

REPLAYS OF KADESH-BARNEA

(Numbers chapters thirteen and fourteen)

The rebellion at Kadesh-barnea, around which the entire book of Numbers revolves, is linked closely to three New Testament situations, and stands as a necessary background for properly understanding them. There was a *national* 'Kadesh-barnea' faced by Israel shortly after Pentecost. A *personal* Kadesh confronted many Jewish people during the same period. Then, during the Tribulation, there will be a *final*, and most severe, repetition of Kadesh.

The National Replay Of Kadesh (Acts chapter seven)

If the leaders in Israel in Christ's day had recalled their history and believed their prophets they could have – and should have – realized they were up against another Kadesh-barnea when they faced Stephen in Acts seven. The parallels are striking!

The Time Element

In Numbers they had the revelation given to Abraham. "Then He said to Abram: 'Know certainly that your descendants will be strangers in a land that is not theirs, and will serve them, and they will afflict them four hundred years. And also the nation whom they serve I will judge; afterward they shall come out with great possessions'" (Gen. 15:13, 14). When the four hundred years had run their course they had indeed "come out with great possessions." Abraham had also been told, "In the fourth generation they shall return here" (Gen. 15:16).

Moses had been sent to them, not only to bring them out of Egypt, but to bring them into a land flowing with milk and honey (Ex. 3:8). "He brought us *out* from there, that He might bring us *in*, to give us the land of which He swore to our fathers" (Deut. 6:23). Surely he would not take them out of Egypt only to let them die in the wilderness. He was accused of this, however, over and over (Ex. 14:11; 16:3; 17:2, 3; Num. 16:13; 21:5).

In Acts seven Israel also had a time prophecy they should have considered. In Daniel 9:24 – 27 the time until everlasting righteousness, and the other blessings of the coming kingdom, would be brought in was set at 490 years. It was dated from a specific event recorded in their historical books. After 483 years Messiah was to be "cut off" and have nothing (Dan. 9:26).

Sir Robert Anderson, using the same historical data available to the learned Jewish leaders of Christ's day, was able to determine that the closing day of the 483rd year was the very day Christ entered Jerusalem riding on a donkey.¹ Could those leaders

¹ "The Coming Prince" by Sir Robert Anderson, 16th edition printed in 1967, the chapter "The fulfillment of the prophecy" - pages 127, 128.

have arrived at that date in their studies also? Evidently they could have, for Christ twitted them about their failure to do so. “Hypocrites! You know how to discern the face of the sky, but you cannot discern the signs of the times” (Matt. 16:3). To what more important, and more precise, time could He have referred? On the very day the four hundred and eighty three years had run their course Christ, with tears, warned the Pharisees of the coming judgment on Jerusalem (Luke 19:41 – 44). He told them of the tragic things that would come upon them because they did not “recognize the time of their visitation” (Luke 19:44). If they had carefully considered Daniel’s prophecy they would have known that this was the day, and Jesus the Messiah, Daniel wrote about. They could have welcomed Him with open arms, and avoided the judgment that befell them in seventy a.d.

The Evidences

At Kadesh-barnea Israel had but recently seen God’s power demonstrated time and again. They had seen God destroy Egypt’s mighty army, open a way through the Red Sea, grant them victory over the Amalakites (Ex. 12:8 – 16), and give them food and water in the desert. They had every reason to expect Him to give them victory over the giants of Palestine.

By Acts seven, Israel’s leaders had seen the power of God operating through, and on the behalf of, Christ. They were surely not unaware of His miracles. They knew the reality of His resurrection – for they had conspired to cover it up with their lies. They had seen the miracles wrought in His name by the apostles, and could not deny them (Acts 4:16). They had every reason to believe that Jesus was indeed the Messiah they professed to be expecting.

At Kadesh the Israelites had, through their twelve spies, seen the land and had tasted of its fruit.

By Acts seven, the Jews had “tasted the powers of the age to come” (Heb. 6:5). In Christ’s ministry they had seen, or at least were aware of, a sample of the ideal conditions that will characterize the millennial age.

Christ had listed His miracles as His credentials when questioned by the followers of John the Baptist. “When the men had come to Him, they said, ‘John the Baptist has sent us to You, saying, “Are You the Coming One, or do we look for another?”’ And that very hour He cured many of their infirmities, afflictions, and evil spirits; and to many blind He gave sight. Jesus answered and said to them, ‘Go and tell John the things you have seen and heard: that the blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, the poor have the gospel preached to them’ ” (Luke 7:20 - 22). The Pharisees would not acknowledge His credentials. Instead they explained his miracles away by attributing them to the power of Satan (Matt. 12:24; Mark 3:22).

Other Parallels

At Kadesh, the provision for their sin (the Passover) had already been provided.

By Acts seven, the fulfillment of the Passover had been accomplished at Calvary.

At Kadesh the crossing of the Red Sea was already a glorious part of Israel's history.

By Acts seven, the resurrection of Christ was behind them. Both the crossing of the Red Sea (Isa. 63:11 – 13) and the resurrection of Christ (Eph. 1:19, 20) are used in Scripture as major demonstrations of the power of God.

At Kadesh Israel's rebellion was only the last of a long series of rebellious acts. "All these men who have seen My glory and the signs which I did in Egypt and in the wilderness, and have *put Me to the test now these ten times*, and have not heeded My voice" (Num. 14:22).

In Acts seven Asaph described Israel as "a stubborn and rebellious generation, a generation that did not set its heart aright and whose spirit was not faithful to God" (Psa. 78:8). Ezekiel referred to them as being a "rebellious" nation sixteen times – five times in chapter two alone! Stephen pointed out that their rejection of Christ was the culmination of a long history of rebellion. "You stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears! You always resist the Holy Spirit; as your fathers did, so do you. Which of the prophets did your fathers not persecute? And they killed those who foretold the coming of the Just One, of whom you now have become the betrayers and murderers, who have received the law by the direction of angels and have not kept it." (Acts 7:51 – 53).

Paul reviewed this sordid history of Israel's penchant for rebellion in 1 Thess. 2:15, 16. "[The Jews] killed both the Lord Jesus and their own prophets, and have persecuted us; and they do not please God and are contrary to all men, forbidding us to speak to the Gentiles that they may be saved, so as always to fill up the measure of their sins; but wrath has come upon them to the uttermost."

At Kadesh they were not given a second chance. When they decided to go, after all, to the place that the Lord had promised (Num. 14:40) they were warned, "Do not go up, lest you be defeated by your enemies, for the LORD is not among you. For the Amalekites and the Canaanites are there before you, and you shall fall by the sword; because you have turned away from the LORD, the LORD will not be with you" (Num. 14:42, 43). Their attempt to do it on their own failed totally. They were left to the judgment God had pronounced upon them.

At Acts Seven God considered they had committed an unpardonable sin. They had rejected God's offer of the King and the kingdom made through Peter (Acts 3:19 – 21). Later they determined to gain their freedom from Rome and reestablish the Davidic kingdom in their own strength. Foreseeing that His people would reject Him even after His resurrection, Christ had warned them against such an attempt (Luke 21:20 – 24). Josephus, who was an eyewitness of the destruction of Jerusalem and its temple in 70 ad, warned Israel's leaders of the futility of their rebellion. But they would not listen, just as

the rebels in Moses' day would not listen to him.

Although individual Jews were invited to repent and be forgiven, the nation was set aside without another opportunity to accept the offer made to them. God accepted their decision as final. As with Israel at Kadesh, their attempt to do it on their own was a disastrous failure.

At Kadesh Israel was ready to stone those who urged them to enter the land.

In Acts Seven they did stone Stephen.

At Kadesh the guilty generation perished in the wilderness, but the two who stood against their folly were spared.

At Acts Seven the guilty generation perished less than forty years later when Jerusalem was destroyed by the Romans, but the believers escaped when they followed Christ's instructions in Luke 21:20, 21.²

At Kadesh the judgment on Israel was to last about thirty-eight more years.

At Acts Seven the judgment entered into was not time oriented. No specific duration for it was set (Acts 1:6, 7). However a span of time is at least suggested. It must last until the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans, in order to fulfill Christ's prophecy in Matt. 24:1, 2 and Luke 21:5, 6. It must also last long enough for Peter to grow old and die (John 22:18, 19). However it could have been short enough that John, who outlived the other apostles, would not die (John 22:20 – 28).

Then why has it continued so long? It was because a previously unrevealed factor came into play. God interrupted the prophetic program and inserted this age of grace, which greatly extended the time between the sixty-ninth and seventieth weeks of Daniel's prophecy. The setting aside of Israel was introduced at Acts seven as a judgment upon them for their rebellion. It was greatly extended at Acts nine (or Acts thirteen) by the introduction of an unprophesied program that opened up salvation to all sinners regardless of whether they were Jews or Gentiles.

At Kadesh, if Israel had entered the land the Palestinians would have been dead in a very short time. Their cup of iniquity (Gen. 15:16) was full at that time. But as a result of Israel's unbelief and rebellion those Gentiles enjoyed an unprophesied 'stay of execution' and lived on another thirty-eight years.

² "The whole body, of the church at Jerusalem [in 70 ad.], having been commanded by a divine revelation . . . removed from the city, and dwelt at a certain place beyond the Jordan, called Pella." -- Eusebius Pamphilus, Bishop of Caesarea (265 - 339 ad.): cited in "Israel My Glory" magazine for April/May 1989, page 23.

By Acts Seven the time was fast approaching when Christ could be expected to return. “Repent therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord, and that He may send Jesus Christ, who was preached to you before, whom heaven must receive until the times of restoration of all things, which God has spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began” (Acts 3:19 – 21).

If Israel had repented, and that return had taken place, within a few years the Gentile armies would have been totally defeated at the battle of Armageddon, their governments brought into full subjection to Christ, and their people judged. But, as a result of the fall of Israel and their casting away (Rom. 11:11, 15), the doom of the Gentiles has been postponed for over nineteen hundred years. More than that, salvation has been offered to them, apart from Israel and the law, and they have even been given the privilege and responsibility of making this salvation known – to Jew and Gentile alike (Rom. 11:11 – 15).

It is important to see that it was not the unbelief of Israel when they crucified Christ that ushered in the *reprieve* for the Gentiles, and *the age of grace*. Instead, the cross laid the groundwork for the return of Christ (Acts 3:18 – 21) and, with it, the “day of *vengeance*” (Isa. 63:4) and *judgment* on the Gentiles (Matt. 25:31 – 46). It was their subsequent unbelief – their rejection of the risen Christ in Acts seven - that was the basis for the ushering in of the age of grace. This is seen in the typology, for it was not the Passover, or the striking of the rock, that doomed Israel to the wilderness and brought a stay of execution to the Canaanites – it was their rebellion at Kadesh-barnea that brought all this about.

The olive tree in Romans eleven represents God’s witness in the world. The Israelites were chosen to be His witnesses (Isa. 43:10) but that responsibility has been largely taken from them and committed to Gentiles during this age of grace. Some of the natural branches of the olive tree have been broken off and the branches of a wild olive tree (Gentiles) grafted in among them (Rom. 11:16 – 23).

Gentile Christendom has now almost totally departed from His kindness – despising the message of His grace. Those true believers that still appreciate and trust in the grace of God will be removed from the scene in the Rapture. The Christendom left behind, devoid now of true believers, will not have the privilege of being His witnesses to the world. That privilege and responsibility will be returned to Israel,³ the natural branches. “Therefore consider the goodness and severity of God: on those who fell, severity; but toward you, goodness, if you continue in His goodness. Otherwise you also will be cut off. And they also, if they do not continue in unbelief, will be grafted in, for God is able to graft them in again” (Rom. 11:22, 23). This indicates the Rapture must

³ It is not that there will be no Gentile believers in the Tribulation churches, for a host of them will be saved during that time. But they will come to Christ under the evangelism of the 144,000 Jewish believers, and will not have places of leadership in those churches (Rev. 2:9; 3:9).

take place before the Tribulation, for during the Tribulation the ministry will be placed back in Jewish hands (Rev. 2:9; 3:9; 7:4 – 8; 11:3).

In Numbers, even though God’s judgment fell on Israel, He did not disown them. Even if He had carried out what He suggested to Moses – if he had slain them, dispossessed them, and started over (Num. 14:12) -- the new nation would not have been a group of Gentiles taking Israel’s place. It would have been a nation descended from Abraham and Israel (Jacob) through Moses – a renewed Israel.

In Acts Seven, when God set Israel aside in judgment, He did not select the largely Gentile church, or any branch of it, to take Israel’s place (as the Seventh Day Adventists, and some other groups, claim). Paul categorically rejects that notion. “Has God cast away His people? Certainly not!” (Rom. 11:1).

While it is true that “they are not all Israel who are of Israel” (Rom. 9:6), it is also true that every Israelite is physically descended from Israel. The 144,000 witnesses for Christ (Rev. 12:17) during the coming Tribulation are truly and physically Jews, for they are carefully linked to their respective tribes. The “Israel of God” in Gal. 6:16 is not a Gentile church, but those descendants of Jacob who share Abraham’s faith and are Israelites indeed.⁴ Those during the Tribulation who say they are Jews, and are not, are said to be guilty of blasphemy and are called a synagogue of Satan. God promises that He will cause them to worship before the feet of those who really are Jews, and be made aware that He still loves Israel (Rev. 2:9; 3:9).

The Personal Replay Of Kadesh (Hebrews 6:4 – 9 and 10:26 – 31)

While the nation, under the leadership of the Sanhedrin, had turned back from the opportunity to enter the promised kingdom, stoning Stephen in the intensity of their anger, salvation was offered to individual Jews. Many of them, like their nation, had come to the point where they had all the knowledge necessary to make a decision for Christ. Just one thing remained to become Christians. They were right at the borderline between their lost condition and salvation. They need only believe the gospel, which they are commanded to do. If, knowing the truth, they “turn from the holy commandment delivered to them [to believe]” (2 Pet. 2:21) there is nowhere else to turn for the salvation of their souls. Two passages in Hebrews deal at length with this problem. A study of them, in some depth, will reveal the parallels to Kadesh-barnea.

⁴ “For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything, but a new creation. And as many as walk according to this rule, peace and mercy be upon them, and upon the Israel of God” (Gal. 6:15, 16). Two groups of people are in view in these verses. There are those who walk according to the rule given in verse 15, and, on the other hand, the “Israel of God.” The latter were believing Israelites who, being saved before the age of grace began, and who had a kingdom hope, were still practicing circumcision, and were zealous of the law (Acts 21:20). The “Israel of God” mentioned in this passage is no longer with us, since it consisted only of that generation of New Testament Jews who became believers in Christ before the Body of Christ began.

Hebrews Six And Ten ⁵

It is amazing how often these passages come up when the eternal security of the believer is mentioned. The assumption is that those described in Heb. 6:4, 5 and Heb. 10:26 - 29 are believers who lose their salvation. *If* this is true, it seems clear that we could also lose *our* salvation.

It is Seldom noticed, however, that -- *If* these passages teach a believer can lose his salvation -- they also teach, very clearly and emphatically, that when salvation is lost it is lost forever! In chapter six it is stated, "it is *impossible*" for those who "fall away" to be "renewed again unto repentance." Likewise chapter ten states, "If we sin willfully ... there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, but a *certain* looking for of judgment and fiery indignation." This surely would discount the testimony of any believer who claims to have once lost his salvation; for if he ever lost it, he is still lost and can never be saved again. It would also make the ministry of those who preach to "backsliders" (those who, supposedly, have lost their salvation) a useless and even wicked effort. If the backsliders could never be saved again, it would be a cruel mockery to urge them to return to Christ. Clearly, according to this interpretation of these passages, such a return would be "impossible."

What do these chapters really teach?

Hebrews Chapter Six (verses 4 – 9)

The key to this portion of Hebrews is verse nine. "But, beloved, we are confident of better things concerning you, yes, things that *accompany salvation*, though we speak in this manner." This verse teaches there are things better than those listed in verses four and five. While those items do not "accompany salvation" these "better" things *do*! The writer is here saying very definitely and clearly that verses four and five do not describe a saved person.

What can be better than those things set forth in verses four and five?

To be "once for all enlightened" (Amplified Bible) is to know fully the message from the Lord. But to *know* a truth and to *believe* it are not the same. It is not said here that they believed. Salvation is not through knowledge, but through faith. A man may sit through a series of meetings, where the gospel is faithfully preached, and go away thoroughly "evangelized" -- but still *lost*. Faith is better, for *it accompanies salvation!*

What is better than to *taste* of the heavenly gift? Obviously it would be better to *receive* that gift. "But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God" (John 1:12). To receive the gift *accompanies salvation*.

⁵ This study is adapted from the author's book "Help in Hard Places."

But were not these people described as being made “partakers of the Holy Spirit”?

In the 1917 edition of the Scofield Bible the margin suggests this verse be translated, “and were *going along with* the Holy Ghost.” This thought is illustrated where the same Greek word is used in Luke 5:7 and translated “partners.” There, when the disciples in one boat caught so many fish their net broke, they “signaled to their partners” (those who had *gone along with* them in their fishing venture) who were in the other boat. Applying this meaning of the word to Heb. 6:4, the verse appears to be saying that these “backsliders” have been under the convicting power of the Spirit, may even have made a profession of faith and urged others to do the same -- all without true faith themselves. What could be better? It would be better if they had been *born* of the Spirit (John 3:5), *indwelt* by the Spirit (Rom. 8:9), *sealed* by the Spirit (Eph. 1:13; 4:30), and *baptized* by the Spirit into the Body of Christ (1 Cor. 12:13) -- for *these things* accompany salvation.⁶

Likewise it is better to *believe* the word of God than to merely *taste* it. How many, even today, enjoy a Bible study or good gospel preaching, but have not really believed the Word of God. Ezekiel was warned against such people in his ministry. “Indeed you are to them as a very lovely song of one who has a pleasant voice and can play well on an instrument; for they hear your words, but they do not do them” (Ezek. 33:32). It is not the one who merely *hears* (tastes) the Word, but the one who *believes*, who has everlasting life.

But have they not tasted (here is that word again!) the “powers of the age [not ‘world’ as in the KJV] to come”? Yes indeed. Similarly the Israelites at Kadesh-barnea tasted of the fruit of the land brought back by the spies, but they never entered the land. They never ate of the milk and honey, or the grain and new wine (Num. 13:23, 27; Deut. 33:28). When they turned back (or “fell away”) they found it was impossible to renew them again unto repentance. Their subsequent attempt to enter the land met with defeat, and they died in the wilderness (Num. 14:39 - 45).

For these Jews referred to in Hebrews, the age to come was the millennial kingdom. They had tasted of the powers which will be characteristic of that kingdom. Not only had they seen the miracles wrought by Christ, or by the apostles after His resurrection, but also many of them may have actually experienced healing at their hands. They may have eaten of the loaves and fish miraculously multiplied by Christ. They have enjoyed a sample of the coming kingdom, but they could never enter that kingdom without being born again (John 3:3).

By coming to the very brink of salvation, and then turning back, they would be knowingly and willfully rejecting Christ -- the very sin that was committed by the nation when they crucified Him. They would be crucifying Him afresh in their hearts.

⁶ All believers are born of the Spirit, and the Spirit indwells all believers after Pentecost. The sealing and baptizing into the Body of Christ are characteristic of this Age of Grace.

This interpretation is further strengthened by Heb. 6:7, 8. Both fields described there receive the same rain from heaven, but one brings forth herbs and the other one only thorns and briars. What is the difference? One field, being prepared by the farmer, *received the good seed* -- the other did not. The second field is not one that produced herbs, and later *reverted back* to weeds, but one which *produced weeds in the first place*, even though it had been watered from heaven.

Hebrews Chapter Ten (verses 20 – 31)

The key to this portion of Scripture is found in verses 38 and 39. “Now the just shall live by faith; but if anyone draws back, My soul has no pleasure in him. But we are not of those who draw back to perdition, but of those who believe to the saving of the soul.” This drawing back is the willful sin referred to in verse 26. It is not a case of those who draw back *after* believing, but *in contrast* to it. There are two groups -- those who draw back (called “adversaries” in v. 27) and those who believe.

The context of this passage is significant. In verses one to eighteen of chapter ten the writer expounds the theme that Christ's death is a once for all sacrifice -- in contrast to the repeated offerings under the Law. His point is -- if the sacrifices under the Old Covenant really solved the sin problem, they would not need to be offered over and over (vs. 1, 2). Christ's one sacrifice not only sanctified the believer (set him apart forever from the unbeliever -- v. 10), but also *perfected* him forever (v. 14). In light of this, “there is no longer an offering for sin” (v. 18); that is, when one receives Christ there is no need for any *additional* sacrifice, for He finished the work and sat down (v. 12).

The rest of the chapter looks at the Jew who, though he knows the truth about Christ as set forth in the first part of the chapter, draws back to Judaism and the temple sacrifices. Verse 26 *seems* to say the same thing as verse 18, but the context indicates an important difference. In verse 18 the one who *accepts* the sacrifice has no need for *additional* sacrifices, while in verse 26 the one who *rejects* the sacrifice of Christ has no *other* (or alternate) sacrifice to which he can turn. He cannot go back to the animal sacrifices if he rejects their fulfillment in Christ. Verse 18 points out that Christ is a *sufficient* offering; verse 26 that He is the *only* offering God will accept today.

Now let us scrutinize the passage itself more closely. What appears to indicate that those described here may be true believers?

First of all, the writer says, “If *we* sin willfully” -- and the writer was a believer. But the writer was also a *Jew*, and writing to Jews. He is not saying, “If we *believers* sin willfully,” but “If we *Jews* sin willfully.” The reference to the Law of Moses in 10:28 substantiates this.

Then, again, these people had received knowledge of the truth. This is so. But, as noted before in our study of chapter six, knowledge is not faith. It is his knowledge of the truth that makes his sin willful -- he sins knowingly.

Also, it is said that he was sanctified by the blood of the covenant (v. 29). Remember that “sanctified” basically means “set apart.” With this in mind, even if the pronoun “he” refers to the man who sinned willfully, it does not prove he had come to personal faith in Christ. The blood of the Old Covenant had set Israel apart as a nation, even though many individuals in Israel never became a part of the true Israel by personal faith. So the blood of the New Covenant (Christ's own blood) is the basis for the future salvation of “all Israel” (Rom. 11:26) -- even though many individual Jews of Paul's day never became a part of the “Israel of God” (Gal. 6:16). Every Jew is set apart to the salvation spoken of in the New Covenant, but each must experience a new birth before he can realize it personally and enjoy it. Can one be spoken of as “sanctified” even though he is not saved? Yes. See 1 Cor. 7:14. “For the *unbelieving* husband *is sanctified* by the wife, and the *unbelieving* wife *is sanctified* by the husband.”

However, there is a real possibility “*he* was sanctified” in verse 29 refers to *Christ*. It is His blood that forever sets Him apart from all other leaders. To turn one's back on Moses is not as serious as spurning Christ -- for Moses did not shed his blood for our sins. Christ did. The man in view here is counting the very blood, which sets Christ Himself apart from all religious leaders, as “a common thing” and “has insulted the Spirit of Grace.”

Verse 30 is also said to indicate this man is a believer. “For we know Him who said, Vengeance is Mine, I will repay,” says the Lord. And again, “The LORD will judge *His people*.” Does this not show that this man -- one of “His people” -- is a true believer? The entire nation of Israel (including the unbelieving Jews) is referred to in many places as “His people,” so this does not prove the man was saved.

Moreover, when the Old Testament wording of the prophecy quoted here is examined, it sheds a lot of light on the verse. The quotation is from Deuteronomy. In Deut. 32:35 unbelievers are in view and vengeance is to be meted out to them. “Vengeance is mine, and retribution, in due time their foot will slip; for the day of their calamity is near, and the impending things are hastening upon them.” But in verse 36, where “His people” are in view, it says (both quotations from the NASB), “For the Lord will *vindicate* His people and will *have compassion* on His servants.” So in Heb. 10:30 there is a contrast drawn (as there is also in verses 38, 39) between the one who draws back and receives vengeance, and the true believer who will be vindicated (avenged or defended). It is not “*His people*” who “fall into the hands of the living God” (v. 31), but the “*adversaries*” (v. 27).

Summary

Both of these passages in Hebrews are looking back to the sin of Israel as a nation when they willfully rejected the risen Christ in early Acts. They had come to a second “Kadesh-barnea” and, like their forefathers, turned back in rebellious unbelief. Like their ancestors, they had seen God's power at work and had tasted of the fruit of the land. But when that generation of Jews who were contemporary with Christ turned back they found

there would be no “second chance” for them (compare Num. 14:39 - 45). As a nation they had committed the unpardonable sin (Matt. 12:31, 32). Rejecting the testimony concerning the risen and ascended Christ, given by the Spirit filled apostles, they had sinned against the Holy Spirit.

In Hebrews six and ten individual Jews, who have come a long way in profession, are urged to *possess* the thing they have been *professing*. They are warned that if they stop short of true saving faith they will make the same mistake personally that their leaders have made nationally. If they turn back, they cannot return to the godly Judaism of the remnant before Calvary, for that remnant has gone on to faith in Christ. They can only turn back to join the apostate leaders who rejected Christ and stoned Stephen -- and they will share their fate!

No one today fits the situation of those referred to in Hebrews six and ten. No one today is facing such a dispensational change as took place then. No one today has experienced the powers of the millennial age, or is tempted to go back to the temple worship and animal sacrifices once given by God (which will no longer avail because God has replaced them all with the one sacrifice of His Son). So, too, no one today has committed the unpardonable sin, making it impossible to be renewed again to repentance. No one today who has been saved needs to fear fiery indignation.

However the passages do have a vital message for us. Today, as then, a man may go far in his profession without being a true believer. He may deceive others, and even himself, by his conformity to what is expected of a believer, without ever possessing eternal life. Peter recognized this. This is why he urged those to whom he wrote to make their calling and election sure (2 Pet. 1:10). Paul also tells the believers in Corinth, “Test yourselves to see if you are in the faith; examine yourselves! Or do you not recognize this about yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you-- unless indeed you fail the test?” (2 Cor. 13:5 -- NASB).

Today the door of grace remains open as long as one lives. The only ‘unpardonable sin’ is to die without having ever trusted Christ as Savior. But when anyone fully knows the truth about Christ and is under deep conviction by the Holy Spirit, it is the part of greatest wisdom to respond in faith and not turn away. There may be other times when he can come to Christ, but there is little assurance that he will do so. This is not because the offer of salvation is no longer open to him, but because he has set a course away from an acceptance of it. He has made a decision that will be very difficult to reverse as he grows older. It could turn out to be his private Kadesh-barnea!

The Final Replay of Kadesh-barnea (Ezek. 20:33 – 44; Rev. 12:13 - 17)

One day soon a heavenly trio will be giving a public recital. The very trumpet of God will accompany a shout and an angelic voice. It will receive more than a standing ovation. Millions of us believers will rise to our feet – even those who have died – and, not satisfied with that, will continue rising, clouds of saints, into heaven itself!

Heaven will ring with hallelujahs and songs of gratitude and praise. We will be satisfied when, sickness and sorrows forever past, we awake in His likeness (Psa. 17:15), His glory being revealed *in us* (Rom. 8:18). Angelic hosts will look on in wonder, marveling at what Christ was able to do with these lowly creatures of clay.

On earth it will be quite a different matter! The sudden disappearance of such a multitude of people, many of them well known, will bring panic. Governments will be scrambling for any advantage they might reap from this development. A host of people, worldwide, will be missing loved ones. Many will wish they had listened more closely when their “religious” neighbors spoke to them of the Savior. The New Agers will hail it as a triumph, a fulfillment of prophecies put forth by their own sect.⁷ Millions of terror stricken people, conditioned by everything from “Superman” to “Star Wars,” will be sure it is an invasion of UFOs from outer space. All too many priests and preachers, having missed the Rapture, will be busy trying to explain it all away to their congregations, and attempting to justify their modernistic and humanistic views. With all of the true believers missing from all segments of Christendom, the greatest hindrance to total ecumenicalism will have vanished. A “world church,” the “great harlot” of Rev. 17:1, will quickly be established.

At the peak of this international chaos a man will step forth, possibly from comparative anonymity, and call on the nations to follow his leadership. The main plank in his ‘platform’ will probably go something like this: “Nations of the world, unite! The whole world is under attack! We must set aside our differences to repel this invasion from outer space!” He will have what appears to be inspired solutions for the new crisis, and also for many of the world’s other long standing problems. Among them he will manage, in some unrevealed way, to solve, temporarily, the Arab–Israeli problem, and allow the Jews to rebuild their temple.

⁷ Constance Cumbey tells of the activities of New Age leaders using hypnosis to condition people to accept the New Age agenda. They are told, when under hypnosis, that “a cleansing action will have to occur before the New Age can begin.” (Their “New Age” is Scripture’s Tribulation period). She writes further, “The ease with which some seemed to ‘go under’ suggested that they had been subject to prior conditioning. It was chilling to watch hundreds of intelligent adults give a standing ovation to the prospects of ‘false teachers about the Christ’ (i.e. fundamentalist Christians) DISAPPEARING” (her emphasis). “Reading that all who express recalcitrance towards the New Age ‘Christ’ will be released from physical embodiment and sent to ‘another dimension than physical incarnation’ [i.e. to physical death] certainly does nothing towards giving the reader warm feelings about the writers and their followers -- the New Agers.” -- From “The Hidden Dangers of the Rainbow” by Constance Cumbey, pages 184, 185.

A seven-year treaty will be negotiated with Israel, as was foretold in Daniel. “Then he shall confirm a covenant with many for one week [seven years]” (Dan. 9:27).⁸ Evidently the rebuilding of the Jewish temple will be one of the stipulations of the treaty.

Most of the religious Jews will jump to the conclusion that this man is their long awaited Messiah. Christ foretold this development when He said, “I have come in My Father's name, and you do not receive Me; if another comes in his own name, him you will receive” (John 5:43). The first century Jewish leaders said, “We will not have this man [Christ] to reign over us!” (Luke 19:14). They had further protested, “We have no king but Caesar!” (John 19:15). In this future day, being totally deceived, they will submit to the reign of the antichrist.

The secular Jews will be thinking, “We will be like the Gentiles, like the families in other countries, serving wood and stone” (Ezek. 20:32). Closing their eyes to the plight of the rest of the world under the rule of the man of sin, they will reassure themselves with the thought, “We have made a covenant with death,⁹ and with Sheol we are in agreement. When the overflowing scourge passes through, it will not come to us, for we have made lies our refuge, and under falsehood we have hidden ourselves” (Isa. 28:15). They will tell themselves that the only way to escape from the harshness of this world ruler is to join him.

Their reasoning parallels that of the Pharisees and Saducees when they were trying to justify their planned murder of Christ. “If we let Him alone like this, everyone will believe in Him, and the Romans will come and take away both our place and nation. ... It is expedient for us that one man should die for the people, and not that the whole nation should perish” (John 11:48, 50). They were expecting security with the cry, “We have no king but Caesar!”

All will seem to be going reasonably well for the Jews for over three years, and then their false peace will be shattered. The action will begin in heaven. “War broke out in heaven: Michael and his angels fought with the dragon; and the dragon and his angels fought, but they did not prevail, nor was a place found for them in heaven any longer. So the great dragon was cast out, that serpent of old, called the Devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world; he was cast to the earth, and his angels were cast out with him” (Rev. 12:7 – 9).

When this happens, the situation for Israel will suddenly change drastically for the worse. “Then I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, ‘Now salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of His Christ have come, for the accuser of our brethren, who accused them before our God day and night, has been cast down. ... Therefore rejoice, O heavens, and you who dwell in them! Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and the sea! For the devil has come down to you, having great wrath, because he knows that he has a short time’” (Rev. 12:10, 12).

⁸ What a contrast to the covenant God will make with the believing remnant at the return of Christ! That will be an *everlasting* covenant (Isa. 61:8) - and it will not be broken!

⁹ This is no doubt the covenant referred to in Daniel 9:27.

“Now when the dragon saw that he had been cast to the earth, he persecuted the woman [Israel] who gave birth to the male Child [Christ]” (Rev. 12:13). He will break the covenant with them by ending the sacrifices and offerings in the temple (Dan. 9:27). Those who think their alliance with the antichrist will save them from his depredations should listen to the answer God gave, through Isaiah, to those who would make a covenant with death (Isa. 28:15). “Your covenant with death will be annulled, and your agreement with Sheol will not stand; when the overflowing scourge passes through, then you will be trampled down by it” (Isa. 28:18). The antichrist will further arouse their animosity by setting an image of himself in their temple, demanding their worship (Rev. 13:13, 14). When they see this “abomination of desolation” in the holy place (Matt. 24:15; Dan. 9:27), they will refuse to worship it. In retaliation Satan and antichrist will launch a worldwide attack on Israel reminiscent of the Holocaust, but even more far-reaching and severe.

Jeremiah foresaw this day. “Alas! For that day is great, so that none is like it; and it is the time of Jacob's trouble, *but he shall be saved out of it*” (Jer. 30:7).

It is at this point that the Lord says, “Surely with a mighty hand, with an outstretched arm, and with fury poured out, I will rule over you. I will bring you out from the peoples and gather you out of the countries where you are scattered, with a mighty hand, with an outstretched arm, and with fury poured out. And I will bring you into the wilderness of the peoples, and there I will plead My case with you face to face” (Ezek. 20:33 – 35). He will use the satanic attack against Israel to force them into flight for their very lives. Evidently the only available place of safety will be the one provided by God, the “wilderness of the peoples.” “But the woman was given two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness to her place, where she is nourished for a time and times and half a time [three and a half years], from the presence of the serpent” (Rev. 12:14).

The remarkable similarities of all this to what took place in the book of Numbers is not coincidental. God Himself links the two together. “I will bring you into the wilderness of the peoples, and there I will plead My case with you face to face. *Just as I pleaded My case with your fathers in the wilderness of the land of Egypt*, so I will plead My case with you,” (Ezek. 20:35, 36). It will be, indeed, another “Kadesh-barnea.”

In the exodus, God protected His people from Pharaoh. He delivered them from Egypt, and brought them to Himself “*on eagles' wings*” (Ex. 19:4). Then He judged them Himself in the wilderness, and did not allow the rebels to enter the land. In this future day God will protect His people from Satan and the antichrist. Israel will be “*given two wings of a great eagle*, that she might fly into the wilderness to her place,¹⁰ where she [will be] nourished for a time and times and half a time, from the presence of the serpent” (Rev. 12:14). But in their wilderness haven He will make them pass under the rod of judgment, and will purge the rebels - those who transgress against Him - from

¹⁰ This could be carried out quite literally. It could be the greatest ‘air lift’ in history, vastly surpassing the one bringing Jews from Ethiopia some years back.

among them. He will bring them all out of the country where they dwell, but the rebels among them shall not enter the land of Israel as the others will (Ezek. 20:37, 38). They will die in the wilderness (as those who rebelled at Kadesh-barnea did). The remnant who are not rebels are not yet believers in Christ. They escape the judgment meted out to the rebels, however, and will be allowed, later, to enter the land (as the younger generation entered the land under Joshua). There they will see Christ and put their trust in Him.

The prayer usually referred to as ‘The Lord’s Prayer’ will perfectly fit their situation in the wilderness. The world will be under the control of the “man of sin,” who is the ultimate blasphemer. In this situation they could fittingly pray, “Our father in heaven, hallowed be Your name. The man of sin is ruling now, but may Your kingdom come! Your will has been done in heaven and Satan has been cast out. But now he is on earth, may Your will be done here as well! We are in the wilderness where we cannot grow our own food and, even if we had access to the outside for food, we could not buy it without taking the mark of the beast. Give us our food daily, as You did for our ancestors long ago. Send the manna! We forgive those who have persecuted us, now forgive us for our own sins. Do not lead us out of this place of safety - just to face the testings that would come upon us out there. Deliver us from the evil one who is ravaging the earth these days. May Your kingdom soon come and all the power and glory be Yours! Amen.”¹¹

The younger generation at Kadesh, after spending time in the wilderness, entered the land under Joshua and enjoyed the riches of the land that had long been promised to their people. Concerning the still future day God said, “‘Then you shall know that I am the LORD, when I bring you into the land of Israel [after time in the wilderness], into the country for which I raised My hand in an oath to give to your fathers. And there you shall remember your ways and all your doings with which you were defiled; and you shall loathe yourselves in your own sight because of all the evils that you have committed. Then you shall know that I am the LORD, when I have dealt with you for My name's sake, not according to your wicked ways nor according to your corrupt doings, O house of Israel,’ says the Lord GOD” (Ezek. 20:42 – 44).

This coming national conversion is described in Zechariah. “I will pour on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem the Spirit of grace and supplication; then they will look on Me whom they pierced. Yes, they will mourn for Him as one mourns for his only son, and grieve for Him as one grieves for a firstborn” (Zech. 12:10). It will be the fulfillment of the Day of Atonement, the prophetic feast day when Israel looked back on their sins of the past year and afflicted their souls, a day of mourning (Lev. 23:29, 32). It will fulfill the promise of Christ, “Blessed are those who mourn, For they shall be comforted” (Matt. 5:4). They will be comforted indeed, for in that day “All Israel will be saved, as it is written: ‘The Deliverer will come out of Zion, And He will turn away ungodliness from Jacob’” (Rom. 11:26).

¹¹ Compare Matt. 6:9 – 13.

This day is described also by Isaiah. “-- He has sent Me ... [after ‘the day of vengeance of our God’] ... to comfort all who mourn, to console those who mourn in Zion, to give them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; that they may be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the LORD, that He may be glorified” (Isa. 61:1 – 3). They have hungered and thirsted for righteousness and they will be filled, for they will have the righteousness of God by faith – a righteousness far exceeding the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees (Matt. 5:20).

In this future day, following the conversion of Israel, it will not be, as it is today, a matter of Gentiles given a reprieve from judgment through the *unbelief* and *setting aside* of Israel. Instead, it will be a time when salvation will come to many Gentiles (who have escaped the end time judgments) through the obedience and witnessing of a *saved* Israel (Matt. 28:19, 20; Mk. 16:15; Luke 24:47).¹² They will, at long last, truly be His servants, His witnesses to a world under the reign of the King of kings. Truly, “If their fall is riches for the world, and their failure riches for the Gentiles, how much more their fullness!” (Rom. 11:12).

The joy experienced by Israel when they finally crossed the Jordan and entered the land of milk and honey will be as nothing compared to the ecstasy they will enjoy when, at long last, they have their King and their kingdom. The cry oft repeated in the Psalms, “How long, O Lord, how long?” will never be on their lips again. The ‘Wailing Wall’ will be wet with their tears no longer. The nation will have stumbled and fallen many times along the way, but their God will have proved His faithfulness to them. They will be able to say with Joshua, “Not one thing has failed of all the good things which the LORD [our] God spoke concerning [us]. All have come to pass for [us]; not one word of them has failed” (Josh. 23:14). Their lips will sing His praise. “We give You thanks, O Lord God Almighty, The One who is and who was and who is to come, Because You have taken Your great power and reigned” (Rev. 11:17). “The LORD reigns, He is clothed with majesty; The LORD is clothed, He has girded Himself with strength. Surely the world is established, so that it cannot be moved. Your throne is established from of old; You are from everlasting” (Psa. 93:1, 2. See also Psa. 96:10; 97:1; 99:1) Their anthems of praise will ascend to Him forever!

¹² The ‘Great Commission’ was given to the twelve apostles and their associates, but was not fully carried out by them because of the setting aside of Israel in Acts seven. It was replaced, during the age of grace, by the one detailed in 2 Cor. 5:14 – 21. This new commission was entrusted into the hands of the Body of Christ, largely Gentiles, until the Rapture. During the Tribulation the Great Commission will be taken up again by the 144,000 and will result in many of every nation coming to Christ in that critical time (Rev. 7:9 – 17). During the kingdom it will be continued and completed by Israel as they fulfill their ancient calling to be God’s witnesses to the other nations (Isa. 43:10 – 12).