

Wilderness Gleanings 8 - The Defiled Camp

“Outside the Camp”

Exodus 33:7: “And Moses took the tabernacle, and pitched it without the camp, afar off from the camp, and called it the Tabernacle of the congregation. And it came to pass, that every one which sought the LORD went out unto the tabernacle of the congregation, which was without the camp.”

We observe that “Moses took the tabernacle and pitched it without the camp, afar off from the camp, and **called** it the Tabernacle of the congregation.¹ And it came to pass, that every one which sought the LORD went out unto the tabernacle of the congregation, which was without the camp.” The camp was defiled and so a place outside the camp was appointed by Moses as the place where people who *sought* (desired to search out) the Lord could worship Him in spirit and in truth.

Practical application:

The “Camp” refers to all that was Judaism at that time – the system of altars, offerings and priesthood that *God* ordained and instituted for His *earthly* people. That system was now defiled by sensuality and sacrifices that suited the flesh. What was Moses to do? He did not seek to reform it from within. Rather he sought *separation* from it and set up a place outside it where true worshippers could be worship God in spirit and in truth. This too must be our course of action – separation and not reformation when faced with a defiled camp. “Everyone which sought the LORD went out unto the tabernacle of the congregation, which was without the camp.” Today the Camp typifies the religious systems within the professing Church. They have become defiled with the ways and wisdom of the world – catering to the flesh of the natural man. The church at large has lost sight of the glory of God, preferring:

- *evolution* over creation
- *priestcraft* over priesthood
- *sacraments* over sacred remembrance
- *democracy* over theocracy
- *sensuality* over solemnity
- *social services* and *charities* over salvation through the cross
- *patronage* of Christianity over *pilgrimage* in Christ
- *the goodness of man* over the *glory of God in Christ*

Today, idolatry, apostasy and blasphemy are endemic within Christendom. We see it in the adornment of amulets and crucifixes; in the elevation of men as priests and prelates as well as the denials of Christ’s deity and perfect humanity. This threefold iniquity has grown in direct proportion to the degree to which the professing church has lost sight of the redeeming *glory of God* in the face of Jesus Christ. And, in the light of this we have the fresh appeal of Moses to God: “I beseech thee, shew me thy glory” (Ex 33:18), an experience that he had already encountered. No man can see the essential glory of God and live. Moses had to be protected in the cleft of the rock and covered by the hand of God. What Moses was given to see was a Theophany, a unique one! Later when the Tabernacle is built the glory of the Lord filled the Tabernacle before the people.

In all this we have a beautiful figure of Christ, the Redeemer going *outside the Camp* in Hebrews 13, a place of reproach. “We have an altar, whereof they have no right to eat which serve the tabernacle” (Heb 13:10).² The altar here is Christ Himself. An altar is the way of approach to God on

¹ This refers to the tent of Moses and *not* to the Tabernacle according to the instructions given upon the Mount. This was yet to be built (Exodus 35).

² Note: No right to “eat;” i.e., the idea of sacrifice is omitted. In the old economy no priest was permitted to serve at the altar while the High Priest was within the sanctuary; neither could there be any sacrifice for propitiation between the Days of Atonement (it would be a denial of the value of the sacrifice on that Day). It is a wonderful picture of our Great High Priest who is now within the sanctuary. “No blood no altar now, the sacrifice is o’er ... our High Priest sits within.”

the basis of sacrifice. The text distinguishes between the altar of Judaism and all that it speaks of (the dead altars inside the camp of Christendom), and the living altar which is Christ outside the camp – the place of His rejection. It carries a vital practical truth. “Wherefore Jesus also, that he might sanctify the people with his own blood, suffered without the gate. Let us go forth therefore unto him without the camp, bearing his reproach. For here have we no continuing city, but we seek one to come. By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to his name” (Heb 13:12-15).³ We have a living altar, a continuing city (the New Jerusalem) and a sacrifice of praise and not ritual. Positionally, we have been brought *out* of the camp and *into* the sanctuary – within the veil.

Within the veil

It is fitting here to say a little concerning the place into which Christ has brought us, outside the camp and inside the veil. Though we all have our standing within the veil, we may not be walking in it practically. We have already remarked on the need to be separate from the defiled camp, but what about our responsibilities regarding our undeniable place within the veil? *Positionally*, being within the veil and being inside the camp are mutually exclusive. In Christ, we are where He *is* - outside the camp and within the sanctuary. This is our *standing*. *Practically*, we are to act according to the place wherein He has brought us. This is the practical exhortation regarding our *state* in Hebrews 13:13. “Let us go forth therefore unto Him without the camp, bearing His reproach.” The camp is the sphere which has been established to suit the *natural* man in the world. It seeks to attract him and appease his conscience before God. The object is not to convert but to *conform* the natural man to Christianity. The place within the veil was established through the death of Christ to suit those who have died and been born anew in Him - the *heavenly* and *new* man in Christ. Accordingly, the sanctuary shuts out all that pertains to the world and its ways, and seeks to tune the heart of the new man to God. If we are not prepared to bear Christ’s reproach outside the camp, we cannot partake of the blessings within the veil.

³ Today, the camp has been disowned by God – and so too the earthly city of His government, because like the camp it disowned Christ who was put to death outside its walls. We therefore have neither the camp nor an earthly city. Like Abraham we seek one to come – the heavenly Jerusalem, which is our present inalienable inheritance. “But ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels” (Heb 12:22). Our citizenship is in heaven (Php 3:20).