Genesis - Commentaries by Charles Stanley

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Gen. 50:15-21

After the death of Jacob we thus find the brethren of Joseph in great distress. The remembrance of their past conduct might well, indeed, be overwhelming, for they understood not the grace in Joseph. They thought of their sin, but entirely lost sight of the forgiveness and grace of Joseph; and they said that Joseph would certainly requite them "all the evil which we did unto him." Surely they deserved all this. There was no excuse for their sin. It had been terrible. They had as good as killed their brother by casting him into that pit. There was no pity in their hearts when they took him out of that pit, and sold him into slavery, though they saw the anguish of his soul; he besought them and they would not hear (Gen. 40:11-21).

But had not their sin been brought to their consciences? Yes, in the very presence of Joseph, though they knew him not. He was dealing with them; he understood their thoughts and their words. Judah had said, "What shall we say unto my lord? what shall we speak? or how shall we clear ourselves? God hath found out the iniquity of thy servants." It is an awful moment, thus to be brought into the presence of God, and all laid bare!

"Then Joseph could not refrain himself before all them that stood by him; and he cried, Cause every man to go out from me. And there stood no man with him, while Joseph made himself known unto his brethren." Oh, what grace! "And he wept aloud." He said, "I am Joseph; doth my father yet live? And his brethren could not answer him; for they were troubled at his presence." It was not now that they prayed to be forgiven, but "Joseph said unto his brethren, Come near to me, I pray you. And they came near. And he said, I am Joseph your brother, whom ye sold into Egypt." Then did he make known unto their astonished ears the purpose of God, in their salvation from famine. "Moreover he kissed all his brethren, and wept upon them: and after that his brethren talked with him."

What a life picture of the wondrous ways of God in grace! God the Spirit uses various means to bring sin so home to the conscience that there is no escape. But when sin is not only felt, but confessed to God, what a revelation in Christ, the true Joseph! Our sins are felt to be loathsome, and we abhor ourselves in His holy presence. It is He who is dealing with our souls. We own all to Him; and He says, Yes, it was for those very sins I sent My beloved Son to be the propitiation. "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins." Thus the Antitype goes infinitely beyond the touching type of Joseph.

There was not, however, one thing lacking to show and prove the forgiveness of Joseph; yet, after years of kindness on his part, they feared the reality of his forgiveness. How was this? No doubt, the better they knew their relationship to Joseph, and all his righteous conduct, the baser would their own appear; but, as we have said, they could not fathom the grace in Joseph's heart. And is it not so with those who are brought to know their relationship with the risen Jesus? The more we know Him, while we abhor the flesh and all its sad fruits, the more we rest in His grace.

If they looked at their own past conduct, they might give way to gloomy unbelief, until they sank in despair. If they looked at his past conduct and love to them, how could they have a doubt? Past failure often gives Satan a great handle, and he will ever use it, if possible, to drive the child of God to despair. By this mark we may always know it is his work. The Holy Spirit may have to humble us, and deepen in us a sense of what sin is, and the need of greater watchfulness and dependence; but then He will also deepen in our souls a blessed sense of that mercy which endures forever. "Let Thy mercies come also unto me, 0 LORD, even Thy salvation, according to Thy word. So shall I have wherewith to answer him that reproacheth me: for I trust in Thy word." At such a time it is of all importance to be able to say, "The LORD is on my side; I will not fear."

With these thoughts, let us look at our deeply interesting scripture. No doubt the brethren of Joseph deserved punishment. And if God dealt with us in judgment, what do we deserve? They had thought of this, and reasoned from it, until doubt and unbelief had got a strong hold upon them; but they did not despair. There was the lingering sense of his grace; they went to Joseph, whereas despair would have led them to depart from him. It is so with God; the lingering sense of His grace draws us near to Him. Despair would drive the soul to utter darkness.

They said "unto Joseph, Forgive, I pray thee now, the trespass of thy brethren, and their sin." It was terrible to have sinned as the brethren of Joseph. It is this that gives sin its deep aggravation-to have sinned as the brethren of the risen Jesus. And mark, it is much easier to pray for the forgiveness of sins, than to believe in the forgiveness of sins. Many there are who continue for years to pray for forgiveness of sins, just like the brethren of Joseph, who never believe their sins are eternally forgiven.

This then was their position; long ago their sin had been brought home to them; they had stood self-condemned before Joseph. He had fully revealed his grace to them, and given to each the kiss of forgiveness. But little understanding the grace in Joseph's heart, they now pray for forgiveness. Now look at Joseph; does this please him? "Joseph wept when they spake unto him." What a picture of Jesus! What a touching scene! How deeply his heart felt their unbelief! How could they doubt his love? No doubt God greatly overrules—yea, uses this humiliation for blessing to His children. "And his brethren also went and fell down before his face." They also did what the prodigal thought of doing. "And they said, Behold, we be thy servants." Thus the poor unbelieving heart is ever ready to take the place of serving, in order to be deserving.

Surely it is far better to be thus humbled and broken in the presence of our Joseph, than to be indifferent about sins. But, oh, how sweet to a crushed, broken spirit are those words, "Fear not." And again, "Now therefore fear ye not: I will nourish you, and your little ones. And he comforted them, and spake kindly unto them"; or, as in the margin, "spake to their hearts." Is not this what our Jesus does? Full well does He know that even His own words would fail at such a time to comfort, unless applied by the Spirit to our hearts. Let us not, however, forget the

grief it gave to Joseph for his brethren to doubt his forgiving love.

With our eyes we do not see our Jesus weep; we do not thus, as they, see the pain- if we may use such a word- it gives to doubt His love; but do we not hear Him say, "Why are ye troubled? and why do thoughts arise in your hearts? Behold My hands and My feet, that it is I Myself: handle Me, and see; for a spirit bath not flesh and bones, as ye see Me have." They had just heard, for the first time in resurrection, those words, "Peace be unto you." Yes, words spoken on the first day of the new creation. Now why were they troubled? What, thoughts would arise, if they looked back only for one short week? Oh, what a week!—never such events had taken place, or can take place in one short week.

They were now the brethren of the risen Jesus. He had sent them the message to assure them of this. They had never been, and never could be, in that relationship until He had died and risen again (John 12:24). They had not yet grasped or understood this marvelous grace. And as Joseph wept, so the risen Jesus could not bear to see them doubt His love.

If they thought what they had done, even in those few past days, what cause for trouble in His presence! If they thought what He had done, what cause for eternal joy! Yes, how much depends on whether we are occupied with ourselves, or with Him! What had they done? All had forsaken Him; one had denied Him in the presence of His enemies. All had loved Him, and did love Him; but, oh, how weak is the flesh in the hour of temptation! And more, they had known His love, and yet they had sadly failed to stand by Him. Had He not deeply felt all this? Yes, He says, "I looked on My right hand, and beheld, but there was no man that would know Me: refuge failed Me; no man cared for My soul." Psalm 142:4. Yes, if they looked at their own conduct, they could only feel troubled in His presence. But if they looked at what He had done, had He not spoken to their hearts? Yes, after warning the boldest of his fall, before it came, in infinite grace, He turned to His disciples, and said, "Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in Me." He was going away, no more to be seen with them in the flesh; but He speaks to their hearts, to trust Him even as God, whom they did not see. Yes, He spoke to the heart. He said again, "Peace I leave with you, My peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid."

Did He not then go up to the cross, and accomplish their and our eternal redemption? Did He not bear their and our sins in His own body on that cross? Had not those words been heard, "It is finished"? Had He not risen from the dead, Head of the new creation, the first-born from among the dead? Had He not sent the joyful message, that they were now His brethren—that they stood in the same relationship to God the Father in which He stood, alive from the dead? Yes, He had said to Mary, "Touch Me not; for I am not yet ascended to My Father: but go to My brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto My Father, and your Father; and to My God, and your God." Old things had passed away, all things had become new, and all of God. As yet they understood it not, and were therefore troubled when He stood in their midst, and said, "Peace be unto you." If Joseph wept, Jesus said, "Why are ye troubled?" Did He not speak to their hearts? Yes, He says, "and why do thoughts arise in your hearts?" Had He not borne their sins, to be remembered against them no more? He showed them His hands and His feet.

It might be asked, How could they know, and how can we know, that all that would otherwise give trouble is gone forever? Surely His own word, spoken to the heart, is enough-"Peace be unto you." Satan and memory would bring up the past. Jesus says, "Peace," and He had made it by the blood of the cross. Joseph had not done this for his brethren. Jesus has for His. Peace and forgiveness is now proclaimed through Him; and, as it was with Joseph's brethren, it is much easier to pray for forgiveness of sins, than to believe the forgiveness proclaimed. "To Him give all the prophets witness, that through His name whosoever believeth in Him shall receive remission of sins." "Through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins: and by Him all that believe are justified from all things." It does not say, Whosoever continues praying for forgiveness of sins shall at some future time be forgiven, but, all that believe are justified. And if praying for forgiveness, long after they were forgiven, made Joseph weep, may we never grieve the heart of Jesus by a single doubt! God grant that we may hear Jesus speak to our hearts in these scriptures. It was wondrous grace in Joseph, but have we less in Jesus? Far be the thought. All the types of the Old Testament were but figures, or pictures, but in Jesus we have the infinite fullness- God manifest. Ever then may these words abide in our hearts-"Peace be unto you."

Shiloh: Where I Set My Name, Shiloh: "Where I Set My Name"

“Go ye now unto My place which was in Shiloh, where I set My name at the first” (Jer. 7:12).

“Where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them” (Matt. 18:20).

Before we can understand the instruction given to us in these last days, contained in the deeply interesting subject of Shiloh, we must take a brief view of the dealings of God with His people Israel, to whom He appointed Shiloh as the only place where He set His name. Their history, written for our instruction, is a type or figure of each believer’s history and salvation.

“God Is Love”

If we read Exodus 2:23 and 3:1-10, we see the condition of the people in cruel bondage and slavery, an exact picture of our condition under the cruel bondage of sin and Satan. Their cries and groans came up unto God. Do you remember the time when it was thus with you? Think of the slave that can by no means escape from bondage. Such is the condition, by nature, of every man, whether he knows it or not. And mark that the source of their deliverance was not in themselves. The source of our salvation is the love of God. God is love. He came down to deliver. He sent Moses to deliver. “God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.”

Yes, God sent Moses — God sent His Son. God is love. They believed Moses. “Then they bowed their heads and worshipped” (Ex. 4:31). This, then, is the first mark of a quickened soul. Have you believed the love of God in sending His Son? This bows your head, and you worship.

The next step is the earnest desire to be gone —to escape from the slavery of Satan and sin. Did they escape through believing the love of God alone? No. Have you? No. Their case became worse as to experience. So has yours. So did mine. They were now put on the principle of more work — to make bricks without straw. They could not, and they were beaten because they did not. And you — were you not put under the law of God? They had no straw, and you had no strength. And you found that word true, “Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them.” And you had no strength to do them. Paul describes all this in Romans 7:14-24.

Poor, wretched Israel! Moses said, “Neither hast Thou delivered Thy people at all” (Ex. 5:22-23). And you have believed the love of God and tried to keep the law of God, but are you delivered from sin? What do you say? “O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me?”

The next or third thing we find in this picture is the promises of God. Read Exodus 6:19. Do read them. Could God give more precious promises? No. Did the promises deliver? Not in the least; “they hearkened not unto Moses for anguish of spirit, and cruel bondage.” And you have tried to lay hold of the promises. Have they delivered you? No. You say, They do not comfort me. Why? I am such a sinner — such a slave. And this makes you unspeakably miserable.

Now the fourth thing in this picture is the wondrous kindness of God in His providential care of Israel during the plagues of Egypt. In chapters 7-11 we have the most tender care in sparing His people. But they were all still in cruel slavery.

What is to be done? We too have believed the love of God; we have tried to keep the law of God; we have tried to lay hold of the promises and to trust the providence of God, and yet no real deliverance from sin — from the cruel slavery of doing what we hate. We are at our wit’s end — we have come to the end. We do not know what to do. Thank God, we have got to the end of ourselves; we can do no more.

All now is of God. We will see what He has done. What do we get in this picture? A lamb. Every man’s need is met by a lamb. The lamb must now be put forth; the lamb must be killed; blood must be sprinkled; the lamb must be eaten; God must see the blood. God says, “When I see the blood, I will pass over you.” Oh, how little redemption is understood. Such is sin in God’s sight: He must send His Son, the Lamb of God. He must be killed; His blood must be shed. And it is what God sees in that blood — it is God’s estimate of that blood — which shelters from judgment. We must have redemption through that blood. There is no other means of pardon and eternal salvation.

Now many reach this point who never go beyond, and they are utter strangers to all the teaching of Shiloh. Yea, they are not even delivered from Egypt; they have not yet understood the Red Sea. Until Israel had passed through the waters of the Red Sea, they were sorely troubled about Pharaoh and the host of the Egyptians behind them (Ex. 14). Often you are sorely troubled about past sins, especially sins since you believed the love of God. Does not Satan bring them after you like the armies of Egypt?

A Christian can never really sing in his heart until he knows he is brought out of his old state through death — death written upon him and all his past. Ah, then the Egyptians are all dead on the shore. It is a wonderful thing to reckon ourselves dead with Christ.

But before we reach Shiloh, there are two things that must be known — “out of ” and “into.” We learn what we are brought out of at the Red Sea; we get the picture of what we are brought into when we have crossed the Jordan. Now between these lies the wilderness with all its lessons and experiences. But in the wilderness there is not a word about Shiloh. Let it be borne in mind that none can enter into the lessons of Shiloh but those who have not only been brought out of the old creation, typified by Egypt, but also brought into the new creation —into the heavens — as typified by the passage of the Jordan.

It is most needed to learn the lessons of God’s provision for us in the wilderness by the offerings of Leviticus — how every failure has been met by the one offering of Christ, yea, how all the claims of divine righteousness have been met to the glory of God. He who came to do the will of God could say, “I have glorified Thee.”

If we now read carefully Deuteronomy 12, beginning at chapter 11:31, we shall see the immense change that would take place when they had crossed the Jordan and were in actual possession of the land and had rest in all that God had given them. All idolatry was to be destroyed. Then God would choose out a place. “Unto the place which the Lord your God shall choose out of all your tribes to put His name there, even unto His habitation shall ye seek, and thither thou shalt come.” To that place they were to bring all their offerings. There they were to worship and eat and rejoice before the Lord. All this is solemnly repeated. They were not to do there as they had done in the wilderness, “every man whatsoever is right in his own eyes. For ye are not yet come to the rest and to the inheritance, which the Lord your God giveth you. But when ye go over Jordan, and dwell in the land which the Lord your God giveth you to inherit, and when He giveth you rest from all your enemies round about, so that ye dwell in safety; then there shall be a place which the Lord your God shall choose to cause His name to dwell there.”

What is the antitype or answer to all this? Can you say, It is true of me; after all my struggles in Egyptian bondage to sin and Satan, God brought me out by the blood of the Lamb? Through Pharaoh’s overthrow I see now that he who had the power of death is destroyed. Can you say, I am dead with Christ? Can you say, God has secured His own glory and provided for all my needs by the offering of Christ? Can you say, As to my conscience, the whole question of my sins is settled for eternity: I have eternal redemption; He has by His one offering perfected me forever, in unchanging continuance?

And much more. Now take the epistles. Look at Ephesians 1. Look at the heavenly land, so to speak, that our God and our Father has given us. Here you see the believer clean over Jordan —that is, brought into the land God has given him in Christ, in the heavenlies — out of Egypt, as you may read in Colossians 1:1214, but into the heavenlies in Christ, in Ephesians. In the one case, he is really across Jordan — dead with Christ and risen with Him (Col. 23); in Ephesians, right up in the heavenlies in the Beloved, in the same favor in the Beloved. Can you say, All this is true of me? Is God so good to you? In His free grace, has He given you all this to enjoy in His own love in Christ? Oh, have you taken possession? Have you rest in the unbounded love of God, as thus revealed? Mark, until this is the case, you will be like Israel before they crossed the Jordan: As to all church matters, you will do what seems good in your own eyes. You look abroad, and you see many places that men have built and placed their names, and you will choose for yourself, and not knowing the Lord’s mind, you will do what you think best, in what is called liberty of conscience.

Shiloh (Joshua 18:1-10)

The land had now rest from war. Israel was in the land. The Jordan had been crossed; the victory had been won. Surely this points to the resurrection of Christ from the dead. He was risen from the river, from among the dead, but all believers are risen with Him, as all Israel passed over dry shod. It is as risen with Christ that we are in possession of the heavenlies, the true Canaan. The risen Christ is Shiloh.

The Meaning of the Word “Shiloh”

In Scripture this word “Shiloh” has two meanings. It is the name of a person in Genesis 49:10. “The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come; and unto him shall the gathering of the people be.” The meaning of “Shiloh” here, as

applied to a person, is “whose it is” or “whose right it is.” Surely that person is Christ the Lord. It was when He had accomplished the work of redemption, when God had raised Him from the dead, that He was the One — the only One —“whose right it is” to gather to Himself. Whether we look at the church of God, the future gathering of Israel and the millennial nations, or up to heaven in Revelation 5 and see one in the midst of the throne, there is only one whose name is Shiloh; to Him, “whose it is,” shall the gathering of the people be. He alone is the Shiloh. He alone is worthy. Worthy is the Lamb. Oh, let us never forget His words — what meaning they have: “Where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them” (Matt. 18:20).

Shiloh As a Place

The Lord, the true Shiloh, first gathered to Himself, or formed the assembly, by the Holy Spirit at Pentecost (Acts 2). Thus, Joshua 18 is a type of Pentecost. The meaning of “Shiloh” as a place is “peaceful tranquility”: the Lord’s own place, the place of peaceful tranquility. What was it but this when He arose from the dead? What were the first words of the risen Shiloh to His disciples assembled together? “Peace be unto you.” And He showed them His hands and His side. He had finished the work; He had made peace by His blood — eternal, perfect peace. It is His right to speak peace. Have you heard His voice speaking to you?

Shiloh was the place where Jehovah was pleased to place His name at the first. “The whole congregation of the children of Israel assembled together at Shiloh, and set up the tabernacle of the congregation there.” What a picture of Pentecost! The true One, “whose right it is,” was come, and all believers were gathered unto Him. They were not gathered to Peter, but to the Lord. Peter was the preacher, but Christ, the exalted Lord, was the Shiloh to whom all were gathered.

Thus, in the beginning all was done at Shiloh, before the Lord. True, there were many who had not as yet received their inheritance, but Joshua was not indifferent: He says, “How long are ye slack to go to possess the land, which the Lord God of your fathers hath given you?” Missionaries were sent out, so that all might enjoy their possession. They went out from Shiloh and returned to Shiloh, and the land was given to them at Shiloh. “Then said Jesus to them again, Peace be unto you: as My Father hath sent Me, even so send I you.” Thus He sent them out as missionaries to make known peace and forgiveness of sins. And it is only as we drink in His precious peace into our own souls and enjoy in peaceful tranquility the certainty of sins forgiven — yea, that we are accepted in the favor of the beloved One — that we can expect to be used in bringing others into the possession of that present enjoyment of the inheritance which God our Father has given us in Christ. Oh, to go out from His peaceful presence, as He came forth from the Father.

It would be most blessed to dwell more on this — Shiloh as a picture of what the church was as built by Christ. We shall find the future history of Shiloh to be a true picture of the sad history of the church. During the days of Joshua and those that overlived Joshua, Israel served the Lord. His words are very striking: He says, “Now therefore fear the Lord, and serve Him in sincerity and in truth: and put away the gods which your fathers served on the other side of the flood, and in Egypt; and serve ye the Lord. And if it seem evil unto you to serve the Lord, choose you this day whom ye will serve. . . . As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord” (Josh. 24:14-15). What a word to us now! Every form of idolatry in which we trusted, whether in Egypt or in the wilderness, must be put away. If we are dead with Christ and risen with Him, what need have we for all those things in which we trusted? All are now “beggarly elements.”

The Book of Judges

We shall see a most striking picture of the history of Christendom. In chapter 2 we have repeated how “the people served the Lord all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders that outlived Joshua.” Joshua then died and all that generation. And “there arose another generation after them, which knew not the Lord.” Then we read the sad history how they did evil and served other gods. They forsook the Lord and served Baal and Ashtaroth, and for hundreds of years you do not hear a word of Shiloh, the place where the Lord had set His name at first.

Yet God did not forsake His people but raised up judges, and though some of them were strange men, yet God did care for and deliver His people. There were Deborahs and Gideons and Jephthahs and Samsons, but not one of these ever names Shiloh.

It was exactly so after the death of Paul and all that generation. There arose another generation that knew not the Lord and His ways, as at the beginning. Then the devil taught the doctrine of development. But the Lord in His tender care raised up individuals and through them delivered the church from utter ruin by the loss of all truth. But for centuries Christ is never again known and owned as the true Shiloh. Nay, a man is blasphemously put in His place as the center and head of the church. And even at the Reformation, none of the reformers, so far as we have any record, ever recovered the long lost and only true position of the church as gathered to Him “whose it is.” They did escape from much of paganism but never knew Christ as the only true center, around which the two or three should be gathered in perfect tranquility. For the most part, they retained the worldly nationalism, or Babylonian principle, of confusing the church with the world. It is remarkable that the very same idolatry has prevailed in Christendom as in Israel during its centuries of darkness, such as observance of days, turning to the east, worship of the queen of heaven, images of saints (as, formerly, Jupiter and Ashtaroth), monks, nuns, candles, and holy water: All these are real paganism — idolatry, so denounced in the Word of God.

But during those centuries of Israel’s history, did not the true Shiloh exist? Yes, indeed it did, and God surely remained the same. One verse proves this. “They set them up Micah’s graven image, which he made, all the time that the house of God was in Shiloh” (Judg. 18:31). Has it not been so during the dark history of Christendom? All the time they set up their altars and images which they made — all that time, it was still true that the only true church principle was Christ in the midst, the true Shiloh, the only One whose right it is to gather His redeemed to Himself on earth, as it shall be in heaven. And no doubt a few of the unknown hidden ones may, in unknown places, have enjoyed the peaceful tranquility of His blessed presence. This is sure: The Lord remained the same, though the true place of Shiloh was as little known in Christendom as in the type in Israel.

There is a most sad history of the one man going to the house of the Lord, as he says, “and there is no man that receiveth me to house” (Judg. 19:18). But so great had been the neglect of Shiloh during these centuries that few knew the way. Indeed, it required the most minute description how to find it! “Then they said, Behold, there is a feast of the Lord in Shiloh yearly, in a place which is on the north side of Bethel, on the east side of the highway that goeth up from Bethel to Shechem, and on the south of Lebonah” (Judg. 21:19). Would it not have been the same for centuries: If a man had inquired where was the true place, the true Shiloh, where saints were gathered to Christ, as in the Acts, could any have told him the place or the way to it? Reader, could you tell it even now?

Yet there was such a place then, and even from which a Benjamite might get a wife. And there is such a place now where many a preacher may get a sermon, though he neither lives there nor ever gives it a good word. “In those days there was no king in Israel: every man did that which was right in his own eyes” — the last words of Judges and words, also, which describe the whole history of Christendom. Perhaps the cause of every evil division is just that — the want of the true owning of the lordship and authority of Christ, in the fear of the Lord. Where this is not, every man is sure to do that which is right in his own eyes — his own will.

We now come to the first three chapters of 1 Samuel.

The Revival of Shiloh

It is striking that that which introduces this is a beautiful glimpse of the bride of Christ in the type of Ruth. This brings us to the present century of Christendom in figure. At the beginning of this century the Holy Spirit brought again before us the bride of the heavenly Boaz and the glorious truth of eternal redemption to be completed in resurrection. And now after Shiloh had been almost forgotten, all at once we have more in these three chapters as to Shiloh than in the whole word or history of Israel before.

1 Samuel 13

It would be well now to read carefully these three chapters, so full of our subject, and compare them with Revelation 3:7-22. In the one case, we have the closing scenes of Shiloh; in the other, the closing scenes of Christendom. In both we are close on judgment. May the Holy Spirit open our eyes to see the solemn application to the very circumstances of this day.

Here, then, in 1 Samuel we have two families, both at Shiloh, the place where the Lord set His name at first. In one family there is nothing that God condemns; in the other, there is nothing that He approves. In the closing days of Christendom, there is not one thing the Lord condemns in Philadelphia (Rev. 3:7-13). In Laodicea, there is not one thing that He approves (Rev. 3:14-19).

The very names of the two families at Shiloh are most significant, and in their meaning, and all else recorded respectively of them, we learn that it is not enough to be, as is said, on true ground, that is, professedly gathered to Christ, whose right it is, the true Shiloh, the true and only place He approves, but, also, what is the real state of soul of those who outwardly are so gathered.

There is, then, the family of Elkanah and the family of Eli. Both are at Shiloh. Everything said in these chapters is about them at Shiloh. No one can deny or fail to admit there has been a most remarkable revival of this very truth, as to the only true place of worship and service of Christians, gathered to Christ, the true Shiloh, in these last fifty years.

As Elkanah is named first, we will first take his name. Elkanah means “God has redeemed,” “possession of God” or “whom God created.” In this name all is of God. Redemption is an accomplished thing; God has redeemed us to Himself; we are His, and none shall pluck us out of His hand. We are His possession; we are not our own. “If any man be in Christ, he is a new creation,” and that new creation is wholly of God. This very name Elkanah indicates the blessed truths God has restored in these last days.

And the name Hannah is equally characteristic: “grace and mercy.” Oh, the freeness of His favor and the depths of His mercy!

In contrast with all this, Eli means “a foster son” or “adopted of the Lord,” and it is very remarkable that in Greek the word “Diotrephes” means a similar thing! All this points out officialism in place of the enjoyed relationship of a child born of God. Is there not a difference between God adopting the flesh and imparting the divine nature as born of God?

The names of the sons of Eli are equally characteristic of that which is not approved of God.

Hophni means “boxer, pugilist”; in Arabic it means “to fill both hands full.”

Phinehas means “mouth of brass.” This boldness may be for good, as in the case of another Phinehas, but what one sees and deplores in some who have taken a place at Shiloh, that is, professedly gathered to Christ, is just what answers to these names. Instead of seeking to help and feed the whole church of God, wherever found, with the blessed truths of a full and eternal redemption — God’s unceasing love and care for His saints as His own possession — and that every believer is God’s new creation, instead of unfolding the riches of His grace and the depths of His mercy — instead of these things, nothing suits their nature more than to go into a village or a town and fight everybody and every sect like a boxing pugilist, with a mouth of brass that knows no shame. Such then are the names of the two families, both at Shiloh. And even in the family of Elkanah, Peninnah, the prosperous, was not so approved as Hannah, the feeble, yet daughter of grace and mercy. What warnings and divine teaching there are for us.

Let us now look at Hannah, for the Holy Spirit brings her out as the most prominent. We see her at Shiloh, provoked by her adversary because of her barrenness. She lays all before the Lord at Shiloh. There she weeps in the bitterness of her soul. It may be, my reader, you are barren and unfruitful in the things of the Lord. Have you ever wept in bitterness over this? She wept sore; have we? She asked at Shiloh for a man child, and she asked for this for Shiloh. Eli, the aged priest, knew nothing of all this; he saw but did not understand; he thought she was drunken. Yes, there may be two parties at Shiloh, and they do not understand each other. Eli sits on a post, and Hannah weeps sore. But the request of the weeper is granted. She had poured out her soul at Shiloh before the Lord, and He had heard and answered. Jesus says to His feeble, weeping Hannahs, “Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in My name, He will give it you” (John 16:23).

He for whom she had asked was born. “She bare a son, and called his name Samuel [asked of God], saying, Because I have asked him of the Lord.”

Men delight in what is great and showy; not so the Lord. He says, “I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it.” Is this because you are become great and strong and have done many mighty things? No, “for thou hast a little strength, and hast kept My word, and hast not denied My name.” Is not this what the Lord approves in these very last days? Philadelphia (Rev. 3:8) is the answer.

In our lovely picture of the true Philadelphian, there are four things. Samuel is a little child. Jesus tells us there is no way of entrance but “as a little child” (Luke 18:17).

The second thing is that Samuel is weaned before he is brought to Shiloh. What sorrow in the assembly is caused by persons being brought in before they are weaned from the world! There was more weaning forty years ago.

The third thing was that Samuel was dedicated through death, the death of a bullock.

And the fourth mark of this true Philadelphian was that he was a worshipper at Shiloh: “He worshipped the Lord there.”

No doubt two parties, the approved and the disapproved, may both be at Shiloh; that is, both take the ground of their meeting to be gathered to the Lord. How am I to know which is right? Here are four things to guide me: little, weaned, dedicated, and a worshipper. Do these marks answer to the state of our souls, or, rather, does our state answer to these marks? Are we really little in our own eyes? If not, we are not the children of Hannah (grace and mercy). Are we weaned from the world? If not, it would be better to go to the church of the world than bring the world to the Shiloh of God. Are we really dedicated by the death of Christ, of which the bullock was a type? Think of being crucified with Him. And, lastly, are we true worshippers in spirit and in truth? Do we delight in God — joy in God? What is the love of God to you? Is it so shed abroad in your heart by the Holy Spirit given unto you that in return you adore Him in holy peace? Oh, that these marks did more abound wherever souls are gathered to Him, whose right alone it is, the blessed Shiloh, and in that only place of peace and tranquility of soul.

Before we go on to the further characteristics of the two families at Shiloh, showing so distinctly what is pleasing to God at this very time and what is not, let us ask ourselves, Are we real worshippers? Can we sing the song of Shiloh?

The Song of Shiloh

Sing, you say? How can we sing with the church in such a state and judgment close at hand? It was exactly the same when Hannah sang that song of Shiloh; she was like a lark. You might say to the lark, How can you sing? Do you not see what a fog there is on the ground? This way I sing, the lark would say, higher and higher, far above the fog, in the heavenly blue above. Thus sang Hannah, higher, and higher still. Is there a higher swell of joy in the whole Scriptures? As the sun fills the sky of the lark, so the Lord Himself was before her soul.

She did not rejoice in Shiloh, as a place, but in the Lord who is the Shiloh. It is the person who makes the place. “My heart rejoiceth in the Lord . . . because I rejoice in Thy salvation.” In the spirit of Revelation 3, as a Philadelphian, she says, “There is none holy as the Lord: for there is none beside Thee.” How soon we may slip away from this — how soon get occupied with men! Such was the Person of the Holy One to her that He exceeded all others. What an exclusion, and what a song!

Is Jesus the Shiloh thus before our souls? If so, how could we leave Him? “Lord, to whom shall we go?” Do our actions show that He is enough, and we cannot allow any beside Him? “And by Him actions are weighed.” The mighty men and the weak are all made known in His presence. His wonderful ways are known at Shiloh. Read every sentence. How needed to the children of God now at Shiloh! “He bringeth low, and lifteth up.” Could anything prove more distinctly the inspiration of the Holy Spirit than this song at Shiloh? Hannah’s faith and song rise to a theme utterly unknown at that time. The church, of which this is a picture, full of typical instruction, was as yet hidden. (See Ephesians 3:9.)

Mark the order of verses 8-10 in Hannah’s song. She sees humanity a dunghill! Out of that dunghill, God lifts up or raises up the beggar “to set them among princes, and to make them inherit the throne of glory.” Is not that exactly what God is doing now? Oh, have you been taken as a lost beggar out of the dunghill, as Paul? And is God determined that you shall be set among princes and that you shall, as part of the body of Christ, inherit the throne of glory? Yes; He has no lower thought or purpose for us. But does it in some way depend on my holding fast? May I not turn aside, though a true saint, and after all be lost?

Nothing of the kind, says Hannah: “He will keep the feet of His saints.” True, she says, “And the wicked shall be silent in darkness; for by strength shall no man prevail.” Cheer up, my soul! These are weighty words — they are the words of this day of grace, during which God is gathering the church for the throne of glory in the heavens.

Then, in verse 10, the next thing is the time of tribulation: “The adversaries of the Lord shall be broken to pieces; out of heaven shall He thunder upon them.” Then the judgment of the living: “The Lord shall judge the ends of the earth.” After this, the reign of Christ on earth: “And He shall give strength unto His king, and exalt the horn of His anointed.”

It was simply impossible for anyone to have invented this very order, then utterly unknown to man but now become the well-known order and purpose of God: first, the taking out of the church for the throne of glory, kept for that purpose by the power of God; second, the day of the Lord, ending with the judgment of the living nations; and, third, the setting up of Christ as the true Shiloh, Messiah, King on earth. Let the sceptic tell me how it came to pass that Hannah sang of all this, in type, more than a thousand years before it was revealed? This amazing song of Shiloh is an unanswerable proof, then, of divine inspiration. It is the very theme, at this moment, of the songs of those gathered to Him, the only Shiloh. Oh that we were more like Hannah, instead of being crushed with the state of things in Christendom, and even at the very place or position that answers now to Shiloh as a place, the place in His presence of peaceful tranquility. Yes, instead of looking at the state of things until our hearts sink within us, may we, like Hannah and like the lark, thus rise above them and rejoice only in the Lord.

We have noticed that there were two families at the only true place — Shiloh. One is approved, and the other is disapproved. What was the difference? This may help us to discern the Lord’s mind now, especially where there may be two companies, both declaring they are gathered to the Lord. The words are very plain. “The child did minister unto the Lord, before Eli the priest.” This is the first test. Are we ministering to the Lord, or to self and self-importance? Which is it? Do not evade this question.

“Now the sons of Eli were sons of Belial; they knew not the Lord.” Yet they were the officials of Shiloh! Is it possible to be so now? We do not ask, Is it possible for a true Christian to fail — to fall? Alas! Every true Christian knows and owns it is. But is it possible for evil to be practiced by those who are in the true place, on true ground, as they say, and that by those who know not the Lord? Yes, and for the very same motive as that of the sons of Eli. It is what they can get. It is “the pan, or kettle, or cauldron, or pot; all that the fleshhook brought up the priest took for himself. So they did in Shiloh” (vs. 14). Wickedness was practiced at the very doors of the tabernacle at Shiloh.

“Wherefore the sin of the young men was very great before the Lord: for men abhorred the offering of the Lord.” This is the root — the practice of evil by those who know not the Lord. Mark again the contrast: “But Samuel ministered before the Lord, being a child, girded with a linen ephod.” This is the remedy for all the evil at Shiloh — to really minister before the Lord, girded with practical righteousness. Do weigh

this.

The Lord now sends a messenger, a man of God, to Shiloh. God makes known the coming judgments on the house of Eli. He now makes known to us the coming judgment on Christendom — on Laodicea. But what was the marked failure of Eli? It was the allowance of evil. He seems to have been an amiable old man himself, but while condemning the evil himself, he was loose in allowing and going on with it. And what he allows he is reckoned as a partaker of. And did this bring down the judgment of God on his house and on Shiloh, where He placed His holy name at first? It certainly did, according to the word of the man of God.

And has there been no man of God in these days who faithfully warned the house of the amiable Eli, who allowed and went on with what he condemned? Is it not astonishing what light these three chapters throw on our very path in these days? Surely we can thus discern what God approves and what He condemns. No doubt all the world may condemn the exclusion of evil and all who bring and practice it. Nothing has been so hated and misjudged in these days as faithful exclusion of known evil, especially evil doctrine against the Person of Christ. But does God misjudge, like man, or disapprove? Read the message of the man of God to Eli. May we all read it in the fear of the Lord. He says, “But now the Lord saith, Be it far from Me; for them that honor Me I will honor, and they that despise Me shall be lightly esteemed” (vs. 30). This is a most important word to us. We may be too much occupied with the authority of the assembly and with questions of united judgment or a majority, but do we know the real presence of the Lord? Do we really know Him as we should if we saw Him? This is the point. Do we really own Him present and seek His mind? Who would rail and question the decision of a few thus gathered in His presence? Is He not really present to faith? He says it, and it will be found wherever He is truly owned. These He will honor and preserve. It has been so in every case.

Chapter 3

“The child Samuel ministered unto the Lord before Eli. And the word of the Lord was precious in those days: there was no open vision.” It is so now. It is only as we are as little children that we can really serve the Lord. And though there is no open vision — no further development — yet cannot we say that the Word of God is precious in these last, closing days of Christendom, as in those closing days of Shiloh? The eyes of Eli began to wax dim that he could not see. It is so wherever known evil is allowed or excused. Dimness of perception of divine truth is sure to be the result. “Ere the lamp of God went out.” Is it not a solemn thought that the bright testimony of the Holy Spirit will soon cease to shine in this poor world, ere God shall give the rejecters up to dark and strong delusion? The night grows dark; already pagan ritualism covers the land with many a rite of Baal. Is this a time for indifference? Are the Elis and Samuels to lie down to dream, being neither cold nor hot? No, the voice of the Lord is heard, but not by Eli: “He that hath an ear to hear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.” But he who allows the evil he condemns has no ear to hear. Eli heard not that voice, though it had to say to him.

Samuel, the little, weaned, dedicated worshipper, heard. His ear was open, but at first he did not understand. Do we hear the Spirit say, Give out such a hymn, read such a portion of the Word, or lead the assembly in prayer or worship? Well does the writer remember the first time the Spirit said to him, Read the first chapter of 2 Corinthians, and the thoughts that were then impressed on his heart, though much over forty years ago. Like Samuel, he did not then know the Lord after this manner. Yes, if really waiting before the Lord, it is our privilege to be unmistakably guided by the Spirit, ever present with the saints on earth. But if we allow evil, this cannot be, and the official priesthood never thus hears the voice. Nay, in poor, fallen Christendom, the real guidance of the Holy Spirit, as to what shall be done when gathered together, is never thought of. Oh, to be a little child and, with Samuel, to say, “Speak; for Thy servant heareth.”

Now is it not most remarkable that the doom and judgment on the house of Eli is communicated to the child Samuel? And what is the sin that brings down this terrible judgment? Is it not repeated again, as we have seen, this one thing — the allowance of sin which he condemned? “And therefore I have sworn unto the house of Eli, that the iniquity of Eli’s house shall not be purged with sacrifice nor offering forever.” Very affecting are the words of the aged Eli: “What is the thing that the Lord hath said unto thee? I pray thee hide it not from me.” “And Samuel told him every whit, and hid nothing from him. And he said, It is the Lord: let Him do what seemeth Him good.” Yes, in many respects this seems to have been an amiable, aged priest. Was it not even human kindness or parental kindness? He might call it love, as many have done in this day. They have called it love to allow and pander to the false doctrine and evil they condemn. Have they not even slandered those who have sought to exclude the evil and give it no shelter? Oh, let us all take this solemn lesson of Eli’s house to heart! Remember, brethren in Christ, judgment will begin at the house of God, as it swept away the house of Eli at the close of the history of Shiloh.

We thus learn it is not enough to be at Shiloh. We must have the spirit of the little Samuel. Mark these results: “Samuel grew” (vs. 19). Where there is the suited condition of soul, suited to Shiloh, there will be real growth. “And the Lord was with him.” Are you quite sure the Lord is with you? It is no Shiloh if He is not, for He is the true Shiloh. “And did let none of His words fall to the ground.” It is so now and will be to the end. (See Revelation 3:9.) Yes, all shall know this. “And the Lord appeared again in Shiloh: for the Lord revealed Himself to Samuel in Shiloh, by the word of the Lord.” Nothing could be more cheering to the true Samuels in this day, though just at the end. Yes, up to the end, as at the beginning, the Lord will reveal Himself in Shiloh, in the place that He has chosen. Wherever two or three are gathered to His name, there He will be — there He is. It is not where there is a splendid cathedral, a splendid organ, a gorgeous ritual, or priestly robes of cost — not where riches and fashion are displayed! No, all this is Laodicean, and where that is, He reveals not Himself but stands outside and knocks. (See Revelation 3.)

Hold fast, then, this blessed fact: To the very end, as the Lord appeared to Samuel in Shiloh —as He revealed Himself to Samuel in Shiloh by the word of the Lord — so He will now to the end. Let the house of Eli rail and misrepresent you, the Lord’s dear presence is enough the mind and heart to fill.

The house of Eli may often say, “Ebenezer” —hitherto the Lord has helped us. There is much of such boasting in Christendom. It is the spirit of Laodicea. Do not forget that the Philistines are not far off the same place. The Philistines, those who are in the land but not of it, are gathering and preparing their forces. Shiloh was destroyed; Shiloh as a place came to an end. Samuel went to Ramah, his home — Ramah, “the high places.” Christendom will indeed be destroyed, but the church of God — Samuel, so to speak — will be caught up to the high places and be seated around the throne of God in glory. From Ramah Samuel judged Israel (ch. 7:17). Paul says, “Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world?” (1 Cor. 6:2).

We will close these brief remarks with a short review.

1. A redeemed people, not only sheltered by the blood, but brought out of Egypt.

2. They must also be brought in, through the Jordan, into the land.

3. Then, when they had rest and possession, the Lord placed His name in Shiloh.

4. For centuries Shiloh was almost forgotten.

5. The great revival of Shiloh in 1 Samuel 13. To pursue the type, we have Ruth, the bride before the reign, then Saul, head and shoulders above the rest, and then follows the reign of David.

Thus also the church is redeemed by the blood of the Lamb, brought out of darkness and slavery, and blest in Christ in the heavenlies. All this must be known ere church position can be understood. The church, or even two or three, is now gathered to the risen Christ, the true Shiloh, He whose it is.

What a blessed place of peaceful tranquility. This was practically lost and unknown for centuries. Then, as Shiloh was so remarkably revived in 1 Samuel 13, so in these last times the true principle of gathering together has been restored—that is, to Himself, the only One whose right it is. As there were two parties, or families, then, so again now: one who has allowed the evil they condemned, and the other desiring to exclude all evil, in separation to Christ, the only Shiloh.

May the Lord apply His truth to us all. May Hannah’s song be ours, however reviled as exclusive. May we learn in this lesson what is pleasing to the Lord! May we know the Shiloh, Emmanuel, He whose it is. May we honor Him, cleave to Him and glorify Him, for He alone is worthy. “Worthy, O Lamb of God, art Thou.”

In the midst of the redeemed in glory, Thou shalt be the Shiloh. When Thou shalt come to this poor, sad earth, Thou, whose it is, shalt have the glory. All nations shall worship Thee. Thine be the glory forever and ever. Amen.

Christian Truth: Volume 28, Where Art Thou?

Gen. 3:9

God made man upright, and put him in the garden where was everything that was pleasant and good. Everything was to be subject to man, and he was to have dominion over all. And God brought the cattle and fowls to Adam, and he named them. Man was the head, center, and ruler over all, put in the place of perfect earthly blessing. But all this could only be held and enjoyed in dependence on God. Alas! how soon all was let go. The work of the enemy, the wretched distrust of God in man's heart, in spite of all the blessings that surrounded him, the working of lust and pride, followed so quickly by that dreadful act of disobedience, had a direct consequence. Man became a coward, and could not stand before the conscience he had acquired; he fled from God, his kind gracious benefactor.

But God is love, and it was love that put man there in that garden of delight at the first; and He is the unchanged and unchanging One: "The same yesterday, and today, and forever." The man, changed and terrified, fled from God; God in the energy of divine love pursued, seeking the lost. But "God is light," and everything must be brought to the surface—no keeping back, and why should there be the holding back? for He knows all, and with Him is the remedy.

"If our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things." 1 John 3:20.

Adam's heart condemned him, but God saw further into the depth of the ruin than Adam and, blessed be His name, He saw the remedy too—the source of all the evil judged and crushed under the heel of the "woman's seed."

"Where art thou?" Man must come out from his hiding place; as the fig leaves could not satisfy the conscience, so now the tree cannot hide man from God. And how many trees there are that men are hiding behind today. Men are hiding, and in restless activity are seeking to stifle the conscience which condemns and says, "not fit for God." It is God that asks, "Where art thou?" And He furnishes the answer, both for the sinner and the believer. The former is in his sins—that awful, lifeless condition, "in the flesh" (Rom. 8:8), and thus unable to do anything to please God. In the far country where the famine is, without Christ, without hope, without God, in the world, unclean, an enemy—the sword of judgment hangs over his head.

But believer, "Where art thou?" And God's Word again furnishes the reply; and what mind, however great, could have given birth to such a thought—it would have been blasphemy to have expressed it—but God has spoken, and shall we not hear? The believer is not in the first man where all is ruin, but in the second Man where there is naught but blessing in Christ Jesus, where there is no condemnation. He, blessed be His name, bore it all on that tree, and now it can never touch the one in Christ. "Accepted in the beloved" (Eph. 1:6), not merely in Christ, though that is true—but "in the beloved," the One so dear to the heart of God. His place now is in the Father's house, seated at His table, having on the best robe, which is surely none other than Christ.

"Now we see in Christ's acceptance

But the measure of our own;

Him who lay beneath our sentence,

Seated high upon the throne.

"Quickened, raised, and in Him seated,

We a full deliverance know;

Every foe has been defeated,

Every enemy laid low.

"Soon, O Lord, in brightest glory,All its vastness we'll explore;Soon we'll cast our crowns before Thee, While we worship and adore."

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