

Two Masters

The Gospel as recorded by the Spirit through Luke narrates the words of Messiah concerning service:

“No servant can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. *Ye cannot serve God and Mammon*” (Luke 16:13).

The situation is clear therefore: being unable to satisfactorily serve two masters, we must decide in our own minds who it is that we pledge our allegiance to – whether to Yahweh, or to the god of this world. The apostle Paul spoke of this:

“know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey, whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness? ... being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness.” (Rom. 6:16,18).

In this place, we learn that who we choose to serve will influence our ultimate destiny. Later in the same chapter we read: “the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ though Jesus Christ our Lord” (Rom. 6:23). If we choose to serve sin, then we will be granted the wages that sin pays it's workers – death. But contriwise, if we choose to serve Yahweh, we shall be given the gift that comes by His grace – eternal life. The choice is entirely ours.

This aspect of *service*, comes out very strongly in the matters pertaining to the children of Israel, and their deliverance from Egypt. We read of the burdens imposed by the Egyptians:

“the Egyptians made the children of Israel to *serve* with rigour. And they made their lives bitter with hard bondage, in mortar and in brick, and in all manner of *service* in the field: all their service wherein they made them *serve* was with rigour” (Ex. 1:13-14)

So it was that Yahweh visited his people in their affliction, and raised up a deliverer for them in the form of Moses. But the deliverance of the people was not to be an end in itself; rather it was so that they could forsake the things of Egypt, and serve Yahweh: “Ye shall *serve* God upon this mountain” (Ex. 3:12) was the command to Moses. Similarly the words of Yahweh through Moses to Pharaoh:

“I say unto thee. Let my son go that *he may serve me*” (Ex. 4:23; see also 7:16; 8:1; 8:22, 9:1; 9:13; 10:3;).

The issue then is: which of the two masters would be served: Egypt, who sought to kill the babies of Israel? Or Yahweh, who brought salvation from the Egyptian bondage. Death or Life – the circumstance are different to our own day, but the question remains the same. King Sin demands more and more from us, in terms of both time and energy as we must go out to work for a living, and if we are not careful, to the expense of the things of the spirit.

Whilst in Egypt, Israel sought after the Egyptian idols and worshipped them, - hence the words of Yahweh came through Ezekiel:

“Then said I unto them, Cast ye away every man the abominations of his eyes, and defile not yourselves with *the idols of Egypt*: I am Yahweh your Elohim. But they rebelled against me, and would not hearken unto me: They did not every every man cast away the abominations of their eyes, *neither did they forsake the idols of Egypt*” (Eze. 20:7-8).

There was a need then, to demonstrate the power of Yahweh before Israel, as well as the Egyptians in order that all would see His Greatness by contrast to the vain idols of Egypt. So the Ten Plagues

followed, with the death of the firstborn being the means of Israel's deliverance.

Many years later, Joshua called upon all Israel to choose their Master – whether it be Yahweh, or the idols:

“... the people answered and said, God forbid that we should forsake Yahweh, to serve other gods” (Josh. 24:16)

And again:

“the people said unto Joshua Nay, but we will serve Yahweh (Josh. 24:21)

So Joshua commanded:

“Now therefore fear ye Yahweh, and serve Him in sincerity and truth, and put away the gods whom your fathers served ...” (Josh 24:14)

And again:

“put away the strange gods which are among you, and incline your heart unto Yahweh Elohim of Israel” (Josh. 24:23).

So it is, that in order to serve Yahweh “in sincerity and in truth”, men must forsake the god of this world, and all those carnal things involved in it's worship. Rather than to be like Israel, who pledged obedience, yet gave rebellion, we should rather be like Joshua who declared: “As for me and my house, we will serve Yahweh” (Josh. 24:15) Irrespective of what the multitude may do, we ought to stand fast, and serve Yahweh. Though many men may betray their pledge to serve Him, individually as members of the house of the Greater Joshua/Jesus we must seek to emulate his spirit in our resolve to remain steadfast in the Truth.

This expression “in sincerity and truth” occurs in one other place:

“purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened . For even Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us. Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened bread of *sincerity and truth*” (1 Cor. 5:7-8).

Notice, the principles are similar: in order to offer acceptable worship, we must cast out all malice and wickedness first. We keep the Memorial feast as a memorial of Messiah's offering – and interestingly, it was during the passover feast that he ordained the Breaking of Bread to be kept by his brethren. And notice here, the “old leaven” is to be found not outside, but *within ourselves*, hence the need for personal examination prior to partaking the memorial feast (1 Cor 11:28). Having removed the old leaven, we become a “new lump” as it were. Or to change the allegory, seeking to put “old man” of the flesh to death, the “new man” lives, formed by the growing seed of the Word

Another instance of this principle of which Master ought to be served, is seen in the circumstances of Elijah in opposition to the Baal worshippers. The people having been gathered together, “Elijah came unto all the people and said, How long halt ye between two opinions? If Yahweh be Elohim, follow him: but Baal, then follow him” (1 Kings 18:21).

A double-minded man being unstable in all his ways (Jas. 1:8), finds it difficult to choose, and hovers between the two. Elijah called upon the people to decide, and instigated a means to demonstrate the power of Yahweh, so that the prophets of Baal would be exposed as being utterly impotent.

The expression: “how long halt ye between two opinions” is translated by Young as: “till when are ye leaping on the two branches”. The idea appears to be that of a bird hopping from branch to branch, now knowing upon which to settle. Elijah, through the means thus described took away the branch of apostasy, and sought to cause the people to remain strong in the faith looking to the Branch of Yahweh's providing.

This challenge to the false deities is most instructive for us to consider. Two bullocks were taken, one for Elijah, the other for the prophets of Baal. The challenge was to determine which bullock would be accepted as an offering by Yahweh. No fire was to be placed under the offerings, and the God that answered by Fire, thus consuming the bullock, would be declared to be the true god. So the Baal worshippers arranged their bullock as required:

“they dressed it, and called on the name of Baal from morning even until noon, saying, O Baal, hear us. But there was no voice, nor any that answered. And they leaped upon the altar which was made ... and they cried aloud, and cut themselves after their manner with knives and lancets, till the blood gushed out upon them” (1 Kings 18:26,28)

Baal having been proved to be utterly impotent, attention turned to Elijah. The first thing that he did was to “repair the altar of Yahweh that was broken down” (verse 30). And so the principle is shown that worship must take place on Yahweh's terms, and not ours. By repairing the Altar, Elijah was declaring that the old paths must be sought for, and not a new system to be established. The next thing he did was to take “twelve stones, according to the number of the tribes of the sons of Jacob ...”. With these stones, he built another altar – demonstrating that the basis of acceptable worship was to be based upon the Jewish hope: as the Master himself said: “salvation is of the Jews”.

Around this altar, Elijah dug a trench “as great as would contain two measures of seed” (1 Kings 18:32). Seed in Scripture represents the Word – as evidenced by the parable of the sower (Luke 8:11). But the basis of Elijah's worship had to be capable of containing “two measures” of Seed and so it is that there are two parts to the Word – Old and New Testaments.

Next, we read that Elijah:

“put the wood in order, and cut the bullock in pieces, and laid it on the wood, and said, fill four barrels with water, and pour it on the burn sacrifice, and on the wood” (1 Kings 18:33)

This procedure with the water was repeated three times, meaning that there were 12 barrels full of water poured upon the sacrifice. Again, this emphasises the Jewishness of our Hope – the Hope of Israel is contained within 4 gospel records. The trench was also filled with water, water itself being representative of the cleansing effect of the Word (Eph 5:26). Pouring water over the sacrifice would naturally ensure that it could never be burned up with fire – but the power of Yahweh is far greater than the laws of nature He has set in place.

Then we read that “it came to pass at the time of the offering of the evening sacrifice” that Elijah prayed to Yahweh. “Then the fire of Yahweh fell, and consumed the burnt sacrifice, and the wood, and the stones, and the dust, and licked up the water that was in the trench” (1 Kings 18:36). As well as showing acceptance of Elijah's worship, this contrasted with the false Baal-gods, and Baal's inability to do a thing. So, witnessing these things, “all the people saw it, and they fell on their faces: and they said, Yahweh, he is the Elohim; Yahweh, he is the Elohim” (1 Kings 18:39). And so the decision was made, as the power of Israel's God was demonstrated: the people were to serve Yahweh, and eschew Baal, as Elijah slew the prophets of Baal at the brook Kishon.

Having turned to God from idols to serve the Living and True God (cp 1 Thes. 1:9), Israel showed a rare desire to seek after Yahweh – but sadly even that was shortlived, with Elijah becoming convinced that

he alone remained of the prophets of Yahweh.

In these two examples (i.e. Israel leaving Egypt, and Elijah upon mount Carmel), we have many instructive principles for our learning. Israel were taken from being sold under sin to Pharaoh, and given liberty that they might serve Yahweh instead of the idols of Egypt. All that Egypt obtained was death and destruction through Pharaohs hard-heartedness, but for the faithful in Israel this was a glorious time of deliverance. Elijah later sought to demonstrate the power of Yahweh before the people in particular means which could never naturally occur – the burning of an offering doused with water. But in both of these instances, the reformation was only short lived. The wiles of the flesh being strong within man, it was not long before they compromised themselves in the worship of Idols, and the corruption of their way. Not all, however, turned aside. There were seven thousand in the days of Elijah, who held fast to the worship of Yahweh, and who received the Word that came through the prophets.

A final point in this consideration is the behaviour of the people in the absence of Moses, as they awaited his return from his ascent to Mount Sinai. They should have patiently waited for him to return – even as we ought to patiently wait for the coming of our Lord. Yet they instead turned aside to worship the gods of Egypt, having become tired of waiting. As Moses and Joshua returned to the camp, they heard the sound of drunken revelry:

“When Joshua heard the noise of the people as they shouted, he said unto Moses, there is a noise of war in the camp. And he said, It is not the voice of them that shout for mastery, neither is it the voice of them that cry for being overcome: but the noise of them that sing do I hear” (Ex. 32:17-18)

Here, Israel should have waited patiently for the appearance of Moses – yet instead they enjoyed the pleasures of sin for a season. When Moses returned and saw what had happened, he “stood in the gate of the camp, and said, Who is on Yahweh's side? Let him come unto me. And all the sons of Levi gathered themselves together unto him” (Ex. 32:26). From this, it would appear that the Levites did not themselves engage in the idolatry, but were instead “on Yahweh's side”. Here is the real issue - whose side are we on? We cannot serve God and Mammon – we cannot be over concerned with the cares of this life, and acceptably serve our God. Where do our sympathies lie – with those who seek after the Truth, or those who desire to cast aside the constraints of Yahweh's providing, promising liberty, yet being the servants of corruption. We can but ask the question, but only individually can we provide the answer.

Chris Maddocks

No Man Can Serve Two Masters

“We claim, and often tell God in prayer, that it is our "sole desire to serve Him in immortal strength throughout eternity." Some say "humble desire" -- though we always wonder at the depth, or even the understanding, of "humility" of those who tell God they are humble (doubtless we do it ourselves too, as in many other things we wonder about in others). But about this claim to desire to serve God totally and forever, WE can show right now whether this is sincerity or just fancy words. IF we really do desire to "serve God throughout eternity," we shall be serving Him NOW with ALL our present mortal strength and life, and mind and goods, or else all our fine words are froth. We shall recognize that we have no time to spare -- yea, we shall have no DESIRE -- for anything else except providing the bare necessities of life so that we may wholly serve Him. Does our way of life confirm or belie our so noble protestations? Do we think God is deceived by mere words?”

Bro G Growcott

