

It is better to be in a minority with God than in a majority without God, and Caleb and Joshua had abundant cause in after years to rejoice that they had brought back a report showing that they were of good courage and full of confidence in the power of God against any human odds.

THE ATTITUDE OF THE PEOPLE.

The people, in this case as in so many other similar crises, allowed themselves to be swayed by this distrustful sentiment of the majority of the spies. They broke out into disgraceful and cowardly murmurings against Moses and Aaron, and even proposed to make a captain for themselves and to return into Egypt. And though they were not allowed to do this, yet because of their unbelief and distrust, God declared that none of the adult people of Israel should enter the land of Canaan save Caleb and Joshua only.

WHAT OF OUR OWN PROMISED LAND.

We stand aghast at the conduct of the children of Israel. Are we doing our very best to enter into the land promised for all the children of God, and are we faithfully trusting and obeying the Leader whom God has appointed for us? Let us watch and pray lest we too fail of entrance into the heavenly Canaan.

AUGUST 31.

The Brazen Serpent.

Numbers 21: 1-9.

GOLDEN TEXT. And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up; that whoso believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life. John 3: 14-15.

THIRTY-EIGHT YEARS OF WILDERNESS LIFE

It was now about thirty-eight years since the Israelites, by their fear and cowardice had forfeited the opportunity of an early entrance into the land of Canaan. During this time their movements had centered around Kadesh-Barnea. But few events are recorded as having taken place during these years of sojourn in the wilderness, and it seems altogether likely that they were devoid of any important occurrences save those that are recorded in the sacred narrative. Among these are included the revolt of Korah against Moses, the budding of Aaron's rod, the death of Miriam, the murmuring at Kadesh, the repulse from Edon, and the death of Aaron.

VICTORY AT HORMAH.

When the Israelites entered the domain of the King of Arad, on their way to Canaan, they were fiercely attacked and some of them were made prisoners. Then the people of Israel made a vow unto the Lord, and the Lord drove their enemies into their hands, and the name of the place was called "Hormah," which means "utter destruction."

DISTRUST AND ITS PENALTY.

Having once been repulsed from the land of Edon, the Israelites were forced to make a long circuitous journey around this country instead of marching straight through it as they would like to have done. This unwelcome delay once more aroused the discontent of the people, and as so often before they broke out into loud and rebellious complaints against Moses and against God. The murmuring to the people brought down upon their heads a swift and condign punishment. Fiery serpents made their appearance in the camp and many people died from their bites.

The divine object in sending the fiery serpents among the people was soon attained. Their rebellious murmurings quickly gave place to expressions of repentance and humble petition for the removal of the fiery serpents. Repentance is the doorway leading to redemption, and as soon as the people of Israel manifested their sorrow for their sin the Lord opened a way of escape for them.

THE LOOK OF FAITH.

God, by a single word, might have healed all the people of their serpent bites. Instead of so doing, however, he chose a method which called for co-operation on the part of every one who complied with the divine requirements and looked upon the brazen serpent there came a complete cure.

The brazen serpent was the symbol and promise of a greater redemption that should come to the world through the Messiah. Most clearly does Jesus Christ apply to himself the suggestive teachings of this wonderful and striking incident in the history of the people of Israel.

The application of our lesson is found in the words of the Golden Text. Jesus is the atonement for the sins of humanity, and all who will look unto Him in faith shall find a full and free redemption.

SEPTEMBER 7.

The Prophet Like Moses.

Duet. 18: 9-19.

GOLDEN TEXT. This is of a truth that Prophet that should come unto the world.—John 6: 14.

INTRODUCTION.—After the incident of the Brazen serpent, the Israelites conquered Sihon and Og and camped in the country of Moab, opposite Jericho, where occurred the events connected with Balaam. To the tribes of Reuben, Gad, and half of Manasseh was assigned inheritance east of Jordan, and cities of refuge were ordered to be appointed. The book of Deuteronomy is, as its name—second law—indicates, a repetition of much contained in the three preceding books, and is a record of the last communication of Moses to the Israelites, the new generation that had grown up in the wilderness (2: 14). Knowing that he was not to take the people into the promised land, his instructions and charges were peculiarly tender and earnest, anticipating much of their experience in coming years. Immediately preceding our lesson, instructions are given in reference to a king (17: 14-20) as a ruler they would one day desire, and to priests and Levites (18: 1-8), who were to minister in the name of the Lord (ver. 5). As the surrounding nations had kings and priests and various kinds of prophets, God tells them his purpose in regard to prophets for them.

NOTES.

1. Abominations Denounced. Ver. 9-14. This journey had a definite end, quite different from mere roaming about for pasturage, as Israel had been doing for many years. Land . . . God giveth thee. Moses repeatedly reminds them that their new home, though to be conquered by vigorous efforts is peculiarly a token of divine favor, without which it would never have been theirs. Abominations would exist in the land they were to enter and they are warned not to learn any of them. Pass through the fire. Worship characteristic of Moloch, already forbidden (Lev. 18: 21; 20: 2-5). With this horrid ritual were connected various forms of sorcery, here enumerated in detail: useth divination . . . necromancer, all of them based on an impression, almost universal, that the will of the deity, as well as the events and influences which affect human interests, may be known through various natural agencies. When these impressions prevail, no worthy conception of God can control, and all divination was absolutely prohibited (Exod. 22: 18), because invariably associated with idolatry. God had shown his displeasure against all these forms of evil in that, because of them, he would drive them out from before his people (9: 5; Lev. 20: 23), devoting them to utter extermination (Lev. 18: 28, 29). In order to secure freedom from these corrupting influences, the duty is enjoined to be perfect with the Lord, upright and sincere in heart and in act, the absolute prohibition against every sort of divination being intended as a kindness. Not suffered thee to do so. Having by instruction and discipline kept them from falling into these abominations (Num. 25: 1-18).

This abomination was the same as modern spiritism. See Isa. 8: 19, where it is described, and forbidden; also Isa. 20: 4. It was the same art that the Magicians of Egypt used in trying to compete with Moses in working miracles. It is the same spirit of error and falsehood that has been at work all down the ages, antagonizing the truth as it is revealed by the spirit of God. It is a bewitching spirit, and is today drawing thousands away from the saving gospel of Christ. It is the leight of folly for us to go to the dead for information; the devil will make us believe that they talk with us when it is he himself. A male magician is a wizard; a female magician is a witch; a necromancer is a male or female enchanter. A modern spiritual medium is one that has a familiar spirit, and the Lord forbids us to consult them.

2. A great Prophet promised. Ver. 15-19. In order to counteract the temptation to practise divination and to supply the universal human need that occasioned it, Moses declares that for their benefit and in accordance with his own will, God will raise up . . . a prophet, a divine organ of communication suited to all their need from time to time. Midst of thee. Not one of an alien race, having no common interest or sympathy with them, but fully identified in every matter that concerned them and having similar experience to theirs. Like unto me. The experience of Moses had been strangely checkered: an outcast, yet nourished amid the riches of Egypt; a fugitive shepherd, yet humbling at his feet the proudest monarch—all to fit him to lead and teach the chosen people. According . . . desiredst. A gracious response to their own request in Horeb (Exod. 20: 18, 19). Well . . . they have spoken. This request contained more and reached farther than they at all comprehended, as it fell in with God's great mediatorial purpose. My words in his mouth. He is then a regularly constituted channel of divine influence for the people, the inspired declarer of the divine will, in God's purpose higher than either king or priest, both of whom were circumscribed within the limits of the revelation given by Moses (17: 18, 19; 18: 5). The Prophet promised is to speak . . . command him and thereby to enlarge and develop the teaching of Moses, being called of God to declare his ever widening purposes in developing the life of the chosen people. Not hearken . . . will require. To refuse application of the old truth or reception of the new will entail evil, even destruction. Stagnation, or a refusal to learn may be as hurtful as heresy. This Prophet is fulfilled in the Messiah, who summed up all that was found in the prophetic order (Acts 3: 20-24). That a succession of prophets was contemplated is implied in the method of deciding between true and false ones (ver. 20-22).

The promise of this prophet to Israel was fulfilled by the coming of Jesus Christ; and the ministration of the law and the prophets was superseded by his superior ministry. We are to hear him, and him only. See Mat. 17: 5, 8; Mark 9: 7; Luke 9: 35. Heb. 1: 1, 2.

The Baptist Institute will convene in Zion Baptist church, Yarnouth, N. S. on Friday, August 22 at 10 a. m. There will be three sessions. An excellent programme has been prepared.

B. N. NOBLES.

S. John, West, July 18, 1902.

The Albert County Quarterly Meeting will convene with the 2nd Hillsboro church (Dawson Settlement) on the first Tuesday in Sept. at 2 o'clock. Sermon by Rev. J. B. Ganong, alternate Rev. H. H. Saunders, paper by Rev. F. D. Davidson.

Officers will be elected for the ensuing year. Matters of unusual importance will be brought before us and a large delegation is earnestly solicited.