

# Moses's Loss of Canaan

J. G. Bellett.

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Moses had his ordinary shepherd's rod in his hand, when God called him to feed Israel (Ex. 4). It then, became God's rod, for God made it the symbol and instrument of Moses's authority and grace in Israel. He was thenceforth to take it, that by it he might do his wonders in Egypt and in the wilderness, for judgment on the enemy, and for blessing on the people (Ex. 4: 17).

It first swallowed up the rods of Egypt, to show that no strength could stand before God's strength, thus giving Egypt notice that it was hard to kick against the pricks (Ex. 7: 12). But Egypt would not learn that lesson. And then the rod brings the plagues of blood, of frogs, and of lice, till the magicians own that they could not measure their strength with the Lord's (Ex. 8: 19). It is then used in the plagues of hail (Ex. 9: 93), locusts (Ex. 10: 13), and darkness (Ex. 10: 22), and finally for the destruction of the firstborn as well as the deliverance of Israel, and for the overthrow of Egypt in the Red Sea (Ex. 12 - 14).

Thus was it the instrument of judgment and of grace in Egypt. It was but a weak shepherd's rod at first, but as such it was the more fit to become God's rod, for He ever perfects His strength in our weakness, and chooses the weak things to confound the mighty.

But we are still to see the rod in the wilderness, for Moses with it opens the rock in Horeb (Ex. 17: 5, 6). By the same Shepherd's strength and grace He now feeds the camp in the desert, as that by which He had redeemed them from bondage.

By all this use of the rod, Moses (and Aaron, his associate) should have been fully submitted to by all the congregation. The wonders they did (of which this rod was the symbol) had fully accredited them, and entire subjection to them as the king and the priest, or God's dignities, was the righteous place of the congregation. But it happens otherwise. The congregation despise these dignities, and are for setting aside this king and this priest of God (Num. 16: 3). That was a solemn moment in Israel. The rebellion of Korah and his companions was an awful consummation of despite of the Lord. But then the Lord pleads the cause Himself. He judges the offenders, and in a solemn trial of the question, He determines by the budding rod who His dignities or officers were, that the murmuring of the congregation might be silenced for ever, and that they might thus be saved from death (Num. 17: 8).

Now we have much of the way of the Lord Jesus in all this. Jesus was set forth to Israel at the first as their shepherd. He did His wonders of grace and strength. His miracles and healings and teachings were enough to accredit Him, so that they owned for a season that this was He (Matt. 12: 23). But Israel at length rose up against Him, they despised God's King and Priest, like Korah and his company, crucifying the Lord of glory, But God pleaded His cause against the nation by raising Him from the dead. Jesus brought forth. in resurrection is the budding of the rod, the dead stick blooming blossoms and bearing almonds. Jesus in resurrection has all the virtue of this rod, both in silencing the murmur of every rival, and securing from death the soul that will trust in Him, and allow His claims. These two virtues of the resurrection are largely preached by the apostles. The resurrection has made Jesus a Prince and a Saviour. It has vindicated His claims and made Him the dispenser of life. By it God has fully declared that all power is Christ's, that He is the spring of life, and the executor of judgment. And the apostles were the preachers of the resurrection in these its virtues, and the angel at the tomb so witnessed to it (Matt. 28: 18-20; Acts 2: 36; Acts 17: 31; Acts 3: 13, 16; Acts 5: 31; Acts 1:

22; Acts 4: 10-12; Rom. 1: 4). And now all blessing must flow through it, through this new rod, the budding rod, not Jesus as before, born of a virgin, but Jesus brought from the dead; not the rod that was first in Moses's hand, but the rod that was brought from before the Lord (Num. 20: 9; Num. 18: 7).

It is quite true that many, perhaps, at future seasons would not hear the voice of the budding rod, as now many will not hear the voice of the resurrection; but that does not alter the voice. Whether they will hear it or not, it silences murmurs — the budding rod and the resurrection have established those claims, for which Moses and Jesus the Son of God had been previously rejected and reproached.

This seems to me a simple following out of the history and the mystery of the rod. But then this also gives us the character of Moses's and Aaron's sin by which they forfeited the land.

God will be sanctified in them that come nigh Him (Lev. 10: 3). He will have the provision which He has made, for either His own service or His people's blessing, honoured by them. And the contrary of this was the sin of Nadab and Abihu. They took fire of their own, and did not use God's fire, the provision He had made for His own altar. Thus they did not sanctify Him. And this was the sin of Moses and Aaron here. They did not sanctify God in His ordinances of the budding rod. They did not use it according to God's mind about it. They did not give it its ordained place, or duly own its virtues before the congregation. They acted as they did before, striking instead of speaking. They did not know the power of this rod — using strength instead of preaching the virtue of it. Nor did they duly honour the grace of the rod, for in it God's grace had greatly abounded. In spite of all their sin in the matter of Korah, God had set up this other witness for His praise and their blessing. But Moses and Aaron act no more in full sympathy with the grace than they had with the power of the rod, for they upbraided the people as well as strike the rock, while they were told merely to speak to the rock, and to do nothing with the people, but bring them forth the water. Their conduct, therefore, was unbelief in the virtues of this mystic rod. It was unbelief in the present ordinance, and a return to previous dispensations. They forgot the lesson of Numbers 17 for a moment, and thus they forfeited the land.

Such was their sin, and such their judgment. And it is like present unbelief in the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. For Christ risen is God's great ordinance now. The resurrection, as I have said, is the true budding rod. It is that ordinance which has the virtues of Aaron's rod in it. When the resurrection is not honoured in its fulness of grace to sinners, and of glory to God, as that which silences every tongue that should rise against the holy claims of Jesus, and also hinders the death and feeds the life of the poor sinner that will trust in Him, God's ordinance is not honoured, and then comes forfeiture of all blessing. For God must be honoured in His ordinances, and sanctified in them that come nigh to Him.

Now to this I would just further add, that Saul of Tarsus offended against the resurrection. He was chief among those who killed the witness of it (Acts 8: 1). But Saul was brought to know it, and by that knowledge to die himself, — and to live to be the witness of a higher glory still, even of ascension or heavenly glory. And so with Moses here. He offends against the budding rod, and loses Canaan, but afterwards shines in the glory of the church on the top of the hill (Matt. 17: 3).