

GOD'S COVENANT AT MOUNT SINAI

- *AUGUST 31. - EXODUS 19:1-6. -*

"Let us have grace, whereby we may offer service well-pleasing to God, with reverence and awe." – Hebrews 12:28. R.V.

TWO months after the Passover deliverance, the Israelites arrived at Mt. Sinai, but on their way they had two valuable lessons respecting God's Grace and Power. When they reached the Valley Rephidim, they were thirsty and found no water. Here Moses, in the name of the Lord, smote the rock with his rod, and from it gushed water, abundantly refreshing Israel at this time, and as a rivulet following them through much of their subsequent journey.

St. Paul, by inspiration, points out to us that that rock represented Christ, that the smiting of the rock represented the putting of Christ to a shameful death, but that only by this means is the Water of Life provided for those who desire to be the people of God. As the waters of that rock followed the Israelites, so the stream of God's favor, through the sacrifice of Christ, refreshes Christ's disciples throughout their wilderness journey.

Refreshed in body and in faith, Israel journeyed onward, but encountered new obstacles. The Amalekites, a warlike people, considered the coming of Israel as an invasion of their country, and attacked them in battle. A people used to peaceful pursuits, as the Israelites had for centuries been, would naturally be at a disadvantage in a conflict with such opponents. Yet God gave them the victory. He indicated, however, that it was not by their prowess or skill, but of His grace that they conquered.

Moses, stationed upon a high hill, lifted up his hands in prayer to God for the people. While he did so, success was theirs; but when he ceased thus to pray, the Amalekites were the victors. Perceiving

this, Aaron and Hur assisted in holding up the hands of Moses until the battle terminated with success for Israel. God thus indicated that Moses was the advocate or representative of Israel, and that without him they could do nothing.

In the antitype, we realize that Spiritual Israelites have conflicts with enemies too mighty for them without the Lord's assistance. The world, the flesh and the Devil make common cause against all who are seeking the Heavenly Canaan. We who are followers of Jesus have success in our warfare only as we have Him as our Advocate – "We have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the Righteous." Through Him we may come off conquerors, yea, more than merely conquerors, victors in the highest sense – "through Him who loved us and bought us with His precious blood."

THE ROYAL PRIESTHOOD PROFFERED

All of God's dealings with the Israelites were in accord with His great Covenant made with Abraham, and certified with the Divine Oath – "In thee and in thy Seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed." Neither Moses nor any of those who followed him could possibly have understood the full import of this great oath-bound Promise; for it is a double Promise, the spiritual portion of which was hidden until God's due time – at the First Advent. Even since then, St. Paul assures us, it is a **[R5285 : page 233]** hidden mystery, appreciated only by the very few. "The secret of the Lord is with them that reverence Him, and He will show them His Covenant."

The Promise is divided into three parts: **(1)** Abraham himself (and all the Ancient Worthies, whom he represented) was to have a share; **(2)** Abraham's Seed was to be the chief agent, or channel, of blessing; and **(3)** all the families of the earth were to be blessed as recipients of God's favor through these channels. But only by the light of the Holy Spirit during this Gospel Age are these lengths and breadths and heights and depths of the Abrahamic Covenant made manifest.

When inviting the Israelites to come out of Egypt, God did not explain the Covenant to them nor tell them which portion they might have a share in. But when they had come to Mt. Sinai, God made inquiry as to whether or not they could keep the Divine Law, and thus prove themselves eligible to the highest favor included in that Covenant.

In other words, the Lord said to them at Mt. Sinai, Are you ready now to enter into a Covenant of full consecration to do My will? You have seen how I dealt with the Egyptians in delivering you. You have seen how, ever since then, I have borne you on eagles' wings over all the trials and difficulties of your journey to this place. Have you faith? Have you loyalty? Do you wish to enter into a Covenant? "If ye will obey My voice indeed, and keep My commandments, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto Me above all people... and ye shall be unto Me a Kingdom of priests and an holy nation."

While the Israelites knew that they were the favored seed of Abraham, the natural heirs of the promises, it was proper that they should know also that they would be unsuitable for the Lord's use in blessing the other nations with His Law unless they themselves were able to keep that Law and to instruct others how to keep it. With this understanding, that they were ready to do the Lord's will and thus to be separated by Him to be the kings and priests of the whole world, a Law Covenant was made with them, and Moses was appointed its mediator. Whoever would keep those commandments might live forever; and in proportion as he kept them he would be entitled to earthly favors.

TYPICAL OF NEW COVENANT

St. Paul, in Hebrews 12:18-24, points us to the antitype of today's Study. As Israel was delivered from Pharaoh and his hosts, so ultimately all mankind is to be delivered from Satan and his hosts, the fallen angels, and from all evil influences. As the journey to the

Promised Land brought the Israelites to Mt. Sinai and the Law Covenant, so the journey of God's people will ultimately bring all the willing, obedient and faithful to the antitype of Mt. Sinai; namely, Mt. Zion, God's Kingdom, for which Jesus taught us to pray, "Thy Kingdom Come; Thy will be done on earth, as it is done in Heaven."

Meantime, Jesus has become the antitypical Moses and Leader of the people, and in harmony with Jehovah's program, He has been selecting the members, or associates and joint-heirs. St. Paul explains this to us, saying, "God gave Jesus to be the Head over the Church, which is His Body." St. Peter explains that this great antitypical Moses must be raised up from amongst the brethren first, before the blessing of Restitution can come to mankind in general. – Acts 3:22,23,19-21.

This entire Gospel Age has been devoted to the gathering of the members of the Christ Body. And when the last member shall have made his calling and election sure, this Age will end, and the more glorious work of the Messianic Age will begin.

SHAKE HEAVENS AND EARTH

The antitype of our lesson will be the inauguration of the New Covenant, at the Second Advent of Jesus. The basis of this new and better Covenant was completed at Calvary by our Lord's sacrifice of Himself. He has since been completing His "better sacrifices" by presenting the bodies of His saints, holy and acceptable, to God (Rom. 12:1). Soon the "better sacrifices" will be completed, and the greater Mediator will have been fully raised up from amongst the brethren. Then everything will be ready for the inauguration of the New Covenant, to bless the world of mankind with knowledge, and with opportunity for Restitution to earthly blessings and perfection.

St. Paul points out that this is what we are coming to – approaching – "the General Assembly and Church of the First-

born," whose names are written in Heaven. He declares that we may expect an antitype of the stirring scenes mentioned in our lesson. As at Mt. Sinai the literal mountain shook, lightnings flashed, and the voice of God was heard as the sound of a great trumpet, so here the antitype will come. The great trumpet here will be [R5286 : page 233] the seventh trumpet, the trump of God. The storm and tempest and shaking here in the antitype will mean the shaking of the ecclesiastical heavens and the social, political and financial earth.

The Apostle prophetically assures us that everything shakeable will be shaken to its destruction, that only the unshakeable things will remain. That is to say, the Messianic Kingdom then to be established will completely overturn everything not in harmony with righteousness, justice and truth. This is merely a prelude to the great blessing of the Abrahamic Covenant then to be fully ushered in, for the blessing of all the families of the earth.

THE HEIRS OF THE KINGDOM

The Body of the Spiritual Seed of Abraham, of which Christ Jesus is the Head – His faithful, saintly followers – are now being tested as respects their worthiness for so high a station. St. Paul's words in our Golden Text are very forcefully applied to these: "Let us have grace, whereby we may offer service well-pleasing to God, with reverence and awe."

DELIVERANCE

"Still o'er Earth's sky the clouds of anger roll,
And God's revenge hangs heavy on her soul;
Yet shall she rise – though first by God chastised –
In glory and in beauty then baptized.

"Yes, Earth, thou shalt arise; thy Father's aid
Shall heal the wound His chastening hand hath made;

Shall judge the proud oppressor's ruthless sway,
And burst his bonds, and cast his cords away.

"Then on your soil shall deathless verdure spring.
Break forth, ye mountains, and ye valleys, sing!
No more your thirsty rocks shall frown forlorn,
The unbeliever's jest, the heathen's scorn.

"The sultry sands shall tenfold harvests yield,
And a new Eden deck the thorny field.
E'en now we see, wide-waving o'er the land,
The mighty angel lifts his golden wand,

"Courts the bright vision of descending power,
Tells every gate and measures every tower;
And chides the tardy seals that yet detain
Thy Lion, Judah, from His destined reign."

– *Heber*.

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