

General Conference Daily Bulletin, 1897

The Apostasy of Israel.—No. 6.

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(Sunday Evening, March 14, 1897)

AS we saw in the previous lesson, Israel apostatized, and called for a king that they might be like all the nations. In the present study, we shall see how entirely like the nations they did become. But Israel apostatized from God; because they did not believe God with all the heart. The word was not mixed with faith in them that heard it. They grew formal, and then the evils that they would have escaped if they had been faithful to God, came upon them, as upon any other heathen; and then, as the Spirit of prophecy tells us, all the evils that were the result of their own apostasy they charged back upon the government of God. They considered that his government was a failure; it was not good enough for them, it was not sufficient for them in this world, and they must have a government of their own—one which they could handle and by which they could govern and protect themselves.

Then they said to Samuel, "Make us a king like all the nations," "that we may be like all the nations;" and although the Lord, by Samuel, solemnly protested against it, they protested against that protest, and said, "Nay; we will have a king over us like all the nations." As they' would have it so, the Lord let them have it so. Not only had they decided and settled it that they would have a king, but they had already decided who it was they should have for king. It was Saul, the son of Kish; and the Lord let them have him, too, because they must have their own way.

But all the evils which the Lord told them would come because of their choosing a king and a kingdom, did come upon them. They began to reap some of it in the days of Saul. They were helped considerably to be saved from their evils by the influence and reign of David. Although they rejected God, he did not forsake them, he still remained with them to lead all who would be led, and to save them, if possible, from the calamities that must certainly come, and which he knew would come, and from which they could not escape, as a nation. But he would save all who

would escape it as individuals. They had started in a course that inevitably and irrevocably carried them on, one step after another, until, as we shall see, ruin came.

With Solomon began in plainest measure the troubles that were a necessary result of the course which they had taken against the protest of the Lord. And Egypt was always with it. Egypt always comes in. Solomon took a wife from Egypt, against the word of the Lord. He sent to Egypt for horses, against the word of the Lord. The glory that the Lord gave him he perverted to the service of Egypt and Egyptian idolatry, and the idolatry of all the nations around. The burdens which were brought upon the people in supporting Solomon's three hundred wives and seven hundred concubines from all the heathen nations, in their idolatrous worship, were such as should not have been borne, that could not have been borne for good by the people; and for the good of both peoples, the Lord decided to separate the ten tribes from the two.

We cannot know what that good was that the Lord intended for the ten tribes, or for the two, because it never was realized. Jeroboam was signalized as the one who should rule the ten tribes first. But Jeroboam, forgetting the splendid example of David, to wait the Lord's good time, and have him bring him to the throne of the ten tribes in his own way—even yet while Solomon lived, he lifted up his hand against the king, in that he took the step that proposed to take the throne of the ten tribes and rule them, to set himself up for king against Solomon. That was treason and rebellion. Solomon thought to punish him for it, and he fled to Egypt and stayed there until Solomon's death.

If he was not an Egyptian in heart before, he was after he got there. When Solomon had died, Jeroboam returned from Egypt. The time came for the ten tribes to be separated from the two, and Rehoboam took the course that separated them. When the people came and asked him to lighten

the burdens that his father had laid upon them, it was a reasonable and proper request. The ancient men who had been advisers of Solomon, advised him to do that thing. But Rehoboam was not content to take the advice of these, because he did not want to be the servant of the people, as they advised him to be; he wanted to be the boss of the people, and he therefore consulted with the young men that had grown up with him. His mother was an Ammonitess, one of the basest of the idolatrous wives that Solomon had; and the young men who had grown up with him were the sons of other idolatrous women whom Solomon had for wives. These young men had grown up in all the abominations of heathenism that Solomon had practiced with his wives. Rehoboam partook of their sentiments and leaned to their way, and of course rejected the Lord's counsel, and the counsel of the men who had the fear of the Lord before them.

Rehoboam gave to the people the answer with which we are all familiar: You have asked me to make your burdens lighter, but instead of that, I will make them heavier; where they were as your little finger, I will make them to be like unto your loins. They said, "To your tents, O Israel: now see to thine own house, David." Rehoboam, when he saw what had come, was really surprised at it; and yet that is not so strange in him, because when he was so blind as not to be able to see that the thing that he said to them was the most unwise thing to say, it is not strange at all that he should be surprised at what followed when he did say it. He sent his treasurer to them, to pacify them and to smooth the thing over and bring them back, if possible. But they stoned the treasurer to death at once, and Rehoboam, seeing what the result was, became scared and rushed to his chariot and hurried back to Jerusalem, raised up an army to come up and subdue them and compel them to serve him. But the prophet of the Lord told him that was not what was to be done, and that they should remain at home, and they did so.

Then Jeroboam took the kingdom, and set up the golden calves which he had brought from Egypt, so that the ten tribes were led at once into Egypt, into Egyptian idolatry and Egyptian system of government when they were separated from the two. Thus by Jeroboam the tide was started, and the example was set that was followed by all the rest of the kings of the ten tribes. And always after, it is "Jeroboam, the son of Nebat, which

sinned and made Israel to sin." And the apostasy was steadily, steadily downward, until the whole kingdom perished, and never was heard of again, and never will be. The apostasy in the line of kings of the ten tribes was from bad to worse and worse. Jeroboam was bad; the ones who immediately succeeded him were bad also. Then came Omri, and he was worse than the others; then came Ahab, and he was worse than all before him. Thus it went on through the kingdom, until the whole of it perished and was gone.

But the Lord was all the time trying his best to get them to serve him. He sent them prophets after prophets; he called again and again unto the kings to fear him, to serve him. When we come to the last days of Israel, you have Amos and Hosea especially prophesying. Amos, Hosea, and Micah prophesied for Israel, and to Israel, in the last days of Israel. Only a little of Micah, however, directly concerns the ten tribes. Almost all of Amos is concerning them, and the most of Hosea. Amos and Hosea are largely, almost all, prophesyings concerning Israel, and the Lord's last call for Israel to turn once more to him, and be saved from utter destruction.

All those prophesyings, and the history of Israel, are put in the Bible for the warning of the people who live in the last days of this world's history. And the instruction of God is there for the people in the last days-to turn to God that they may be saved from actual ruin. That is why those things are put there. So that Amos and Hosea are just as much present truth to-day, to you and to me, and to everybody in the world, as they were to the people in the ten tribes in the day that they wrote.

Amos prophesied, and the priest that was at Beth-el said to him, Don't you prophesy here; this is the king's house, and the king's court; get you over to Judah. And he went and told the second Jeroboam that Amos was prophesying evil concerning the land, and was teaching rebellion against the king, and saying that the sword of the Lord would fall upon it all, and that the Lord could not bear all his words.

Let us turn now to the particular passage, and read Amos 7:10-15:-

Then Amaziah the priest of Beth-el sent to Jeroboam king of Israel, saying, Amos hath conspired against thee in the midst of the house

of Israel: the land is not able to bear all his words. For thus Amos saith, Jeroboam shall die by the sword, and Israel shall surely be led away captive out of their own land. Also Amaziah said unto Amos, O thou seer, go, flee thee away into the land of Judah, and there eat bread, and prophesy there; but prophesy not again any more at Beth-el: for it is the king's chapel, and it is the king's court. Then answered Amos, and said to Amaziah, I was no prophet, neither was I a prophet's son; but I was an herdman, and a gatherer of sycamore fruit: and the Lord took me as I followed the flock, and the Lord said unto me, Go, prophesy unto my people Israel.

And he did prophesy unto them; but do not forget, those were the last days of Israel. But when they would not let Amos prophesy in that land, and drove him off, and persecuted him as they had many of the prophets before, the Lord raised up Hosea in the land of Judah; and he, being in the land of Judah where this idolatrous priest told Amos to go, could prophesy concerning Israel, and they could not persecute him and do as they wanted to to him.

Now just a word, glancing again over this whole field: You know that from the time of Samuel onward, the kings of Israel persecuted the people of God, persecuted the prophets, slew the priests, as they chose. They did it because they had the power, as well as the spirit, to do it. But now if Israel had never had a king, a kingdom, or a government of their own, could they have done that?-No; it would have been impossible. You know that the kings of Israel were worse than the heathen kings to the men of God and the prophets of the Lord: so that where kings of Israel and kings of Judah wholly maltreated the prophets of the Lord, heathen kings would respect them, and favor them.

Hosea, as I was saying, prophesied concerning this also. Now I will read a few verses in Hosea, that you may see what he says on this. Look at the ninth chapter first, just a word or two:-

They shall not dwell in the Lord's land; but Ephraim shall return to Egypt.

Ephraim was one of the ten tribes; but the name is used here for the whole of them. The ten tribes went to Assyria; they were carried captive by the Assyrians. Yet when they were carried captive by

the Assyrians, what does the Lord mean when he says they shall return to Egypt?-Egypt signifies the farthest possible apostasy from God. The darkness that is altogether Egyptian darkness, is where men rule in the place of God, and the whole rule-the government, the men, and all-is set against God, and against his people, as it was against Israel when they were in the land of Egypt just before the plagues fell upon Egypt, and Israel was delivered. And when the Lord here says that Ephraim should go to Egypt, although Assyria-the government of Assyria-was to carry them captive, it shows that they were determined to go into absolute apostasy, and therefore they could not, simply because they would not, dwell "in the Lord's land."

You remember that we read what the Lord said to Abram: "Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, *into the land that I will show thee.*" Then that land is the Lord's land. And when he speaks by Hosea that Israel shall nor dwell in the Lord's land, it does not refer to that little spot of land around Samaria; but refers to the land that was shown to Abraham and to which God had called his people when he brought them up out of Egypt. They shall not dwell in the Lord's land; then follows Egypt, absolute apostasy. You will see that further, as I shall read.

They shall not dwell in the Lord's land; but Ephraim shall return to Egypt, and they shall eat unclean things in Assyria. They shall not offer wine offerings to the Lord, neither shall they be pleasing unto him: their sacrifices shall be unto them as the bread of mourners; all that eat thereof shall be polluted: for their bread for their soul shall not come into the house of the Lord. What will ye do in the solemn day, and in the day of the feast of the Lord? For, lo, they are gone because of destruction: Egypt shall gather them up, Memphis shall bury them: the pleasant places for their silver, nettles shall possess them: thorns shall be in their tabernacles.

Tenth chapter:-

Israel is an empty vine, he bringeth forth fruit unto himself: according to the multitude of his fruit he hath increased the altars; according to the goodness of his land they have made goodly images. Their heart is divided; now shall they be found faulty: he shall break down their altars, he

shall spoil their images. For now they shall say,
We have no king.

At this time they had no king. He had been murdered, and there was an interregnum. Another king had not yet come in his place. But mark what he says, "For now they shall say, We have no king." The Lord said to them, when they chose that king against his protest, that they were rejecting him. "Nay; but we will have a king." Did they have a king?-Yes; and the time came when they were compelled to say, "We have no king." But what did the Lord say just at this time?

For now they shall say, We have no king, because we feared not the Lord; what then should a king do to us? They have spoken words, swearing falsely in making a covenant: thus judgment springeth up as hemlock in the furrows of the field. The inhabitants of Samaria shall fear because of the calves of Beth-aven: for the people thereof shall mourn over it, and the priests thereof that rejoiced on it, for the glory thereof, because it is departed from it.

In the thirteenth chapter you have what the Lord says. Ninth verse:-

O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself; but in me is thine help. I will be thy king.

But they would not have it so. So you see all the way through, the Lord wanted to be alone their king; wanted them to find him their king, and not to have any other. Then as he says in the next verse, "I gave thee a king in mine anger, and took him away in my wrath." So I read the whole of that verse:-

I will be thine king: where is any other that may save thee in all thy cities? and thy judges of whom thou saidst, Give me a king and princes?

He points them right back to the time when they said, Give us a king to reign over us. He says now, I protested that time that you should not have him, and told you this evil would come; now you confess, yourselves, that you have no king, but you have destroyed yourselves. I will be your king; let me be your king. Now look at the eleventh chapter, first verse:-

When Israel was a child, then I loved him, and called my son out of Egypt.

Why does he speak that here in the last days of Israel, a thousand years after he had brought him out of Egypt? What is it for?

When Israel was a child, then I loved him, and called my son out of Egypt. As they called them, so they went from them: they sacrificed unto Baalim, and burned incense to graven images. I taught Ephraim also to go, taking them by their arms; but they knew not that I healed them. I drew them with cords of a man, with bands of love: and I was to them as they that take off the yoke on their jaws, and I laid meat unto them. He shall not return into the land of Egypt, but the Assyrian shall be his king, because they refused to return. And the sword shall abide on his cities, and shall consume his branches, and devour them, because of their own counsels. And my people are bent to backsliding from me: though they called them to the Most High, none at all would exalt him.

The Lord is mourning over Israel now, just when he is on the brink of ruin. He is making the last call: the last prophecy comes now; and with this, and at this very time, Hezekiah is reigning in Judah. When he came to the throne he set about to reform the kingdom, and to recover it from the apostasy of Ahaz. When he had cleansed the temple, and put everything in order, they had a two weeks' Passover. But before that Passover, Hezekiah sent messengers throughout the whole of the ten tribes, what remained of them, to call them up to the Passover at Jerusalem, to worship the Lord God of Hosts; but the record is, they scoffed at the messengers, and they laughed them to scorn; yet "a multitude" out of Issachar, and Zebulun, and Naphtali, and the different parts of the provinces came up to Jerusalem, and kept the Passover, and joined themselves to the Lord. And when these people went up to Jerusalem and took their places among the people in Judah, in that very season the Assyrian king came up and took possession of the whole land of the ten tribes. And thus those who obeyed that call by Hezekiah to go up to Jerusalem to worship the Lord, were saved from the captivity to Assyria.

Now, just before Hezekiah makes his plea, Hosea is writing this, and the Lord is mourning over what the people are determined to do. See what he says:-

I taught Ephraim also to go, taking them by their arms.

The Lord was so anxious to have them go in the right way, that he took them by the arms, and led them along; but they drew back the arm, they would not be led even that way. But yet he cannot give them up. See:-

How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? how shall I deliver thee, Israel? how shall I make thee as Admah? how shall I set thee as Zeboim? mine heart is turned within me, my repentings are kindled together. I will not execute the fierceness of mine anger, I will not return to destroy Ephraim: for I am God, and not man; the Holy One in the midst of thee: and I will not enter into the city.

Thus he holds himself back from the judgments that must fall upon them. Because he is God, he will not let it fall yet; even when it must fall. But still they rebelled; still they went on in their own way. And the result is recorded in 2 Kings 17:5-8:-

Then the king of Assyria came up throughout all the land, and went up to Samaria, and besieged it three years. In the ninth year of Hoshea the king of Assyria took Samaria, and carried Israel away into Assyria and placed them in Halah, and in Habor by the river of Gozan, and in the cities of the Medes. For so it was, that the children of Israel had sinned against the Lord their God, which had brought them up out of the land of Egypt, from under the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt, and had feared other gods, and walked in the statutes of the heathen, whom the Lord cast out from before the children of Israel, and of the kings of Israel, which they had made.

Then it follows them down to the thirteenth verse:-

Yet the Lord testified against Israel, and against Judah, by all the prophets, and by all the seers, saying, Turn ye from your evil ways, and keep my commandments and my statutes, according to all the law which I commanded your fathers, and which I sent to you by my servants the prophets. Notwithstanding they would not hear, but hardened their necks, like to the neck of their fathers, that did not believe in the Lord their God. And they rejected his statutes, and his

covenant that he made with their fathers, and his testimonies which he testified against them; and they followed vanity, and became vain, and went after the heathen that were round about them, concerning whom the Lord had charged them, that they should not do like them.

Thus the ten tribes were lost. Hosea, when he prophesied of these, said, "Judah yet ruleth with God, and is faithful with the saints." Judah could stand yet awhile. Hezekiah was king; Manasseh followed Hezekiah, and he plunged the kingdom into apostasy again; his son followed his steps; Josiah followed him, and reformed the kingdom once more; and when Josiah was killed, then the kingdom went straight to ruin. There was no one after Josiah that feared the Lord. Even in Hezekiah's day, they were constantly calling for Egypt, and holding onto Egypt, trying to get Egypt to save them, trying to get help from Egypt, when the difficulties that had been brought upon them were all because of their unbelief and departure from the Lord.

Now look at the latter days of Judah. Ahaz sent to Tiglath-Pileser, king of Assyria, and asked him to come up and save him out of the hand of the king of Damascus and the king of Samaria. Tiglath-Pileser did so; he took possession of Damascus, thus relieving Ahaz. Ahaz paid him tribute, and went up to Damascus to meet him, and to pay him obeisance as a subject. While there he found an idolatrous altar, had one made like it, and set it up at the door of the temple of the Lord. Thus he led the nation into apostasy, as the others in Israel.

In Judah Hezekiah succeeded Ahaz. When Hezekiah became king, he wanted to be delivered from the Assyrian rule and tribute. There was a party in Judah that were with Hezekiah, determined to be delivered from Assyria. This party supposed that the only way to do this was to get the help of Egypt. Isaiah was prophesying then, and he told them to depend upon the Lord for deliverance from both Egypt and Assyria. He told them that it was because of their sinning against the Lord, that they were oppressed. He told them that their attempt to get help from Egypt would not avail; because their trying to get help from Egypt, would bring them more oppression, because Egypt would only oppress them instead of helping them; that Egypt could not deliver.

Now look at the eighth chapter of Isaiah. What passage of Scripture is it that is used so much by us in the book of Isaiah, about the coming of the Lord, and the waiting for the coming of the Lord? Where do we find it? Do you remember that the eighth chapter of Isaiah is the one that speaks about those who seek unto familiar spirits, that peep and mutter,-referring to Spiritualism? There is where it says, "Bind up the testimony, seal the law among my disciples. And I will wait upon the Lord, that hideth his face from the house of Jacob, and I will look for him." Then is that an advent chapter?-Yes. Is that a chapter that reaches to the coming of the Lord?-Yes.

Now see what is in that chapter. See what is in the beginning of this chapter, beginning with the fifth verse.

The Lord spake also unto me again, saying, Forasmuch as this people refuseth the waters of Shiloh that go softly, and rejoice in Rezin and Remaliah's son [this was Assyria and Damascus]; now, therefore, behold, the Lord bringeth up upon them the waters of the river, strong and many, even the king of Assyria, and all his glory: and he shall come up over all his channels, and go over all his banks: and he shall pass through Judah; he shall overflow and go over, he shall reach even to the neck; and the stretching out of his wings shall fill the breadth of thy land, O Immanuel.

That was literally true concerning them. The king of Assyria came up and flooded the whole land. But why is that written in a connection and in a place where the coming of the Lord is looked for, and concerning a people who are to look for the coming of the Lord? That is written in that place, and brought down to us, to show to all the people now in our day, that difficulties and hardships and perplexities are going to come upon all the land and upon all the nations, that will overflow and pass over and reach even to the neck and fill the breadth of the land, and that the people will not know how to escape it. That is why this passage is brought down to us who are looking for the Lord. Let us read on and see.

Associate yourselves, O ye people, and ye shall be broken in pieces; and give ear, all ye of far countries: gird yourselves, and ye shall be broken in pieces; gird yourselves, and ye shall be broken in pieces. Take counsel together, and it

shall come to naught; speak the word, and it shall not stand: for God is with us. For the Lord spake thus to me with a strong hand, and instructed me that I should not walk in the way of this people, saying, Say ye not, A confederacy, to all them to whom this people shall say, A confederacy; neither fear ye their fear, nor be afraid.

Are there such times as that now, just now, just when the coming of the Lord is looked for? Are they associating themselves because fear and perplexity is upon them? because troubles are coming upon the land? Do we see anything of that kind anywhere? Have any of you seen it?-O yes, you have! Has anybody but Seventh-day Adventists seen it?-Indeed, if there could be any difference, nearly everybody sees it more plainly than the Adventists. But it is seen; that is plain enough. And they are associating themselves together, binding themselves in companies and bundles, and girding themselves. What are they girding themselves for? What is going to come?-They are going to be broken in pieces. Then what are they girding themselves for?-To be broken in pieces. Yet they do not think so; but that they are girding themselves against the evils that are coming. And the attempts they make to deliver themselves from the evils, only deepen the thing, and bring them that much nearer to destruction, and to the breaking in pieces.

Sanctify the Lord of Hosts himself; and let him be your fear, and let him be your dread. And he shall be for a sanctuary; but for a stone of stumbling and for a rock of offense to both the houses of Israel, for a gin and for a snare to the inhabitants of Jerusalem. And many among them shall stumble, and fall and be broken, and be snared, and be taken. Bind up the testimony, seal the law among my disciples. And I will wait upon the Lord, that hideth his face from the house of Jacob, and I will look for him. Behold, I and the children whom the Lord hath given me are for signs and for wonders in Israel from the Lord of Hosts, which dwelleth in mount Zion.

It is clear that that reaches to the coming of the Lord. It is an exhortation to the people who are to meet the Lord. But why does it bring in the troubles in the time when Assyria was oppressing Judah? Because that simply shows most plainly what kind of troubles would be upon all the land and trouble all the people in the time of the coming of the Lord. And the attempts that Judah

made to escape those evils and to deliver themselves from them, are exactly such attempts as will be made by those who profess to be the people of God, to deliver themselves from the evils that are coming.

God is calling all the time: Put no dependence upon Assyria; put no dependence upon Egypt; but put your dependence upon the Lord alone. Turn your back against Assyria: that is right. But do not go to Egypt to escape Assyria. Seek the Lord. Go not to Egypt; go to the Lord. And when you find the Lord with all your heart, you will be delivered from all this trouble and oppression from Assyria. Just a few words upon that. The thirtieth chapter of Isaiah tells us the secret of that.

Woe to the rebellious children, saith the Lord, that take counsel, but not of me; and that cover with a covering, but not of my Spirit, that they may add sin to sin: that walk to go down into Egypt, and have not asked at my mouth; to strengthen themselves in the strength of Pharaoh, and to trust in the shadow of Egypt. Therefore shall the strength of Pharaoh be your shame, and the trust in the shadow of Egypt your confusion. Verses 1-3.

His ambassador came down there to make their overtures to Egypt. And when Judah sent ambassadors to Egypt, Egypt was ashamed of the ambassadors.

For his princes were at Zoan, and his ambassadors came to Hanes. They were all ashamed of people that could not profit them, nor be a help nor profit, but a shame, and also a reproach. The burden of the beasts of the South: into the land of trouble and anguish, from whence come the young and old lion, the viper and fiery flying serpent, they will carry their riches upon the shoulders of young asses, and their treasures upon the bunches of camels, to a people that shall not profit them. For the Egyptians shall help in vain, and to no purpose: therefore have I cried concerning this, Their strength is to sit still. Verses 4-7.

Now that you may see that this is not foreign, I turn here and read from a testimony, dated July 5, 1896, as follows:-

The warnings given in the word of God to the children of Israel were meant, not merely for them, but for all who should live upon the earth. He says to them, "Woe to the rebellious children, . . . that take counsel, but not of me; and that cover with a covering, but not of my Spirit, that they may add sin to sin: that walk to go down into Egypt, and have not asked at my mouth; to strengthen themselves in the strength of Pharaoh, and to trust in the shadow of Egypt." If the Lord reproved his people anciently because they neglected to seek counsel of him when in difficulty, will he not be displeased to-day if his people, instead of depending on the bright beams of the Sun of Righteousness to enlighten their way, turn from him in their test and trial, for aid, to human beings who are as erring and inefficient as themselves? Where is our strength? Is it in men who are as helpless and dependent as ourselves; who need guidance from God even as we do? Christ says, "Without me ye can do nothing;" and he has provided the Holy Spirit as a present help in every time of need.

But you know that in the perplexities of last year, that were hoped to be settled by the political campaign, even Seventh-day Adventists were so carried away from their allegiance to God that they would take part in the campaign in trying to manipulate the affairs of politics and to control the elections and trying to shape up things. What for?—O to help the land out of the difficulties that they were so sure were coming upon the land. Of course, difficulties are coming upon the land. But will Seventh-day Adventists form themselves into companies for any such work as that? Let them be delivered from Assyria; let them be delivered both from Assyria and Egypt unto God. This is the only salvation. This is the only deliverance, whether then, now, or evermore. {March 14, 1897 ATJ, GCDB}