

Another Baal-Peor?

Arch Chater

Forty years had expired since the children of Israel had been turned around by God and caused to wander in a dry barren desert because of their apostasy, their cowardice, and their rebellion at Kadesh-Barnea. Their disobedience to go forward and possess the Promised Land, following the return of the twelve spies who searched out the land, caused God to turn His people around and send them back towards the Red Sea. Forty years lost, forty years of delay in God's plan for His people. Their disobedience, their rebellion and their absence of trust and gratitude for what God had done for them, was voiced aloud, when all the children of Israel cried out, "Would God we had died in this wilderness." Numbers 14:2. And the Lord, hearing their murmurings, replied, "As ye have spoken in my ears, so will I do to you; your carcasses shall fall in the wilderness." (Num 14:28-29)

As the twelve spies who spent 40 days searching out the Promised Land, so the hosts of Israel were to wander 40 years in the wilderness. All those at that time who were 20 years or older, and had murmured against the Lord were to die there. (Num 14: 34, 35) This sad history of the lives of God's people revealed that God rules in the heavens, and gave positive evidence that rebellion is punished with death.

Only 2 of those adults that left Egypt remained and saw the Promised Land. A generation perished, aside from the few persons under God's protective care.

"Today Satan is using the same devising to introduce the same evils, and his efforts are followed by the same results, that in the days of Israel laid so many in their graves. (1BC 1113). "Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples and they are written for our admonition upon whom the ends of the world are come." (1Cor 10:11)

The warning to Christians to learn the lesson of Israel's wilderness experience is peculiarly appropriate in the light of the near approach of the second advent of Christ. Many of the Israelites perished when they had almost completed the journey to Canaan. These were the people God had specially favoured, but failed to maintain loyalty to Him."

On their return to the borders of the Promised Land, their rebellious attitude, their repeated turning away from God's commandments and His protective care, was again evidenced by their Baal worship, their rebellion being further compounded by their whoredom with the neighbouring Midianitish women. The divine judgments of God fell upon them when they were so close to entering the Promised Land. The plague that followed, by divine judgment, caused by their disobedience, took the lives of 24 000 people. (Num 25:9)

There is an important lesson here for Spiritual Israel, in that if by neglect the lesson is not heeded, many will imperil their souls and jeopardise their entry into the heavenly Canaan. "Be not deceived, God is not mocked, for whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap." (Gal 6:7)

From the Spirit of Prophecy, the counsel is given, "We want to understand the time in which we live. We do not half understand it. We do not half take it in. My heart trembles in me when I think of what a foe we have to meet, and how poorly we are prepared to meet him. The trials of the children of Israel and their attitude just before the first coming of Christ, have been presented before me again and again to illustrate the position of the people of God in their experience before the 2nd coming of Christ, - how the enemy sought every occasion to take control of the minds of the Jews and he is seeking to blind the minds of God's servants that they may not be able to discern the precious truth. (1SM 406)

For over 100 years now, God's church, God's people at large have borne an attitude, a disposition not unlike that of the Israelites at Kadesh-Barnea, and as a result, His people have been wandering about in a wilderness experience. The Loud cry could have been given soon after 1844, and later after 1888, but dissention, divisions and the compromise of the truth by many of the leaders, pastors, and laity caused God to withhold the mighty outpouring of His Spirit in the form of the Latter Rain. This conclusion is borne out by inspired evidence. "An unwillingness to yield up preconceived opinions and to express this truth, lay at the foundation of a large share of the opposition manifested at Minneapolis against the Lord's messages through Brothers E.J. Waggoner and A. T. Jones. By exciting that opposition, Satan succeeded in shutting away from our people in a great measure, the special power of the Holy Spirit that God had longed to impart

to them. The enemy prevented them from obtaining that efficiency which might have been theirs in carrying the truth to the world as the apostles proclaimed it at the day of Pentecost. The light that is to lighten the whole earth with its glory was resisted; and by the action of our own brethren has been in a great degree kept away from the world.” (1SM 234, 235)

“Had Adventists, after the great disappointment in 1844, held fast their faith and followed on unitedly in the opening providence of God, receiving the message of the 3rd angel, and in the power of the Holy Spirit proclaiming it to the world, they would have seen the salvation of God. The Lord would have wrought mightily with their efforts, the work would have been completed, and Christ would have come ere this to receive his people to the reward, - But in the period of doubt and uncertainty that followed the disappointment many of the Advent believers yielded their faith, dissensions and divisions came in. The majority opposed with voice and pen the few who, following in the providence of God received the Sabbath reform and began to proclaim the 3rd angel’s message (1 SM 68)

As in the rebellion of God’s people on the borders of the earthly Canaan, so the period following 1844 and again in 1888, when God was ready to cut short His work in righteousness, a repeat performance of rebellion and cowardice was demonstrated and evidenced by God’s people, as it was at Kadesh. They again rejected God’s leading to go forward. “The history of the report of the 12 spies has an application to us as a people. The scenes of cowardly complaining and drawing back from action when there are risks to be encountered are re-enacted among us today. The same unwillingness is manifested to heed faithful reports and true counsel as in the days of Caleb and Joshua, - Few receive the faithful warnings given of God. Darkness and unbelief do not decrease as we near the 2nd advent of Christ and truth becomes less palatable to the carnally minded. (4T:154,155)

The 40-year time period allotted to the Israelites for their wilderness wanderings had ended, let us return to the encampment beside the River Jordan as Moses sat in his tent preparing plans for the crossing of the Jordan and the occupation of Canaan. It had been some 80 years since Moses had undertaken the task God had given him to lead the children of Israel from Egypt into the Promised Land, and now finally they

were encamped on the plains known as the “vale of Shittim” beside the River Jordan in the vicinity of Mt Peor. The Promised Land lay before them and was everything God had said it would be – a land flowing with milk and honey. They were now at its borders, so close to claiming God’s promises when they apostatised again at Baal Peor on the borders of the Promised Land.

It was here at their encampment “amid those attractive surroundings they were to encounter an evil more deadly than the mighty hosts of armed men, -- on every side were places noted for idolatry and licentiousness, the very names being suggestive of the vileness and corruption of the people. These surrounds exerted a polluting influence upon the Israelites. Their minds became familiar with the vile thoughts constantly suggested, the life of ease and inaction produced its demoralising effect and almost unconsciously to themselves they were departing from God and coming into a condition where they would fall easy prey to temptation”....

“They ventured upon forbidden ground and were entangled in the snares of Satan. Beguiled with music and dancing and allured by the beauty of heathen vestals they cast off their fealty to Jehovah. They offered sacrifice upon heathen altars and participated in the most degrading rites” (P&P 453, 454). God’s people had involved themselves with worldly amusements, degrading behaviour, Baal worship and whoredom with their heathen neighbours “and Israel joined himself to Baal-Poer” (Num 25:3).

The records of the conditions existing in those days differs little from that prevailing today, conditions that will surely draw away from God, to their eternal loss, all those who would attach themselves to the world and its “pleasures.” It is a history written as a warning as we stand on the borders of the Heavenly Cannan. “Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him” (1 John 2:15). A warning is given that Satan will intensify his efforts just before the close of probation to endeavour to decimate “the remnant” and cause many to compromise their faith, living lives that will place in jeopardy their place in the Heavenly Cannan. “Be sober, be vigilant because your adversary the devil as a roaring lion walketh about seeking whom he may devour.” (1 Peter 5:8)

“There is a great similarity between our history and that of the children of Israel” (4T:27)

If this is so, what are the similarities? Note the inspired words from the Spirit of Prophecy, “I have been shown that the spirit of the world is fast leavening the church. You are following the same path as ancient Israel. There is the same falling away from your holy calling as God’s peculiar people. You are having fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness. Your concord with unbelievers has provoked the Lord’s displeasure. You know not the things that belong to your peace and they are fast being hid from your eyes. Your neglect to follow the light will place you in a more unfavourable position than the Jews upon whom Christ pronounced a woe. It is all through our ranks, all over the field.’ (5T :75, 76)

And again, “The line of demarcation between worldlings and professed Christians is almost indistinguishable. Many who once were earnest Christians are conforming to the world, its practices, its customs, its selfishness. Instead of leading the world to render obedience to God’s law, the church is uniting more and more closely with the world in transgression. Daily the church is becoming converted to the world. (8T:118, 119)

The Alpha of apostasy, the heretical view presented by Dr Kellogg in 1904 has occurred. “The Omega will follow and will be of a most startling nature.” (1SM:197-200). The Omega has followed and its heresies are here and well entrenched within the church and held in the beliefs of many professing Christians. This is evidenced by:

- the doctrinal errors taught and accepted by many;
- the compromising of the commandments by many;
- compromising the standards within the church and in the lives of many of God’s professing people; and
- the celebration type of worship that permeates many of our churches .

These are but a few of the woes that ail the church.

“The church has turned back from following Christ her Leader and is steadily retreating toward Egypt, yet few are alarmed or astonished at their want of spiritual power. Doubt and even disbelief of the testimonies of the spirit of God is leavening our churches everywhere. Satan would have it thus. Ministers who preach self instead of Christ would have it thus. The testimonies

are unread and unappreciated. Jesus spoke to you. Light has been shining from His word and from the testimonies, and both have been slighted and disregarded. The result is apparent in the lack of purity and devotion and earnest faith among us.” (5T:217)

“I have been instructed to warn our people, for many are in danger of receiving theories and sophistries that undermine the foundation and pillars of the faith.” (1SM 196 -197)

“We must firmly refuse to be drawn away from the platform of eternal truth which since 1844 has stood the test.” (E. G. White; 7 August, 1904. 1SM 200).

Special Testimonies, Series B, no. 7, p57. (4 December, 1905, Sanitarium California).

" We are to hold fast *the first principles of our denominated faith*" (published in 1872) "and go forward from strength to increased faith."

NI.1906-02-07.004 (New York Indicator, Standing in the Way of God's Messages - 1906.)

“The past fifty years have not dimmed one jot or principle of our faith as we received the great and wonderful evidences that were made certain to us in 1844, after the passing of the time.”Not a word is changed or denied. That which the Holy Spirit testified to as truth after the passing of the time, in our great disappointment, is the solid foundation of truth.”

These are the words of Sister White, not mine.

There are none so blind as those who do not want to see.

The church has been drawn away from the platform of eternal truth. We need to revisit and understand what this platform is and return to it.

To deny that our church is in such a state of decline is to accept that the prophetic writings of Sister White therefore apply to someone else and – or are meant for another time. This is to categorically deny that the church has been especially blessed with the Spirit of Prophecy and also deny the glaring evidences before us.

The Omega of apostasy grows amidst us as we hover on the borders of the Heavenly Canaan. Satan is intensifying his efforts daily to have as many of God's people "draw away from the platform of eternal truth" (1SM 200) and join with the world becoming "lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God" (2 Tim 3:4) Those that would compromise the commandments of God, and draw away from the platform of eternal truth, will endanger their place in the Heavenly Canaan.

The end is near and by God's grace, none need succumb to Satan's wiles and be led into another Baal-Peor experience so close to the heavenly goal, for Jesus said, "I will never leave thee not forsake thee" (Heb 13:5). We can choose Whom we will serve. Let each one heed the Lord's entreaty when He said, "That which ye have already, hold fast till I come." (Rev 2:25)