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Our Pulpit.

The Story of Moses.

No. 13

HIS LAST YEAR

SERMON PREACHED BY

REV. A. J. MOWATT.

In St. Paul's Church, Fredericton, Sunday morning April 7th. 1889.

"And the Lord said unto Moses, Behold, thy days approach that thou must die."—DEUT. XXXI. 14.

If you were told by God, my hearer, that you had only one more year to live and do your work in, what effect would it have upon you? I think some of you would get out of business as fast as you could. You would sell out your interest in some rather doubtful speculations the very first chance you would have, and you would invest more largely than ever in the church. You would resign your seat in parliament perhaps, wash your hands clear of politics, and give yourself to prayer. No more balls! no more card-playing! no more theatre-going! no more horse-racing! no more rum-sel-ling nor rum-drinking! no more of so many things that men can see no harm in till they come to die!

With others again the effect would be different. The nearer death the harder they would work. They would not go out of business. They would buy and sell right up till their last hour. That is their way of serving God, and here they can serve Him as well as I can here. They would not resign their seat in parliament. They would redouble their efforts to glorify God there. And they would not need to give up this and that, for they would not be in them.

Tonight I am to tell you how Moses employed the last year of his life. He had sinned, and because of his sin the Lord told him he could not lead the people into Canaan, and that meant his death in a year or so. At first he could not be reconciled to his fate. It cost him a severe struggle with himself to bow down and say, "O Lord, Thy will be done." But he came to it when he found he had to come to it, and his last year was one of his best years. The near approach of death, instead of quenching the fire in him, and paralyzing his efforts, woke up all the might of the old hero, and made him anxious to fill his last few days as full as they could be filled with earnest efforts and brilliant achievements. He threw himself into the work there was to do. He led the people. He inspired them with his heroism. He cheered them with his hopefulness. He negotiated treaties. He flung defiance in the face of enemies. He fought battles. He won glorious triumphs. He circumvented the machiavelian plots of Balaam. He wrote out his histories and laws. He found his tongue too, and we have in the book of Deuteronomy the eloquence of the man who thought he could not speak. In a word, it brought out the wealth of his genius, the grandeur of the man, to find himself shut up to a year of life. But this will come out still more clearly as we note the leading incidents of his last year.

I. MOUNT HOR

It had been the first intention to invade Canaan from the south. But this had been frustrated by the refusal of the people, when they learned what the spies had to say, to go up. The first intention was therefore abandoned as difficult, perhaps impracticable. And now the plan is to march clear away round east of the Dead Sea, and invade the country by crossing the Jordan. From Kadesh a deputation is sent ahead of the main body to ask permission from Edom to go through their territory. Thus the long sojourn at Kadesh ends, and the march begins towards Edom. They travel almost back over the way they had come forty years before, in a south-east direction, the objective point to be reached in the first stage of their journey being Mount Hor.

Jebel Maderah, a prominent mountain some twenty miles south of the Dead Sea, is today claimed to be the true Mount Hor. The older and more general opinion is that Mount Hor is on the borders of Edom, near the ancient city of Petra, and perhaps forty miles south-east of Maderah.

At Mount Hor the people encamped for some time, and three important incidents occurred. Here Aaron died. He had sinned with Moses, and now he must die. The Lord ordered him, accompanied with Moses and Eleazar his son, to ascend the mountain in the view of the people. You see the three of them slowly climbing their way up the steep mountain-side some four thousand feet. Aaron is in full canonicals. He dies in harness. With tears in their eyes the people watch him as he goes up, for they shall see his face no more, nor hear his eloquent words again. No more for them will he minister at the altar, and speak to them of forgiveness and reconciliation. At last beyond the shoulder of the Mount they are lost to view, and the people bow their heads in prayer.

On the mountain-top Aaron is stripped of his robes of office, and they are put upon his son Eleazar. And then the old man of one hundred and twenty three years feels weary and goes to sleep. He is buried there, and Moses and Eleazar return to the people without him. The people mourn a month for him. Thus Moses is left alone, and over his head hangs the doom that has prostrated his sister and brother. And he knows it.

Another incident that occurred at Mount Hor was a battle with Arad at the head of an army of Canaanites. This warrior-king had been watching the movements of Israel, and had pursued them, and made an attack upon their rear, and taken some of the people captive. But Israel soon rallied, and the tide of battle turned. The Canaanites were defeated, and pursued into their own country, and their cities sacked.

The third incident that occurred at Mount Hor seems to have been the return of the deputation sent to treat with Edom with the disappointing news that Edom would not suffer Israel to pass through their territory. This meant a long hard journey round about.

II. THE BROOK ARNON.

From Hor the people proceeded still south to Ezion-Gaber at the head of the Elanitic Gulf. Here they struck away eastward over a rugged mountainous country that greatly tired the people's patience, and set them murmuring again. It was here they fell in with the fiery flying serpents that proved a most fatal sort of plague. Moses was directed to make a serpent of brass, which he twisted round a pole, and set it up where all the people could see it. The people were then invited to look, and all who looked were healed. Thus they were saved from the deadly serpents.

That was the old way of preaching the gospel. It was look and live. Today we have been seeing Christ lifted up on the cross as God's one remedy for the sin-plague that has been desolating the world, and we have been invited to look and live. The poison of the great serpent is in our blood, and we are suffering from it, yea dying from it. But God's great mercy has provided a remedy, the cross, the Crucified Jesus. He has been lifted up. Oh! do you see Him, poor dying sinner! Turn in your desperate need and look upon Him. You may ask, "What can the dead Christ do for me? What can one whose head is bowed in death, and out of whose side has ebbed away the life, do to help me, to save my poor sin-destroyed soul?" Ah! sinner, doubt not; come and see what He can do for you. As the hope of the serpent-bitten yonder in the wilderness of Edom many centuries ago was a brass serpent lifted up on a pole according to the word of the Lord, so the hope of the world today is the dead Christ. That is the meaning of the solemn service of the supper we were observing a week ago. It was the dead Christ we were looking at through symbol and sacrament, and the sight we had of Him inspires us with hope and wakes up in us a new and glad energy. "And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up; that whosoever believeth in Him have eternal life."

The people of Israel rounded the granite range of Mount Sier, passing along east of Edom and Moab, keeping probably to the Wady Ithm, till they reached a tract of country which the Amorites had taken from Moab. This tract of country lay between the rivers Arnon and Jabbok, east of the Dead Sea and the Lower Jordan. They cross the Arnon, and pitch their tents. They are now in a rich country, a highland "region of great fertility. It is described as a wide table land tossed about in wild confusion of undulating downs, clothed with rich grass throughout, and in spring waving with great sheets of wheat and barley, in summer and autumn bringing to perfection vast quantities of grapes."

From their camping ground on the Arnon they sent a deputation to Sihon, King of the Amorites, asking permission to pass through his country. This was the request made: "Let me pass through thy land; we will not turn aside into field, or into vineyard; we will not drink of the water of the wells; we will go by the king's highway, until we have passed thy border." This moderate and reasonable request Sihon refused, and not only refused, he at once declared war against Israel, and mustered his forces at Jahaz. This led to a fierce battle, Israel beginning the attack, and they were completely victorious. King Sihon himself and his sons were killed in the battle. The victorious army pressed forward taking Hesbon the capital, and all the leading towns, such as Jahaz, Dibon, Medeba, Elealeh, Baal-Meon, Kir-harath, and Horonaim. It was a splendid victory, and the whole country of the Amorites submitted to the conqueror. The victorious army returned to the camp at Arnon with the spoil, where they celebrated their victory, and sung a psalm:

"We have shot at them; Hesbon is perished even unto Dibon, And we have laid waste even unto Nophah, Which reacheth unto Medeba." *Continued on third page.*

III. WARS AND CONQUESTS.

From the banks of the Arnon Israel pushed on into the country of the conquered Amorites, and took up a position opposite Jericho, east of the Jordan. Moses led his army north into the country of Bashan, and had a battle with Og, the king of Bashan, at Edrei. Og himself was a giant. He had an iron bedstead 13 feet long and 6 feet wide. This giant warrior Moses conquered and killed, with his sons, and took his strongholds, some sixty in all, besides unwalled towns and villages very many. The inhabitants were all put to the sword, the Divine policy with regard to all those peoples being that of utter extermination, a policy that has been much criticized by writers who are not in a position to judge either of its soundness or rightness. Their cup of wickedness was full and running over, and so they were delivered up to a fearful retribution.

We boast today of our humane legislation, but is it not true that extermination hangs over the heads of the Indian tribes of this western world as well as over the ancient Rephaim who were the Indian tribes on the east of the Jordan in Moses' day? We come with our modern civilization, and we take possession of their lands, and we fight them with our modern warfare, and disease is preying upon them, and the end will be extermination, in America, just as surely as yonder in Canaan, of the Indian tribes.

Thus the whole country east of the Jordan, from Arnon the border of Moab and Ammon to Mount Hermon on the north, fell into the hands of Israel by conquest. This was a rich grazing country, and was divided between the tribes of Reuben and Gad and half Manasseh. Israel was not allowed to invade Moab and Ammon, because they were a kindred people, being descendants of Lot.

The last war that Moses conducted was against the Midianites, or rather the Midianites supported by the Moabites. Moab did not like to see Israel in the country at one time owned by itself. Balak their King felt exceedingly sore about it, and he sent for Balaam the son of Beor, an eminent prophet of the time, a sort of professional soothsayer or wise man, whose home was far away on the banks of the Euphrates. He was a man of brilliant genius, extraordinarily gifted, able to discourse like an angel, and his skill as an interpreter and prognosticator was known and sought after far and near. He was not ignorant of the truth. He worshipped the true God, and professed to declare His counsels, but he was lacking of high principle, hiring himself out to those who would pay for his services and honor and reward his abilities, and he would do this regardless as to who they were or why they wanted him. Thus he flung his splendid abilities at the feet of the basest service for gold and glory.

Ah! Balaam is not without his followers today. There are professional men of acknowledged ability who will preach for Moab or Israel, who will plead the case of righteousness or wrong, for the biggest salary.

To this soothsayer dwelling far away in the east Balak the King of Moab sent messengers with generous rewards to induce him to come and curse Israel. But he declined to come. He declined however in a way that gave them to feel that he could be won over. So a second embassy was sent with still larger rewards. And Balaam came. But the Lord was against him. I need not dwell here on how the king and the gain-saying prophet tried in vain to curse the people the Lord would not curse. They erected their altars and offered their sacrifices, but no enchantment would work against Jacob. It was blessing, blessing, only blessing for Israel, and Balaam could not prophecy anything else.

But the mischief the gain-saying prophet could not effect, speaking in the name of the Lord, he made out to effect in another way. He counselled free intercourse with the people. He advised idolatrous festivals, Midianitish and Moabitish jollifications. To these idolatrous festivals the Israelites were invited. The plot was cunningly laid, and was too successful. The people of God were caught, snared, and fell into gross idolatry. They went so far even as to contract Moabitish and Midianitish inter-marriages.

Thus matters were well nigh desperate before much notice was taken of them. And as matters were desperate, so desperate measures must be had recourse to, if the nation is to be saved. The chiefs of the people, because of the part they had in the affair, were summarily hanged. And Phinehas, Aaron's grandson, distinguished himself by his zeal to root out the dangerous evil. And it was rooted out, but not till 24,000 had fallen victims. Ah! what it cost God's people in other days to fraternize with the world! And God's people cannot do it today any more than then without loss, without a curse.

The affair led to a sort of holy war, a crusade, against the Midianites, who were chiefly to blame. A thousand warriors were chosen from each tribe, making 12,000 in all, and this army was sent to avenge upon the Midianites the

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88 Winter Arrangement '89

On and after MONDAY, Nov. 26th, 1888 the Trains of this Railway will run daily, (Sunday excepted,) as follows

TRAINS WILL LEAVE ST. JOHN

Day Express.....7.30 a. m.
Accommodation.....11.20 a. m.
Express for Sussex.....16.35 p. m.
Express for Halifax and Quebec.....18.00 p. m.

A sleeping car runs daily on the 18.10 train Halifax.

On Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday a Sleeping Car for Montreal will be attached to the Quebec Express, and on Monday, Wednesday and Friday, a Sleeping Car will be attached to Moncton.

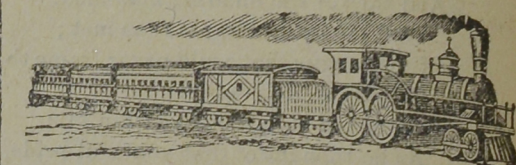
TRAINS WILL ARRIVE AT ST. JOHN

Express from Halifax and Quebec.....7.00 a. m.
Express from Sussex.....8.35 a. m.
Accommodation.....13.30 p. m.
Day Express.....19.20 p. m.

All trains run by Eastern Standard time.

D. POTTINGER, Chief Superintendent

Railway Office
Moncton, N. B., Nov. 20th 1888.



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ALL RAIL LINE

Arrangement of Trains

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LEAVE FREDERICTON.

EASTERN STANDARD TIME.

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8.45 A. M.—Express for Fredericton Junction, Vanceboro, Bangor, Portland, Boston and points West; St. Stephen, St. Andrew's Houlton, Woodstock, Presque Isle, Grand Falls, Edmundston and points north.

12.50 P. M.—For Fredericton Junction, St. John and points east.

ARRIVE AT FREDERICTON

11.35 A. M.—From Fredericton Junction, St. John and points East.

3.10 P. M.—From Fredericton Junction, Vanceboro, Bangor, Portland, Boston, and points West, St. Andrew's, St. Stephen, Houlton Woodstock and points north.

6.30 P. M.—Express from St. John, and intermediate points.

LEAVE GIBSON.

6.50 A. M.—Mixed for Woodstock, and points north.

ARRIVE AT GIBSON.

4.45 P. M.—Mixed from Woodstock, and points north.

F. W. CRAM,

General Manager

A. J. HEATH, Gen. Pass. and Ticket Agent
St. John, N. B., March 29th, 1888.

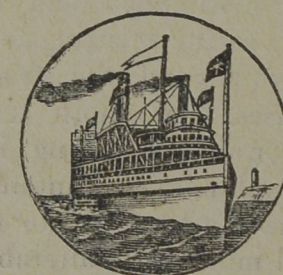
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