

4. Trumpet, Blood, Cloud, and Fire (4Q 2009—People on the Move: The Book of Numbers)

Biblical material: Exod. 12:1-29; Numbers 9, 10; Matt. 26:36-43; Luke 22:15, 19, 20; 1 Cor. 15:52.

Quotes

- It boggles my mind that someone can see life breathed into a baby, watch the grass die and then come to life again, see leaves fall and watch the rebirth of a tree, or gaze on any of the majestic splendor that is this earth and not be overpowered by the presence of an Almighty God! *Bill McCartney*
- God please do not be merciful with those that do not believe in your holy presence. *Albrecht Druer*
- To me, it seems necessary to rediscover - and the energy to do so exists - that even the political and economic spheres need moral responsibility, a responsibility that is born in man's heart and, in the end, has to do with the presence or absence of God. *Joseph Ratzinger*
- It's about people who are ready to take God out of the box. These people stand up for their faith regardless of what they are labeled. It's just so great to see the power of God and to feel His presence. *Darnell Jenkins*
- True religion is not a narrow dogma. It is not external observance. It is faith in God and living in the presence of God. *Mohandas Gandhi*

Questions

What was the real significance of the pillar of cloud/fire? How should we understand the blood of the Passover? How is God really with us today? What were all the symbols for? How do we apply the teaching methods God used then to our situation now? How do we see God leading us to the Promised Land?

Bible discussion

Numbers 9 contains instructions for a delayed "Second Passover," if anyone should miss the first for a valid reason—showing once again the merciful nature of God. The pillar of cloud/fire that covered the Tabernacle was a visible demonstration of his presence by God to a people that really needed reassurance! Such a spectacle was the to emphasize that he was with them every step of the way on their journey; but history shows how less than convinced they were!

With the sound of silver trumpets (Numbers 10) the Israelites march off to the Promised Land. They march in order—they are on their way! Little do they know what faces them, and that they will wander in the wilderness for forty years because they refuse to trust their loving Lord. (An interesting aside is in 10:29-32, showing that even those from Midian were invited to join in the journey to the Land of Promise...)

The key to all the symbols referenced in the title of this study is the presence of God and how he reveals himself to us. This self-disclosure is the answer in the great controversy to all the charges, and while including our salvation, is much more than that.

Comments

In a Nazi concentration camp, three human beings dangled at the end of the hangman's ropes. Two died quickly. The other suffered on and on. The reason? He was just a boy, and his weight was not enough to kill him quickly. Turning in bitter disgust and anger, one of the onlookers said to another, "And where is God in all of this?"

"God is here, hanging on the end of that rope," said the other.

The presence of God. For the only reason God allows this horrendous, stinking, cancerous, homicidal world to continue is for that greater reason. The reason why He came: For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life." [John 3:16 NIV]. And that cannot be forced, but must be chosen. And the only reason to choose God is not for fear of punishment or because of desire for reward, but because *God is utterly right and true.*

For that's the problem. Rival armies fight each other and burn fields, yet man blames God for the famine and doesn't want to stop fighting. Factories pour out PCBs and lead and dioxins, yet when the babies are afflicted with birth defects, we rage at God and keep on pumping out the pollution. People infect each other with AIDS and other sexually-transmitted diseases, yet they only curse God and refuse to change. And when the fall-out from sin affects the truly innocent, no one but God is to blame!

"This is the verdict: Light has come into the world, but men loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil." [John 3:19 NIV]. Only when we admit we are wrong and God is proved undeniably right, only when we want to live honest and true lives, only when we really want healing from all our sinsickness--only *then* can Experiment Earth become what it was intended to be: the home of righteousness.

So the simple answer to the hard questions: God *cannot* end the pain and the sin and the sickness and the evil and the rebellion without being untrue to Himself and His created beings. When the issues are fully demonstrated, when evil is seen in all its demonic wickedness, when good is shown to be the *only* way which any sane being would want to live, when the final choices are all made—*then* the God who values freedom above all else can come and end it all. That sin ends in death must be seen to be the natural consequence of such a choice, and *not* as some arbitrary imposed revenge from God. [Romans 3:23, James 1:15]. For God seeks freely given love and worship, not that which is offered by a cringing rebel out of fear of punishment.

Ellen White Comments

God will be with you if you will be with Him. Take care that you do not leave a wrong impression upon minds in reference to yourself.... We need the cloudy pillar to lead us constantly. We have the assurance of the presence of God; you have it—"Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world." (Matt. 28:20.) God bless you. {TSA 20}

The Lawgiver explained the meaning of the divine precepts, and showed that they were not arbitrary requirements, but that in the doing of them there is life; for Christ from the pillar of cloud had distinctly told them that those who did them should live in them. The Ten Commandments are called in the New Testament the royal law of liberty. In

obeying the divine precepts, men will assimilate to the divine character; for the character of God is expressed in his holy law. In substituting their own ideas, in erecting their own standard, they will come to misrepresent the Father and Jesus Christ, whom he has sent...

{ST, October 17, 1895}

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