to deliver his people from all kinds of slavery, that we may serve Him in separation from the world. But against this happy liberty, Satan's power opposes. It was when

Israel was conscious of its deep misery that God came in and sent Moses to them, and soon their liberty became real, as they believed God.

For poor slaves of Satan and sin there is a similar way of deliverance: when they feel their misery and cry to God, He will show to them His beloved Son Jesus, who is able to give them perfect freedom and a blessed life beyond the power of Satan.

FREEDOM BY THE CROSS

"That through death he might annul him who has the might of death, that is the devil and might set free all those who through fear of death through the whole of their life were subject to bondage." (Heb. 2:14-15)

"Who has delivered us from the authority of darkness and translated us into the kingdom of the Son of His love." (Col. 1:13).

In this battle against the powers of darkness, Christ has been victorious on the cross, and He made us free.

Against Him and us were the "principalities, the authorities, the universal lords of this darkness, the spiritual powers of wickedness in the heavenlies." (Eph. 6:10) These powers apparently obtained the victory, when Jesus saying, "This is your hour and the power of darkness" was condemned under Pilate. Indeed, these powers had seized Him, and the Prince of Life was stripped and scourged in the midst of cruel mockery, and nailed to the accursed tree. Men and devils were witnesses of this apparent victory of Satan and of this apparent defeat of Christ. But all was only appearance, because in reality it was the Lord Jesus who, in the midst of shame and loneliness and death, obtained an eternal victory. And now these powers have been disarmed as a principle: "having spoiled principalities and authorities, He made a show of them publicly, leading them in triumph by it." (Col. 2:15).

DELIVERANCE FROM THE LAW

"So that, my brethren, ye also have been made dead to the law by the body of Christ." (Rom. 7:4). The law, as God gave it to Moses, is holy and righteous and good.

"Now we know, that the law is good if any one uses it lawfully, knowing this, that law has not its application to a righteous person, but to the lawless and insubordinate..." (1 Tim. 1:8). It addresses unconverted man, not in order to justify him, but to convict him of sin. Israel has shown under law its incapacity to fulfill it. Under law our sinful nature is rather stirred by Satan to transgress the holy commandments. Natural man, placed under the law, not only becomes a transgressor, but the law pronounces its curse on all those who do not accomplish it to the letter. Thus the yoke of the law became unbearable for Israel, and it is still unbearable for all those who place themselves under its burden.

Taking marriage as an example, the apostle Paul, in the seventh chapter of Romans declares that the law has only authority over a man as long as he lives. Because the believer is dead with Christ, he is delivered from the authority of the law. This is a reason for great joy, because. "Cursed is every one who does not continue in all the things which are written in the book of the law to do them:" (Gal. 3:10).

Every man is legalistic by nature, and sees religion as a system of commandments and prohibitions. Many children of God remain legalists a great part of their lives, and this hinders them from enjoying fully the true grace of God wherein they stand. A clear understanding of our complete deliverance from the law brings a heavenly and unspeakable joy to our hearts, and makes an end to all bondage that is not according to our position. This truth is valid as much for the believers out of the Gentiles as for the converted Jew, for human nature is legalistic. From the moment that our thoughts are occupied with the question: What must I do?" or "What am I forbidden to do?", instead of being occupied with the riches of grace in Christ, we become legal and a prey to many stumblings and disappointments, accompanied by a bad conscience. But by faith we may enjoy the precious truth that by our identification with Christ in His death, we have been delivered from the principle of the law: "Christ has set us free in freedom stand fast therefore, and be not held again in a yoke of bondage." (Gal. 5:1). We are, as by marriage, united with Christ, who has been raised from among the dead, that we may bear fruit for God, the precious fruit of the Spirit: "Love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, fidelity,

meekness, self-control; against such things there is no law." (Gal. 5:22). This fruit for God is not obtained by our efforts, but on the ground of faith. The vital power to produce them is in the glorified Redeemer; we have only to fix the eyes of faith upon Him, expecting that He may operate in grace and for His own glory. Let us abstain from all legal efforts and trust in His grace, that the Holy Spirit may guide us and make us bear fruit by His power.

DELIVERANCE FROM THE WORLD

"Love not the world nor the things in the world. If any one love the world, the love of the Father is not in him." (1 John 2:15). "But far be it from me to boast save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom the world is crucified to me, and I to the world." (Gal. 6:14).

The world is under the rulership of Satan, the prince of it and the god of this age. The natural man is enslaved under his power; the whole world is lying in wickedness. What a comforting truth is our freedom from such a world, because we are identified with Christ in His death upon the cross. The world has merited its condemnation by the death of Christ, for it has killed the Prince of Life. And when the world condemned Christ, it condemned also the Christians, and Paul says that he has been crucified to the world. Two dead bodies cannot have attraction for each other. By faith we see ourselves as crucified with Christ by the system of this world; thus our sympathy for the world disappears, while also the friendship, which the world may have for us disappears when we walk faithfully. And this belongs to our communion with the Lord, for whosoever is a friend of the world is an enemy of God. (James 4:4). For those who walk by faith, the attraction which the world tends to have even for certain christians disappears. Its seductive appearance has no influence on someone, who estimates himself to be dead with Christ to the world. The cross establishes an impassable gulf between the world and the believer. When we show our insensibility for vanity, glory and pleasures, we will soon experience the displeasure of the world and have less difficulty to discern its true character of hatred against God and God's children.

DELIVERANCE FROM SIN

"So also, ye reckon yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus." (Rom. 6:11) "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me out of this body of death? I thank God, through Jesus Christ our Lord." (Rom. 7:24,25).

Many believers enjoy only in part the blessings that are theirs in Christ. When we are satisfied with the thought that our sins and trespasses have been put away, without pursuing after a more complete deliverance, there will be the danger that our christian life gets careless, worldly and even sinful. Even a true child of God has no power in himself to resist against the desires of the flesh and the seductions of Satan. In order to walk in communion with God, it is not sufficient to believe that Christ died for our sins, but it is necessary to know that the believer has died with Christ. A blessed and overcoming life of faith requires the practical knowledge of two truths:

1) Christ died for my sins.

2) I died with Christ.

Our sins or bad actions have been put away, but the principle of sin that dwells in us has not been put away, but dwells in every child of God till he dies, or is changed at Christ's coming. Scripture calls this principle "sin in the flesh," or "the old man," the old nature that we have from Adam. This sinful principle has always the desire to bring us to sinful acts. How can we prevent this? The power of the sinful flesh can only be kept down by the power of our living Deliverer. God does not forgive this sin in the flesh and He does not improve the old man, and does not take away the old nature from us. God did only one thing to annul the power of sinful flesh: He has condemned sin in the flesh. This is a precious side of the cross of Christ for believers who desire to be victorious over the sin in the flesh. "For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God, having sent his own Son, in likeness of flesh of sin, and for sin, has condemned sin in the flesh." (Rom. 8:3).

When we consider ourselves by faith as crucified with Christ, our thoughts on ourselves are in accordance with God's thoughts about us, and in this communion, together with a wholehearted confidence in Christ, the invincible Deliverer, we realise the victory over the will of the flesh, and do not

accomplish sin. "But to him that is able to keep you without stumbling and to set you with exultation blameless before His glory, to the only God our Saviour, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, might and authority, from before the whole age, and now, and to all the ages. Amen." (Jude. 24,25).

DELIVERED FROM MAN

"If ye have died with Christ from the elements of the world, why, as if alive in the world, do ye subject yourselves to ordinance? Do not handle, do not taste..." (Col. 2:20).

The Gospel speaks to man, not only as to a guilty one but also as to a religious person. It finds man under the power of sin. Human nature is as much able to refuse to enter into the praetorium, that they might not be defiled... (John 18:28), as to cry with positive hatred against God: "Crucify, crucify Him." (John 19:6). Thus the truth of God meets a refusal equally peremptory from religious man as from man devoted to his passions. And Jesus foresaw "that the tax-gatherers and the harlots" would enter into the kingdom of God before the pharisees. (Mat. 21:31). In our days the religions of man have a great extension, and man not only organises religion according to his own will and taste, but he seeks to change the Word of God according to his own will, instead of having his will depending on the Word of God. This is the basis of all human systems in Christianity, not only of the so-called christian "churches," but also of those groups who follow rather blindly leaders, giving them an authority beyond what God gave to them, and thus beyond the Word of God. But in Christ's death on the cross we died to the pretensions of man, and to his religious principles and tyranny, and we are indeed free to follow Jesus alone. "Therefore let us go forth to Him, without the camp, bearing His reproach." (Heb. 13:13). "If ye abide in my word, ye are truly my disciples; and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall set you free." (John 8:31,32)

DELIVERANCE FROM THE BODY

"We also ourselves groan in ourselves, awaiting adoption, that is the redemption of our body." (Rom. 8:23)

As the believer bears with him, as long as he is here on earth, the flesh or sinful principle, always threatening to rob him the radiance of God's face, it is not astonishing that his desire is to be forever free from this old nature, and to be

with the Lord. "We are...pleased rather to be absent from the body and present with the Lord." (2 Cor. 6:8) The definitive deliverance from the mortal body takes place either at the second coming of the Lord or at the death of the believer:" For this corruptible must needs put on incorruptibility, and this mortal put on immortality. (1 Cor. 15:51).

At Christ's coming, raising us from amongst the dead, we will be clothed with a new and glorified body, without sin, or mortality, or weakness, weariness or sorrow.

Then we will see Christ, our Deliverer, face to face, and fully enjoy His victory on the cross. Now we groan in this earthly tent, but soon it will give place to a better dwelling place, not built with hands, but eternal in the heavens. We will then be changed into the likeness of the glorified Christ.

4 The Son of God

The mystery of the Trinity cannot be explained to the natural intelligence. In order to know the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, we need a divine revelation, accepted by faith. All professing christians have been baptised in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. In this baptismal form the Son is acknowledged as a divine Person as much as the Father and the Holy Spirit. The three Persons of the Godhead, known by faith, are in relationship with each other. The Father and the Son are in the glory of the divine Existence, and though they are equal in glory, there exists between them this relationship of Father and Son. The names of the Father and the Son are revealed clearly in the New Testament and specially in the Gospel of John. Our hearts can receive all that is hidden in these names for our eternal blessing. The Son, who is in the bosom of the Father has made known to us the name and character of the Father: "Father...and I have made known to them thy name, and will make it known; that the love with which thou hast loved me, may be in them and I in them " (John 17:26).

The name of the Son was proclaimed by the Father Himself, when it was heard out of an opened heaven: "This is my beloved Son, in whom I have found my delight." (Matt. 3:17) Reciprocal, infinite love, this is the relationship between the Father and the Son. This love was displayed to the children

of men. "That the world may know that I love the Father, and as the Father has commanded me, thus I do." (John 14:31) To do the will of the Father was the revelation of this love when the Son came here below. This divine will was, that the Son empty Himself, descend into death, and endure God's wrath in our place. Through this sacrifice we know with what love the Father has loved us, because we are called children of God. The reciprocal love between the Father and the Son was no new or unknown experience for the Son, when He came on earth. "For thou hast loved me before the foundation of the world." (John 17:24). He is the eternal Son of the Father's love. This love is not something vague, but the object of a clear revelation. The love that fills the heart of the Father has found eternally a perfect acceptance and a full answer in the heart of the Son.

While John shows to us the only begotten Son in the bosom of the Father and loved before the foundation of the world, Luke speaks about Him as the Son of the Highest before His birth in this world; Matthew and Mark mention His name as Son of God only after His baptism in the Jordan.

Faith sees behind the veil of humiliation, that covered the child of Bethlehem, the whole divine glory of the Son of God. The almighty God came down here: weak Himself and amongst weak things. Our natural intelligence is also unable to understand the incarnation of the Son of God, but faith kneels down and worships.

FOUR TESTIMONIES

The Lord Jesus Himself mentioned four witnesses which confirmed His glory as Son of God before all men. We find these testimonies in the fifth chapter of the Gospel of John. First, He quotes the testimony of John the Baptist, next He speaks about the WORKS which He accomplished, thirdly He reminds them of the heavenly testimony of the Father, and finally alludes to the Holy Scriptures, that testify of Him.

1. The testimony of John the Baptist.

"And this is the witness of John:... I am not the Christ... On the morrow he sees Jesus coming to him, and says, Behold the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world... And I have seen and borne witness that this is the Son of God." (John. 1:19,20,29,34).

Against the expressed will of the Jews, desiring to reject Him, Jesus brings first the testimony of John the Baptist. Not because He depended on a human testimony for His own honour, but in order to save sinners His love reminded them of the words of the greatest of all prophets. John the Baptist had announced the glories of Christ which we find in the first chapter of John. He is the Word, He is God, He is the Creator, He is the Light, He is Life, He is the promised Messiah. Never had any prophet spoken of so many glories of the promised One. John had accentuated before the Jews that sent their delegates, that he, John was not the Christ, and then John, pointing with his finger to the Lord Jesus crowns his testimony with these two great glories. "Behold the Lamb of God...this is the Son of God..."

And in the fifth chapter Jesus gives this testimony concerning John: "He was the burning and shining lamp, and ye were willing for a season to rejoice in His light." (John 5:35). Indeed, since Malachi there had not been raised any prophet in Israel, and thus the people rejoiced very much that God made Himself heard again by the mouth of such a prophet. But the special object of the service of John was to announce the Messiah, who came immediately after him. In order to profit really by the message of John, it was necessary to accept the Lord Jesus, not only as Messiah, but also as the Son of God. Alas! the Jews continued to refuse Him, in spite of this clear testimony. They rejected His divine glory.

2. The testimony of the works of Jesus.

"But I have the witness that is greater than that of John, for the works which the Father has given me that I should complete them, the works themselves which I do, bear witness concerning me, that the Father has sent me" (John. 5:36).

The glory of the Son of God was hidden for natural man, whose eyes were blinded by the power of darkness. But in the works of Jesus something of His glory was displayed before all, in order to produce faith in Him. The miracles which He accomplished were obviously of divine origin. God alone was able to heal the sick, to raise the dead, to change water into wine. These divine miracles and signs were a proof to the people of Israel that Jehovah had come in the midst of His people in the Person of His Son. At the end of his gospel, John writes that all that he described served to bring the

reader to faith in the Son of God. He speaks of seven miracles. Each of these miracles show in a special manner the work of the Son of God in immediate dependance on His Father and in presence of the total lack of strength in natural man. We resume the three most important miracles here:

A) The Son of God heals the lame man.

The poor and beggarly elements of the Old Covenant, the law and the ministry of angels, the temple, the priest hood, the sabbath, and all that belongs to these powerless earthly resources, must be replaced by the lifegiving power of the Son of God. "There was a certain man there who had been suffering under his infirmity thirty and eight years...Jesus says to him, Arise take up thy couch and walk. And immediately the man became well..." (John. 5:5,8,9) This gospel story brings us to the pool of Bethesda with its five porches, and the occasional intervention of divine mercy by an angel...all a picture of the dispensation of the law. Among the sick people there was a man who represented in a touching manner the position of a poor sinner under the law. There was a means of healing, but he was unable to profit by it, because it supposed strength in him who desired to make use of it; and strength was just what failed him entirely. What a striking picture of the law of Moses, which said to natural man: "Do this and thou shalt live." But what can a sinner, a slave of Satan, ever do for God? Sin took away from him all fitness to do good in spite of his best intentions. "For we being still without strength, in the due time, Christ has died for the ungodly" (Rom. 5:6).

B) The Son of God manifests Himself to the blind.

The man born blind of John 9 had been healed by his washing in Siloam, and had given testimony to Christ as a prophet. Now he has to discover that the most delightful Object for eyes that see, is the Lord Jesus Himself. Jesus had not lost him out of view, but awaited the favorable moment to manifest Himself to him as the necessary Object for his heart. For his new life he needed a new Object to love, because this visible world no longer satisfies those who are born again, and have tasted that the Lord is good. "Jesus heard that they had cast him out, and having found him, he said to him, Thou, dost thou believe on the Son of God? He answered and said, And who is he Lord, that I may believe on him? And Jesus said

to him, Thou hast both seen Him and He that speaks with thee is He. And he said, I believe, Lord; **AND HE DID HIM HOMAGE.**" (John 9:35-38) Every true witness for Christ will soon find himself outside the religious camp, but such will feel quite happy outside because the Lord Jesus is there, and manifests Himself intimately to the hearts of His own. Jesus had prepared the heart of the born-blind man, that he might receive the great revelation of His divine glory. On His question, "Dost thou believe on the Son of God?" he answers immediately. "Who is He, Lord, that I may believe on Him?" Thus Jesus in our days opens the "spiritual eyes" of those who were spiritually "blind," that they may contemplate the glory of the Son of God. The Lord Jesus becomes the object of worship for the renewed heart; His divine glories and perfections fill the heart, and for a satisfied heart, the visible, earthly, temporary things lose their attraction.

C) The Son glorified in Lazarus' resurrection.

After having healed the lame man, Jesus had said: "The Father will show him greater works than these, that ye may wonder." (John 5:23). These greater works were the resurrection of Lazarus and Christ's own resurrection. In these miracles the glory of God was seen (John 11:40). Christ was declared Son of God by Lazarus' resurrection, before He was declared thus "in power" by His own resurrection. (Rom. 1:4). Jesus is in John 11 the Resurrection and the Life. It may be found astonishing that Jesus, when He heard that His friend Lazarus was ill, did not go directly to Bethany in order to heal him. He explains the enigma Himself. "This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God may be glorified by it" (John. 11:4). The thoughts of the Lord are not always ours, and in the circumstances experienced by the family of Bethany, it was not God's will to prevent Lazarus' death. A greater work than healing ought to be accomplished, that the glory of God may shine in this resurrection of Lazarus, and the Son of God be glorified by it. Indeed, what a glory shines there at the sepulchre around the Son of God, despised and hated by men, when, at His voice, life was victorious over death! How could this lifeless body, that seemed already to have gone into corruption, live again? Who could give new life, except He who possesses life and incorruptibility? Only God's Son, by whom all things have been created and who

sustains them by His power, can do this. "For even as the Father raises the dead and quickens them, thus the Son also quickens whom he will." (John. 5:21). The victorious power of life over death was come into this world in Jesus, and by His death and resurrection. He is able to give eternal life to whosoever believes on Him.

3. The testimony of the Father.

There are mysteries into which no man can penetrate. There is a personal intimacy between the Father and the Son that no one can fathom. Only that which is revealed to us by the Word of God can be known by us, weak creatures that we are. But we do not like the Athenians adore an "unknown God." The Father has given witness concerning His Son, and the Son has revealed the Name of the Father (John. 17:26) What a rich revelation when we compare it with the poor light that was given to believers under the Old Testament! Some beams of the glory of God were granted to the seventy elders: "and they saw the God of Israel and there was under His feet as it were work of transparent sapphire and as it were the form of heaven for clearness." (Exod. 24:10). Even Moses, who had the privilege of speaking with God, had never seen His face, but saw Him only "from behind" (Exod. 33:23).

The New Testament reveals God as Love; the heart of God is opened there, and faith admires the reciprocal intimacy and the unspeakable and eternal love that unite the Father and the Son. Love, delight and counsel existed in the secret of the Godhead, in the Father's bosom, as much as omniscience and omnipotence.

When the queen of Sheba contemplated the royal glory and the magnificence of Solomon's court, there was no more spirit in her. But what is Solomon's glory in comparison with the glory of the "only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father?" When we hear the testimony of the Father concerning His Son, must we not at seeing such glorious mysteries take our shoes from our feet, and worship?

At the Jordan, when Jesus had been baptised, the heavens were opened and the Holy Spirit descended as a dove and came upon Him. (Matt. 3.17). For the first time in the Scriptures the Trinity was plainly revealed: the Father, the

Son and the Holy Ghost. To the visible testimony of the Holy Spirit, the Father adds His audible testimony concerning His Son. The heavens were opened, and the voice of the Father addresses His beloved Son upon earth. The voice was tender and full of love. It was not the voice of the words at Sinai that shook the earth and made the hearers tremble. (Heb.12:26) No, it was the voice of the Father, who expressed His infinite delight and said: "This is my beloved Son, in whom I have found my delight." This testimony is greater than that of John, and doubtless the greatest of the four. When God saw the first man, Adam, in the full freshness of the first creation He found him "very good." (Gen. 1:31). But in the second Adam the Father found all His delight, or His intense joy, as He had found this delight eternally in the only-begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, "the hidden shelter of love."

The Father has given once more such an audible testimony: on the mountain of transfiguration the voice was heard again. The rejection of Christ by the people of Israel was so evident that the Father sought to turn away the attention of the disciples from the earthly kingdom and fix it upon the glory of the only-begotten Son. When thus the establishment of the kingdom of Christ, as the disciples expected it, was postponed their hearts were comforted by the personal glories of the Son. The rejected Christ, who soon should be mocked, condemned and crucified, was the beloved Son and the Father's delight.

In the twelfth chapter of John, when in answer to a prayer of Jesus a voice is heard, so that the crowd thinks that it thundered from heaven, Jesus says to them: "Not on My account has this voice come, but on yours." The Lord however had said of the Jews: "Ye have neither heard His voice at any time, nor have seen His shape and ye have not His word abiding in you; for whom He hath sent, Him ye do not believe." (John. 5:37,38) what a terrible responsibility to deny such powerful revelations.

4. The testimony of the Scriptures.

"Ye search the scriptures, for ye think that in them ye have life eternal and they it is which bear witness concerning Me."..."Thy Word is truth." (John 5:39,17:17).

The great subject of the Holy Scriptures, the Old and the New Testament, is the Son of God. The affirmation, to possess and to know the Word without believing in Christ as Son of God is an utterly false pretension. No one can understand the Scriptures, who does not first accept the Person of the Son of God.

THREE DIVINE PERSONS IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

In the second Psalm David, prophesying that God will establish the throne of the Messiah on His holy mountain of Zion, quotes a decree taken by Israel's God in favour of His Son: "I will declare the decree: Jehovah hath said unto me: Thou art my Son, I, this day have begotten thee." (Ps. 2:7) The future ruler of Messiah has several titles but His name is the Son of God. Though a veil covered the Old Testament with all its Messianic prophecies, till Christ Himself took away this veil, God speaks in this psalm very clearly about the future kingdom of Christ. In spite of all human resistance, Jehovah will establish His kingdom in Zion.

The expression: "I, this day have begotten thee" refers to His incarnation. He became man, the Word was made flesh, in order to rule, in a future day, over the world. Whereas in the gospels the great motive for the first coming of Christ is the salvation of sinners, according to the second Psalm He will come a second time, in order to destroy His earthly enemies by terrible judgments.

At the end of the book of Proverbs, there is a question concerning the Son of God: "Who has ascended up into the heavens and descended?...What is His name, and what is His son's name, if thou knowest?" (Prov. 30:4)

Agur asks a mysterious question to which nobody under the old dispensation could give an answer. What a privilege, that for us this veil has been lifted! By the testimony of the New Testament the Name of the Father and the Son have been clearly revealed.

THE KNOWLEDGE OF THE SON OF GOD

The starting point and the goal of all christian life, the secret of all power, victory and perseverance is the knowledge of the Person of the Son of God. The measure of our spirituality is exactly in proportion to our personal and practical knowledge of the Lord Jesus, as it results from our

fellowship with Him.

We have been saved for eternity, when our heart opened for the knowledge of the Father and the Son. And since, increasing knowledge has produced increasing spiritual life, if our practical walk answered to this knowledge."

The intention of the Lord in giving to the Assembly shepherds and teachers, and every spiritual gift, is: "until we all arrive at the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God." (Eph. 4:13). This knowledge is our greatest need, and increasing it, remains a need till the very end for every saint. All the ways of God with us are governed by His desire to communicate to us a deeper and more real and intimate knowledge of the Person of His Son.

The secret of the blessed life of Jesus here below was His perfect knowledge of His God and Father, and His perfect obedience to the Father's will. All His actions were the result of His perfect knowledge of the heart of God. The intention of God with His children is no more to give them laws and prescriptions, but to fill them with the knowledge of His Will. He manifests Himself to us by the Person of His Son, and produces the willing and the working according to His good pleasure. (Phil. 2:13). By the Holy Spirit we contemplate the Son in His present position of glory and exaltation, and by the same Spirit we are changed into His image, and enabled to walk as He has walked.

This purpose of God to transform us to the image of His Son, all things working together for the attainment of this purpose, explains all our experiences in our christian life, as much our blessings as our trials. In the twelfth chapter of Hebrews we find how chastisements and sufferings are used by our Father to our perfection, to print upon us more the character of real sons, the character of His beloved Son Himself.

Many think that christian activity is the only important thing on earth. Martha has thought this in the beginning, while Mary delighted to sit down at the Lord's feet in order to know Him better. Mary was enabled to anoint the Lord Jesus before His death, a blessed act of intelligent and spiritual worship.

Many times the Lord has permitted the outward activity of one of His servants to be hindered or interrupted, in order

to have such a one in solitary place alone with Himself. The deepening of the knowledge of Himself will increase the value of any form of service.

In times of tribulation this knowledge gives steadfastness when others stumble, it gives light and guidance in times of testing and perseverance under the most shameful reproach and loneliness.

Those who know the Lord will not trust in themselves, or boldly stretch out their hands to undertake anything in their own strength. The knowledge of the Lord goes with the knowledge that in ourselves, in our flesh, there is no good. The life and power of Christ is able to operate in the measure that we realise by faith that we are crucified with Him.

Knowing that His power is accomplished in our weakness, we should not hesitate when He entrusts to us a pathway of testimony that seems too difficult; confidence in Him, in the fullness of His glorious power, will give peaceful strength when all is shaking around. Constancy in testing times, reveals a rich and deep life of faith, the fruit of fellowship with Jesus, the leader and Completer of faith. (Heb. 12:2).

The apostle Paul, especially in his epistles written from prison, shows such spiritual richness, and reveals the secret of it. "I count also all things to be loss on account of the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord." (Phil. 3:8). This excellency of the knowledge of Jesus had eclipsed all other things and made them valueless to his heart.

The stars and the darkness disappear before the sun. All things fade before the glory of Jesus. Not only bad things, but also the doubtful lights of the advantages for the flesh. Paul could reject them, counting them to be filth, that he may gain Christ. His heart longed only for one thing, to know better his Lord, His Saviour, His All. To know Him in the power of His resurrection.

5. The Lamb of God

What an incomparable moment it was when the finger of John the Baptist, in which, as it were, the Old Testament finished, pointed in the direction of the Lord Jesus!

With what admiration the forerunner must have exclaimed

those wondrous words: "Behold the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world." (John 1:29). Indeed, this Man was the Lamb without blemish and without spot, by whose precious blood our sins have been removed forever.

The central thought, linked with the title "Lamb of God" is this: "Without blood-shedding there is no remission." (Heb. 9:22). By the bloody sacrifice accomplished on the cross atonement was made for our sins. The earthly life of Jesus Christ bears indeed the marks of meekness, humility and purity which make us think of a lamb, but before He died His whole service was unavailing, as far as the restoration of our relations with God are concerned. It is not through incarnation, but by sacrifice, that a new relationship has been established. Jesus went from place to place doing good, but His death alone has given us an entry into the presence of God. "He was led as a lamb to the slaughter, and was as a sheep dumb before her shearers, so he opened not his mouth." (Isaiah 53:7). The Lamb answers as well to the demands of God as to the needs of the sinner. Man can only approach God by the means of a sacrifice. Only at the cross the conscience of the sinner finds rest; at the Cross only was God perfectly glorified. "Therefore, having been justified on the principle of faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." (Rom. 5:1).

Personal faith in the divine Person and the accomplished work of the Lamb of God only can give to the soul this blessed peace, ignored by this poor world. The life was in the blood according to the law of Moses: "For as to the life of all flesh, its blood is the life in it." (Lev. 17:14). Christ is the Life. His life was spotless, but on the cross (and only there) He took on Himself the sin and He went into death. Sin was by imputation laid on Him when He was on the cross. He has borne our sins in His body on the tree. When He gave His life, sin was put away. The third day, Jesus came forth out of the grave as the overcomer of death and of sin and of Satan. "He was raised for our justification." (Rom. 4:25). The only way to "see life", is to believe on the Lamb slain. Apart from Christ all is death and misery. Only when with the eyes of faith we consider the sacrificed Lamb, who bore away the heavy burden of our sins, can we enter into the path of life and have a part in the eternal and unspeakable blessings of heaven. The joy of it increases gradually when we walk in

communion with the Lord, and will be perfect bliss and delight when we will see the glorified Lamb in heaven.

THE FOREKNOWN LAMB

The Lamb is described as "foreknown (or fore-ordained) before the foundation of the world. (1 Peter 1:20). This means far more than the prescience of God. It implies the expressed will of God, His decree, that His Son should come and die for sinners. Jesus, coming into the world, said: "Thou tookest no pleasure in burnt-offerings and sacrifices for sin. Then I said, Lo I come (in the roll of the book is written of me) to do, O God, THY WILL." (Heb. 10:5-9). "Who gave Himself for our sins,.....according to the will of our God and Father." (Gal. 1:4). "Him given up by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye, by the hand of lawless men, have crucified and slain." (Acts 2:23).

Our redemption is founded on the blood of the Lamb, according to the eternal counsels of God. The redemption was not merely the answer of God to our fall into sin, but before the world was, before the creation of Him who became Satan, and before the existence of sin, before Adam's transgression, the great plans of love existed in the counsels of God. The plan of redemption has not been invented as a remedy for the terrible evil which the enemy had introduced in seducing Adam and Eve, but this plan existed from before the creation. It was on the basis of the foreknown sacrifice of Christ, that the worlds, instead of being directly destroyed, went on in their course after that the universe had been defiled by sin. Had not a Holy God, whose eyes are too pure to consider evil, all reason to burn up earth and heaven?

In the fulness of time God manifested the Lamb and executed His plan of infinite love. Immediately, when sin was brought into the world, the glorious thought of the redemption by the blood was expressed in the figures of coats of skins, that God gave to Adam and Eve with the promise of the Seed of the woman.

THE LAMB SLAIN

We are reminded that the Old Testament is full of shadows of the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world, through the words of the apostle: "For also our

passover, Christ, has been sacrificed." (1 Cor. 5:7). What a touching picture we have in the Pascal Lamb, which the Israelites slew the evening before their exit from Egypt. The blood of the Lamb protected the whole people of Israel from the angel of destruction in that terrible night of judgment. In the same manner, the blood of Christ protects us against the coming wrath, because all our sins, and God's judgment against sin, fell on the Holy Lamb of the sacrifice. When Jesus had shed His precious blood for the abolition of sins, He went into the presence of God in the value of this blood. And now God pardons all the sins of those who believe, because of the value of the blood and on the ground of His justice. On this basis the sinner, who believes, is declared perfectly just in Christ. The work of Christ is accomplished, it is absolutely and eternally perfect. We are not saved by our appreciation of the blood, but simply by the blood itself. "Thanks be to God for His unspeakable free gift!" (2 Cor. 9:16).

THE LAMB AS THE CENTRE OF GATHERING

"And the whole congregation of the assembly of Israel shall kill it between the two evenings." (Ex. 12:6).

Not only is the blood of the Lamb the ground of peace for the believer, but the Lamb of God is itself the centre of unity of the redeemed. The passover lamb typifies these two viewpoints: the ground of personal security, and also the centre of unity. The whole of Israel ate the Passover lamb in a holy communion. Thus the children of God are now invited to celebrate their salvation around the Person of Christ, and to do this in communion with God and in fellowship the redeemed. The Holy Spirit is gathering now around Christ the glorified Lamb and feeding saints with His glories. Of their unity and communion, the Lord's Table is the visible expression here upon earth.

"So let us celebrate the feast, not with old leaven, not with leaven of malice and wickedness, but with unleavened bread of sincerity and truth." (1 Cor. 5:8).

But the Passover was not the whole feast; it was the starting point of it. We read in Numbers 28:16: "And in the first month, on the fourteenth day of the month, is the passover to Jehovah. And on the fifteenth day of this month is THE FEAST: seven days shall unleavened bread be eaten."

THE FEAST was that of unleavened bread. And thus it is in Christendom: 1 Cor. 5:8: "Let us celebrate the feast", does not apply to the Lords supper specially, but to the whole of our position and life.

Those who believe in the efficacy of the blood of Christ know that they are without leaven before God and free to present themselves before Him, clothed like Christ, with His perfect holiness, but they must seek carefully to walk in this practical holiness. They must celebrate the seven days of unleavened bread, when passing through this world. The number seven symbolises the whole time of our sojourning here below. May our life be a perpetual feast of true holiness before God.

THE LAMB AS THE CENTRE OF ETERNAL WORSHIP

"And I saw in the midst of the throne and of the four living creatures and in the midst of the elders, a Lamb standing, as slain...And when it took the book, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell before the Lamb, having each a harp and golden bowls full of incenses, which are the prayers of the saints." (Rev. 5:6,8).

The glorified Lamb in heaven is now the object of worship for the assembly on earth, and will be the centre of worship still when the assembly is taken away from this scene, and gathered in glory around the Lamb in heaven. They will see Him "as slain" in the midst of the throne, executing first in power the will of God concerning the earth. He will bear in glory, in the eyes of the glorified saints, the features and marks of what he has suffered. The four creatures and the twenty-four elders will fall upon their faces before the Lamb and bring him homage. He who died once upon the cross, will receive the domination of the universe.

The period that will begin when the Lamb takes the book and opens its seals, will be for the earth a period of terrible judgments, which will end in the "day of the Lamb's wrath." But in heaven the glorious BRIDE, the true assembly, will be united to Christ in the marriage of the Lamb. This union of Christ and the assembly has its root in His humiliation, His sufferings and death for the glory of God.

When blood and water came out from His pierced side, the

Father built Him a Bride, as Eve was built for Adam. The Bride is the fruit of His sufferings as the Lamb of God. And the Bride has herself shown to be ready to be humbled with Him and to suffer in a world full of wickedness and hatred. After the marriage of the Lamb, Christ will come back to the earth in radiant beauty and glory, and soon the whole creation will be united in worship, giving glory to the Lamb that has been slain. (Rev. 5:13-14).

6 The Son of Man

“What is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him? Thou hast made him a little lower than the angels, and hast crowned him with glory and splendour.” (Ps. 8:4,5).

“There came with the clouds of heaven one like a son of man, and he came up even to the Ancient of days...And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all peoples...should serve him.” (Daniel 7:13).

To Israel had been given the promise that their future king, the Messiah or Anointed One, would reign over all the nations. (Psalm 2).

But Israel has rejected its Messiah; and as it is not the way of God to reestablish spoiled things in their original form, Christ will come and reign as Son of Man according to Psalm 8.

In John 3 we have the Son of Man who is from heaven. He was to re-enter heaven as Man, to be Head over all things. As Son of God he has been appointed Heir (Heb. 1). He is such as Creator (Col. 1), but also as Man and Son of Man, according to God's counsels. In Eph. 1. 1 Cor. 15 and Heb. 2 we have quotations of Psalm 8. Man in His Person has entered heaven, into the presence of God Himself, without a veil, and all things are to be subjected under His feet (1 Peter 3:22; John 13:3; John 16:15).

The difference between Messiah and the Son of Man is seen in Matthew when the expression “kingdom of heaven” occurs. This is the kingdom of the Son of Man. As to Dan. 9:26, Messiah was to be cut off, and have nothing. Thus

Daniel sees Him as Son of Man, coming with the clouds of heaven.

THE SON OF MAN IN THE GOSPEL OF LUKE

The testimony which the Scriptures bear concerning the perfect and holy manhood of the Lord Jesus is of fundamental importance. Christ was truly a Man, born like us of a woman, though the basis of His existence and the manner of His conception were wholly different from ours. It is chiefly in the Gospel of Luke that our Saviour is represented to us as the Son of Man. The mystery of the incarnation must remain an object for our worship, and not become a subject for reasoning. Even the shaping of an ordinary child in the mother's womb is a mystery; how much more the formation of the body of Jesus in the womb of the virgin Mary. His conception is a wonder, wrought by the Holy Spirit. "And the angel said to her; Fear not Mary, for thou hast found favour with God; and behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb and bear a son, and thou shalt call His name Jesus. He shall be great, and shall be called Son of the Highest." (Luke 1:30,31). The conduct of Joseph is a wonder of holy reverence and of obedience of faith, so that Mary in nothing is exposed to the reproach of the world. The angel of the Lord announces the coming of the Firstborn in His own creation, and diminishes the fear of Joseph, so that he takes Mary to his home. "For that which is begotten of her is of the Holy Spirit." (Matth. 1:20). Jesus is born of a woman and under the law. In this manner the life of the Son of God began here below. He is the perfect Man before God, in whom dwells bodily the fulness of the Godhead. He is Immanuel, God with us. What a holy mystery: God and Man found together in one Person! The great mystery of godliness would have its starting point in the revelation of God in the flesh. His birth is supernatural as much as holy and blameless. Who had ever thought that such a Person as He would be born in this manner and in such a place? Who could think that a young maiden, unknown to all those who were of reputation in this world and who was engaged with a poor carpenter, should be the mother of the Saviour of the world?

Mary was indeed a chosen vessel, she obtained grace in the eyes of God. She was favoured through sovereign grace and blessed among women. He, who was announced by the angel, was a child that was really conceived in the womb of

Mary, who begat Him at the usual time indicated by God for human nature. He should be "great and called the Son of the Highest"! Before the foundation of the world, He was the Son of the Father. As a child, born of a woman, he bears the title of Son of the Highest, wondrous title for a real man. Christ is "over all, God blessed for ever." (Rom. 9:5).

"And it came to pass, while they were there, the days of her giving birth to her child were fulfilled, and she brought forth her first born son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes and laid Him in the manger, because there was no room for them in the inn." (Luke 2:6,7). Thus are pictured the surroundings wherein the birth took place. The fourth empire predicted by Daniel, Rome, swayed its sceptre over the whole civilised world. In order that the Scriptures might be fulfilled, God used an edict of the emperor Augustus, the first Roman emperor, to order the taking of a census of the whole empire. Thus Mary and Joseph went from Nazareth, where they dwelt, to Bethlehem, where, according to the prophecy of Micah, Jesus should be born. The place where Jesus was born is of the greatest significance. There was no place for Him in the world, not even in the hostelry: the great Creator of the universe had only a manger for His bed. Later on He has no resting place for His head and He ends His life on the awful cross. He has a part in all the weakness and the circumstances of human life: "Wherefore it behoved Him in all things to be made like to His brethren." (Heb. 2:17). This glorious Creator, who had been "covering Himself with light as with a garment stretching out the heavens like a tent curtain." (Ps. 104:2). was laid down there, wrapped in swaddling clothes in the humble manger! What a wonder of self-emptying and humility! This babe is meanwhile the center of all the divine counsels, the Upholder and Heir of the whole universe. And He became the Saviour of all those who, by faith, inherit life and everlasting joy. Therefore nothing is without significance in this coming of the Son of God, and in the fields of Ephratah the angels reveal their interest in this peerless event. A multitude of the heavenly host announce the unspeakable glory of the new-born One: the presence of the Son of God is the ground of universal peace, that will one day be established on earth: "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good pleasure in men." (Luke 2:14).

This good pleasure is not in sinful man, but in the second

Man, Christ Jesus, and through Him, this good pleasure is in all those men who by faith find shelter in His saving grace.

THE YOUTH OF JESUS

Jesus did not come into this world like Adam, who was formed as an adult, but He had to grow. The sober details about His youth which the Scriptures bring to us, are of invaluable worth for our souls. His human nature was always full of God and the delightful beauty of such a childhood moves our heart. "And when he was twelve years old, and they went up to Jerusalem according to the custom of the feast and had completed the days, as they returned, the boy Jesus remained behind in Jerusalem and his parents knew not of it...And he said to them: Why is it that ye have sought me? did you not know, that I ought to be occupied in My Father's business?" (Luke 2:42-52). Although as a child, he was obedient to his parents, He was always conscious of His glory as the Son of God. His human intelligence developed remarkably: "And Jesus advanced in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man." (Luke 2:52). From a perfect child, He became a perfect adult. The adorable plant grew and developed before God and men. Though He was Son of God, and was conscious of it, He was however just as any child ought to be only in perfection. His relation to His Father was as clear to Him as His obedience to Joseph and His mother was beautiful, becoming and perfect.

HIS BAPTISM AT THE JORDAN

The heaven itself has been opened to bear witness, that this Man is the Son of God. Jesus, the Son of Man, the last Adam, is wholly different from the first Adam, who abandoned God for the sake of a fruit. He is a dependent Man, living by faith and prayer. Just when He is praying, the heavens open. God's love is satisfied when He sees this humble Man, whose walk expresses: "I confide in Thee." (Ps. 16:1).

Then also the Holy Spirit can descend on Him as a dove, finding a pure place to rest the sole of His feet in the midst of an ocean of sin and revolt, in contrast with the dove of Noah, who found none. On the day of Pentecost the Holy Spirit descended on the believers in the form of parted tongues as of fire. On men like ourselves the Holy Spirit could only descend under a symbol expressing that the judgment of God over sin had been executed on the Cross, but for Jesus the fire of

judgment was not necessary: in this perfect Man God had nothing to judge. The Father expresses His love for His Son and thus the relation between God and man can be restored by the shed blood of this Man, because the heavens were opened not on a Person seated in the highest heavens but upon a Man who walked on this earth. Directly after His atoning death the invitation to believe in this Man is addressed to all men, in order that they might find fellowship with God in His Beloved One. Only the believers will enjoy this really, but the Cross has opened the way for all.

THE MINISTRY OF THE LORD

After the temptation in the wilderness, where He overcame the tempter by a right use of the Scriptures, the Lord Jesus began His public service. He had bound the strong one, and undertook now to rob his spoils and to deliver his prisoners. "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because He has anointed me to preach glad tidings to the poor; He has sent me to preach to captives deliverance and to the blind sight." (Luke 4:18,19). This work He could pursue without hindrance. He brought grace accompanied by great power, pardoning sins and healing sicknesses. His Word had power on hearts and consciences. Thus God worked through this perfect Man, who was filled with the Spirit. Hearts were attracted by His grace and found an object to which to attach themselves. No class is excluded the greater the misery, the greater the mercy: "They that are in sound health have not need of a physician, but those that are ill. I am not come to call righteous persons, but sinful ones to repentance." (Luke 5:31, 32).

Grace is like wine; new wine cannot be kept in old skins. The forms and customs of the religious old Adam must be put aside as soon as the true grace of God appears. Grace is love that overcomes evil, love that comes specially to those who are unworthy of it: to hell-deserving sinners!

Dependence was the secret of the power of the Lord Jesus. It is the secret of all power for service. On this principle of dependence on Jesus the twelve disciples and later the seventy were sent out, invested with power for testimony. What a stream of love flowed unceasingly from His Person! And when finally this stream of love found hindrances in its way, it over-

flowed its banks and thus overcame the resistance. At last this stream of grace found its fullest outflow at Calvary's cross.

There grace shewed itself much more abundant than the stream of human wickedness and sin, and from Golgotha the waves of God's love spread all over the world to the ends of the earth. By the cross the middle wall of enclosure that separated Jew from Gentile was broken down, and grace comes to all the nations. But during the life of Jesus, this truth was anticipated by some from the Gentiles who were blessed with faith, as for instance the Canaanitish woman (Matt. 15) and the Roman centurion, of whom Jesus said, that even in Israel He had not found so great faith. (Luke 7:1-10) Only twice in the gospel of Luke we read that the Lord was astonished. The first time he was astonished at the unbelief of His fellow citizens at Nazareth, and the second time He was astonished at the faith of a Gentile.

Did not the Lord here throw a glance towards the future, seeing in this gentile believer the forerunner of a rich harvest among the nations, while Israel would be hardened by unbelief?

This centurion had an elevated thought of the Person of Christ and a humble thought of himself. He acknowledges the dependance and authority of the Lord. Jesus heals the servant from a far distance, as the Prophet Elisha could heal the Syrian Naaman (2 Kings 4) at a great distance, when he plunged himself in the Jordan. Jesus manifested His power in a house which His feet had not yet reached.

Herein we have an anticipation and picture of the work of the now glorified Son of Man who, seated in the highest heavens, works unto the farthest ends of the earth by the power of the Holy Spirit. The Son of Man is the Light to enlighten the nations.

ANTICIPATION OF HIS GLORY

After receiving from the mouth of Peter the testimony that He is the Son of God, the Lord in the 9th chapter of Luke shows to His disciples the way in which the Son of Man shall be crowned with honour and glory through His rejection and death on the cross. But the third day He would rise again and be crowned with honour and glory. In the TRANS-FIGURATION on the mountain we have a foretaste of this

glory; and after this the thought of His crucifixion again occupies His spirit "And as He prayed the fashion of His countenance became different and His raiment white and effulgent." (Luke 9:29).

Moses and Elijah, who appear with Jesus in the brightness of glory, speak of the same subject as Jesus did with His disciples: "of His departure which He was about to accomplish in Jerusalem."

Then a cloud comes over the mountain top, takes Moses and Elijah away, and removes the whole scene. But before the Old-Testament saints return to heaven, a voice is heard, saying, "This is my beloved Son: HEAR HIM" And They saw JESUS ALONE.

When Christ descended from the mountain He had, in a symbolical manner to deal with demons, a poor boy possessed by evil spirits. These two go together the GLORY of the Son of Man, and the DEFEAT of Satan, the price of this world. When the Lord Jesus reappears in glory He will bind Satan for a thousand years; Satan's power will be annulled publicly, not only as a secret for faith, but as a visible reality, when the Son of Man will come in His glory, and that of the Father and the holy angels. (Luke 9:27).

GETHSEMANE

Several times during His life, the Lord Jesus had accentuated the necessity of His atoning death. Satan knew this, and in Gethsemane he came and used all his efforts to hinder the Lord from giving His life on the cross. The divine wrath was not upon the Lord in Gethsemane, but Satan, having the power of death and using its terror, made these terrors to weigh fully on the soul of Jesus.

In Christ, we have Man in His perfection, in the disciples we have man in his weakness, in Judas we have man in his wickedness. They all met in Gethsemane.

"And having knelt down He prayed, saying" Father, if Thou wilt remove this cup from me, but then, not my will, but thine be done. And an angel appeared to Him from heaven, strengthening him. And being in conflict, He prayed more intently. And His sweat became as great drops of blood, falling down upon the earth." (Luke 22:41-44). How deep was

the valley of trial for the perfect Man! During the terrible anguish which falls upon Him He watches and prays. He lays all before His Father and expresses in perfect submission the desire of accomplishing the Father's will unto the end. He has taken the place of needing an angel to sustain and strengthen Him, so intense was the conflict of His soul. The depth of sufferings, which He foresees more and more clearly in His spirit, obliges Him to pray more intensely. The consequence of His fellowship with His Father is that He knows perfectly, that He is to be confronted with the whole power of darkness. So really does He anticipate the sorrows which He must pass through, that His body is influenced by it: His sweat becomes as drops of blood. While He is in anguish He is still able to say, "Father." He speaks in His relationship as Son, not yet as a victim before God, but as One who suffers in His spirit. Now that He enters by anticipation into the depths of the waters through which He must pass, He calls from those depths to the Father. Thus He receives the power to continue in the way of suffering and is able to drain that cup of divine wrath against sin even to the last drop on the accursed tree. There is indeed a great difference between the sufferings in Gethsemane and the sufferings on the cross. Atoning sufferings and death were suffered only on the cross. After the Lord in Gethsemane had wrestled in the presence of God, and near the heart of His Father, He is calm and victorious in the presence of men. What a touching picture of the perfect Man—who was God—presents itself to our spiritual eyes, when we consider Christ in the garden of Gethsemane!

THE TRIBUNAL AND THE CRUCIFIXION

After Jesus received the cup out of the hand of the Father, wicked men continue their gloomy work. In the house of the high priest, Jesus was exposed to their mockery, hatred and beatings.

In the morning they led Him to the Sanhedrin in order to give a legal form to their lawless process; they had indeed condemned Him in advance.

They find in His words a pretext to deliver Him to Pilate as a political danger. "And Pilate adjudged that what they begged should take place. And he released him, who for tumult and murder, had been cast into prison, whom they

begged for, and Jesus he delivered up to their will." (Luke 23:24-25).

Jesus had said, "This is your hour and the power of darkness." (Luke 22:53). Men did not want Him, and God allowed them to have their way... "And when they came to the place which is called Skull, there they crucified Him, and the malefactors, one on the right hand and the other on the left." (Luke 23:33). Christ gave His life because eternal life for His enemies could only be obtained through His death and resurrection.

"Verily, verily, I say unto you, except the grain of wheat falling into the ground die, it abides alone but if it die, it bears much fruit." (John. 12:24).

Luke lays more stress than Matthew and Mark on the agony of the Lord in Gethsemane, describing the horror of death of the perfect Man; But Luke accentuates much less the sufferings on the cross, as he does not describe the aspect of the sin-offering. There is no allusion in Luke to the fact that He was forsaken by God during the three hours of darkness, when the sacrifice for sin was offered. He mentions the darkness and then immediately announces the result of the work: the veil of the temple is rent in the midst.

God prepared some consolation for Jesus in the midst of the mockery of Jews and Gentiles by the conversion of a great sinner. Paradise is opened for a converted malefactor, dying next to Jesus on a cross.

How full of light is God's side in this scene, where, on man's side, only the deepest darkness reigns! The veil is rent and every believer now has access into the holiest of holies in heaven by the blood of Jesus, the new and living way, which He has dedicated for us through the veil, that is His flesh. (Heb. 10:19).

Every converted sinner, purified by faith, has access now, by the Spirit, into the presence of God.

Finally, all is accomplished and the Lord cries with a loud voice. "Father, into Thy hands I commit my spirit." This loud voice is a remarkable witness to the perfect humanity of the Lord. In Him there was found no principle of corruptibility; never could any exterior influence cause His death. He had the power to give His life and to take it again.

(John 10:18). For Him death was not the consequence of weakness or exhaustion, and His loud voice was the proof, that He freely gave His life as an act of His divine power. Thus He has overcome death and can give His spirit freely into the hands of His Father. Through the death of Jesus, Death has lost its power... Next, another prophecy is fulfilled and His body is laid in a new sepulchre, for He had to be with the rich in His death." (Isaiah 53:9).

THE RESURRECTION

On the first day of the week the women and the disciples sought in the midst of the dead the One who is living, the Prince of Life; and naturally all that they find is an empty grave. Angels were needed to remedy this lack of knowledge which was a consequence of unbelief... "Two men suddenly stood by them in shining raiment...and said to them: Why seek ye the living one among the dead? He is not here, but is risen." (Luke 24:5). He who had been made a little lower than the angels on account of the suffering of death, now occupied again His rank of Ruler of the angels, and the angels, having desired to look into such mysteries, now tell the story of resurrection.

After this Jesus manifests Himself to the disciples, and entrusts to them the preaching of the gospel of grace. By the cross the door was shut against all that had its root in the old man. A new creation had begun that first day of the week. "So if any one be in Christ, there is a new creation; the old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new." (2 Cor. 5:17). Something entirely new had appeared in the universe by the resurrection of Christ. He is the Second Adam, the Man of heaven, and all those who believe on Him, are risen with Him, and new creatures. Not only has He put away sin on the cross, but He gives us the power of resurrection against the power and seduction of sin, and as a result a life of victory and communion with God.

The risen Christ is not a spirit, but still the same real Man; He shows the scars in His hands and feet, and proposes that they may give Him to eat. What a comfort for every believer to know that a Man has defeated Death, and that we share in His victory.

The same first day of the week, He appears to the disciples who went to Emmaus, and comforts them in showing

from all the Scriptures what had been written of Him, the counsels of God concerning the Son of Man. This delivers them from their narrow Jewish Messianic conceptions, and gives them a new and heavenly vision about the kingdom of the Son of Man.

THE PROMISE AND THE ASCENSION

The disciples now must carry the great news of a crucified and risen and glorified Christ to all the nations. Two truths would characterise the present dispensation: there is a glorified Man in heaven, and a divine Person, the Holy Spirit, on the earth.

The cross has annulled the old covenant of Sinai and opened the door of grace for the remission of sins, first for the Jew and then for the Gentile. Since for this testimony a power is needed, the Lord gives the promise of the Holy Spirit. "And ye are witnesses of these things. And behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you, but do ye remain in the city till ye be clothed with power from on high." (Luke 24:49). This could only be fulfilled after Jesus would be ascended and glorified: the exalted Man would send the Holy Spirit to bear witness of His glory. "And He led them out as far as Bethany, and having lifted up His hands He blessed them. And it came to pass as He was blessing them, He was separated from them and was carried up into heaven." (vs. 51).

7 Our Lord

As soon as we know Christ as our Saviour and Redeemer we learn also that He is our Lord. His Lordship is universal and embraces all men as such, but there is a special relationship between Him as Lord and the believers.

The apostle Peter proclaimed that truth the day of Pentecost: "Let the whole house of Israel therefore know assuredly, that God has made him, this Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ." (Acts 2:36). Paul also, after he has described the humiliation, sufferings and death of the Lord Jesus, adds that God glorified Him, that the whole creation will once bow before Him, and "that every tongue confess, that Jesus Christ IS LORD to God the Father's glory."

(Phil. 2:5-11). The Lord Jesus Himself, after His resurrection, said: "All power has been given me in heaven and upon earth." (Matth. 28:18). And Peter who presents another side of the same truth speaks of the false teachers who will bring in destructive heresies, "and deny the Master that bought them." (2 Peter 2:1).

So we find these two facts: first that God has made Christ Lord on the basis of redemption, giving Him a place of universal supremacy, and secondly that Christ has obtained the Lordship over all things by the right of the ransom paid. This thought we have in Matth. 13:44; the Man, Christ, having found a treasure, hides it in a field and sells all He has and buys that field. His purpose was to possess the saints, and in obtaining them He bought the rights over the whole creation. Christ as Man is LORD over all things, having authority over all flesh by the will of God. (John. 17:2, Acts 10:36, Rom. 14:9).

When we, as believers, speak about Christ as our LORD, we express the thought of our relationship to Him as servants. It is by God's grace, that we bow before His dignity, accept His authority personally and take our place of submission to Him. This Lordship was one of the results of His death, as Paul says, "He died for all, that they who live should no longer live to themselves but to Him..." (2 Cor. 5:15).

"For both if we should live it is to the Lord we live; and if we should die it is to the Lord we die...that He might rule over both dead and living." (Rom. 14:7-9). As believers we acknowledge that Christ is Lord over all, but also, by God's grace, that He is in a far more intimate way our Lord. It is our joy to confess Him as our Lord personally. Even those who reject Him will one day be forced to confess that He is Lord. It is our solemn and blessed responsibility to proclaim His universal authority, and to be witnesses of the submission due to Him by all, in this day of His general rejection. Here are some of our privileges and responsibilities towards the Lord:

1. We worship Him as Lord. (Phil. 2:11). As the glorified Man, Christ Jesus, who is the object of praise for angels and saints.

2. We pray to Him as Lord. When Stephen was stoned he said: "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." (Acts 7:59). Paul says "For this I thrice besought the Lord that it might depart

from me." (2 Cor. 12:8). In the next verse we see that the Lord Jesus answered him. Addressing ourselves to Him as "Lord Jesus" we express our position of dependance and submission to Him and His rights over us.

3. We take our place as servants, or slaves, because He has bought us with His precious blood, and because we are His property. Therefore Paul is pleased to call himself a slave of Jesus Christ. (Rom. 1:1, Phil. 1:1). This is true for all believers and not only for those who have a gift of ministry.

The will of the Lord is our supreme law. The character of a true Christian is that he has no will of his own; when self-will acts, all is in the flesh and the Lord is dishonored. Christ during His life, always did the will of His Father, and now we must do the will of God in obeying the Lord Jesus. The Lord blamed those who called Him "Lord, Lord," and did not what He said. (Luke 6:46). As soon as Paul was saved, he said: "What shall I do, Lord." (Acts 22:10).

4. His Lordship embraces also our house. Children of believers are "in the Lord."

5. It gives power to the preaching of the Gospel when we proclaim that every man on this earth ought to own the Lordship of Jesus, and that the whole world has sinned on this point, as they all do their own will. This is able to touch consciences, and bring lost sinners to repentance before God. Next we can present to them the rich love and grace of God, who sent His beloved Son Jesus. In this manner not only the consciences but also the hearts may be touched.

In the gospels, those who owned Jesus as Lord acknowledged that He was God, Jehovah. It is striking, that Judas, who betrayed the Lord never addressed Him as "Lord." When Jesus announced to His disciples, that one of them would betray Him all except the traitor said: "Is it I, Lord"? But Judas said: "Is it I, Rabbi"? (Matth. 26:22,25).

RESPONSIBILITIES "IN THE LORD"

In the epistle to the Ephesians we find that all our spiritual blessings in heavenlies are "in Christ" (Eph. 1:3), but speaking of our responsibilities the apostle uses seven times the expression: "In the LORD."

1. FAITH in the Lord Jesus (Eph. 1:15). Genuine faith is not only in Jesus as Saviour, but also as Lord. The centurion in Luke 7:1-10 was under Roman authority, and this gave him authority over the Roman soldiers. By faith He owned the Lordship of the Lord Jesus. As soon as Paul was converted on the way to Damascus he knew that he was a slave of Christ. Natural man likes to do his own will. The new man, having unfeigned faith, (2 Tim. 1:5) submits unreservedly to all the will of God.

2. A HOLY TEMPLE in the Lord (Eph. 2:21). In this scripture we have the assembly as it is built by Christ Himself, according to the counsels of God. This building does not depend on man's faithfulness. The assembly is the place where the holiness of Him who dwells there is acknowledged, and reproduced in a holy, obedient walk of the believers.

3. I say and testify in the Lord. (Eph. 4:17). Paul speaks here as an ambassador of Christ, responsible towards his Sender for all he says—the full truth.

The saints are responsible to accept his words as if they were spoken by the LORD Himself. The Lord will accompany with His authority that which is spoken according to His will. "We can do nothing against the truth, but for the truth." (2 Cor. 13:8).

4. Ye were once darkness, but now light in the LORD. (Eph. 5:8). When we observe the will of the Lord in all the details of our daily life we will spread light around us and we will be recognised as children of obedience or children of light. "Light has no communion with darkness" (2 Cor. 6:14). A walk in obedience separates us from those who disobey.

5. The fifth expression is an exhortation to the children: "obey your parents in the Lord." (Eph. 6:1). The children of believers are not seen here as pagans or as belonging to the world where Satan reigns, but as belonging to the house of God where Christ reigns. The expression "one Lord, one faith, one baptism." (Eph. 4:5) embraces the second circle of unity, or the whole christian profession. All christian churches and groups who profess that they acknowledge Jesus Christ as Lord belong to that circle. This does not imply that they own practically His Headship over the One Body. The children of believers are on the ground of the christian profession.

(1 Cor. 7:14), called also the "kingdom of heaven," where His supremacy is professed. They are baptised and educated under christian teaching ("one faith"). The question here is not if they are born again or not. Every child is responsible to obey its parents **"IN THE LORD."**

6. Spiritual warfare is the subject of our sixth expression. **"For the rest, brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the might of his strength. (Eph. 6:10).**

The first principle that rules the life of a warrior is obedience: he must strictly obey the orders of his captain, who represents his nation.

With the soldiers of Christ things are similar. We have to combat enemies. We are seated in Christ in heavenly places, and have there our blessings, but there are in those heavenly places also "principalities, authorities, universal lords of darkness, spiritual powers of wickedness" (Eph. 6:12). The combat is unavoidable when as citizens of heaven we desire to enjoy our blessings. The book of Joshua gives striking pictures of that warfare. Israel was in Canaan and had all rights on the country, but the former possessors were still there and had to be overcome. The secret of victory was: "Be strong and courageous, that thou mayest take heed to do according to all the law that Moses my servant commanded thee." (Joshua 1:7). For us also obedience to all the will of the Lord is the secret of our victory.

7. **Tychicus, the beloved brother and faithful minister in the Lord, (Eph. 6:21).** The important thing in ministry is not success, but faithfulness in the Lord. Obedience to the Lord's will, that is the secret of approbation by the Lord. "Here further, it is sought in stewards, that a man be found faithful." (1 Cor. 4:3). The world judges the value of a man according to his success, but God asks that self-will, self-seeking and self-importance be set aside, and that we do His will. "Well, good and faithful bond man, thou wast faithful over a few things, I will set thee over many things; enter into the joy of thy Lord." (Matth. 25:21).

LORDSHIP OVER BELIEVERS INDIVIDUALLY

The word "Lord" is used in two distinct senses in the New Testament. In some places it means "Jehovah," this is a testimony to His deity. In other place it is a testimony to

His exaltation as Man: he has been made "Lord and Christ." The first testimony of the Holy Spirit was to His Lordship as the Man Christ Jesus. (Acts 2:36). The assembly was formed by this testimony. In 1 Cor. 8:6:"...to us there is one God, the Father, of whom all things, and we for Him; and one Lord, Jesus Christ, by whom are all things and we by Him." The different uses of the words "God" and "Lord" are seen very clearly. The Father remained in original Godhead, but the Son has become a man and taken the place of LORD in His manhood.

Christ is **LORD** to **INDIVIDUALS**, but He is **HEAD** of the **Body**, the assembly. The unity of the Body does not rest on His Lordship but on His Headship. His Lordship calls every believer to individual obedience. They are called to obedience to the "commandments of the Lord" (1 Cor. 14:37). The first day of the week they ought to consecrate to His honour and service as the "**LORD'S DAY**" (1 Cor. 16:2; Rev. 1:10; Acts 20:7). The Lord welcomes individual believers, who listen to His voice, to partake at the "**LORD'S TABLE**" (1 Cor. 10:21). There we drink the "**LORD'S CUP.**" (1Cor.10:21) and we take the "**LORD'S SUPPER.**" (1Cor.11:20) Important decisions in individual life, such as marriage, ought to be taken "in the Lord" (1 Cor. 7:39) When a table is not spread according to the will of the Lord, expressing truly the Unity of the Body, such an act is not "in the Lord", and such a table cannot be called the "Lord's Table." The Lord hates every form of independency as being sin.

Lord is a title of authority over individuals, not a title to which saints are gathered. The lordship of Christ is not the ground of gathering. Expressions as "the lordship of the assembly", or "the Lord's assembly", or "the Lordship of the body" are not scriptural.

Partaking of the Table of the Lord is not the fact of being member of the Body, it is only the outward sign or expression of it. When it is said that Christ is head of every man (1 Cor. 11:3) this means His lordship over all, including wicked men as well as saints.

When the apostle speaks about Christ as Bridegroom for His assembly he says: "He nourishes and cherishes it, even as also **CHRIST** the assembly" (Eph. 5:29). Not as Lord but as Christ He cares for His assembly.

In the expression: "He that is joined to the Lord is one spirit", individual oneness with Him is obviously meant. (1 Cor. 6:17).

8 The Head of the Assembly

THE MYSTERY

A mystery according to Scripture is a secret revealed only to initiated persons. God has adopted the believers as His children, and His secrets, which were hidden in former times, are now revealed to them.

Paul wrote to the Colossians that his service was to complete the Word of God, obviously in adding to it the revelation of the mystery of Christ and the assembly His body: "...the dispensation of God, which is given to me towards you to complete the Word of God the mystery which has been hidden from ages and from generations, but has now been made manifest to his saints; to whom God would make known what are the riches of the glory of this mystery among the nations, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory." (Col. 1:25-27).

In Ephesians too the mystery is described:... "the administration of the grace of God which has been given to me towards you, that by revelation the mystery has been made known to me...the mystery of Christ, which in other generations has not been made known to the sons of men, as it has now been revealed to his holy apostles and prophets in the power of the Spirit, **THAT THEY WHO ARE OF THE NATIONS SHOULD BE JOINT HEIRS AND A JOINT BODY**, and joint partakers of his promise in Christ Jesus by the glad tidings." (Eph.3:2-6) This does not mean that the Gentiles by the gospel were brought into **JEWISH BLESSINGS**. These Jewish blessings are for the earth and postponed until the church will be taken from the earth. Paul says, that the Gentiles are "fellow-heirs. and of the **SAME BODY**, and partakers of God's promise." Both Jew and Gentile are taken **OUT OF THEIR OLD CONDITION** and brought into an entirely **NEW ONE**. Among the unbelievers of the world the distinction between Jew and Gentile continues unchanged, but out of the Jews and Gentiles a new class is formed on the principle of **FAITH**, the **BODY OF CHRIST**, in which all earthly distinctions are set aside.

In consequence, Scripture knows only three categories of men: the **JEW**, the **GENTILE** and the **CHURCH OF GOD**. (1 Cor. 10:32).

Continuing in Ephesians we find: "We are members of His Body; we are of His flesh, and of His bones...This mystery is great, but I speak as to Christ and as to the assembly." (Eph. 5:30,32). The special mystery revealed to the apostle was the assembly as Body and Bride of Christ.

We may wonder what was God's intention in keeping this truth secret during all the centuries of the Old Testament. It was because the Church is a heavenly thing, belonging to God's **HEAVENLY COUNSELS**, whereas the Old Testament prophecies only revealed **EARTHLY COUNSELS**. This shows how completely the Church has a position **OUTSIDE THIS WORLD**. It does not belong to the old creation, but is a **NEW CREATION**. The Church has a different origin from the earth, created in the beginning. It had been foreknown **BEFORE** the foundation of the world. It has been revealed at a different time from the prophecies concerning the earth. It has a different future from that of the earth, and finally, it belongs to a different **SPHERE** from the earth, that is to **HEAVEN**.

God did not want these two revelations to be mixed together, as they are mixed by human theologies.

While God's purposes about the earth were unfolded by the Old Testament prophets, the mystery of the Church was hidden in God, not even in Scripture. And when the mystery of the Church was unfolded the purposes concerning the earth were **SUSPENDED** for what is now nearly twenty centuries.

God will again take up His relationships and dealings with Israel after the Church is away from this scene. The Church is associated with Christ in **HEAVEN**; Israel was and will again be associated with Him on the **EARTH**. The earth is for the Church the scene of sufferings and rejection, for the Jews it was in the Old Testament, and will be again in the kingdom, the scene of power and blessing. The **BLESSINGS** of the Church are spiritual and heavenly; the blessings of Israel are material, political, **EARTHLY**.

But being heavenly, the Church's blessings are everlasting and incomparably, higher than any other blessing.

THE FORMATION OF THE CHURCH

The Lord Jesus spoke about the formation of the assembly in Matth. 16: "And I also, I say unto thee, that thou art Peter, and on this rock I will build my assembly, and hades' gates shall not prevail against it."

This was a prophetic anticipation of the formation and a partial revelation. The full revelation of the truth of the Assembly could only be given **AFTER HIS ASCENSION**. So the Church was not founded while Christ was still on the earth but on the **DAY OF PENTECOST**.

In Acts 1:4-8 we read that the Lord Jesus promised to His disciples a "baptism of the Holy Spirit", and in Acts 2 we read about the coming down of the Holy Spirit. (Vs. 1-4) This was the fulfilment of these words: "Ye shall be baptised with the Holy Spirit after now not many days." Indeed in that first chapter of Acts, the disciples were assembled, but only as a number of individual believers, without a corporate character in God's sight. At the close of the second chapter we read that the assembly, till then spoken of as a future thing, was already in existence, for the: "Lord added to the assembly daily those that were to be saved." (Acts 2:47).

The effect of the baptism of the Holy Spirit was obviously to gather into one Body or Assembly those who, before this event, were nothing more than individual believers, as Paul says: "For also in the power of one Spirit we have all been baptised into one BODY, whether Jews or Greeks, whether bondmen or free, and have all been given to drink of one Spirit." (1 Cor. 12:13). Every member of that body is as closely connected with Christ and with the other members, as limb is connected with limb in the human body, and as all the limbs are connected with the head. "For even as the body is one and has many members, but all the members of the body, being many, are on body, so also is the Christ." (1 Cor. 12:12). Not merely is the Body said to be **UNITED WITH CHRIST**, but to be **CHRIST HIMSELF**, in this striking metaphor: "**SO ALSO IS THE CHRIST**."

The limbs are considered to be absolutely **ONE WITH THE HEAD**, which gives motion, life and character to the whole body, so that it is all spoken of under the Name of the **HEAD**. Our minds fail to grasp the full extend of the blessing revealed in this image, but faith enables us to enter somewhat

into the closeness, intimacy, and the completeness of **UNION**, which is revealed in these scriptures, enough to fill our souls with admiration and worship.

The **CLOSENESS OF THE UNION** is also expressed in the passage: "Do ye not know, that your bodies are members of Christ? Shall I then, taking the members of the Christ, make them members of a harlot?" (1 Cor. 6:15) By the baptism of the Spirit it can be said: "But he that is **JOINED TO THE LORD** is one Spirit." (1 Cor. 6:17). Not only have we a new life and nature individually, but we are "joined to the Lord", so that our bodies are the members of Christ. How divinely perfect is the union with Christ, wrought by the baptism of the Holy Spirit. As Paul wrote to the Romans: "For as in one body we have many members, but all the members have not the same office; thus we, being many, are one body in Christ, and each one **MEMBERS ONE OF THE OTHER**." (Rom. 12:4,5) In all these passages the members are individual believers and not, as false teachers say, different local assemblies. Some of these go even so far as to say, that the different sects in Christendom are these different members of one body, the church. Such teaching has not any basis in Scripture.

In the epistle to the Colossians we find the figure of the Head and the Body several times: "And He is the Head of the Body, the assembly; who is the beginning, firstborn from among the dead, that He might have the first place in all things." (Col. 1:18). We can compare this with Matth. 16:15-18, where the assembly is associated with Christ as the "Son of the living God", and as the One who should die and rise again. The headship of Christ is brought out here in Colossians in connection with His divine nature: "the image of the invisible God." and with His death and resurrection: "the Beginning, the **FIRSTBORN** from among the **DEAD**."

Also here, Paul expresses the union between Christ and believers in a touching manner: "I fill up that which is behind of the tribulations of Christ in my flesh, for His body, which is the assembly." (Col. 1:24). The first lesson which Saul of Tarsus, the bitter persecutor, had been taught by Christ, was in these words: "I am Jesus **WHOM** thou persecutest." (Acts. 9:5).

In the same chapter, verse 16, the Lord said that He would

show the apostle: "how much he must suffer for my Name." Paul had learned on the way to Damascus, how Christ, the Head, suffered with the feeblest of His members persecuted on earth. And in 2 Cor. 4:7-10, retracing his experience, the apostle could say: "always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be manifest in my body." The Lord Jesus on high, on whose behalf these afflictions were borne, felt them, as if every grief were inflicted upon Himself. How beautifully all this expresses the living union between Christ and His members. Not only does He sympathise and feel with them but all the members are nourished by Him. The Colossians are warned against philosophers who were: "...not holding fast the Head, from whom all the body, ministered to and united together by the joints and bands, increases with the increase of God." (Col. 2:19).

The truth of the body is again accentuated in: "Let the peace of Christ preside in your hearts, to which also ye have been called in one body." (Col. 3:15). In like manner the Ephesian believers are exhorted to put away lying, and "speak every man truth with his neighbour, for we are MEMBERS ONE OF ANOTHER." (Eph. 4:25). The oneness of the body is a PRACTICAL thing ON THE EARTH, and all saints are RESPONSIBLE to maintain and display the character of the ONE BODY in their daily life. Our conduct must be conformed to our blessed relationships. National and social distinctions do not exist in the body. Jews and Gentile, free-man and bondman, all are members one of another: "But now, in Christ Jesus ye, who once were afar off, are become nigh by the blood of the Christ. **FOR HE IS OUR PEACE**, who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of enclosure, having annulled the enmity in his flesh, the law of commandments in ordinances, that He might, **FORM THE TWO IN HIMSELF** into ONE NEW MAN." (Eph. 2:12-15). Let us notice that the one NEW MAN, FORMED out of Jews and Gentiles, is formed "IN Himself," that is in Christ. The new MAN is the same as the One Body, spoken of in other Scriptures, the Body of Christ. The Assembly and Christ are seen as forming one NEW MAN, a mystical unity, which brings together by faith all those who were so opposed one against the other before.

"There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond

nor free, there is neither male nor female; for ye are all one in Christ Jesus." (Gal. 3:28). "There is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision Barbarian, Scythian bondman nor free, but Christ IS ALL, AND IN ALL." (Col.3:11). Seen as members of the body, all these differences have disappeared, and the saints are all "one in Christ Jesus", and Christ is "ALL AND IN ALL." Where the unity, made by God, and unchangeable in principle, is so much stressed as a principle of truth, it is not astonishing that our responsibility, to display practically that Unity in keeping the Unity of the Spirit is also accentuated in Ephesians.

THE DIGNITY AND GLORY OF THE ASSEMBLY

The heavenly glory and elevated destination of the Assembly are set forth in the epistle to the Ephesians. "And he has put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to the assembly, which is His body, the fulness of Him who fills in all." (Eph. 1:22,23). The word fulness means here complement, that is what has to be added to a thing to make it complete. The glory of the Lord Jesus would not be complete when in that glory. Hewere not united to His Bride and Body, the Assembly. Not only is the Lord Jesus spoken of here as Head of the Body, but as HEAD OVER ALL, God has exalted Jesus, and has set Him in the highest place of authority at His own right hand, and now God has made Him HEIR OF ALL THINGS, the acknowledged and undisputed Head of the WHOLE UNIVERSE, reigning, "till He has put all enemies under His feet." In this character, as Head over all things, God has associated with Christ, not as being a part of the dominion over which He reigns, but as a PART OF HIMSELF, the Assembly, His Body, the fulness or complement of Christ, who fills all in all.

As the glory of Christ is the measure of the glory of the Assembly, it is important to read the description of the glories of the Lord Jesus, first as Head over the first creation, next as Head over the New Creation, the Assembly. (Colossians 1).

In pronouncing such titles of exaltation of our beloved Saviour, the hearts bows down in worship before Him, who alone was worthy to receive them. After His humiliation and shame, after having been obedient unto death, yea the death of the cross, the Lord Jesus received a Name above all Names, a name of matchless supremacy, putting in the shadow every angelic or human name or power. Oh, that all saints may give

Him practically "the first place in all things"; this would put aside so much displaced human, aim for supremacy in the assembly. Did not the professing body, by this aim for human glory and power, loose sight very early of Christ as the Head of the Church, and of the character of the assembly as the Body of Christ? Did it not become the scene of human glory, earthly supremacy (Byzantium, Rome) and of fleshly rivalry, and will not the great Babylon be the final result of this work of man?

A special and blessed work of the Holy Spirit in these last days was necessary to bring a number of saints outside the display of human power, and back to the real knowledge of the Lord Jesus as Head of His Body, the Assembly, and to practical submission to His authority. As the whole ruin of christianity can be resumed in these terms: "Not holding fast the Head, from whom all the body, ministered to and united together, by the joints and bands, increases with the increase of God." (Col. 2:19), so also in these times of recovering when Christ has again the first place in the midst of the gathered saints, there is real spiritual blessing, power and growth.

9. Our Great Highpriest In Heaven

On our pathway through this wilderness scene, so full of temptations and dangers, we are comforted by heavenly resources when only we look upon Jesus by faith. Heaven is open now, the veil is rent, and the eye of faith beholds the Lord Jesus, whose heart so full of love sympathises with us in every need or trial, whose never failing power keeps us, and whose faithful intercession finds a perfect answer in the heart of God.

The service of our heavenly High Priest is indispensable for every saint of God, to be sustained in wandering through this hostile world. Some have thought that this service had something to do with the atonement of sins. This is a mistake, because the atonement of sins had been perfectly accomplished on the cross before the Lord Jesus went to heaven to begin His High priestly service there. This service of our Lord is not for poor sinners but for the children of God,

for a people that has been delivered from the judgment, and against whom there is no more condemnation. The Lord Jesus, after having suffered and died on Calvary, left this scene and passed through the heavens. "We have such a one High Priest, who has sat down on the right hand of the throne of the greatness in the heavens; minister of the holy place and of the true tabernacle, which the Lord has pitched and not man." (Heb. 8:1,2). He was "addressed by God as High Priest according to the order of Melchizedek" (Heb. 5:10)... "That he might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things relating to God." (Heb. 2:17).

The service of Christ as our High Priest is entirely different from His service as an Advocate (or patron) with the Father (1 John 2:2), which is the divine resource in the case of sins committed by believers. His intercession as a High Priest does not take place after the failure or sin of a saint, but at the moment that a believer is tempted and in danger of falling into sin.

Failure and sin are never objects of divine compassion; they never are seen as the normal state of any saint, and the compassion of the Lord Jesus certainly does not mean that, through compassion, He would less seriously condemn every failure or act of sin.

PREVENTING GRACE

"Let us approach therefore with boldness to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy, and find grace for seasonable help." (Heb. 4:16).

How comforting is this invitation from the throne of grace, God's divine love offering us preventive grace before the trial comes! When we take this invitation for us, in a life of prayer and communion with heaven, a special grace will precede or accompany every attack of the enemy. Has not the Lord Jesus been tempted by Satan in the wilderness, and does HE not know perfectly our need of help? There is, in the gospel of Luke, a touching picture of preventive grace, when Jesus says to Peter before his denial: "Simon, Simfon, behold, Satan has demanded to have you to sift you as wheat; but I have besought for thee, that thy faith fail not." (Luke 22:31,32) And in the 17th chapter of John's gospel, the Lord anticipates His intercession for us in saying: "Holy Father, keep them in

thy name, which thou hast given me... I do not demand that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them out of evil." (John 17:15).

We find a beautiful example of comfort in the midst of great danger in the words of the angel that stood at Paul's side in that night of the shipwreck: "Fear not, Paul; thou must stand before Caesar; and behold, God has granted to thee all those that sail with thee." (Acts 27:24). As a merciful High Priest our precious Saviour is now living and praying for us, in order that we may be kept in the hour of temptation and under the many consequences of the hatred of men, of Satan and of the world; sending help from heaven for those who wander across the barren desert, where we have to labour and suffer, learning how to resist the enemy's craft and power.

THE HEAVENLY CHARACTER OF THE PRIESTHOOD

"We see Jesus...crowned with glory and honour" (Heb.2:9)
"Having therefore a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast the confession." (Heb. 4:14).

With these words the apostle accentuates the great contrast between the earthly priesthood, existing still at that moment in Jerusalem, and the heavenly priesthood of our Lord Jesus. These warnings were necessary, as the Hebrew believers were in danger of returning to an earthly order of things, the flesh being attracted by the visible beauty of the earthly sanctuary and ceremonies. But the warnings of the epistle are written for us also, in these last days of the church's history on earth. A living faith is necessary to enjoy the heavenly priesthood of Jesus but alas! lack of faith has conducted to the falling back into a visible order of things. Indeed, the ceremonies and rituals in the cathedrals of professing christendom show this return to the Old Testament order, giving a place to man in the flesh, distinguishing an earthly priesthood or clergy from the mass of the "christian" professing people. The priesthood of real believers and their free entry into the sanctuary in heaven, fundamental truths of Christendom, have been practically denied and forgotten throughout the past nineteen centuries. The only way to be delivered from the delusions of the church systems of men is the free ministry of the Holy Spirit, who stresses the heavenly glory of Christ.

In our second scripture (Heb. 4:14) the Spirit as it were takes us to follow the Lord Jesus as He passes through the heavens. The heavens as we know them, the atmosphere and the starry sky, were only the outer gate or porch which He had to pass through in order to enter into the third heaven, the inaccessible light of the presence of God. There He was seen, soon after His ascension, by a Spirit-filled saint (Stephen) some moments before he sealed his testimony with death...What a striking picture of a New Testament saint, looking by the Spirit's power from this sinful, hostile world, into the opened Heaven and being comforted by the glory of the son of Man.

He found "grace for seasonable help" in that moment of supreme trial, and the crown of life will be his reward for his martyrdom. (Rev. 2:10). It is striking that Stephen saw the Son of Man **STANDING** (Acts 7:55,56) at the right hand of God, whereas in the epistle to the Hebrews He is **SEATED** there. This was because Jesus was waiting till the testimony of the Holy Spirit was definitely rejected by the Jews. After the death of Stephen Jesus sat down at God's right hand expecting, now, till His enemies become the footstool of His feet. (Psalm 110) It was by the Jews that the testimony of the Holy Spirit was rejected. The **CAMP**, the Jewish priesthood was not definitely set aside, and in this epistle the believers are exhorted to go outside the camp, to Jesus, bearing His reproach. There, outside human restrictions, under the free guidance of the Holy Spirit, they can fully enjoy **HIM**, who ministers inside the veil in the heavenly sanctuary.

THE SAINTS SUFFERING WHEN TEMPTED ON EARTH

"In that himself has suffered, being tempted, he is able to help those that are being tempted." (Heb. 2:18). For we have not a high priest not able to sympathise with our infirmities, but tempted in all things in like manner." (Heb. 4:15).

The heavenly position of the saints as it is taught in the epistle to the Ephesians is not found in the epistle to the Hebrews. Christ is not a High Priest for the Assembly as His body, but for the children of God as a spiritual people and priesthood, living on the earth. In our position as members of the Body of Christ, seated in Him in the heavenlies, there is no question of weakness or temptation; in their heavenly position the believers are holy, unblamable and perfect. We

find in the Hebrews our heavenly calling, and heavenly help for those who live on the earth in weakness and dependence.

In our first scripture (Heb. 2:18) the word "tempted" has nothing to do with the inner springs, which can lead us to do evil. Such a temptation the Lord Jesus has never known. He was during His whole life the Holy One, and the Just One, and had nothing to do with sin. Not only has he never sinned, but He never had any contact with sin. That is the meaning of our second scripture. (Heb. 4:15). This means literally: sin excluded. His human nature did not give any hold to the enemy. It was in the desert that Christ was first tempted by Satan, in a manner, in which no believer has ever been tempted. He, who was absolutely without sin, was the only One who was prepared for such an attack from the empire of darkness. The enemy was completely defeated. The prince of this world did not find in Jesus anything that answered to his temptations.

God's children are now in a great and terrible wilderness, where they are the objects of many temptations. But our Great High Priest has undertaken to bear us across that wilderness, and to bring us safely into glory, in spite of the hostile powers that resist against us. And however glorious and powerful He indeed now is, He is still full of that merciful compassion and sympathy for the weakest of us, because He has known weakness Himself and has overcome Satan by the power of God and by the sword of the Spirit. And now, as the Leader and Completer of faith, He will conduct to victory all those who put their confidence in Him. The victory of Israel over Amalek, conducted by Joshua when Moses was seated on the mountain, with his hands lifted up to heaven (Exodus 17:8-12) is only a weak image of the victories of the desert.

When the flesh is tempted it does not suffer, but rather rejoices; but when, in the light of the Holy Spirit and in obedience to the Word, the new, spiritual man resists against the attacks of the crafty or threatening enemy, the believer suffers. Christ suffered when He was tempted. He had the cross before His eyes, but the enemy was constantly tempting Him to come to royal power and glory by another pathway, without suffering and shame.

10. Our Advocate With The Father

The heavenly office of our Lord Jesus Christ expressed in the title "Advocate", or "Patron" (J. N. D. translation) belongs to His priestly office in the sanctuary.

But there is a difference between what He is as High Priest before God and what He is as Advocate with the Father. As we have seen under that title, His high-Priestly office for the children of God as a people on earth has a preventive character, and is not so much a resource in case of sin, but of temptation and weakness. His office as an Advocate with the Father is restorative in cases of sin. The apostle John in his first epistle does not speak of Christ as High Priest; he teaches us about the intimacy inside the family circle of God, the relationship of the children to their Father.

RESTORING GRACE

Poor lost sinners need for their salvation the cleansing power of the blood of Christ, but saints, children of God, need the power of the water to be kept in holy fellowship with the Father and the Son. When a sinner has found peace by the blood of Christ he is saved forever, and can never lose eternal life. But fellowship can easily be lost; therefore our God and Father has provided for restoration in the Person of our Advocate, Jesus Christ. "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins, and cleanse us from all unrighteousness." "My children, these things I write to you in order that ye may not sin; and if any one sin, we have a patron with the Father, Jesus Christ, the righteous." (1 John 1:9 and 2:1) In the footnote of the J. N. D. translation we read: Patron is the translation of the Greek word "Parakletos", the same word that is translated "Comforter" in John 14,15 and 16. Christ manages all our affairs for us above; the Holy Spirit below. I use "patron" in the sense rather of the Roman patron, who maintained the interests of his clients in every way. So Christ on high, the Spirit here for saints.

When a saint of God has sinned, there is a divine source for cleansing. The blood that purifies from sin and the water that removes defilement, both flowed from the pierced side of

our blessed Saviour and Lord. "This is he that came by water and blood, Jesus the Christ, not by water only, but by water and blood." (1 John 5:6). The world around us and the flesh inside us tend to hinder our fellowship with God. But God loves to have us so near to Himself that we may be perfectly happy and enjoy the heavenly blessings.

INTERRUPTION OF COMMUNION

The children of God have the precious privilege of being in fellowship with the Father and the Son. But that blessed communion, the secret of spiritual power and joy, can easily be interrupted and changed to sadness. One foolish thought or one careless word can hinder that fellowship, because God is Light, without any communion with darkness. Our Patron is with the Father, because no sin can break our relationship with our Father. But that word "Father" reminds us also how serious it is to sin against One who cares for us with such tender love. This thought will increase our sense of responsibility and of shame in case of sin; the intimacy of our relationship with Him makes evil more awful, as it is an insult in the face of such a loving but holy Father. We have here not "the sin in the flesh," but certain sinful acts. Now the service of Christ is first necessary to make us discover THAT we have sinned, and to make us confess our sin, and then to restore us to fellowship with Himself.

In John 13 we find the Lord Jesus washing the feet of His disciples. The water is a figure of the Word of God that enable us to judge ourselves in the light of God's holiness. The Lord said: "Unless I wash thee, thou hast no part with me." (John 13:8).

In the Old Testament we have a striking picture of the work of restoration in the 19th of Numbers, where the water of purification, prepared with the ashes of the red heifer, had to be applied on the third day and on the seventh day. The work of purification of the third day has to do with the operation of the Holy Spirit by the Word on the conscience, so that the saint sees clearly that he has sinned; and the purification of the seventh day assures the restoration in communion. (Numb. 19:12).

David, when he had sinned in the case of Bathsheba and

Uriah is a striking example. David had put his and Joab's conscience to sleep with the words: "Let not this thing displease thee, for the sword devours one as well as another." (1 Sam. 11:25), but God used Nathan to awaken the conscience of the king with a striking parable. (2 Sam. 12:13) so that he exclaimed: "I have sinned against Jehovah." That was the first part, the purification of the third day. Next, the prophet could apply the purification of the seventh day, saying "Jehovah has also put away thy sin."

God's first intention is to lead His own to His own thoughts about the terrible character of sin. The Word is His means to attain this. Thus we learn to judge ourselves and to hate sin, and to confess our sins as hateful. Then He restores us in the enjoyment of heavenly things.

SATAN THE ACCUSER OF THE BRETHREN

In the twelfth chapter of Revelation we find a war in heaven between Michael and his angels and Satan and his angels and the end of that war is the casting out of Satan and his host from heaven. (Rev. 12:7-9).

One of the oldest books of the Bible, that of Job, gives the testimony that Satan is able to draw near God and to accuse the saints before Him.

Also in our dispensation he acts as a sort of antipriest, accusing the heavenly saints, and in the coming great tribulation, as soon as he is cast out from heaven, he will act as antiking and anti-prophet. Other examples of Satanic activity in heaven we find in 1 Kings 22 and in Zech. 3. In Eph. 6:12, we have the principalities and authorities of darkness, the spiritual powers of wickedness in the heavenlies.

Satan cannot come into the immediate presence of God, in the light wherein God dwells, but he can draw near enough to accuse God's people before God.

As Israel had to fight in order to enjoy the possession of the promised land, so the heavenly saints have to combat those spiritual powers that are in heaven now. A saint who is not in full fellowship with God cannot be victorious in that battle, and cannot enjoy his heavenly blessings, because Satan profits of every ground to accuse a saint whose conscience is not at rest.

But the time is coming when the heavens will be purified:

"It was necessary then that the figurative representation of the things in the heaven should be purified with these but the heavenly things themselves with sacrifices better than these." (Heb. 9:23). Satan's presence is defilement for heaven, but on the cross Christ defeated Satan, and soon Michael will execute with his host the sentence on Satan and cast him out from heaven. It is indeed a form of Satan's rebellion that he ventures to intrude himself into God's presence and carry the accusations of His people before Him.

How comforting the thought that there is always, in the very presence of our loving Father, that blessed One who opposes the accusations of Satan, and who ever intercedes in favour of the children of God, the Lord Jesus, our PATRON with the Father.

How hopegiving also to know that soon Satan's accusations will be finished forever. "And I heard a great voice in the heaven, saying, Now is come the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God, and the authority of His Christ; for the accuser of our brethren has been cast out, who accused them before our God day and night; and they have overcome him by reason of the blood of the Lamb and by reason of the word of their testimony, and have not loved their life even unto death." (Rev. 12:10,11). Those who have overcome Satan are Christ and the heavenly saints of our period.

11. Jesus, Our Shepherd

The work of a shepherd is to provide good pasture, refreshing water, security and rest for his sheep. The Word of God depicts the lives of several men who were shepherds, as Abel, Abraham, Moses, David, Amos who, far from the attractions of the world accomplished their humble task. There, in the silent retreat, they heard the voice of God; in dependence upon Him they made the experience of His loving care, and became types of Christ, the Great Shepherd of the sheep.

Moses, who sojourned forty years in the wilderness of Midian shepherding a flock, became there "the meekest man of the earth." David was enabled to sing the glories of the Lord, his Shepherd, and to describe by the Spirit the sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow after these.

The shepherd character of the Lord Jesus is found in Scripture under the titles of the "Good Shepherd," the "Great Shepherd" and the "Chief Shepherd."

As the "Good Shepherd" we find Him in the tenth of John, where the Lord speaks first about the difference between Israel under the law and Christian believers. God's desire was to shepherd His people, but the whole of Israel's history had been full of unfaithful shepherds, of whom Ezechiel gives this picture: "Ye eat the fat, and ye clothe you with the wool, ye fill them that are fattened, but ye feed not the flock...neither have ye sought for that which was lost, but with harshness and with rigour have ye ruled over them. And they were scattered, because there was no shepherd; and they became meat to all the beasts of the field and were scattered..." (Ezech. 34:3-6).

After the darkness and coldness of man, the love of God would raise His Shepherd, the son of David. (Vs. 11-16 and 23-24). And indeed, what tender mercies we meet in the Lord Jesus, what a care for His sheep! He was moved with compassion for the people of Israel, because they were harassed, and cast away as sheep not having a shepherd. (Matth. 9:36).

His heart went out first with love towards His people, and He sent His disciples first to all the scattered sheep of the house of Israel. (Matth. 10:6).

THE SHEPHERD, THE SHEEP AND THE PORTER

Jesus starts the teaching of the wonderful tenth chapter of John with the words: "Verily, verily, I say to you, He that enters not in by the door to the fold of the sheep, but mounts up elsewhere, he is a thief and a robber; but he that enters in by the door is the shepherd of the sheep" (Vs. 1,2).

The fold represents Israel, separated from other nations, established outside the gentiles. God had given His law and many spiritual and material advantages to them. But the privileged and favoured people had forsaken the law and fallen into idolatry and sin. Since their return from Babylonian captivity they kept the outward forms of religion, but when Jesus came, they opposed strongly against Him. Nevertheless a small number listened to Him, and believed, and this remnant of real believers is called; "the sheep."

Mixed with the people, they were governed by leaders who

pretended to be shepherds, the scribes, priests and pharisees, but who were not called and prepared by God. As Zechariah described: "Feed the flock of slaughter, whose possessors slay them without being guilty, and they that sell them say, Blessed be Jehovah! for I am become rich; and their own shepherds pity them not." (Zech. 11:4,5). As God had not prepared and established them, they had introduced themselves and had the character of robbers.

Jesus, when He came, followed the way which Scripture had indicated long before by the prophets. God opened the door for Him, using John the Baptist as porter, who prepared His way. It is remarkable that when Jesus enters, His purpose is not to shepherd the sheep inside the fold, a building which protected them from outward dangers. In order to shepherd them He leads them outside. "To him the porter opens, and the sheep hear His voice; and he calls his own sheep by name, and leads them out." (vs. 3). This was entirely a new work. The sheep listen to the voice of the shepherd: it is this which gives them the character of sheep. The Shepherd knows their names and leads them outside the Jewish fold which was not a place where true sheep of Jesus could remain; in John 9 we see the man, born blind, one of the sheep of Jesus, cast out from Israel's fold.

Until the coming of Jesus God had not given to anyone the right and order to leave the fold, and even during the life and after the ascension of Jesus, many Jewish saints were unable to decide to leave it. The book of Acts shows how zealous the Jewish believers were for the law. (Acts 21:20). The work of Jesus and of the Holy Spirit was to deliver them from the bondage of the law.

"When he has put forth all his own, he goes before them and the sheep follow him, because they know his voice. But they will not follow a stranger, but will flee from him, because they know not the voice of strangers." (vs. 4-5). There was no liberty and no food inside the fold. The law was unable to give life and peace. Listening to the voice of Jesus and following Him, life and food and rest would be provided to them. Sheep are unable themselves to find their food, but when they follow a good shepherd, who knows all their needs, they are without care. When the heart of a poor sinner is filled with peace and joy and thankfulness in believing in Jesus, he will

no more listen to the voices of the doctors of the law, who deny the grace of God. The man born blind in John 9 discerned readily that the reasonings of the Pharisees were entirely wrong.

Now the Lord Jesus calls Himself the DOOR of the sheep: "Verily, verily, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep. All whoever came before me are thieves and robbers; but the sheep did not hear them. I am the door; if any one enters in by me, he shall be saved, and shall go in and shall go out and shall find pasture." (vs. 7-9). God had opened the door of the fold for the introduction of the Good Shepherd, born from a virgin, born under the law and preceded by John the Baptist. Now a door was needed to bring the sheep under a new order of things, under Christendom, which is no fold, but where the believers form a flock. Christ Himself is the door of salvation, only by Him we can enter into eternal life, there is no other way to be saved. Next the expression: "he shall go in and shall go out," describes the liberty which saints enjoy, and in which they prosper.

All those that had come before Jesus had been robbers and thieves, thinking only of their own earthly interests, and the sheep had not listened to them.

"The thief comes not but that he may steal, and kill and destroy. I am come that they might have life, and might have it abundantly." (John. 10:10). The Lord gave life to the Jewish sheep, but He desires that they may have it abundantly. During the earthly life of Jesus all those who came to Him by faith received life. But life in abundance could only be given after Christ had tasted death and was risen. The first day of the week, the day of resurrection, He communicated life in resurrection to his disciples, blowing on them the Holy Spirit, and on the day of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit fell on the gathered disciples, and they received at that moment life in abundance, the Holy Spirit, dwelling in them.

THE GOOD SHEPHERD (John. 10:11-15)

Here the Lord calls Himself the Good Shepherd, in contrast with the hirelings, another character of those who pretended to shepherd the Jewish sheep. "I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep,

but he who serves for wages, and who is not the shepherd, whose own the sheep are not, sees the wolf coming, and leaves the sheep and flees; and the wolf seizes them and scatters the sheep. Now he who serves for wages flees because he serves for wages, and is not himself concerned about the sheep." (vs. 11-13). The Good Shepherd does not think about His own interest. He came for His own sheep, and they are His property. A flock can be entrusted to a shepherd who is paid for taking care of it, but as soon as he sees himself exposed to the same danger as the sheep, he thinks only of his own security and forsakes the flock, because the flock is not his own property. Jesus, in taking the title of "Good Shepherd" alludes to His death. Not only does He care for the sheep but gives His life for them. So immense is His love that He does not count His own life as precious; at ANY cost the sheep must be saved from the threatening wolf. This love brought the Lord Jesus to the cross, to die for His sheep. His death was their life and security. David presented this in type. When he shepherded his father's flock, he delivered the sheep in exposing his life, killing the bear and the lion. (1 Sam. 17:34-35).

In Gethsemane the Lord met the wolf, Satan, who wanted the perdition of the sheep. Thinking that he would cause the Saviour to shrink from the very death in which He would overcome the devil, Satan brought all the horrors of death before Him. But the love of the Good Shepherd was triumphant. He laid down His life, the ravening wolf was overcome and the sheep were delivered from eternal destruction. To the crowd of soldiers, who came into Gethsemane to take Him, He said. "If therefore ye seek me.....let these go away" (John 18:8). Does not such a love touch our hearts, and enable us to love His voice, and to follow Him? Our enjoyment of His love enables us also to discern and to avoid the voice of the strangers.

"I am the good shepherd; and I know those that are mine; and I am known of those that are mine, as the Father knows me and I know the Father; and I lay down my life for the sheep." (vs. 14-15). He knows His sheep by the unrelenting interest and care of His ever active love. And the sheep know Him; all those who by faith enjoy His love. In Him the knowledge of the sheep is perfect; and the Lord does not speak here of the practical imperfection of the love and knowledge

of the sheep itself. The ground is laid for a perfect communion between the Shepherd and His sheep, as the communion between the Father and the Son is perfect. For this communion the Shepherd has laid down His life. Such a relationship goes far beyond the Jewish privileges or the attractions of the world, and calls us to separate from such beggarly elements.

OTHER SHEEP ARE BROUGHT IN

It was an unknown mystery that believers out of the nations would be blessed with heavenly and eternal blessings. To this the Lord alludes saying: "I have other sheep which are not of this fold; those also I must bring and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one flock, one shepherd." (vs. 16).

His flock would not only be composed of Jewish believers, but of all those poor sinners who would hear His voice and for whom He gave His life. This work, started by Himself when He spoke to the Samaritan woman (John 4), was continued by the apostles, and goes on this day. The division of the christian profession is due to the refusal or incapacity to listen only to the voice of the Good Shepherd. Nevertheless, in spite of these divisions, there exists only one flock of real believers, united by the Spirit with the Shepherd on high. There is one Body and one Spirit, and this will be soon manifested in glory.

Those who now, with an entire submission, listen to the voice of the Shepherd, obeying the Word of God, led by the Holy Spirit, are enabled today to manifest on earth the oneness of the true flock of Jesus, though it be in outward weakness.

THE SEEKING SHEPHERD (Luke 15)

A sheep is unable to find its way. A horse finds its stable, a dog its kennel, a dove the dovecote, but a sheep must be guided and sought when it is lost. This is a picture of natural man. "All we like sheep have gone astray, we have turned every one to his own way, and Jehovah hath laid upon him the iniquity of us all." (Isaiah 53:6). The work of grace towards lost sinners is described in the fifteenth chapter of Luke in three parables, first of the lost sheep, next of the lost drachma and finally of the prodigal son. "What man of you having a hundred sheep, and having lost one of them, does not leave

the ninety and nine in the wilderness and go after that which is lost until until he find it? and having found it, he lays it upon his own shoulders, rejoicing; and being come to the house, calls together the friends and the neighbours, saying to them, Rejoice with me, for I have found my lost sheep." (Luke 15:4-6). The Shepherd is seeking the sheep. God, in the Person of Jesus, came so near to poor sinners, that the doctors of the law were offended: "This man receives sinners and eats with them." Self-righteousness was accusing divine grace. But this grace was the very glory of God. The Son of Man had come into the world to seek and to save what was lost. What could attract the heart of Jesus to come down to miserable creatures as we? The answer of the Shepherd is that His heart went rather after the lost one, than after the ninety and nine that were not lost! He must absolutely find just this one. The poor and simple sheep is unable to fathom or to expect such a love. It did not seek the Shepherd. No, the same disposition that made it go astray, was ever active to push it further and further away from the flock. What a power in these words: "And go after that which is lost UNTIL HE FIND IT." In the work of salvation, God is the One who seeks, not man. In Genesis 3 God asked Adam: "Where art thou?" God was seeking, but man had fled from His face, hiding behind the trees of the garden. In our parable, it is only the Shepherd who seeks, the sheep went always farther away. It had no idea of the self-forgetting love of the Shepherd. The Shepherd does not solicit the cooperation of the sheep. The sheep, left to itself, would have erred till the very moment that the wolf would have come to rend and to devour it. The love of the Shepherd was prepared to face every sort of danger or obstacle, UNTIL HE FIND IT! Even DEATH could not hinder Him from finding His sheep. No, He descended to the grave, to the lowest part of the kingdom of death, and then He shook that kingdom to its foundations. The sepulchre had to yield its power. Nothing, not death nor grave nor hades were able to retain His seeking love. He continued till the moment that He could exclaim: "I have found my lost sheep." Joyful news: "I HAVE FOUND." In these words lies His victory over the power of Satan.

There is no complaint in Him about the pains and sorrows endured while seeking His sheep. There is no blame for the

sheep because it went astray. Joy is the only thing that fills His loving heart. "In view of the joy lying before him, he endured the cross, having despised the shame." This is the joy of accomplished redemption. "I have found." With these words we, as lost sheep, are brought beyond the grave, beyond the reach of death and perdition.

And this is not all. "Having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end. By the work on the cross His love was not exhausted." He lays it **UPON HIS OWN SHOULDERS.**" This is the resting place for the feeblest believer in Jesus. We are on the shoulders that sustain a universe, the power that removed the gates of hell carries us across the desert of this world. How certain is His victory over all that may threaten us here. He could say: "They shall never perish, and no one shall seize them out of My hand." (John 10:27-29). Blessed assurance, bringing a song of triumph on the apostle's lips: "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?"

And finally: "And being come to the house." The sheep is not left in the wilderness, neither brought back to the place whence it had fled. We are not brought back to the garden of Eden, or under the law of Moses. No, our destination is heaven, and the joy of salvation is heavenly joy, a foretaste of everlasting glory. Joy is there in heaven for one repenting sinner, rather than for ninety and nine righteous who have no need of repentance!

12. The Incarnate Word

There is something striking about the gospel of John. Though it speaks of the deepest and highest counsels of God, it is able to touch the simplest heart. The reason for this is that it reveals God's love in the Person of His Son, and love is the greatest need of every human heart.

"In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things received being through him, and without him not one thing received being which has received being." (John 1:1-3).

In this manner the evangelist states the divine and eternal

existence of the second Person of the Godhead.

The book of Genesis starts with creation, but John begins with what preceded creation, with Him who created all things. We do not find here: "In the beginning God created," but: "In the beginning was the Word."

All is founded on the uncreated existence of Him who has created all things. Before the work of Creation had started, He was there, without beginning. This expression: "In the beginning WAS..." excludes every thought as to the beginning of the Word itself.

The simplicity and clarity of this intonation is worthy of its theme. We have here three fundamental truths concerning the Person of the Lord.

- 1) The Word was God and in the beginning with God.**
- 2) The Word became flesh and dwelt amongst men.**
- 3) The Word was the only begotten Son.**

The first eighteen verses are a sort of preface, by which the Holy Spirit introduces the historical part of the gospel. The fifteenth verse is a parenthesis and contains the testimony of John the Baptist about his own low place. Such a preface accentuates the supernatural and heavenly character of this gospel.

With one sentence the Spirit of God draws aside the veil and gives us a glance into the past eternity. And there, by the light of the Spirit we see the Word, the only begotten Son of God, in all the majesty of His divine glories. From the limits of created things the eye of faith looks into the unlimited and uncreated things and greets in adoration the eternal Word that was in the beginning!

And this Word was the Creator, for there exists nothing that did not receive its existence from HIM.

Let us notice that the WORD is the subject of four little sentences in the two first verses. These four statements are able to defend the WORD against all theological attacks in all times:

- a) In the beginning was the Word.**
- b) And the Word was with God.**
- c) And the Word was God.**

d) He was in the beginning with God.

The pronoun "HE" is emphatic and personal, a preventive answer to gnostic subtleties.

THE WORD BECAME FLESH

After having described the original glories of the Word, the apostle now describes His incarnation: "And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us (and we have contemplated his glory, a glory as of an only begotten with a father), full of grace and truth." (John 1:14).

To this in verse 18 is added: "No one has seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him."

The expression: "WHO IS," is remarkable; it is an eternal present time as in Rom. 9:5. "Who is over all, God blessed forever, Amen."

We may wonder why in verse 1 in a similar way it is not stated that: "The Word **IS** God." The expression "The Word **WAS** God," accentuates, that it was thus before the foundation of the world.

In the words of men human thoughts are expressed. The Word expresses the mind of God, the eternal thought of the Godhead.

The Holy Scriptures are called also the **WORD** of **GOD**, as in Heb. 4:12. But though the written Word expresses also the thoughts of God, there is a great distinction between the personal Word of John 1 and the written Word. The Person of the Word is eternal and without beginning or end, but the written Word had a beginning in the time when: "Holy men of God spake under the power of the Holy Spirit." (2 Peter 1:2).

The Word possessed this capacity to express the counsels of God before the world was, but by His incarnation He was enabled to communicate them **TO MEN**. Before the formation of man there was a counsel between the divine Persons, for Elohim said: "Let us make man, in our image, after our likeness." (Gen. 1:26). There we have counsels and plans made known by the Word. This communication is its special capacity.

"And dwelt among us,"-literally "**TABERNACLED**," or

dwelt as in a tent. The tabernacle in the wilderness was a dwelling place for God, and it was an image of the things in heaven, where God dwells. During the life of Jesus, the fulness of the Godhead dwelt in Him as in a tabernacle.

The Word was invisible and dwelt in inaccessible light, until it descended among men, "full of grace and truth."

When the Word was incarnated it brought down all God's grace and truth. Grace is love that overcomes evil, and truth links the divine nature with the human, because Christ, as Man, was the divine TRUTH.

There is difference between the two expressions: "the WORD" (or Logos), and "the Son." The functions of the WORD were to create and to rule, but the Son was to reveal the Father and to speak about divine love, intimacy and tenderness. Both glories are united in Jesus who could say: "I ascend to my Father and your Father, and to my God and your God." (John. 20:17).

"And we have contemplated his glory, a glory as of an only begotten with the father."

These are the words of faith of the disciple and apostle John. The disciples had discovered His divine glory behind the veil of His humiliation. And they had worshipped their God in Him. It is the present privilege of the children of God to worship Jesus as the eternal God, Creator and Saviour. All the glory of Deity dwelt in Him when He journeyed on earth as through a wilderness. The glory which He manifested was LOVE, the infinite LOVE of God His Father.

THE WORD AS JUDGE

The Word will not always display only grace and love, for the day will come in which He will judge the rebellious world: as we read: "He is clothed with a garment dipped in blood, and his name is called the Word of God" (Rev. 19:13). He will come as the glorified Man, His head crowned with many diadems, and He will tread the wine-press of the fury of the wrath of God.

As there are unsearchable depths in His personal glory it is added that He has a name written, which no one knows but Himself.

He is the Revealer, the Word of God and this eternal

character will be then shown in judgment. How lovely the grace and truth with which the Word has been seen! But then He will come back in power and the meek and tender features will make place for a garment dipped in blood, symbolising the words: "Vengeance belongs to me, I will recompense, saith the Lord." (Rom. 12:19).

Men will be held responsible in the measure in which the Word of God has been revealed to them. It has been given completely, in the power of the Holy Spirit, and there will be no excuse at all to have despised it.

As the Word, the Lord Jesus will execute a final judgment over all who have resisted the Word of God.

13. Eternal Life

The first epistle of John is short but its theme is elevated.

Jesus is presented there as the Word of Life and as Eternal Life.

"That which was from the beginning, that which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes; that which we contemplated, and our hands handled, concerning the word of life; (and the life has been manifested, and we have seen and bear witness, and report to you the eternal life which was with the Father, and has been manifested to us." (1 John 1:1,2).

Eternal Life had been in heaven, as a second Person with the Father, and it has come down and has been manifested to chosen witnesses, among whom was the apostle John. The disciples had known the Lord very intimately. After John the Baptist had pointed to the Lord Jesus with the words: "Behold the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world," the disciple John had been one of those who followed Jesus. He was indeed able to say: "Which we have seen with our eyes;... and our hands handled..." The disciple, whose head had rested on the bosom of Jesus, was indeed able to witness about Him with intense love. He writes about "Life" and "Eternal Life," expressions which are synonymous. By the testimony of the apostles this eternal life is communicated to the believers.

"This is the eternal life, that they should know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent." (John 17:3). The manifestation of Eternal Life took place in

this world, not in heaven. The manifestation began when Jesus was born, and laid by Mary in a manger. And this manifestation ended when Jesus ascended to heaven. Since the ascension our Life is hidden with Christ in God.

LIFE IN THE DEATH OF JESUS

Let us consider two Old Testament pictures to illustrate the truth that we receive life by a dying Saviour: the brazen serpent (Numbers 21) and the scape-goat. (Lev. 16). The brazen serpent is a striking type of the crucified Son of Man. "And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, thus must the Son of Man be lifted up, that every one who believes on Him may not perish, but have life eternal." (John 3:14,15). The serpent is the image of sin. Christ came down to be made sin for us, to bear the curse for us on the cross. Sin came into the world when man, under the serpent's instigation, ceased to trust in a loving God. And sin is overcome by the supreme manifestation of God's infinite love. Christ was to be lifted up upon the cross in atonement for sin. Every poor sinner has received the deadly sting of the serpent, so that it is the portion of men once to die, and after this judgment. But how perfect and divine is the remedy: Christ lifted up on the accursed tree.

And now the Holy Spirit invites all those who know that they have been mortally bitten to look to Jesus for life and peace. "There is LIFE in a LOOK at the crucified One." Faith was the only thing needed. The wounded Israelite had simply to look to live; not to look to his own miserable state, but to look to the divine remedy, the only way to receive life and health.

The sinner is called simply to look to Jesus with the eye of faith; Jesus, whose death and resurrection form the eternal foundation of our life and peace and hope

On the day of atonement two goats represented the atoning work of the Lord Jesus. The first goat represented Christ crucified as the One who has satisfied all the righteous claims of God as to holiness and justice.

The second goat or scape-goat typifies the death of the Lord Jesus as the basis of our salvation. "And Aaron shall lay both his hands on the head of the living goat, and confess over it all the iniquities of the children of Israel...and shall send him away to the wilderness by the hand of a man standing

ready." (Lev. 16:20-22).

All our sins were laid upon Jesus and have disappeared in a land without remembrance. To maintain God's glory was the first and main object of Jesus, and on that basis, our sins were perfectly put away. Our sins have disappeared, and never can be found again.

NEW BIRTH AND ETERNAL LIFE

In the 3rd chapter of John we find both the new birth and eternal life. They are not synonymous. The new birth belongs to those things which Nicodemus ought to have known, the earthly things. Eternal life belongs to the heavenly things which came down in the Son of Man from heaven. Where as new birth is a change operated in us by the Holy Spirit, the gift of eternal life is the indwelling of Christ in us by the Holy Spirit. "And this is the witness, that God has given to us eternal life; and this life is in his Son. He that has the Son has life: he that has not the Son of God has not life." (1 John 5:11,12).

The saints of the Old Testament had life, but saints of our dispensation have life in the Son, eternal life having been manifested as a Person. "And we know that the Son of God has come, and has given us an understanding that we should know Him that is true; and we are in Him that is true, in His Son Jesus Christ. HE is the true God, eternal life." (1 John.5:20).

ASSURANCE OF ETERNAL LIFE

Ignorance or doubt about the possession of eternal life is contrary to the will of God. Not only does Scripture accentuate that every one who believes HAS eternal life, but the Holy Spirit gives an inner testimony to our spirit "He that believes on the Son HAS eternal life...he that believes him that has sent me, HAS eternal life, and does not come into judgment... These things have I written to you that ye may KNOW that ye HAVE eternal life..." (John 3:2,36; 5:24, 1 John 5:13). One of the manifestations of this life is love for the brethren: "We KNOW that we HAVE passed from death to life, because we love the brethren." (1 John 3:14). "The Spirit itself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God." (Rom. 8:16).

OUR LIFE WILL BE MANIFESTED

Our life is now hidden with Christ in God. The world is unable to understand that believers have another life as well as natural, animal life.

But the day of the manifestation of our life will soon come. "For you have died and your life is hid with the Christ in God. When the Christ is manifested, who is our life, then shall ye also be manifested with Him in glory." (Col. 3:3,4) "What we shall be has not yet been manifested, we know that if it is manifested, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is." (1 John 3:2). Then, when at the glorious appearing of Jesus we will follow him, to be seen by every eye, the world will know why we did not walk with them, and why our delight was not in the vain and earthly things but in the invisible things that are above, in Christ Himself, who is our LIFE.

14. The King of Kings

Though the expression "King Jesus" is current in the Christian profession, rarely is the right meaning understood. The Lord is erroneously considered as "King of the Church," others call Him "King of our hearts," but His future kingdom over Israel and over the nations is a mystery, only revealed to those who understand prophecy by the Holy Spirit. Shadows of it were already found in the tabernacle. For the journey through the wilderness the table of shewbread was covered with three cloths, (Numbers 4:7) on which the holy vessels were placed, all covered with badgers skins, which protected by its simplicity the riches of the tabernacle. The purple cloth speaks about the royal glories of Jesus, seen also in the curtains of the tabernacle. During the wilderness journey the cloths were hidden by the badgers skins. Similarly the royal glories of Christ remain a mystery for this world. But soon these glories will be manifested.

The title "King of kings" was given to rulers of empires embracing several nations, as Nebucadnezzar, Artaxerxes, Darius, Alexander (Ezek. 26:7, Ezra 7:12, Dan. 2:7). On a far wider scale the Lord Jesus will be King of kings and Lord of Lords. Every knee in heaven and on earth will bow before Him.

THE SECOND PHASE OF HIS COMING

The rapture of the Assembly and the absence of the Holy Spirit will pave the way for the manifestation of the man of sin (2 Thess. 2). When, under the direction of the Beast and the false prophet, all the kings of the earth will be united for the war against the Lamb, Christ will appear in glorious power. (Mat. 21:30; 2 Thes. 1:9-10).

The seventeenth of Revelation describes the mobilisation of all the military powers of the earth under the direction of the Beast. They will have one mind, inspired by Satan, to make war against Christ, the expected Lamb from heaven. "These have one mind and give their power and authority to the beast. These shall make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb shall overcome them; for He Lord of Lords and King of Kings; and they that are with him called and chosen and faithful." (Rev. 17:13,14). "The kings of the earth set themselves, and the princes plot together, against Jehovah and against his anointed; Let us break their bonds asunder, and cast away their cords from us! He that dwelleth in the heaven shall laugh...I have anointed My king upon Zion, the hill of My holiness." (Ps. 2).

Though the unification of Europe under Rome is prepared during long years, the duration of the reign of ten kings under the Roman Beast will be only short. That future Union of Nations under Satan will only be able to further the counsels of God. First must great Babylon, amalgamation of apostate churches, be seated on the Roman Beast. Religious Rome will for a time rule over political Rome. But in the middle of the week, (Dan. 9:27) the ten kings will hate and destroy great Babylon, and at the end of the week, the united kings will be destroyed by the Lamb as King of Kings. What will be the armies of men in the eyes of their Creator?

VICTORY OF THE LAMB

When men will have found "peace, peace, and no danger" on the iniquitous basis of hatred against Christ, the solution of the world's problems will be near, and the Lamb will establish real peace and righteousness. "And I saw the heaven opened, and behold, a white horse and one sitting on it, called Faithful and True, and He judges and makes war in righteousness. And His eyes are a flame of fire, and upon His head

many diadems having a name written which...And he has upon garment, and upon his thigh, a name written, King of kings, and Lord of Lords." (Rev. 19:11-16). "The earth quaketh before them; the heavens tremble; the sun and the moon are darkened and the stars withdraw their shining. And Jehovah uttereth his voice before his army; for His camp is very great..." (Joel. 2:10,11).

Christ will appear in glorious power, with many diadems on His head, as called to world-dominion. The white horse speaks of imperial glory, and He judges and combats in righteousness. His eyes are as fire, because He searches the reins and hearts of all men.

His only weapon is the two-edged sword issuing from His mouth, which once called heaven and earth from nought to existence. The power of error coming out of the mouth of the dragon will no longer have power to unite his allies, and their war will end in confusion. Sin and lawlessness will have attained their culminating point, and will be swallowed up in everlasting judgment.

UNIVERSAL DOMINION ESTABLISHED

The reigns of kings David and Solomon were both shadows of the future kingdom of Christ. David, who had to fight many wars, gives a picture of the first period, when with a rod of iron, the Lord will claim His rights in every sphere of human life. But when all will be stabilised, quietness and peace will replace the storms of war, and the reign will be similar to the reign of Solomon.

The word will be fulfilled that a greater than Solomon will sit on the throne, and the kings and peoples of the earth will come to Jerusalem, owning His infinite wisdom and power, and bring Him homage as once the magi did at his birth.

The saints will be seated with Christ on thrones and reign with Him. The importance of their government will be in proportion to their faithfulness in these present times, accomplishing small and despised things out of love for their rejected Saviour.

Their ability for the administration of the kingdom will be obtained in the present school of Christ, where suffering and

trials are producing patience, holiness, obedience and wisdom. Soon their reign will show how much the wilderness journey has prepared them for their future task. Their power resides in the life that they possess in the Son, the power of Christ, given now to forbear all with patience and joy (Col. 1:11). Dependence on Christ will remain the outstanding feature of their service.

BLESSING OF THE EARTH

Numerous are the Old Testament Scriptures which describe the glorious blessing of the earth during the kingdom. "And ye children of Zion, be glad and rejoice in Jehovah your God; for He giveth you the early rain in due measure...And the floors shall be full of corn, and the vats shall overflow with new wine and oil." (Joel 2:23). Satan will be bound and unable to stir wars. The first chapter of Job shows that Satan has also power over the elements of the air, causing destruction and misery. The curse pronounced after the fall of Adam will have no more effect, all being subjected to Christ, who bore the curse. "I will give in the wilderness the cedar, acacia, myrtle, and oleaster...thy seed shall possess nations, and they shall make desolate cities to be inhabited...And the nations shall walk by thy light, and kings by the brightness of thy rising... There shall be no more thenceforth an infant of days, nor an old man that hath not completed his days; for the youth shall die a hundred years old...The wilderness and the dry land shall be gladdened; and the desert shall rejoice, and blossom as the rose...Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf be unstopped; then shall the lame man leap as a hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing; for in the desert...shall waters break out, and torrents in the wilderness...and everlasting joy shall be upon their heads; they shall obtain gladness and joy, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away...

The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid, and the calf and the young lion and the fatted beast together, and a little child shall lead them...the weaned child shall put forth its hand to the viper's den...They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain; for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of Jehovah as the waters cover the sea. And in that day there shall be a root of Jesse...and his resting-place shall be glory." (Isaiah 41:18,19; 54:3; 60:3; 65:20; 35:1,5,6; 11:6-10).

The whole earth will sing and rejoice, and creation will exalt the greatness of Jehovah, its Creator and Redeemer. Harmony, peace and beauty will only be weakened by the daily disappearing of sinners by judgment.

Alas! the end of the millenium will show that even that dispensation of blessing and glory will not change the perversity of natural man. A great revolt of the ungodly, their attack against Jerusalem, and a fire from heaven destroying them will end this dispensation of glory. After the millenium Christ will give the kingdom into the hands of His Father, and the saints will share the eternal reign in the heavens and the earth where sin will be no more.

"The Lord God shall shine upon them and they shall reign to the ages of ages." (Rev. 22:5).

15 Jesus Christ as Judge

The thoughts of many professing Christians about the office of Christ as Judge are rather confused, and generally limited to the prospect of a final judgment, in which believers and unbelievers would be gathered to hear their future destiny. Let us look to Scripture in order to have the mind of God on this line of truth. We find the following phases of judgment.

- 1) The judgment of the world and its prince, at the cross.**
- 2) The judgment beginning at the house of God.**
- 3) The judgment seat of Christ.**
- 4) The judgment of the nations.**
- 5) The judgment of the great white throne.**

1. THE JUDGMENT OF SATAN AND THE WORLD

"Now is the judgment of the world; now shall the prince of this world be cast out." (John 12:31). "He will bring demonstration to the world of...judgment...because the ruler of this world is judged." (John 16:11).

In paradise, without law, under law, and when Christ was presented, man was responsible as a living man. In every condition he has failed, disobeying in paradise, lawless when without law, a transgressor when under law, and when Christ came man showed all his hatred against God and against His Son. The tree has been proved bad and could no more bear

fruit for ever.

By the Lord's death on the cross, man's history is morally closed. "Now," says the Lord, when Greeks came up, "is the judgment of this world," and the apostle adds: "He appeared once in the END OF THE WORLD" (Heb. 9:26). The death of Christ has closed for faith the existence of the old man before God. If the cross has proved that in the flesh there is nothing but sin and hatred against God, it has also put away the sin it has proved.

The world which surrounds us is a judged world; and a world which has rejected righteousness and truth. The judgment of the world was passed when Christ exclaimed: "It is finished." In the very act of His crucifixion was its judgment sealed. The enmity of man against God was at its height at the cross of Christ, man's malice could go no farther, and God's love was also manifested in the highest degree. This judgment of the world is known to all believers because the Holy Ghost testifies of it. The world is now in a period between sentence having been passed and the final execution of judgment. They have seen and hated both Christ and His Father.

Man now must be born again. The old man being dead in sins, he must become a new creation. In 1 Cor. 10:11, the apostle alludes to this real end of the world's history before God: "Now all these things happened to them as types, and have been written for OUR admonition, UPON WHOM THE ENDS OF THE AGES ARE COME." The system of this world is no longer under any divine dispensation, but the whole course of God's dealings with it is finished until Christ comes for the execution of its sentence.

After God had sent prophets and servants, He finally said: "I will send my son," (Matth. 21) but they killed Him, and God was turned out from the world which His hands had wrought. The cross is the foundation of an entirely new state of things, and that is called here: "The completion of the age." The religious world may have plenty of profession, and may dream of progress, but there is indeed "ONLY LEAVES," and no fruit for God.

In grace, God carries the execution of the judgment, waiting with patience, that individuals may still be saved.

In the gospel the judgment is preached. When a sinner repents he accepts the judgment of himself and of the world, and shelters under the precious blood of the Lamb from the judgment to come.

In John 16:11 the Holy Spirit takes a judicial attitude and proves the guilt of the world. At the glorification of Christ the judgment started. God has set Him above every principality and authority and power. Satan himself is subjected to this power and authority. Thus the act of condemnation has already attained the prince of this world and decides about the position of the world before God now. The judgment of the world is pronounced, and the enemy is under the power of Christ, whom he opposed unto the cross.

The purpose of the Lord's first coming was not to judge the world. But in rejecting Him, the world has placed itself under judgment. Soon the execution will come. But first there is salvation for individual sinners. There is no salvation for the world as a whole or for any privileged nation, even when such a nation takes all the forms of christian profession.

2. THE JUDGMENT BEGINNING AT THE HOUSE OF GOD

The whole book of Revelation is a book of judgments, first of the professing Church and subsequently of the world.

In the first three chapters the church is seen in its responsibility, and as subject to judgment, and the Lord Jesus is seen in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks under the emblems of a judge. In the first verses the whole book of Revelation is called a "PROPHECY," so that the seven addresses in Chapter 2 & 3 also are prophetic. Though the seven churches were present in John's time, the bearing of the seven epistles is more extended. Each church in Asia was chosen by the Lord to depict an outstanding feature of the Church in seven periods of its prophetic history.

In the 13th verse of Chapt. 1 Christ is depicted as Judge. He shows the characteristics of the Ancient of Days in Daniel 17, who was Jehovah. "In the midst of the seven lamps one like the Son of man, clothed with a garment reaching to the feet, and girt about at the breasts with a golden girdle: his hair and head white like white wool, as snow; and his eyes as a flame of fire; and his feet like fine brass, as burning in a

furnace; and his voice as the voice of many waters; and having in his right hand seven stars; and out of his mouth a sharp two-edged sword going forth; and his countenance as the sun shines its power." (Rev. 1:13-16) The eyes as a flame of fire enable Him to know the hearts and reins of man, and to judge righteously: "For also our God is a consuming fire." The sword out of His mouth, the Word of God, contains authority for judgment. The brass also speaks of the fire of judgment.

In verse 19, which divides the book of Revelation into three parts, our present dispensation in which the church is on earth is called: "The things that are." The external state of the churches is described and this is also the history of the professing church on earth.

From chapter 4 we have the things that will take place after the church has been taken away from this scene, the saints there being seen in heaven.

In our present period the church is the "light of the world," the Lord expects from her that she be a light-bearer or a candlestick. The candlesticks have been lighted from heaven in order to give light on the earth. The church is responsible to represent the glory and perfections of Him who has redeemed it, and by whose love the church was created. This light must shine in the midst of the darkness—"in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world"—"shewing forth the praises of Him who has called you out of darkness into his marvellous light." Paul says in 2 Cor. 3, that the Church is the epistle (not the epistles) of Christ, a visible witness of the perfections of the invisible Head.

The Lord Jesus, as Judge, walks amidst the seven candlesticks to see if they are reproducing the light and grace they have received.

The seven churches give a successive picture of the responsible Church, or what is called Church-history, in seven successive periods.

a) Ephesus

The stars are the responsible and representative part of the assemblies, those that ought specially to spread the light of Christ. They are called the "ANGELS" of the assemblies. Each "angel" may be composed of several individuals.

There was faithfulness in Ephesus despite the evil that Satan sought to introduce when the apostles were passing away. They had refused false apostles.

But the Lord complains that they had left their first love. This is the first and most general symptom of decline. That which leads to ruin does not come from the outside, but always from the inside. When the links of real affection between Christ and His assembly are normal Satan is powerless, but when, from the side of the church, love grows cold, the door is open for the entering of all sorts of evils.

b) Smyrna

With the desire to stir up their love, the Lord permits that trial comes over the Church. The Roman emperors of the three first centuries persecuted the saints, of whom many were faithful unto death.

But there was also evil from the inside. Satan had formed a synagogue, a judaising party, perverting Christendom.

Not all the Christians lost their lives as martyrs. The aim to avoid suffering and to have a comfortable place in this world leads to Pergamos.

c) Pergamos

Tired of persecution, the professing Church fell into the snare of seeking protection from the worldly powers. The emperor Constantine proclaimed Christianity as the State religion.

In spite of growing corruption, at the council of Nicea, the truth of the Trinity was protected against the blasphemies of Arius. But once the Church was placed under the protection of the state clericalism was introduced—a victory of Judaism—and progressed rapidly.

Nicolaitanism is a system of ruling over the people, where as the doctrine of Balaam teaches the mixture of the church and the world, and leads to idolatry.

d) Thyatira

The four last churches continue till the end of this dispensation. They all contain allusions to the Lord's coming. Thyatira represents Romanism as it culminated between 1000 and 1500 after Christ.

In spite of doctrinal darkness there was much devotedness for good works. The woman Jesebel represents the whole popish system, affirming that it has a permanent infallibility, a sort of inspired authority to issue doctrines. The fruit is seduction and idolatry, children that share her wicked works and that will share her judgment.

But here a small remnant is accentuated: "The others that are at Thyatira." Little by little these separate from the corrupt system. The Lord invites them to hold fast till He come.

e) Sardis

Reformation in the 16th century was a work of God and a new beginning, but much of the clerical system and ways of Rome was maintained. In this manner, the Protestant churches, which issued from this movement, cannot be called the assembly of the living God, as they have rather the character of dead organisations, clerical bodies. The Lord says: "I know thy works, that thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead."

Though they are in possession of the Bible, no Protestant church as a whole will ever think of submitting entirely to its authority, especially on the subject of assembly order.

Still, as the Word of God was opened, and could act on the consciences, many individuals in Protestantism were saved by grace.

The Lord threatens to come to Sardis as a thief, because they do not have the living hope of His coming. His coming will be judgment for them as a whole, as it will be for this world. Protestantism is much mixed with the political powers in this world, a principle already condemned in the letter to Pergamos.

f) Philadelphia

The blessed truth that Jesus, as the Holy and True One, has promised to be present in the midst of two or three gathered unto His Name characterised a new beginning in the 19th century. A faithful remnant separated from iniquity to enjoy communion with Christ. This epistle shows that such a faithful remnant will be kept by Himself till His very coming.

No great works are mentioned here, nothing to attract the world's attention or admiration, or even the estimation of man.

Where Christ is all, man receives no glory at all. There being nothing for man to glorify in, only those that walk intimately with Christ are attracted. Philadelphia walks in the footsteps of a rejected Christ. It bears His reproach outside the camp of man's religion. What characterises them is that they have KEPT HIS WORD, and NOT DENIED HIS NAME.

Their opposers are the same as for Smyrna, judaism and clericalism.

An hour of trial will come over the world, but Philadelphia will be taken to be with the Lord before that hour comes, as Enoch was taken before the flood came. All believers will share the blessing of His coming.

A crown is promised on condition of holding fast what God has entrusted to Philadelphia. It has the Word of Truth, the Presence of the Lord Jesus, and the power of holiness separation from evil. Christ is all for her affections, and "Philadelphia"-real brotherly love-is the result of this.

g) Laodicea

This last state of professing Christendom results in the rejection of the truth entrusted to Philadelphia. Not only Catholicism and Protestantism, but the great bodies of "Brethren" have practically rejected the truth entrusted to Philadelphia, the truth concerning the Lord's presence and authority in the midst of two or three gathered unto His name.

This rejection gives to all that share in it, doctrinally AND practically, the awful character of LAODICEA. This character is lukewarmness, indifference as to the rights and glory of Christ, the Holy and True One.

There was a historic Laodicea in John's day, and there is a prophetic Laodicea in our last and closing days. The apostle Paul wrote in his epistle to the "holy and faithful brethren in Christ which are in Colosse." "For I bear him witness that he labours much for you, and them in Laodicea, and then in Hierapolis" (Col. 4:13). Only after the Lord's coming will there exist a profession without believers, apostate; and Babylon will be the result of an unified profession.

The judgments pronounced on Thyatira, Sardis and

Tadicea will be executed after the Lord's coming. Great Babylon will be remembered and receive a double torment and grief for all her iniquities (Rev. 18:6).

SELF-JUDGMENT AND DISCIPLINE

The expression "THE JUDGMENT BEGINS AT THE HOUSE OF GOD" implies also the judgment by the saints who compose the assembly in cases where saints fail to judge themselves. "But if we judged ourselves, we were not judged." (1 Cor. 11:31). "For what have I to do with judging those outside also? But those within God judges." (1 Cor. 5:12,13).

When as Christians we have, by grace, the privilege of partaking at the Lord's Table, we are called also to EXAMINE and to JUDGE, not only our ways, but above all OURSELVES. Christ has undergone on the cross the judgment for our sins, and we are exhorted to judge ourselves in the light of HIS holiness, and to announce His death. This holy exercise of judgment of SELF must be a deep thing, serious and habitual.

It does not mean, as in some systems around, the formalistic confession of lips about the sins committed during the week, as the confession in Christian profession, opening the way to rebegin the same things the next week.

No, what is needed, is the judgment of self as the root of evil in the old man, which has been condemned by God in the death of the Lord Jesus. The old nature must be judged completely and continually. When our self is judged as having been crucified with Christ, and when this is done habitually in the presence of God, then we will have no need to JUDGE our WAYS. Self judgment is the secret of victory over evil by the power of the Holy Spirit.

When the need occurs to judge our WAYS, as John supposes in his first epistle, this proves that we had already been overcome by the power of the flesh. "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins...and if any one sin, we have a patron with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." (1 John 1:9;2:1).

We judge OURSELVES in the power of communion with God. Alas, we often have to judge our ways with anguish of soul.

When a person who has an irritable character is able to

judge constantly this tendency, it is possible that this will never be manifested to others. But when such a person does not judge HIMSELF, this irritable character will manifest itself surely, his testimony will be weakened, and this person will have to judge his WAYS with sorrow and humiliation. Instead of overcoming his temperament, he is overcome by it. What an important difference!

Self-judgment is the judgment of the **ROOT** of evil. But the judgment of our ways is only the judgment of the bad fruits of that root. Self-judgment is a valuable exercise, and if Christians would practise it more faithfully, their walk would be more to the Lord's glory. On the contrary, many fail in the keeping down of certain natural inclinations by the power of the Holy Spirit, and the fruits of this neglect are sad indeed. In this way worldliness and moral and doctrinal evil have gradually crept into the assemblies. And many went down, lost discernment, and were carried away from the ground of truth.

The apostle says: "But being judged, we are disciplined of the Lord, that we may not be condemned with the world." (1 Cor. 11:32). In Corinth there were many who had forgotten that the assembly, the dwelling place of a holy God, must be kept holy. The Lord had disciplined them on account of this neglect:" On this account many among you are weak and infirm, and a good many are fallen asleep." (v.30). The assembly of Corinth had failed as to holiness. They had remained in fellowship with one who lived in a public sin, and the apostle teaches them: "But now I have written to you, if any one called brother be fornicator or avariciousness, or idolater, or abusive or a drunkard, or rapacious, not to mix with him, with such a one not even to eat." (1 Cor. 5:11). Those inside the assembly must be judged by the assembly. There exists only one "INSIDE" as to God's assembly on earth. A person is either inside or OUTSIDE the divine ground of the ONE assembly of God.

The Lord has conferred the necessary authority to the local assembly to maintain holiness in its midst. (Matth.18:18) It has the duty to remove the wicked person from its midst, in refusing to break bread with him.

These three things: self-judgment, the Lord's discipline of the saints in their bodies, and the discipline of the assembly

are, next to the judgments pronounced in the seven epistles and the coming judgments on Babylon, important aspects of the with that judgment begins at the house of God.

3. THE JUDGMENT SEAT OF CHRIST

In John 5:24 it is positively stated that the believer will not come into judgment. From 2 Cor. 5:10 and Rom. 14:19 we see that every believer will have to give account of himself to God for all that he has done while in the body.

God has given to his saints a blessed part in the activities of His love towards others. It depends on the spiritual state of every believer is, to how far he accomplishes the good works prepared for him. (Eph. 2:10). As to our position in Christ we are perfect, but our spiritual activities depend on our practical condition. Without a holy walk there will be no power for service; without communion with Christ there will be no practical testimony. Finally, every saint will receive his own reward according to his own labour: "Behold, I come quickly, and my reward with me, to render to every one as his work shall be." (Rev. 22:12). "For we shall all be placed before the judgment-seat of God. So then each of us shall give an account concerning himself to God." (Rom. 14:10-12). "So that do not judge anything before the time, until the Lord shall come, who shall also bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and shall make manifest the counsels of hearts: and then shall each have his praise from God." (1 Cor. 4:5). "For we must all be manifested before the judgment-seat of Christ, that each may receive the things done in the body, according to those things he has done, whether it be good or evil." (2 Cor. 5:10).

This is all different from the judgment of unbelievers. Unbelievers will be judged according to their works before the great white throne and all will be thrown into the lake of fire.

But a believer cannot be personally condemned. He can lose the reward for his works done as a Christian, because one is not crowned if he has not contended lawfully. (2 Tim. 2:5). And when the work of a man will be burned he will suffer loss but he will be saved as through fire. "Now if any one build upon this foundation, gold, silver, precious stones, wood grass, straw, the work of each shall be made manifest; for the day shall declare it, because it is revealed in fire; and the fire shall

try the work of each what it is. If the work of any one which he has built upon the foundation shall abide, he shall receive a reward. If the work of any one shall be consumed, he shall suffer loss but he shall be saved, but so as through fire." (1 Cor. 3:12-15).

Before the judgment-seat of Christ we will be **MANIFESTED**, that is, we will appear in the perfect light of God, and in that light we will see all the details of our past life. The result will be, that we will be more deeply thankful to the Lord for His grace and mercy, which had so much forbearance with our many failures, and has sustained, led and kept us. Christ Himself will be on the judgment seat, and we will see and worship Him, who is our righteousness, and who saved us from condemnation. Also this manifestation will be for our eternal blessing. It is a healthy spiritual exercise for the believer now to think about the judgment-seat of Christ, to live in the light of it, and of the perfect holiness of the Judge.

When the Lord Jesus comes for His Church, those that are asleep in Christ will be raised, first, and we, the living, will be changed, raptured to meet the Lord in the air. In glorified, spiritual bodies we will be manifested before Him, clothed with His righteousness. Then the infinite grace of God that led and kept us, and brought us safely into heavenly glory, will be manifested, and then crowns will be given to the saints, in the measure of their conformity to Christ during their earthly life.

4. THE JUDGMENT OF THE NATIONS

"But when the Son of man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then shall he sit down upon his throne of glory, and all the nations shall be gathered before him and he shall separate them from one another, as the shepherd separates the sheep from the goats; and he will set the sheep on His right hand, and the goats on His left...Inasmuch as ye have done it to one of the least, **OF THESE MY BRETHREN**, ye have done it to Me." (Matth. 25:31-46).

The judgment of the nations living on the earth can be divided into two phases, first the warrior judgment described in Revelation 19, secondly the sessional judgment, described in Matth. 25, **AFTER** Christ has taken possession of the earth.

In the **WARRIOR JUDGMENT** the kings and nations, gathered by Satan to combat against the Lord Jesus, all the opposers will be defeated and destroyed. (Ps. 95:15, 96:13 Acts. 17:31 Rev. 19:11; 2 Thess 1:9,10, Luke 9:26, Col. 3:4, Zech. 14:5 Jude 14:15, Isaiah 66:1).

As to the **SESSIONAL JUDGMENT**, we find in Matth. 25 **FOUR** groups of persons. First of all the Lord Jesus, the Son of Man or the **KING**, then the **BRETHREN**, and finally the sheep and the goats.

The Brethren are the converted **JEWS**, who will preach the gospel of the **KINGDOM** during the Great Tribulation. This gospel of the kingdom will be preached as a testimony to all the nations and after this the end will come (Matth. 24:14). This proclamation of the rights of Jehovah over the earth and the reception of the Jewish preachers by the different nations, will be the great test for the nations. The result of this test will be manifested before the throne of the Son of Man on earth.

The Lord calls these Jewish missionaries his "Brethren." In Matth. 24, He foretells how these will be persecuted and badly treated, and His predictions will be then fulfilled. Nevertheless there will be individuals and peoples who will accept their testimony. These will help them, nourishing and giving them to drink, visiting them in prison and supporting them in all sorts of ways. Not only the love of Christ, but also the sympathy of those individuals and nations will be a great encouragement for these preachers.

On His throne in Jerusalem, Christ will pronounce His judgment over all the nations (Those destroyed in the **WARRIOR JUDGMENT** were **ARMIES**, recruited out of the nations; ~~An~~ entire nation does not go to war). He does it with the authority of a **KING**. Those who are here called "sheep," having shewn mercy, are not the children of God in the spiritual, heavenly sense as we have that name in our dispensation. But they will be blessed in a more earthly manner by the King of the whole earth. They will also enter into eternal life if they accept by faith the word that the Jewish messengers preached to them, and that is spread during the millenium.

Those who, on the contrary, will have rejected the

testimony concerning the King and His Kingdom, will be thrown into the eternal fire, having in Him rejected their own salvation. This scripture gives us the true sense of the word "KRISIS" or judgement i. e. the separation of things that previously existed mixed.

5. THE GREAT WHITE THRONE

"And I saw a great white throne, and Him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled, and place was not found for them. And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened; and another book was opened, which is that of life. And the dead were judged out of the things written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it, and death and hades gave up the dead which were in them, and they were judged each according to their works: and death and hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death, even the lake of fire. And if any one was not found written in the book of life he was cast into the lake of fire." (Rev. 20.11-15).

There will be a judgment of the living, which we have considered in the former paragraph, and there will also be a judgment of the dead, these two judgments will be separated from each other by a period of a thousand years. The living nations will be judged before the millenium. The saints of our present dispensation will be raised from among the dead or translated before the great tribulation and manifested before the judgment-seat of Christ. This is the first resurrection.

The rest of the dead will not be raised before the end of the thousand years. The power of death will then be loosed and the unbelievers will be judged before the great white throne on the basis of their dead works. Christ Himself will be the Judge of all those who have wilfully rejected, opposed and even crucified Him.

The Father has given this judgment over His enemies into the hands of the Son. "For neither does the Father judge any one, but has given all judgment to the Son...and has given Him authority to execute judgment also, because He is the Son of Man...I cannot do anything of myself; as I hear, I judge, and my judgment is righteous, because I do not seek my will, but the will of him, that has sent me." (John. 5:30).

How solemn are the warnings of grace towards this ungodly world, which hastens to its judgment! From the time of the apostles these warnings have been contained in the preaching of the gospel. "God therefore, having overlooked the times of ignorance, now enjoins men that they shall all everywhere repent, because He has set a day in which he is going to judge the habitable earth in righteousness by the man whom he has appointed, giving proof of it to all in having raised him from among the dead." (Acts 17:31). The resurrection of Christ is the proof of the coming judgment. The day in which the eternal destiny of all men who lived without God will be fixed, is a day known to God.

As the resurrection of Christ was the beginning of His exaltation, and the basis of all our blessings, it is also the basis of the judgment of this world. The empty grave, witness of His victorious life, is a standing witness against those who hated Him, and demands everlasting woe for them. Resurrection speaks solemnly about condemnation, about weeping and gnashing of teeth. And the great criterion in the judgment will be what men have done with Jesus. Before He came to earth His witnesses were persecuted and badly treated on earth, and since He came Himself, He was hated and mocked by men. Soon His haters will see Him in glory as an inexorable judge. Once He was taken before their wicked tribunals, but the moment arrives for Annas, Caiaphas, Herod and Pilate to give account of their iniquitous sentence on the Holy and Just One.

They will be raised from their first death and summoned to appear before Jesus on that awful day. Pilate will realize finally that he could not wash his hands in innocence. He was a responsible judge, and innocent blood was shed through his guilty cowardice. The righteous Judge will convince him of the horrible character of his conclusion. The soldiers, who spat on Him and crowned Him with thorns, will see Him then, crowned with many diadems. And Judas will realize that it would have been better for him never to have been born, than to become the traitor of his Master...

But all unbelievers who rejected the sweet invitations of grace, and have thus trodden under foot the Son of God, will contemplate with horror the power and glory of that righteous

Judge.

Even the good works, written in the books of men, will be proved to be filthy rags, unable to hide their nakedness, or to help any one from being thrown into the lake of fire.

And in the face of the miserable crowd of the damned a testimony will be given as to how many myriads were saved by the blood of the Lamb, because another Book will be opened—the **BOOK OF LIFE**, containing the names of the eternally blessed ones, saved and glorified through the love of the Lord Jesus.

16. The Bridegroom

The great purpose of the present activity of the love of Christ for His Assembly is sanctification. In the past this love was seen on the cross, where He gave Himself for her; in the future it will be seen when He will present her to Himself “glorious...”, but in the present time sanctification is the real intent of His love.

“In order that He might sanctify it, purifying it by the washing of water by the Word.” (Eph. 5:26). “Sanctify them by the truth: thy Word is truth.” (John 17:17).

One of the great motives for sanctification is His soon coming: “We shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. And every one that has this hope in Him, purifies himself, even as He is pure.” (1 John 3:2,3).

All believers from the day of Pentecost to the second coming of the Lord Jesus belong to the Bride of Christ, a title which speaks of our union with Him. The Bride, the assembly, waits the moment when her beloved Bridegroom will take her from this earth, where she feels herself a stranger, and bring her into His Father's house. This hope ought to have inspired all Christians in all times, but our enemy has done all to expunge this doctrine from theology. But it is the work of the Holy Spirit to stir up this blessed hope, and in the beginning of the past century the midnight cry. “**BEHOLD, THE BRIDEGROOM GO FORTH TO MEET HIM.**” (Matth. 25:6) was heard. The blessed result has been that a few, realizing that they belong to the **BRIDE OF THE LAMB**, accomplish their errand through the desert of this world, waiting and watching for the blessed moment of **HIS** coming, under the

comforting guidance of the Holy Spirit, who is stirring up her hope.

The union of Christ as Head and Bridegroom with His Assembly as His Body and Bride is a mystery which was hidden under the old covenant, so that the Old Testament does not contain direct teaching concerning the truth of the assembly. Still, "all these things happened to them as types, and have been written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the ages are come." (1 Cor. 10:10).

The precious volume of the Old Testament contains symbolical teaching, illustrating in a blessed way the truth that we find in the New Testament. "For as many things as have been written before have been written for our instruction, that through endurance and through encouragement of the scriptures we might have HOPE." (Rom. 15:4).

Seven Old Testament couples give in a special manner types of the relationship of Christ with His Bride.

1) Adam and Eve. 2) Isaac and Rebecca. 3) Joseph and Asenath. 4) Moses and Zipporah. 5) Boaz and Ruth. 6) David and Abigail. 7) Solomon and the Shulamite.

ADAM AND EVE

Equality of nature is accentuated in the union of Adam with Eve. Formed from the rib of Adam, Eve received from him her life and nature. The second Man, Christ, being from heaven, the Bride, the Assembly has a heavenly origin. She is of His flesh and of His bones. Christ is seated in the heavens, and the assembly is seated in Him in heavenly places.

ISAAC AND REBECCA

The mission which Abraham entrusted to his servant Eliezer, to seek a wife for his son Isaac, dominates in this touching history. The servant is here a figure of the Holy Spirit, sent down from heaven to give testimony on the earth concerning the glory and riches of Christ as Son and Heir of all things. Believing the testimony of the servant the young Rebecca leaves her country and the house of her father and goes across the desert to meet her wealthy bridegroom, Isaac, the son and heir of Abraham. This calling of the bride symbolises marvellously the truth: "The kingdom of the heavens has become like a king, who made a wedding feast for his son."

(Matt. 22:2). According to the design of God, the Beloved Son of God, the object of the eternal delight of the Father, must receive as Man in glory, all power and honour and riches and wisdom and blessing (Rev. 5:12). And the position of the Assembly is inseparably connected with the position of God's Son; what glory and eternal blessing! "Woman is man's glory." (1 Cor. 11:7).

TWO PHASES IN THE SECOND COMING OF CHRIST

The coming of Christ is the great event that all saints ought to expect. No signs or accomplishment of prophecy will precede that great moment. The promise of His coming may be fulfilled to-day, to-night, tomorrow! May we be **READY!**

The present dispensation, between the descent of the Holy Ghost on the day of Pentecost and the day of our rapture, is an interval in which God's official dealings with Israel have been interrupted. God will start again the prophetic history of his people and of the earth as soon as the assembly has disappeared from this scene.

The chronology of the prophetic history of the earth is given by the prophet Daniel: seventy weeks of years or 490 years counted from the order to rebuild Jerusalem, would be necessary to bring the people of Israel into the kingdom of its Messiah, the kingdom of justice and peace. (Daniel 9:24-27).

From the order of Cyrus till the death of Christ, 69 weeks of years are passed already. Next, after that Christ ascended to heaven, the prophetic clock for the earth as it were stood still, and it will not start again until the assembly is caught up. Then the national history of Israel in God's eyes will start again.

There is still one week of years lacking, and these seven years will cover the period between the rapture of the assembly and the coming of the Son of Man in power and glory as King. This period of about seven years is described in the chapters 6-19 of the Revelation.

The second coming of Christ is thus composed of two phases, separated by about seven years, of which the last three and a half years are called the great tribulation. In the first phase, all the believers will be changed and those who died in Christ raised from among the dead, and together they will

meet Him in the air. "Behold, I tell you a mystery. We shall not all fall asleep, but we shall all be changed, in an instant, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet; for the trumpet shall sound and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed" (1 Cor. 15:51,52) "For if we believe that Jesus has died and has risen again, so also God will bring with him those who have fallen asleep through Jesus. For this we say to you in the word of the Lord, that we, the living, who remain to the coming of the Lord, are in no way to anticipate those who have fallen asleep; for the Lord Himself, with an assembling shout, with archangel's voice and with trump of God, shall descend from heaven; and the dead in Christ shall rise first; then we, the living who remain, shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and thus we shall be always with the Lord." (1 Thess. 4:14-17).

As to the SECOND PHASE, after about seven years the saints will come in glory from heaven with Christ as King of Kings. "Behold, the Lord has come amidst his holy myriads, to execute judgment." (Jude 14). "In flaming fire taking vengeance on those who know not God" (2 Thess. 2:8). "When He shall have come to be glorified in His saints" (vs. 10). "And I saw the heaven opened, and behold, a white horse, and one sitting on it, called Faithful and True, and He judges and makes war in righteousness...And the armies which are in heaven followed Him upon white horses, clad in pure, white, fine linen...And he has upon His garment, and upon His thigh a name written, King of kings, and Lord of lords." (Rev. 19:11-16).

THE PARABLE OF THE TEN VIRGINS (Matthew 25)

The ten virgins who, having taken their torches, went forth to meet the bridegroom, represent the kingdom of the heavens or professing Christendom. The christian profession, all the christian churches together, is composed not only of those who are really converted and have been sealed by the Holy Spirit, but also of those who have only the form of godliness, without its power. (2 Tim. 3:1-5). Those who are not born again may have a certain knowledge, and adhere to creeds which contain a certain amount of scripture truth, they may have torches but not being united with Christ by the Holy spirit as members of His Body, there cannot be a permanent and faithful testimony for the glory of Christ.

Oil in Scripture is always the symbol of the Holy Spirit... How foolish to think that Christ will be satisfied by mere outward show! The only thing that can give access to His marriage is reality-the oil in the vessels with their torches.

Christ has come later than was expected in the beginning, and time has manifested the difference between appearance and reality. The long centuries of patience had a extinguished the flame of hope in the christian churches, and though the midnight cry: "BEHOLD THE BRIDEGROOM" has now been heard everywhere, it is obvious how many christians have been unable to bear a faithful and constant witness to the Lord's glory, how many did not remain really separated in heart and walk from the religious and political world and from evil.

The wise virgins used the time to prepare for the marriage. A powerful and real revival took place in the beginning of the nineteenth century. Many believers left human organisations in order to worship the Lord Jesus in His presence (Matth. 18:20), to remember His death at His Table, and many have been able to walk in separation from this present evil world. Let us persevere in waiting and watching, for no second midnight cry will be heard! May our loins be girded and our lamps burning.

What a terrible warning in this parable of the foolish virgins! They hastened to buy oil, but when they returned, the door is closed already. Only those that had been **READY** went in with the Bridegroom. In vain the foolish virgins cry: "Lord, Lord," an empty word when it comes from the lips of vain professors. The Lord does not know them because their heart has never really known His love. Darkness and woe for those without new life. "Watch therefore, for ye know not the day nor the hour."

THE MARRIAGE OF THE LAMB

How touching that even in glory the Assembly will be called still: "The Lamb's wife." The word Lamb reminds us of His sufferings and death, and the Bride bears a name that for ever brings to mind His love.

In 2 Cor. 11:2 the Assembly is considered as betrothed to

Christ; in Revelation 19:6-9, we have the celebration of the marriage. "Let us rejoice and exult and give Him glory; for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife has made herself READY. And it was given to her, that she should be clothed in fine linen bright and pure; for the fine linen is the righteousnesses of the saints."

In the preceding verses heaven had rejoiced in the judgment of the harlot, the false christian profession, and now that joy increases mightily, when the marriage of the Lamb is announced.

The Lamb's wife will be clothed with practical righteousness. The Lord himself will have produced this, and will find enough of it to prepare a brilliant garment for her.

THE HOLY CITY JERUSALEM

In Rev. 21:1-8 we have a description of the eternal state, but in the following verses we have the Assembly as the Bride, the Holy City Jerusalem, during the millennial reign of Christ, after she has descended from heaven, her place of origin. God Himself has been its artificer and constructor. (Hebr. 11:10) The gold and precious stones all speak of the glories of Christ. The Holy City will eternally reflect the beauty of Christ. "The City has no need of the sun or of the moon, that they should shine for her; for the glory of God has enlightened it, and the lamp thereof is the Lamb." (vs 23). The first five verses of chapter 22 complete the picture of the City, with the stream of living water and the tree of life. Then the Word of God finishes with the cry of the Holy Spirit and of the Bride saying, "COME, LORD JESUS"!

The day is at hand, beloved, and the morning star rises in our hearts. The Spirit forms our deeper desires after His Coming, and all saints are invited to join their voices in this chorus, whereupon the Bridegroom answers: "Yea, I come quickly"! AMEN! COME, LORD JESUS!

WORKS BY THE SAME.

God's Wonderful Light

The footprints of the Creator in nature	The Cross and its importance
The Word of God	The Resurrection
Creation and the work of six days	The Ascension
The Creation and Fall of Man	The Coming and the work of the Holy Spirit
From Adam to Christ	Delivered from the power of sin
The Son of God on earth	Prayer
The Man Christ Jesus	The Assembly of God
The Good Samaritan	Israel
The Prodigal Son	The Blessed Hope of the Assembly

THE FUTURE OF MANKIND

The future of mankind	The future of unbelievers
Diagram of the dispensations	The future of Christendom
The future in Thessalonians	The future of the Assembly
The future in Daniel	Enoch
The millennial sabbath	The prophecy of Zechariah
The future in Revelation	The prophecy of Haggai
The future of Israel	The prophecy of Malachi