

Beauties of the Truth

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Nine Men in the Life of Bathsheba
So Many Beasts, Heads, and Horns!
Rocks in the Wilderness

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Nine Men in the Life of Bathsheba

Lives are often defined by those with whom we come in contact. Bathsheba is a good example. There is little we know of her life and character from the scriptural account. We have no direct information concerning her character, either for good or for bad. She figures directly only in four incidents in the Bible: her illegitimate liaison with King David (2 Samuel 11), her reaction to the death of her firstborn (2 Samuel 12), her plea for the kingship for her son Solomon (1 Kings 1), and her intercession on behalf of Adonijah in the matter of Abishag (1 Kings 2).

However we do know a certain amount about her family, and the small cameo roles they play in the Bible help us flesh out a more accurate picture of Bathsheba. She came from one of the most prominent families in Israel. Both her father and first husband were in the elite palace guard, and her grandfather served as the chief political adviser to King David.

In this study we want to touch briefly on the lives of nine men whose lives influenced that of Bathsheba.

ELIAM, HER FATHER

The father of Bathsheba was Eliam (2 Samuel 11:3), also known as Ammiel (1 Chronicles 3:5). He was ranked as one of the thirty-seven “mighty men of David” (2 Samuel 23:34) and would have thus been a frequent guest at the palace. Other than these relationships we know little of him.

It is worthy of note that she was not known as Bathsheba when she was born. Her birth name was Bathshua (1 Chronicles 3:5). It was not unusual among the Israelites to have a name change. Frequently this was done at the ceremony we know as Bar-Mitzvah or Bat-Mitzvah at about the age of twelve. Her first name reflected the feelings of her parents at the time of her birth, and the second reflected her own character and, in particular, her relationship to the law.

Her birth name, Bathshua, means “daughter of my prosperity” (compare Strong's 1340 and 7771). The name by which we know her, Bathsheba, signifies “daughter of an oath” (Strong's 1339) and is often used of the oath-bound covenant made with Abraham.

In this transition of names we see a noted progress in her father's appreciation of her. Though he first names her in honor of his own prominent and prosperous position in the kingdom of David, his values, later change and he honors her by calling her the “daughter of the oath” or “daughter of the oath-bound covenant.” It is a lesson for each of us to apprise spiritual growth as superior to material prosperity at all times.

AHITHOPHEL, HER GRANDFATHER

Ahithophel was the chief counselor of David and ranked even above the priests Abiathar and Jehoiada (1 Chronicles 27:33, 34). So wise were his counsels that it was said of him, it “was as if a man had inquired at the oracle of God: so was all the counsel of Ahithophel both with David and with Absalom” (2 Samuel 16:23)

When Absalom rebelled against his father, Ahithophel switched sides and became Absalom's counselor. He gave two pieces of strategic advice to Absalom. The first was to publicly take possession of the king's harem, thus showing himself to be mightier than the king (2 Samuel 16:21, 22). His second advice was to immediately pursue David and kill him while he was in flight from Absalom in disarray (2 Samuel 17:1, 2). David was able to thwart this advice by having his trusted confidant, Hushai, pretend to be a traitor and warn Absalom that David was lying in wait to ambush Absalom's troops.

When Absalom followed the advice of Hushai rather than that of Ahithophel, Ahithophel went to his home town of Giloh and hung himself. David speaks of the remorse he had for Ahithophel's treason in moving expressions in Psalms 55:12-14.

We cannot know the motivation for Ahithophel's counsel to take the harem of David, but one possible motive is obvious. As the patriarch of Bathsheba's family, he must have felt shamed and betrayed by David when the king took his granddaughter, another man's wife, and had her husband killed in battle. He may even have felt justified in light of Nathan's prophecy that this would happen

(2 Samuel 12:11). Revenge may have been at least part of his motivation. This provides a powerful lesson for us today - "Vengeance is mine, saith the Lord" (Deut. 32:35, Romans 12:19, Hebrews 10:30).

MACHIR, HER BROTHER

Machir plays two bit roles in the saga of David. In the bitter squabbling after King Saul's death many men made the mistake of trying to win the king's favor by proclaiming themselves enemies of Saul and his house. In exasperation, David finally asked "Is there not yet any of the house of Saul that I might show the kindness of God unto him?" (2 Samuel 9:3). He is informed that the son of Jonathan, Mephibosheth, a cripple, is still living. "Where is he," asks David. "He is in the house of Machir, the son of Ammiel, in Lo'debar" (verse 4). It must have taken great courage for Machir to befriend a potential heir of the throne at that particular point in time.

The next incident is in connection with the rebellion of Absalom. His grandfather, Ahithophel, had correctly assayed the situation when he said that David was fleeing in disarray. The king had been thoroughly humiliated and had to go across the Jordan, to the mountain fortress of Mahanaim. He knew he would have to regroup there but was without supplies to arm, garrison, and feed his men. How it must have delighted the discouraged king's heart to see an entire caravan of supplies already coming from Amman through the intervention of Machir (2 Samuel 17:27-29).

Even though his grandfather had switched allegiance to Absalom, Machir remained loyal to the king just as he remained loyal to the house of Jonathan when others in Israel were distancing themselves from the house of Saul. Machir, like Bamabas in the New Testament, was the friend of the friendless, supporting the cause of the unpopular. Paul summarizes the lesson for us in Hebrews 10:32, 33, "But call to remembrance the former days, in which, after ye were illuminated, ye endured a great fight of afflictions; partly, whilst ye were made a gazing stock both by reproaches and afflictions; and partly, whilst ye became companions of them that were so used."

URIAH, HER FIRST HUSBAND

It is hard to imagine a more noble and loyal character than that of Uriah. Although a Hittite by nationality, he was obviously at least a second generation Jew by religion for his name contains the *iah* suffix for Jehovah and means *the flame* [or light] *of Jehovah*. Five other Israelites in the Bible bear the same name. Like his father-in-law, he was one of David's "mighty men" (2 Samuel 23:39), a list so exclusive that it does not even include the name of Joab, the general of David's forces and Uriah's commander in battle.

His loyalty was not only to his king and the nation, but he showed a fierce personal loyalty to Joab (2 Samuel 11:11). How ironic that Joab is the one who is soon commissioned to arrange the death of Uriah (verses 14, 15).

The lesson Uriah brings to us is again one of priorities, placing the work of God ahead of personal pleasure, even the legitimate joys of life. The singleness of purpose and zeal for the Lord's cause which Uriah showed are seldom found, either in his day or ours.

DAVID, HER SECOND HUSBAND

David was “a man after God’s own heart” (Acts 13:22, 1 Samuel 13:14), yet in this one incident he breaks over half of the ten commandments. This becomes, at his death, the only liability charged against him (1 Kings 15:5).

The account of the sin poses a few interesting questions. Since she was the granddaughter of his closest adviser, the daughter and husband of two of his top soldiers, why did he need to inquire who she was? The answer probably includes at least three ingredients: (1) the instance takes place “in an eveningtide” when daylight was departing and he could see only a vague picture; (2) although he may have known her personally he would have only seen her covered with the traditional veil and loose clothing which would not have revealed her beauty; and (3) there was some distance, both vertically and horizontally, separating the king’s palace from surrounding homes.

Would he not have recognized the name of Uriah, when given, as a trusted soldier? Undoubtedly yes! It had become customary, however, for kings to have their own way and exclude themselves from the law. Evidently David had started becoming accustomed to the perks of his office and had begun multiplying wives and concubines (2 Samuel 5:13). This might also be indicated by two observations in the narrative of his sin with Bathsheba. In the first verse we are told that at “the time when *kings* went out to battle,” “David tarried at Jerusalem.” We find him here rising from his bed “at eveningtide,” a time when others are only beginning to think about retiring to their beds, suggesting he had spent some time in the afternoon at ease. These are all suggestive of a natural moral laxity that comes with prosperity.

Why was Bathsheba bathing so publicly? She probably did not consider it public. The middle eastern houses had roofs with walls that came to about waist height. David could view her because the height of the king’s house was so much greater that the shallow walls did not protect her from his view. The bathing was probably not the usual bath for cleanliness, but a ritual bath connected with the uncleanness that was upon a woman for seven days after her menstrual period (Leviticus 15:25-33). This is suggested in verse four of the narrative where that point is probably mentioned to further prove that she had not become impregnated by Uriah or anyone else. In fact, the knowledge of the purpose of such bathings may have been partially responsible for the seed of lust rising in David’s heart.

There is no indication in the account as to her reaction to his proposal. She is not painted as a seductress or aggressive, although she may have been a willing participant, perhaps considering it her obligation to a king who could demand concubines at will. Despite the heinousness of the sin, Bathsheba not only became a wife (and not a concubine), but the favored of all his wives.

NATHAN, HER ACCUSER

The twelfth chapter of second Samuel delineates the account of Nathan’s confronting David with his crime. The story of the ewe lamb was an ideal tool for forcing David to judge himself. The effect was to produce complete repentance as is beautifully shown in the 51st Psalm which David

wrote to show his heart's feelings. There is no reason to suspect that Bathsheba felt any differently.

Nathan was a common Hebrew name (meaning gift) and Nathan the prophet may or may not have been the father of another of David's top soldiers, Igal (2 Samuel 23:36), and brother of a later captain of David's forces, Joel (I Chronicles 11:38); or he may have been the father of two of Solomon's chieftains, Azariah and Zabud (1 Kings 4:5), though it is more likely that these would have been children of Solomon's brother Nathan.



David Mourning the Death of Absalom

died at the age of seven days, David immediately laid aside the garments of repentance and mourning and broke his fast. This change of manner is noted in 2 Samuel 12:20, "Then David arose from the earth, and washed, and anointed himself, and changed his apparel, and came into the house of the LORD, and worshipped: then he came to his own house; and when he required, they set bread before him, and he did eat."

It is noteworthy that not only did he change his own appearance but that he went into the house of the Lord and "worshipped." Rather than accusing God of taking the life of his son or being in bitterness that he was being punished, he accepted the discipline of the Lord. There is no reason to think that Bathsheba felt any differently.

Although Nathan appears in this story as a messenger of gloom to David and Bathsheba, he remained a trusted adviser to both of them. It is by his intervention that Solomon accedee to the throne at David's death instead of Adonijah (1 Kings 1:11). It is also noteworthy that he addresses Bathsheba first on this matter before going directly to David. Perhaps it is for this reason that Brother Russell suggests Bathsheba had chosen Nathan to be the tutor of Solomon (R5701, Col. 2, R4286, Col.2).

In any event, we see in Nathan the faithful prophet, neither biased for or against the one to whom he is sent, but concerned totally with conveying the message of Jehovah.

HER FIRST SON

The child which David sired in sin was born with an incurable disease. (The word translated "very sick" in 2 Samuel 12:15 is translated "incurable" in five of its nine usages in the Old Testament). David fasted and prayed for the life of the child. When he

SOLOMON, HER SECOND SON

Like Bathsheba herself, her second son was given two names. In his case, however, both were given at birth - one by David (notice the masculine pronoun in 2 Samuel 12:24) and the other by Nathan. Nathan named him Jedidiah, meaning “beloved of Jehovah,” though some commentators take it as “pardoned by Jehovah” (2 Samuel 12:25). David named him Solomon (verse 24), meaning “peaceful.” The two names taken together present a beautiful thought - “I have peace because I am still beloved and have received pardon for my sins.”

We know little of Bathsheba the mother. She may have delegated much of his education to Nathan the prophet. We do know of her desire for him to accede to the throne from the account in I Kings, chapter one.

The last chapter of the book of Proverbs is attributed to a king named Lemuel. While some take him to be an unknown monarch of a nearby country, most commentators agree with the ancient Jewish rabbis in identifying the name Lemuel (along with the Agur of chapter 30) as pen names for Solomon. If so, the first verse of that chapter is worthy of note: “The words of king Lemuel, the prophecy that *his mother* taught him.”

This would ascribe the entire chapter as a prophecy of Bathsheba. An analysis of the chapter seems to confirm this view. As a mother, one desirous of his exaltation, she would know her son better than anyone else. In this prophecy she zeroes in on Solomon's two greatest weaknesses: wine and women. In verses four through seven she admonishes him: “it is not for kings to drink wine.” The remainder of the chapter gives a job description for the kind of wife she would desire for Solomon. The indication is of a mother's intense care for her child and a keen eye for his weaknesses which need attention.

NATHAN, HER THIRD SON

Nathan is the first child Bathsheba had the privilege of naming. The first child died before a name was given, the second was named successively by David and Nathan the prophet. The name she chose gives an insight into her character. Very likely it was chosen in honor of her friend and counselor, Nathan the prophet. Yet this was the very man who had pronounced the death sentence of God on her firstborn.

How few would have the moral fortitude to not only accept such a harsh pronouncement of punishment but honor the one delivering it by naming the first child they are privileged to name with his name. Oh that we could each value our critics so dearly as to appreciate the words they speak even when, perhaps specially when, they are contrary to our actions, and reproofs of them!

God's forgiveness of the sin of David and Bathsheba is further highlighted by the fact that both the mother and step-father of Jesus came from their lineage. Joseph is a descendant of Solomon (Matthew 1:6, 16) and Nathan is the ancestor of Mary (Luke 3:31).

SUMMARY

Though we know little of Bathsheba directly, from the men surrounding her we get the view of a faithful woman of Israel who is unfortunately known mostly by her one sinful act. We begin to view her as a woman of prominence, a faithful mother, a humble penitent, a wise prophetess, and a favored wife of the “man after God's own heart.”

- *Carl Hagensick*

So Many Beasts, Heads and Horns!

One problem in the interpretation of Revelation is the identification of the similar but differing beasts of Daniel 7, Revelation 12, 13, and 17. For purposes of reference, they will herein be referred to by the following titles:

Daniel 7 - The Terrible Beast

Revelation 12 - The Red Dragon

Revelation 13 - The Leopard Beast

Revelation 17 - The Scarlet Beast

Let it be known from the outset that we will not solve all the mysteries of these prophecies. Many brethren of superb interpretive abilities have attempted to identify these beasts and their parts and to link each symbol to an historic equivalent. All of these attempts must be admired; but all of these attempts leave questions in the mind of this scribe. It is, therefore, the object of this paper simply to note some of the elements which seem obvious, to note where problems exist, and perhaps to suggest some possible solutions.

WHO (GENERALLY SPEAKING) ARE THESE BEASTS?

It is the consensus of brethren who interpret Revelation that all of these creatures represent Rome in one form or another. Pagan, Civil, Ecclesiastical, and Church-State forms have all been suggested. These seem accurate and logical and fill the interpretive requirements. Rome and its political and theological descendants have been the center of church history.

Rome throughout history has been known as the City on Seven Hills. It seems that the Revelator incorporated this into his message for the sake of recognition. (Compare 17:9 to 2:13 for an example.) It should be noted that Daniel 7 does not refer to this 7-part symbolism. The historical identity of the Terrible Beast is, however, obvious in Daniel's context of four beasts.

WHO (SPECIFICALLY) ARE THESE BEASTS?

The Terrible Beast (Daniel 7). This entity represents “Rome” during its entire history and through all of its evolutions. In Daniel 7:7 it is Rome before Papacy. In Daniel 7:8 it is Rome being transformed by Papacy. In Daniel 7:11 it is today's remains of the Roman-Papal Empire. The

number of heads on this beast is only one (Daniel 7:20) because the varying forms of government of Roman history are not important to us in the interpretation of Gospel Age prophecy. The number of horns is ten *plus* one because it *is* important for us to see from history how the “little horn” came into power.

The Red Dragon (Revelation 12). This entity represents Pagan Rome evolving into Civil Rome. When first we meet it, we see it concerned about the growing religious power of apostate Christians (the manchild) - see 12:3, 4. We see it lose its religious influence to this child (12:7-9). From this point forward it no longer represents Pagan Rome, but Civil Rome, and it is given the four-part name: Dragon, Serpent, Devil, and Satan (12:9). He will be mentioned again in 20:2.

The Leopard Beast (Revelation 13). This entity represents the manchild's view of how the Roman Empire evolved into an ecclesiastical unit. The Red Dragon (of 12) represented the secular view. That Dragon gives this beast its power (13:2), showing that in this picture the two are separate entities.

The Scarlet Beast (Revelation 17). This entity represents the interaction between church and state. Because of this it is necessary to have the woman sitting on the heads. Thus we can see how they do and do not relate or cooperate. In this chapter it becomes necessary to identify the heads since their chronology enters into the interpretation (17:8, 9, 10).

HEADS

The head of a creature is the part that does the thinking - the part that directs the rest of the body. The Red Dragon, The Leopard Beast, and The Scarlet Beast all have seven heads. The Terrible Beast of Daniel, however, only has one (Daniel 7:20). This would lead us to believe that the Lord was trying to tell us that we have no significant interest in the Roman Empire as such. It would not be profitable for us to search history to find out what kinds of leadership it had. Daniel focuses on the horns because he wants us to begin considering the details of Rome only once the Apostate Power is on the scene - once the little horn comes up. Therefore, when Revelation takes the trouble to draw our attention to seven heads on *all three* of these beasts, it strongly suggests that we must be interested in Roman leadership changes once Christianity develops. It would seem, then, that any listing of seven heads *should not predate* the existence of the apostate church.

HORNS, CROWNS, AND BLASPHEMY

In Daniel and in Revelation we find 10 horns in common for all of these beasts. Horns represent powers - just as we begin to consider the power of a bull or ram when he lowers his head to show us he is ready to exercise or employ the power he has.

These horns (along with crowns) are used symbolically to make several points:

- (a) The consistent use in all of these creatures helps us to equate them as various parts of one big picture.
- (b) In Daniel the plucking up of three of them by the “little horn” allows us to trace in history and chronology the setting up of the Abomination of Desolation.

(c) In Revelation 12 and 13 we see that Pagan-Civil Rome (The Red Dragon) has crowns on the heads. This is because the authority was vested in the central Roman political structure, not in the provinces. But in The Leopard Beast (Rome as viewed by the manchild), the crowns are moved to the horns because the church crowned the civil rulers under it and, for the most part, let them have the civil authority. In one sense the pictures are identical in that they both acknowledge that the civil rulers wore the crowns. In Revelation 13, however, the heads have *blasphemous names* on them. This is because church and state were so mixed as to be inseparable in each of the stages of the empire's evolution, and the Lord saw this entanglement of church and state as blasphemous.

(d) The Scarlet Beast (Revelation 17), on the other hand, has crowns on neither heads nor horns because in this picture the *woman* considers herself sovereign over the whole arrangement. It is not stated that she is crowned, but her royal attitude is clear in 17:4. 18:7 explains clearly what her attitude was - "A Queen." In 7:3 names of blasphemy appear all over The Scarlet Beast. This is because it claims through its history to rule by Divine Right received from the woman.

THE BIG TWO BEASTS

While for purposes of detail we have Daniel's Terrible Beast, Revelation's Red Dragon, Leopard Beast, Scarlet Beast, The Two-Homed Beast, and The Image of the Beast, we can profitably shrink all of these creatures into *two characters*. This is intimated in Job's prophecy when it introduces us to Leviathan and Behemoth.

Leviathan and Behemoth seem clearly to distinguish between the civil beast and the ecclesiastical beast - both of whom are great enemies of the people and the true church. The civil beast (Leviathan) seems clearly linked to the prophetic "seed" of the serpent (Genesis 3:15) which would "bruise (the seed of the woman) on the heel." Insufficient focus has been given to the civil beast (governments) as the primary source of trouble for the saints. This imbalance is dangerous.

The lesson we want to learn is that mankind and the church have been faced with a double opposition. Satan has been operating through both civil and ecclesiastical institutions - sometimes even against each other, and thus against himself. But Satan will cast out Satan whenever it is expedient for him to do so to save himself. Being aware of these two prophetic forces as enemies of the saints not only helps us to interpret prophecy, but also to be prepared for whatever we may have to endure.

Thus, all of these creatures are, in one form or another, either civil or ecclesiastical opponents of the church.

Leviathan, the primary civil power of Satan, was introduced to us in detail in Revelation 12 as the Red Dragon. He was there given the four-name appellation "Dragon ... Serpent ... Devil, and Satan." (12:9) We find him again in chapter 16 (vs. 13) when, during the 6th plague, he is in collusion with religion to try to prop up the old order. His final appearances are in chapter 20 which begins with his binding (20:1-3) and ends with his final attempt at deception (20:7, 8) and with his ultimate total destruction (20: 10).

THE CONSTRUCTION - LAYOUT OF THE BOOK OF REVELATION

1:1-8	Introduction to the Prophecy	Intro.
1:9-20	Introduction to the Seven Churches	}

2:1 - 3:22	The Seven Churches	1.
4:1 - 5:14	Introduction to the Seven Seals	}

6:1 - 8:1	The Seven Seals	2.
8:2-6	Introduction to the Seven Trumpets	}

8:7 - 11:14	The Seven Trumpets	3.
12:1 - 13:1	The Woman, Dragon, and false Michael	4.
13:1 - 14:5	Two Beasts, an Image, and the Overcomers	5.
14:6-20	Harvesting and the casting off of Babylon from favor	1.
15:1-8	Introduction to the Seven Last Plagues	}

16:1-21	Seven plaguing events against Babylon	2.
17:1-18	Political-social developments against Babylon	3.
18:1 - 19:10	Economic developments against Babylon	4.
19:11-21	The Harvest from the perspective of the Saints	5.
20:1-10	The Millennium and the "Dragon"	1.
20:11 - 21:1	The Throne of individual judgment	2.
21:2-8	The New Order summarized	3.
21:2-8	The new order's government: the Bride, the New Jerusalem	4.
21:9-27	Food, Water, and Light for everlasting life	5.
22.6-21	Closing remarks from an angel, Jesus, and John	Epilogue

ENTIERE GOSPEL AGE

5 Views of the

HARVEST PERIOD

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Behemoth, the primary religious power of Satan, on the other hand, does not seem very capable of functioning well without the aid of the state. Hence, when we first are introduced to him in detail (13:1, 2), he looks a lot like Rome! And his characteristics borrow from the first three secular beasts of Daniel 7. This beast also is found in chapter 16:13 working with the dragon. In 19:20 he is destroyed forever. He is again mentioned in 20:10 because it is important for us to see that the Leviathan beast joins him in oblivion.

All of the other “details” of Revelation prophecy about a Two-horned Beast, an Image, a False Prophet, etc., are merely extensions of this *Big Two* beasts picture. It is helpful to remember this simple kernel of prophetic thrust.

- *David Doran*

Be Thou Faithful unto Death
and I will give thee a Crown of Life
REVELATION 2:10

Rocks in the Wilderness

“He clave the rocks in the wilderness, and gave them drink as out of the great depths.” - Psalms 78:5

With great celebration the Israelites praised the Lord for the victory he wrought over Pharaoh and his hosts in the Red Sea (Exodus 15). However they were soon to face the perils of a desert journey which would sorely test them. Under these tests most would fail, and most would never reach the promised land. The critical problem was a lack of trusting faith in the Lord. “The word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it. Let us therefore fear, lest, a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it.” (Hebrews 4:2, 1)

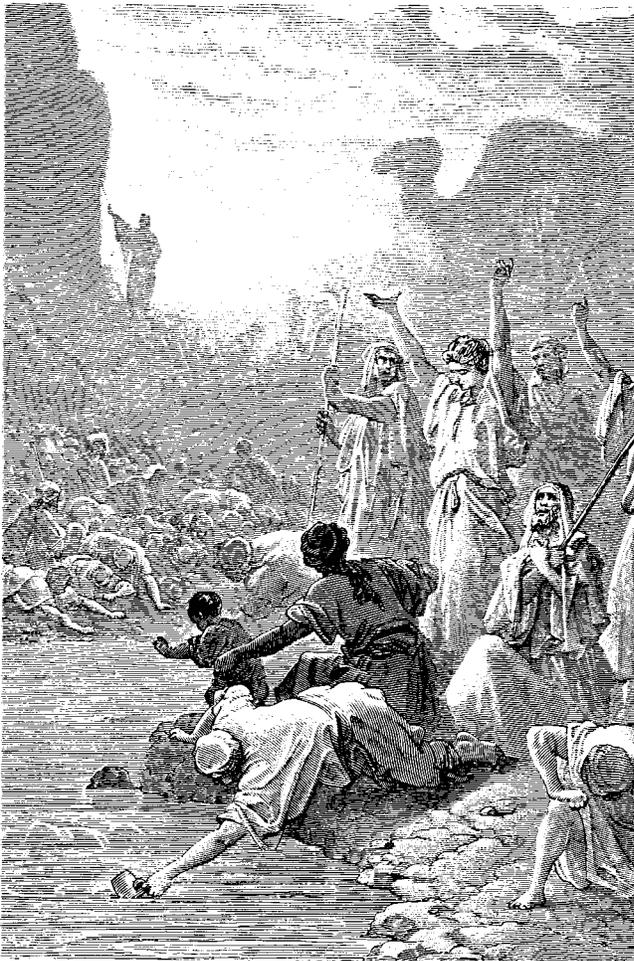
These remarks from Hebrews suggest the tests Israel faced in the wilderness are lessons for us, the developing church of God, who are journeying to our spiritual Canaan. The first episode, crossing the Red Sea, pictures the Baptism of the Christian Church into Christ. Just as the Israelites “were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea, and were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea” (1 Cor. 10:1, 2), so we are baptized into the greater than Moses - our Lord Jesus.

Therefore the experiences Israel faced subsequently may well picture the experiences the church faced in the beginning of their Christian journey. These desert experiences naturally had much to do with food and water, and Paul connects these matters to the spiritual food and drink we appreciate in Christ. They “did all eat the same spiritual meat, and did all drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed: and that Rock was Christ.” (1 Cor. 10:3, 4)

THE FIRST THREE EXPERIENCES

(1) The Israelites journeyed three days journey into the wilderness, and “found no water.” When they reached Marah, further south, they found “bitter” waters, probably meaning brackish, saline, salty water which was therefore undrinkable. Moses sought counsel from the Lord for their dilemma, and God “showed him a tree, which when he had cast into the waters, the waters were made sweet.” (Exodus 15:23-25)

Whether there was some natural phenomenon at work, with the wood drawing the salinity from the water, we know not. But the solution was of the Lord, and the waters were sweetened. Christians see in this event a picture of the sacrifice of Christ providing the sweet water of life to his followers. The tree reminds us of the wooden cross on which he gave his life, and thus stands for his sacrifice.



Moses Striking the Rock in Horeb

Ezekiel 47:11 where saltwater pictures death also.)

“As a result of Adam's sin there was nothing permanently refreshing for God's people to partake of. Those who desired to be his people, those who left the world behind them, found a great deal of dissatisfaction, if we may so express it, from the provisions of the law, which brought only condemnation. In due time, however, God caused the death of our Lord Jesus, and through or by means of his death - through the message of the ransom sacrifice - those who drink of this fact, this water, will not find that brackish taste.” (R4602)

Taking the lead of these comments from Bro. Russell, we think the *water* at Marah pictures the life-giving potential of the Law, but the *salt* pictures the death the Law really brought because of our sinful natures. The Law with its high standard could not actually bring life because it held no actual remedy for the sin brought by Adam. Even though it was holy, just and good, it brought continued condemnation since its high standard identified our deficiency. (Romans 7:11, 12) (Notice

Paul said Christ redeemed the Jews from the curse of the Law, and specifically referred to the tree of crucifixion in this connection. “Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, 'Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree.'” (Galatians 3:13) He

removes the salt-curse of the law, “that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.” (vs. 14)

(2) Israel next “came to Elim, where were twelve wells of water, and threescore and ten palm trees: and they encamped there by the waters.” (Exodus 15:27) No doubt the water represents the blessings of life and truth in Christ. But different pictures carry different points of emphasis.

The twelve wells show the means by which we access the living water available in Christ. It is from his apostles, chosen as his twelve representatives, that we draw this precious gift. Perhaps the 70 palms show the additional benefit of supplementary teachers and helpers to give rest and shade to the saints, as represented by the 70 disciples Christ sent out as his ambassadors also.

(3) Exodus 16 narrates the sending of manna, which was to be Israel's food for forty years. “It was ... white [pure]; and the taste of it was like wafers made with honey.” (Exodus 16:31) In John 6:31-35 Jesus said he was the bread from heaven. The sweet taste of honey pictures the sweetness of our call and hope in Christ. Was it not the sweet honey from the slain lion (of the tribe of Judah) that so impressed Samson? Was it not the sweetness of honey that impressed John as he ate the words of the book? (Rev. 10:10)

THE SMITTEN ROCKS

The Israelites then journeyed to the wilderness of Sin “and pitched in Rephidim: and there was no water for the people to drink.” (Exodus 17:1) The people again complained and railed against Moses, who brought the matter to the Lord. Moses was told to go to “the rock in Horeb; and thou shalt smite the rock, and there shall come water out of it, that the people may drink.” (Exodus 17:6) This Moses did, with a successful result. Here we have a type of the smiting of Jesus - showing his death to be necessary before the waters of life could issue forth.

All of these experiences were early in Israel's wandering. They were before the giving of the Law (Exodus 19:1, 2), and therefore within the first 50 days following the Exodus. But there was another episode involving the smiting of a rock much later at the end of the wilderness wanderings.

That episode is recorded in Numbers 20. The beginning and end of that chapter record the deaths of Miriam and Aaron respectively. The location was not near the wilderness of Sin, in the south of the Sinai peninsula, but in the wilderness of Zin, far north in Kadesh near the entrance to Canaan. Because of the similarity of the episodes, and the similarity of names (Sin, Zin) we at first supposed Exodus 17 and Numbers 20 were two accounts of the same incident. But the context of each event shows otherwise.

Here are some other distinctions.

- (1) Exodus 17 - Moses' attitude was exemplary. Numbers 20 - Moses yielded to frustration, for which he was barred from entering Canaan.
- (2) Exodus 17 - Moses was told to strike the rock. Numbers 20 - Moses was told to speak to the rock.
- (3) Exodus 17 - Moses' rod was used (vs. 5). Numbers 20 - probably Aaron's rod that budded was used (Numbers 20:9 cf Numbers 17:10).
- (4) Exodus 17 - the smiting was in the presence of the elders of Israel. Numbers 20 - the whole assembly was involved, and the elders not mentioned.

Clearly the rock is Christ in both cases - and the water of life nourishes the thirsty multitudes in each case. Why, then, two such occurrences? Are there distinctions in these events which foreshadow distinct episodes in the Divine Plan?

Our answer is yes. In God's plan there are two distinct occasions when the water of life gushes forth to refresh his creatures - first for the church, and later for the world. These two occasions are shown by the first and second episodes - Exodus 17 and Numbers 20 - respectively.

It was necessary that Christ be smitten once, and we drink the refreshing waters as a result. But when it comes time for the world to drink, Christ will not be smitten again. God will then speak to Christ at the proper time, and the waters will gush forth for mankind. The elders of Israel may picture the church who beheld the first smiting. The world will behold the gushing waters the second time. The first occasion was at the outset of the long wilderness wandering, a picture of the Gospel age sojourn of the church. The second was near its close, representing the outset of the kingdom.

Aaron's rod that budded, used on the second occasion, budded to show God's elect choice of the priesthood of Aaron. God's approval of the elect church will be manifested to the world when the church appears in glory with their master. (Romans 8:19) Perhaps this shows the second episode represents an occasion after the church is manifest in glory. (Compare Jeremiah 1:11, 12.)

LET US HEED THE EXAMPLE

The murmuring of the Israelites is legendary. It is an example that stands as a warning to us. God's providence is always sufficient - our faith, however, sometimes comes short. Let us learn that in every experience, no matter how pressing, our privilege is to exercise faith and trust, and conduct ourselves as Christ would conduct himself. In all things he was submissive, patient, accepting. He never let the difficulties of the way move him from the work of God, or deflect him from the character of God.

Moses was the meekest man in all the earth. Perhaps it was to emphasize the lesson to us of our need of vigilance that God allowed this great man, on this rare occasion, to display a fault under duress. He “forgot himself, and allowed a spirit somewhat akin to pride, self-sufficiency and anger to control him for the moment. Smiting the rock, he cried aloud to the people, 'Ye rebels, must I bring you water out of the rock?' The water indeed came forth, as the Lord had promised. The people indeed got the blessing needed, but one of the most illustrious men and servants of God there fell under divine disapprobation.” (R5315)

It would have been better had Moses hidden himself, humbled himself, and asked water from the rock in Jehovah's name. Elders, and leaders of the Lord's people, may observe this point with profit.

They are not to pose dramatically before the people of God as necessary to the supply of the streams of grace and truth. They are to humbly appreciate their privilege of service, and direct the praise for all blessing to its source - first to God, and secondly to his son and our Lord, Jesus.

- David Rice