

Journeying Toward Canaan

***“Because he loved
thy fathers,
therefore he chose
their seed after
them, and brought
thee out in his
sight with his
mighty power out
of Egypt; To drive
out nations from
before thee greater
and mightier than
thou art, to bring
thee in, to give thee
their land for an
inheritance, as it is
this day.”***

***—Deuteronomy
4:37,38***

THE NATION OF ISRAEL

was a typical people, and various aspects of their culture, traditions, and religious observances served as illustrations. Many of these types had a deeper meaning and significant purpose in connection with God’s ultimate plan for the reconciliation of the sin-sick and dying world of mankind. This is especially true in connection with their Tabernacle arrangements, the Levitical priesthood, their sacrificial offerings, and its many other important details and

services. These were designed by God to provide important instruction and guidance for the true followers of our Lord Jesus during this present Gospel Age.

THE CHRISTIAN'S JOURNEY

This lesson's featured scripture points to another important aspect of the Israelites' experiences pertaining to their journey in the wilderness and their hope to reach the promised land of Canaan. Their travels served to illustrate the very difficult and arduous journey upon which our Lord's consecrated people have entered as they seek the promised antitypical haven of rest.

Our minds are thus drawn symbolically to the footstep followers of Jesus who have accepted the heavenly calling and are striving for an inheritance in Christ's future kingdom. The Apostle Paul explains that these consecrated believers "walk in newness of life" (Rom. 6:4), and aspire to new, higher spiritual goals and attainments.

OBSTACLES AND BESETMENTS

The faithful child of God will encounter obstacles and besetments in their journey to the spiritual Canaan. These will challenge, oppose, and attempt to discourage them in their new spiritual life and growth in Christ Jesus. There are three main obstacles that every child of God will need to overcome. Among these three are the weaknesses and failings of the fallen flesh. Therefore, we need to heed Jesus' instruction, "Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak." (Matt. 26:41) The New Creature in Christ Jesus will also be required to overcome the temptations and allurements of the present evil world. (John 16:33) Finally, they will also struggle against the wiles of Satan, the great adversary of the Lord's people, "for the accuser of

our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night.”—Rev. 12:9,10

A NEW COMMITMENT

There are basic principles that the called in Christ must follow. The Apostle Paul wrote, “I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.”—Rom. 12:1,2

The apostle has also given special instructions to the called in Christ Jesus to fight their individual Christian warfare. “Though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh: (For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds).”—II Cor. 10:3,4

We are also provided with our Heavenly Father’s precious Word of Truth that contains the wonderful teachings of the Master. Therefore, we are strengthened to fight this battle, to know his will for us in this narrow way of sacrifice, and to faithfully carry out our lifetime commitment of total consecration. “Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.”—Rev. 2:10

SPECIFIC INSTRUCTIONS

As a typical people, the Israelites were commanded to build the Tabernacle for their religious observances. God gave them very explicit instructions, “According to all that I shew thee, after the pattern of the tabernacle, and the pattern of all the

instruments thereof, even so shall ye make it.” (Exod. 25:9) This command was later confirmed in the Book of Joshua, where we read, “Therefore said we, that it shall be, when they should so say to us or to our generations in time to come, that we may say again, Behold the pattern of the altar of the LORD, which our fathers made, not for burnt offerings, nor for sacrifices; but it is a witness between us and you.”—Josh. 22:28

Any violation of God’s arrangements was punishable by death, as seen in the case of the very serious transgression committed by two of Aaron’s sons when it came time for them to carry out the particular religious services that they had been commanded to perform. The scriptural record states, “Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, took either of them his censer, and put fire therein, and put incense thereon, and offered strange fire before the LORD, which he commanded them not. And there went out fire from the LORD, and devoured them, and they died before the LORD.”—Lev. 10:1,2

Like the ancient nation of Israel which served as a type, the consecrated child of God is also engaged in a warfare that will continue to the end of his life’s journey in Christ Jesus. Having made a commitment to our Heavenly Father to be faithful to our covenant of sacrifice, there can be no looking back. Should we falter, we will not be prepared for a place in the promised land of Canaan—Christ’s future kingdom. The seriousness of this commitment was addressed by the Master during his earthly ministry when a person who expressed his desire to follow him asked for time to attend to his earthly affairs

first. "Jesus said unto him, No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God."—Luke 9:62

POWERFUL ENEMIES

It was commanded of the Israelites that they drive out the various powerful nations that were occupying the land of Canaan. They were to dispossess them so that they could enter the land and claim it in accordance with the will of God. The Canaanites had no rights to the land they occupied. They had simply staked off the most fertile areas that they wanted for themselves and then settled on them. The land did not belong to them because God had promised Abraham that the land of Canaan would be given to his seed. From the scriptural record, this is made clear. "In the same day the LORD made a covenant with Abram, saying, Unto thy seed have I given this land, from the river of Egypt unto the great river, the river Euphrates: The Kenites, and the Kenizzites, and the Kadmonites, And the Hittites, and the Perizzites, and the Rephaims, And the Amorites, and the Canaanites, and the Girgashites, and the Jebusites."—Gen. 15:18-21

There heathen people had descended into a revolting depth of immorality, gross iniquity, and idolatry that could no longer be tolerated and needed to be destroyed. There are ten enemies referred to in this particular scripture. Ten has the significance of being a number representing completeness. As the enemies of the Israelites, it was essential that they all be totally dispossessed from the land because of their extreme violation of the most basic principles of righteousness and common decency.

The Canaanite people were engaged in the most corrupt forms of behavior, and this is brought to our attention by J. B. Rotherham in his *Emphasized Bible*. Immediately following his translation of the Book of Joshua, he includes a special “Note” on the “Destruction of the Canaanite Nations.” In his “Note” Rotherham describes the level of sin, degradation, and depravity to which the people of Canaan had fallen. He points to their worship as being obscene, sensual, and of the utmost cruelty. Their sacred places had been turned into brothels, and, in honor of their unholy false deities, women surrendered their virtue. Further to this, the sons and daughters that were born from these unholy rites were consumed by fire as sacrificial offerings to their false gods.

ANTITYPICAL LESSONS

Since the Word of God indicates that the Israelite nation were a typical people, there are important lessons that remain applicable at this end of the age, especially in connection with the significance of the monstrous enemies typified by the inhabitants of Canaan—the antitypical enemies that must be overthrown in our own lives wherever applicable.

We note the following text of scripture, “On this side Jordan, in the land of Moab, began Moses to declare this law, saying, The LORD our God spake unto us in Horeb, saying, Ye have dwelt long enough in this mount: Turn you, and take your journey, and go to the mount of the Amorites, and unto all the places nigh thereunto, in the plain, in the hills, and in the vale, and in the south, and by the sea

side, to the land of the Canaanites, and unto Lebanon, unto the great river, the river Euphrates. Behold, I have set the land before you: go in and possess the land which the LORD swore unto your fathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, to give unto them and to their seed after them.”—Deut. 1:5-8

CHRISTIAN WARFARE

This scripture has a symbolic lesson in connection with the true followers of our Lord Jesus. Crossing the River Jordan pictures the Christian’s consecration, and the land of Moab represents the land of the Adversary. Horeb serves to illustrate the mount of sin that must be dealt with. Those who have willingly offered their lives to the Heavenly Father in consecration are weary of sin. In reference to the “Spiritual seed of Abraham” we read, “The LORD your God hath multiplied you, and, behold, ye are this day as the stars of heaven for multitude.”—vs. 10

We may consider the experiences of natural Israel, as they also pertain to the consecrated lives of spiritual Israel—the stars of heaven—lessons by which we are edified and built up in Christ Jesus. We have all inherited sin in its many ugly forms, and as consecrated followers of our Lord Jesus, we must be engaged in fighting the Christian warfare to rid ourselves of them. We should strive diligently to make progress in overcoming the weaknesses of our flesh, and to walk in newness of life. As the spiritual seed of Abraham, and thus enrolled in the “school of Christ,” we must learn the necessary lessons that pertain to our life of faith. Each of us will be examined by our loving Heavenly Father to

determine the degree of progress that we have made.

As the “stars of heaven,” we are counted as New Creatures in Christ Jesus. The Apostle John taught, “Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not. Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is. And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure.”—I John 3:1-3

In fighting the fight of faith, we must also subdue our mortal bodies and bring them into subjection to the pure mind of Christ. This means that we bring every thought into subjection, even as the Apostle Paul explained, “This is the will of God, even your sanctification.” (I Thess. 4:3) Sanctification is the process of setting apart our mortal bodies in total consecration to God with the intention of rendering our best possible service to him.

ENEMIES OF RIGHTEOUSNESS

There are enemies of righteousness and truth harbored within our mortal fleshly bodies, and we are to remember that natural Israel serves as a type of the little flock of spiritual Israel. In the conquest of Canaan, there were powerful nations that Israel was to dispossess, destroy, and to make no covenant with.

“When the Lord thy God shall bring thee into the land whither thou goest to possess it, and hath cast out many nations before thee, the Hittites,

and the Girgashites, and the Amorites, and the Canaanites, and the Perizzites, and the Hivites, and the Jebusites, seven nations greater and mightier than thou; And when the LORD thy God shall deliver them before thee; thou shalt smite them, and utterly destroy them; thou shalt make no covenant with them, nor shew mercy unto them.”—Deut. 7:1,2

There are seven nations in this reference, the number seven suggesting perfection. These names, and the land which they occupied, also correspond to the enemies of the New Creation, the antitype of Israel. All who are of the little flock have to battle these many enemies of righteousness. (Luke 12:32) Our Christian warfare, and our battles as New Creatures in Christ Jesus, will involve driving them out so that we may go in and possess the promised land, which represents Christ’s glorious future kingdom.

Further instructions were also given Israel concerning their enemies. “Neither shalt thou make marriages with them; thy daughter thou shalt not give unto his son, nor his daughter shalt thou take unto thy son. For they will turn away thy son from following me, that they may serve other gods: so will the anger of the LORD be kindled against you, and destroy thee suddenly. But thus shall ye deal with them; ye shall destroy their altars, and break down their images, and cut down their groves, and burn their graven images with fire. For thou art an holy people unto the LORD thy God: the LORD thy God hath chosen thee to be a special people unto himself, above all people that are upon the face of the earth. The LORD did not set his love upon you,

nor choose you, because ye were more in number than any people; for ye were the fewest of all people.”—Deut. 7:3-7

FALLEN FLESH TENDENCIES

It is suggested that the various Canaanites who needed to be dispossessed may represent different tendencies of our fallen flesh which have to be overcome and rooted out. For example, the name “Amorite” has the significance of being very strong and very tall. Therefore, those Amorites who dwelt in the mountains and high places may represent those of the Lord’s people who tend toward self assurance, and those who are haughty, or lifted up with pride. “Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall. Better it is to be of an humble spirit with the lowly, than to divide the spoil with the proud.” (Prov. 16:18,19) Spiritual pride is one of the greatest of all enemies to be destroyed by the consecrated child of God.

Those in Canaan who dwelt in the lower parts of the land may represent a jealous disposition, or one that is easily aroused to envy. “Set me as a seal upon thine heart, as a seal upon thine arm: for love is strong as death; jealousy is cruel as the grave: the coals thereof are coals of fire, which hath a most vehement flame.”—Song of Sol. 8:6

Dwellers of the best and most level landscape could represent selfishness, as in those who expect to have, and demand, the best of everything for themselves. Other weaknesses according to our fleshly nature that need to be dealt with include malice, strife, covetousness, and arrogance. Discouragement is another weakness of the flesh that

needs to be continuously brought under control. Many of the Lord's people have been driven from the Truth and a life of sacrifice because they were easily discouraged.

SPYING OUT THE LAND

From Israel's encampment at Paran, Moses sent spies to search out the land of Canaan. This was permitted by God at the request of the Israelites. (Deut. 1:22,23) The spies travelled throughout the land as far north as Hamath and west toward the sea. On returning, although they all agreed that the land was indeed flowing with milk and honey, ten of the spies gave a faithless report that put fear into the hearts of the Israelites. Only Joshua and Caleb encouraged the people to go into the land, overcome their enemies, and possess it.

“Caleb stilled the people before Moses, and said, Let us go up at once, and possess it; for we are well able to overcome it. But the men that went up with him said, We be not able to go up against the people; for they are stronger than we. And they brought up an evil report of the land which they had searched unto the children of Israel, saying, The land, through which we have gone to search it, is a land that eateth up the inhabitants thereof; and all the people that we saw in it are men of a great stature. And there we saw the giants, the sons of Anak, which come of the giants: and we were in our own sight as grasshoppers, and so we were in their sight.”—Num. 13:30-33

Joshua and Caleb brought back an encouraging report, but the spies who had travelled with them lacked faith in the wonderful providence of God

and were overcome with the spirit of fear. Caleb said, “Let us go up at once, and possess it; for we are well able to overcome it.” We also as spiritual Israelites may overcome the giants of fear and discouragement in our lives, and share with our blessed Master in his future kingdom when we reach the heavenly Canaan.

PILLAR OF A CLOUD

God provided for his people Israel in a most remarkable way. “The LORD went before them by day in a pillar of a cloud, to lead them the way; and by night in a pillar of fire, to give them light; to go by day and night: He took not away the pillar of the cloud by day, nor the pillar of fire by night, from before the people.”—Exod. 13:21,22

From the scriptural record, we learn that God’s providence was with Israel when they met Amalek for battle. Moses stood on a hill overlooking the site of battle. “It came to pass, when Moses held up his hand, that Israel prevailed: and when he let down his hand, Amalek prevailed.”—chap. 17:11

God then showed his powerful hand, as we read, “But Moses’ hands were heavy; and they took a stone, and put it under him, and he sat thereon; and Aaron and Hur stayed up his hands, the one on the one side, and the other on the other side; and his hands were steady until the going down of the sun. And Joshua discomfited Amalek and his people with the edge of the sword.”—vss. 12,13

EXAMPLES FOR US

The Apostle Paul enumerates some important examples of God’s overruling care over his typical people. “I would not that ye should be ignorant,

how that all our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea; And were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea; And did all eat the same spiritual meat; And did all drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ. But with many of them God was not well pleased: for they were overthrown in the wilderness. Now these things were our examples, to the intent we should not lust after evil things, as they also lusted.”—I Cor. 10:1-6

We must fight our enemies until we reach the end of our course. However, it is only through our Lord’s strength that we can cast out the enemies that seek to destroy us. Our enemies are mightier than we are, and we rely upon the powerful hand of God to help us.

Throughout our battles with the flesh, the world, and the Adversary, we trust in our Lord who has promised to be with us, and we must manifest his strength and glory in all of our Christian warfare. Therefore, in any victory that may be gained, we must honor the Lord and recognize that it is through his strength, his Word, and his Holy Spirit that we may conquer and possess the long-promised land of Canaan.

“I am the LORD your God, which brought you forth out of the land of Egypt, to give you the land of Canaan, and to be your God.”—Lev. 25:38 ■

*“Let us not be weary in well doing:
for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not.”
—Galatians 6:9*

Think It Not Strange

*“Beloved, think it
not strange
concerning the
fiery trial which is
to try you, as
though some
strange thing
happened unto
you: But rejoice,
inasmuch as ye are
partakers of
Christ’s sufferings;
that, when his
glory shall be
revealed, ye may be
glad also with
exceeding joy.”
—I Peter 4:12,13*

SUFFERING OF ANY KIND

is foreign to the natural desires of all God’s intelligent creatures, and the human creation is no exception. One of the blessed assurances given us concerning God’s plan for the human race is that eventually “there shall be no more pain.” This will be at the close of Christ’s Millennial kingdom, when sickness, and even death itself, will have been destroyed, and when all things shall have been made new.—
Rev. 21:4,5

We are in a suffering and dying world, and the followers of the Master share in the experiences which are common to all. The divine arrangement for them does not call for a release from suffering simply because they are servants of God, although

they are given assurance of strength to bear their afflictions.

Pain itself is difficult enough to endure, but when there is added to physical suffering an uncertainty as to why it is necessary, or what the cause might be, then it becomes even more difficult to bear. This is frequently the case with the people of God. They are visited by afflictions of one sort or another, and they may wonder what they have done to displease the Lord. They search their hearts and lives for the answer, and while they know that they are imperfect, usually they can find no special reason why they should suffer more than others. So their anxiety, and perhaps even fear, increases the burden of their experience.

When we understand clearly the viewpoint which is presented to us in the Word of God, we will have no cause to wonder and worry about our troubles, whether they be sickness or other afflictions. It is this that the Apostle Peter is explaining to us in our text. "Think it not strange," he says, "concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you."

NOT STRANGERS

The Greek word here translated "strange" is one that suggests the relationship between the host and a guest, those not members of the same family. Paul used a similar word in his reference to the experience of Abraham when visited by three angels. Paul wrote, "Be not forgetful to entertain strangers: for thereby some have entertained angels unawares."—Heb. 13:2

The angels were strangers to Abraham, but he welcomed them as guests and entertained them. As Peter explains, we are not to think of our trials as being foreign to us. We are to take them in, so to speak, as a part of our family of experiences and learn to live with them. To take this viewpoint of our afflictions will help a great deal in becoming reconciled to them and in learning the necessary lessons which they are designed to teach us.

Confirming this viewpoint of our trials is the Greek word used by Peter, and translated “happened” in the expression “as though some strange thing happened unto you.” Its literal meaning is “to walk together.” The thought is that when trials visit us and “walk together” with us we are not to think of them as strangers, but to accept such experiences as though they were our friends or even members of our family.

Peter explains that the reason we should not think of our trials as being strange, or alien to us, is that in experiencing them we are partakers of Christ’s sufferings. As the Greek text indicates, we are partners in Christ’s sufferings. In other words, in our trials we are sharing the common experiences of all whom the Heavenly Father is preparing to share in the glory of the kingdom and to partake of the glory of the divine nature.

Since trials are thus so closely related to our hope of glory, we should not consider them as “strange,” but should welcome them into our lives. We should get acquainted with them and learn well the lessons which they alone, perhaps, are best able to teach. We will discover that if we become reconciled to our trials and consider them as a necessary

part of our family of experiences, they will be as “angels,” imparting much valuable information which we need in order to make our calling and election sure.

NOT AN EVIDENCE OF GOD’S DISFAVOR

A critical point of truth to remember is that trials to the Christian are not an evidence of God’s disfavor, but the reverse. Paul wrote, “All that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.” (II Tim. 3:12) We also read that it is through “much tribulation” that we enter the kingdom. (Acts 14:22) Even if some of our trials may be in the nature of discipline, they are still an evidence of God’s love, “For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth.” (Heb. 12:6) “Every son” whom the Heavenly Father receives and loves is subject to training and discipline. Therefore, when trials are permitted for this purpose, we should think of them as evidences of God’s grace, not as being alien or foreign to our needs as New Creatures in Christ Jesus.

Of the nonbelievers, David wrote, “Their eyes stand out with fatness: they have more than heart could wish.” (Ps. 73:7) This is not necessarily true of all who are not running for the prize of the High Calling of God in Christ Jesus. All are not feasting on fatness. There are many in the world who have severe trials, through poverty, sickness, or in other ways. However, at times a Christian is tempted to compare his lot with a worldly friend or neighbor who is doing well along material lines and perhaps wonder why, as a child of God, he himself is having such a difficult time.

HE ALSO SUFFERS

Concerning his typical people, the Lord said that when they were afflicted he also suffered. (Isa. 63:9) Surely this is no less true with us. If our faith can grasp this fact it will help to make every ache and pain—of mind, or heart, or body—a sacred experience of priceless value in preparing us for that high position for which we have been apprehended by God. This will be true regardless of the specific cause of our distresses, for they are all being utilized by the Lord in connection with the trial of our faith.

Think it not strange, then, concerning your fiery trials. Remember that your Heavenly Father knows all about them and, if you will tune your ear to his Word, you will hear him say, “My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness.” (II Cor. 12:9) Also, “Be strong and of a good courage; be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed: for the LORD thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest.” (Josh. 1:9) Because the Lord fulfils these and his many other promises in our day-by-day experiences, we can rejoice in him and in the power of his might. Our joy in the Lord will abound and “the peace of God, which passeth all understanding” will be our daily and blessed portion.—Phil. 4:7

“Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you: But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ’s sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy.”—I Pet. 4:12,13 ■

because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps: Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth: Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously: Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed. For ye were as sheep going astray; but are now returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls.”—I Pet. 2:21-25

The natural tendency of the fallen human nature, is to strike back when attacked, if in no other way than in an attempt to vindicate oneself. But Jesus did not do this, and we are to be like him, humbly submitting to whatever misrepresentation may be heaped upon us. This is a severe test of humility; but, by the Lord’s grace, his people can overcome.

Let us remember that our exaltation is not to be made manifest on this side of the veil, but on the other side and in the spiritual creation. The Apostle Paul proclaimed, “To them who by patient continuance in well doing seek for glory and honour and immortality, eternal life.” (Rom. 2:7) Only those who humble themselves under the mighty hand of God may expect to be exalted by him in due time. ■

“When wisdom entereth into thine heart, and knowledge is pleasant unto thy soul; Discretion shall preserve thee, understanding shall keep thee.”—Proverbs 2:10,11