

## THE REPORT OF THE SPIES

– *OCTOBER 19.* – *NUMBERS 13:1-3,17 TO 14:25.* –

"If God be for us, who can be against us?" – *Romans 8:31.*

THE first journey of the Israelites was from Egypt to Mt. Sinai, where they remained about a year. Their second journey began after the appointment of the seventy Elders, and after Miriam had been received back into the Camp. The start was with some ceremonial – the blowing of silver trumpets, the leading of the pillar of cloud and fire, and Moses' invocation, "Arise, O Lord, and let Thine enemies be scattered, and let them that hate Thee flee before Thee." This was the morning call of the Israelites; and in the evening, as the host rested for the night, Moses prayed, "Return, O Lord, unto the many thousands of Israel." In other words, "Abide with us."

Their journey led through a waste, barren wilderness, scorched by the sun, very different from Sinai's valleys, in which they had recuperated and rested. The journey to Kadesh-Barnea, on the border of the land of Canaan, was approximately 160 miles. It was beset with unknown dangers – serpents, wandering bands of Arabs, lack of water, etc. The Israelites, including women, children, household goods, cattle and sheep, etc., necessarily journeyed slowly. Apparently one or two months were spent on the journey, as they arrived at the time of the first ripe grapes – July.

Kadesh-Barnea, their objective point, is a delightful place, well watered, and is a sharp contrast with the Desert of Paran. Here they rested and refreshed themselves, and looked toward the mountains north of them, their Land of Promise; for they were on the south border.

## **TIMIDITY OF THE ISRAELITES**

Moses, full of faith, proposed that they should forthwith proceed – enter the land of Canaan, the Land of Promise, full of faith in God, who already had manifested His favor toward them in so many ways – in their deliverance from Egypt; in the crossing of the Red Sea; in the sweetening of the waters of Marah; in giving them the victory over their enemies, the Amalekites; in sending them the manna, and later the quail; in manifesting His favor toward them in the Covenant at Mt. Sinai, and in the manifestation of His presence with them in the Tabernacle and in the pillar of cloud by day, and the pillar of fire by night.

But the Israelites were timid. They had no knowledge of war, excepting a little experience with the Amalekites near Mt. Sinai; and they had been worsted until God helped them while Moses' hands were uplifted in prayer on their behalf. Their caution overbalanced their faith. They urged upon Moses the sending of the twelve spies. These apparently were divided under two leaders, Caleb and Joshua. One party went the full length of the land, and returned in the short space of forty days; the other took a shorter journey, and returned sooner. The spies were cautious men, and gave a truthful report of the land, declaring that its cities had high walls and would be difficult to overcome, especially without up-to-date military equipments. They reported also that they had seen giants, probably some of the same families afterwards represented by Goliath, whom David slew in battle. The report of these ten is described as an evil report, because they presented the matter from the viewpoint of its difficulties, as in contrast with the report made by Caleb and Joshua, which is styled a good report, because it was encouraging. These two emphasized the favorable features – the fruits, the honey, the fertility of the country. Their report was backed by faith, while the adverse report was backed by fears, which forgot the Divine providences and leadings.

The spies really should have considered themselves a **[R5314 : page 281]** committee on ways and means for entering the land of Canaan rather than a committee to decide whether it was possible to enter it or not. The possibilities were already determined by God's promises, hence Joshua and Caleb left these out of account. If God could deliver them from the Egyptians and from the Amalekites, could give them water in the desert and bread from Heaven, He surely could do all that was necessary to fulfil His promise to bring them into possession of Canaan.

### **THE LESSON FOR SPIRITUAL ISRAELITES**

Various lessons may be drawn by Spiritual Israelites from the experiences of the typical people. If we view the matter from the personal standpoint, we may see that each Christian has from the Almighty a special invitation to enter into Canaan's rest and to take possession of the blessings promised by the Lord. He turns his back upon Satan and the world, typified by Pharaoh and the Egyptians. By faith he puts between him and the Adversary a firm resolution for righteousness and obedience to God, through whose providential leadings he reaches the place of making the covenant.

Thenceforth as a New Creature he journeys on, beset by the trials of the wilderness journey, until he comes to the position of an advance soldier of the Cross. There he perceives the new life, the new experiences before him, in harmony with God's promises. He would at once with faith and courage enter in and possess himself of all the good things of the spiritual life.

The enemies of the land to him would represent the weaknesses of the flesh and the oppositions of his fallen nature, all of which are to be overcome. To the extent that he can overcome these, he enters into and possesses and enjoys his inheritance promised of the Lord. Some can do this promptly, by reason of faith; others make **[R5314 : page 282]** investigation of the trials and alas! too often become discouraged, fearful, distrustful,

murmurers – sometimes wishing that they had not left the world at all, and that they could return thither.

The reports of the spies represent the different viewpoints from which the promises of God may be seen. To the eye of faith, all things are possible; to the eye of unbelief, all things, in the way of the conquest of the flesh, are impossible. Let us go up and possess the Land! Let us be of good courage and fight the good fight! God will be with us and give us the victory, with the proper exercise of faith!

### **DID GOD ENCOURAGE WAR?**

In studying this lesson, remembering that the Israelites were invading a land possessed by other people, remembering that this invasion meant the loss of many lives amongst the Israelites, as well as amongst the people of Canaan, many are perplexed. They say, It does not seem reasonable to believe that God gave such a message to Moses and to the Israelites. They say, Contrast this with the Scriptural declaration that Jesus is the Prince of Peace, and that God "will make wars to cease unto the ends of the earth." Agnostics inquire, How are these things reconciled? Where is the justice of commissioning the Israelites to steal the lands of the Canaanites, yea, to murder them? And according to some Scriptures, they were to utterly exterminate all the peoples of the land, Canaanites, Hittites, Perizzites, Jebusites, etc.

We reply that to understand the Bible we must view it from the Bible's own standpoint, and not from the standpoint of our creeds formulated in the darker days, nor from the standpoint of our own imperfect reasoning. The Bible is consistent, beautiful, Godlike, only when viewed in its own light.

In the first place, we must remember that the Bible entirely antagonizes the theories of our creeds, which tell us that all those slaughtered Canaanites went straight to an eternity of torture, and

are suffering there yet, because they did not know the true God and Jesus Christ, whom He sent to be the Savior. The Bible tells us that those people and all the people in the whole world are children of Adam, and all perishing because of the death sentence. When they die, they are not alive anywhere. They are dead. Whether they die by pestilence, or famine, or consumption, or pneumonia, or otherwise, it is all the same. They are suffering the penalty that God pronounced; namely, "Dying, thou shalt die." – Genesis 2:17, margin.

It matters not, therefore, in what way we die, or very much whether our experiences be longer or shorter. In the case of the Amalekites and other peoples of Canaan, God declared that their iniquity had come to the full. That is to say, Divine Justice determined that for them to live longer would not be to their advantage, nor to anybody's advantage. They were merely cumbering the earth.

God was using the Israelites as a typical people, through whom He was making types and shadows of coming blessings. He would give Canaan to Israel, and thus make another type of how the antitypical Israel will enter and possess the antitypical Canaan. He would make the slaughter of the people of the land to illustrate the destruction of the works of the flesh and the Devil which His people are to accomplish in themselves by fighting the good fight of faith and overcoming the evil tendencies which have become entrenched in their own flesh.

## **NO INJUSTICE TO THE CANAANITES**

Although God is not bound by Justice to give any future life to anybody, He has arranged so to do. To this end Christ already has died for the sins of the whole world – including the Canaanites, as well as the Israelites. Aside from this Plan of redemption the whole race would have perished under the death sentence. By God's grace, however, we are not to perish, but to be recovered from the death

sentence. So we read, "God so loved the world that He gave His Only Begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him might not *perish*." – John 3:16.

As all the world came into the death condition by one man's disobedience, so all are to be rescued from death conditions by the obedience of another One, "The Man Christ Jesus, who gave Himself a Ransom for all"; "As by a man came death, by a man also comes the resurrection of the dead"; "As all in Adam die, even so all in Christ shall be made alive" – the Church the First-Fruits. – I Corinthians 15:21,22; Revelation 20:6.

In a word, God's proposal is that Messiah's Kingdom, the members of which are now being selected from the world – the Church, the Bride – will for a thousand years, with the Redeemer, bless and uplift and restore all the nations of earth – from sin, degradation, death, the tomb.

Jesus explains that the Sodomites will be of this class to be restored by resurrection processes, and so also will, with those Canaanites, be subjects of Restitution. – Ezekiel 16:55; Mark 6:11; Acts 3:19-21.

### **DEAF EARS TO BE UNSTOPPED**

Nobody will receive God's blessing except through faith in the Lord Jesus as the Redeemer. But the promise of God is that He as the true Light shall yet enlighten "every man that cometh into the world." The Canaanites, the Sodomites, and all the people that lived before Jesus' day must have an equal chance with others to hear the Message of God's favor – the opportunity to believe in Jesus as the Redeemer and to obey His voice.

The same will apply to all the heathen of our day, and the thousands of millions from Jesus' day until now. And the same will apply to the great mass of heathen who have lived in Christian

lands, but whose eyes and ears have been holden by Satan – by false doctrines – so that they could not understand and appreciate the Message of the Love of God. The assurance of the Scriptures is that all the blind eyes shall be opened and all the deaf ears unstopped, and that the knowledge of the glory of God shall fill the whole earth.

The Church, under the Headship of Jesus, is the Spiritual Seed of Abraham, and in and through these will come the blessing of Messiah's Kingdom for a thousand years unto every nation, people, kindred and tongue. – Gal. 3:29.

All men are to be rescued from the penalty of the Adamic death. All are to have a full opportunity of knowing about the Savior and of accepting Him. With the knowledge will come responsibility. Whoever willingly and knowingly rejects the grace of God, and chooses sin in preference to righteousness, will be esteemed a wicked sinner, unworthy of everlasting life or any further favors of God. Such, the Bible says, will die the Second Death. From it there will be no redemption; for Christ shall die no more. Hence from it there will be no resurrection. As St. Paul declares, they shall be punished with everlasting destruction. (2 Thess. 1:9.) As St. Peter declares, they shall perish like natural brute beasts. – 2 Peter 2:12.

The present life does not end hope for any except those who have come to a clear knowledge of God and who have chosen sin with wilful deliberation. As for other trespasses, the Bible assures us that they will all receive a just penalty: "Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." But the horrible doctrine of eternal torment, which has been driving so many away from God and the Bible, is not a Bible teaching, but a part of what St. Paul styles the "doctrines of devils." – I Timothy 4:1

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