

What Part of “NO” Don’t We Understand?

Sometime in 1986-87, I was reading the Bible to my family before they went to school. For some unknown reason, the scripture was in I Chronicles 12:32, where it is recorded the types and tribes of men God had drawn unto David. There it speaks of Issachar, “men with an understanding of the times who knew what Israel ought to do.” When I read that, the Spirit of the Lord came over me, so as to overwhelm me and I began to weep, and was shaken. I did not know at that time why all that happened. It was not until a friend of mine gave me a copy of T. Austin-Sparks’ *But Ye are Come Unto Mt. Zion*,¹ that an interlocking of God’s ways came into focus.

Mr. Sparks wrote on the theme of David being a type, a foreshadow of Jesus as being a reigning King in God’s original plan, but as yet not seated on the throne. In like measure David was “not yet being there,” in I Chronicles 12. David had already been chosen and anointed; Saul had been written off by God, dubbed “Ichabod,” and had his blessing and anointing removed.

So Sparks’ theme is one of God seemingly moving backward in order to move forward. His plan is to have His Son in His rightful place as reigning King. Sparks says we are to consider ourselves in that same chronologically-spiritual position as Issachar. I.e., **with David the anointed, Saul the disenfranchised, and a few who knew what Israel ought to do**. Sparks compares this scenario to the entire “Christian” system as he knew it, and that God would someday write a big “NO” over the entire System, the System being the modern counterpart of Saul.

Friend, Sparks’ paper seems to have been written last night!!!

It is like all of what is happening to all denominations, all “movements,” all efforts at “reviving” the System is prophesied in Sparks’ *But Ye are Come Unto Mt. Zion*.

The System, by teaching more, having more “revivals,” more study, more seminars, more theologizing, even compromising more (Sunday night meeting at 5 o’clock so we can watch the Super Bowl at 6 o’clock....) is to defend the System and keep it alive. This is compared to Saul’s efforts to remain in place as King, even though he had been disenfranchised. Whatever is necessary to keep Christianity from collapsing is put forward; even put crutches under her to save her reputation, just as Saul did.

As all of this sunk in, my family’s estrangement from the System began to make sense. As Sparks says, “We are often out before we know we are out.” We’ve left what should have brought the most joy, but instead the majority of our grief. Oh, various “reasons” have initiated the withdrawal, but all have had the same net effect. So many we know who genuinely love the Lord have all gone through several phases, from at first leaving “THE” denomination, and then becoming spiritual gypsies searching for the fire, only to find those with fresh vision succumbing to traditions, and as powerless as the rest to remain true in their focus and unworldliness. Letters, warnings, and pleading have fallen on calloused ears.

Some two to five years of these wanderings usually were required to wear them out, and they as well as we finally retreated to the only place of safety, their homes. There are hundreds in Smith County alone like this, and their former shepherds never asked them, "Why did you leave?"

There at home a demon of guilt has disparaged them; for years of being in the System, with its Sunday School, "services, meetings, committees, prayer meetings," and the like have created a stronghold. I repeat, this is a stronghold of "doing" for the sake of doing, of maintaining a form of religious works.

These times of 1993 for some, as others will find later, are times reminiscent of the days of Noah. The religious groups then, as now, had become so worldly as to be unrecognizable in a Godly sense. Other periods of human history also reflect times when the religious systems were doing the same carnal activities that looked good, sounded good, received majority approval, and not only were religiously "correct," but were politically "correct."

The world between Malachi and Matthew was active, culminating in Rome's rise as THE world power (sound familiar?). The religious system then, that we now so piously condemn, was also writing voluminous tomes of opinions about the Word, just as we are now. But God had written and big "NO" over them, just as He has now. He was silent until John the Baptist spoke.

The same environment was present between 300 AD and 1517 when Martin Luther broke the Silence of God with the first wave of salvation by faith. Some 1200 years of the darkness and silence was shattered by a few, I repeat, a FEW men like John Hus, Martin Luther and other unknowns before them. But the System then, as now, was replete with the same abominations and just as well accepted. But God had written a big "NO" over them, and was silent, as He is now. But did anyone admit it???

What part of "NO" don't we understand?

The true fires of the King James era in post-1611 died out in the 1700's. The church remained "correct," but was just as apostate as between Malachi and Matthew, and between Constantinople and Whittenburg. Then God broke His Silence and gave a "Yes" in the second wave with the Holy Spirit movement of the early 1900's. Then that fire, too, died out, but its "Pentecostal" form remained much like the shell of jar fly remains when it sheds its skin. It sticks to the side of a house, looking like a real jar fly, never going anywhere nor exhibiting any real life, much less reproducing. (But at least it doesn't moan and groan in fake contrition or deceptive "repentance"...))

The abominations in the Sanctuary at a local church so grieved my family and me; we finally went home, with no place else to go within reason. The little church had grown phenomenally within the last two years under an initially anointed pastor. But many others of those new attendees and members left when the fire waned and the enemy came in. Those for the most part, wanted only the true Presence, not programs.

Later in talking to a longtime member about these who left, his comment was, “Where is their commitment?” – commitment to what?

- a place where disunity, manipulation, power struggles, and worldly models perform before the people?
- a place where abominations unto a Holy God run unchecked and unabated? – where discipline is anathema?
- a place where sins of disobedience to the Word, embezzlement, and arrogance continue unchallenged?
- a place where God has left?

Committed?!? Committed to what???? T.Austin-Sparks is right, but he is incredibly offensive to the System, and to the majority (just as this will be).

To admit God has written a big “NO” over this System is to admit defeat and spell humiliation, not to mention admitting that God was right by leaving. Or do any of you dare to say He is in your meetings? Do the lame walk, or the blind see, or??? Do men and women fall prostrate on their faces before a Holy God, or repent of anything? Do any of you groan at the abominations performed daily in your sanctuaries? Admit it, we’re like the buggy industry in the early 1900’s, refusing to admit Henry Ford had won in changing the direction of transportation!

You say, “That’s pretty strong. The church is doing a lot of good.” That’s true, but Saul also did a lot of good after he was severed from the blessing of God; why, he even saved the best of the spoil! Did any of it remain? Or bear eternal fruit?

Jesus said, “As it was in the days of Noah.....”

But all of this is not to overstate the obvious to any who have eyes to see and ears to hear; the preceding is to set the stage for the main theme:

During all of these times of the Silence of God, there had to have been, as some call it, a Scarlet Thread of holiness, of redemption, or purity, of faith, of the Heart of God, as it were. These were the quiet people, the commoners, the true Israel of God, the ones who were grieved over the departure of God, over His “NO.” They had the Issachars in their loins and the John the Baptists as their progeny. They were the ones who would never be recorded as heroes of the faith, nor chronicled as the YES of God, but would die in the sea of apostasy around them.

The question is this: **WHAT DID THE SCARLET THREAD DO DURING THESE TIMES OF APOSTASY, UNDER THE “NO” OF GOD???**

There are scanty traces of their activity, mere whisperings of their thoughts and deeds. Throughout the Word of God, the wilderness experiences of the heroes of the faith are not recorded. Neither are the thoughts and mind sets of the commoners who maintained the continuity of the Scarlet Thread, who were the parents, grandparents, advisors, counselors and encouragers of the ones who broke the Silence of God.

What did Charles Finney’s predecessors “do?” What did David Brainerd’s father and grandfather “do?” Would you have me believe that there is no Scarlet Thread, no vestige of the good things of God flowing from one generation to the next, no chain of faith, nor faithfulness, nor lamentations over the Ichabod shingle over their portals?

Was there no Holy Essence emanating from the hearts of the Hannahs and Elizabeths into the waters of the womb to bathe daily the developing Samuels and John the Baptists?

Would you have me believe that no one groaned, no one lamented, no one felt spiritually raped, morally urinated upon, nor physically drained during times when God was Silent, when He had left, when He no longer benefitted His people by His Presence, **WHEN HE SAID NO TO THE ABOMINABLE GATHERINGS???**

Hebrews 11:7 says, “By faith Noah, being warned by God concerning events as yet unseen, took heed and constructed an ark for the saving of his household.” Without a doubt, Noah is one of the heroes of the faith, as is Moses, Abraham, Joshua, John the Baptist, Joan d’Arc, Finney, Morgan, Col. Booth’s Daughter, John Sung, T. Austin-Sparks, David Brainerd, David Wilkerson, and even Leonard and Martha Ravenhill, though the latter would shun the honor. These are men and women who arose by the hand of God in their appointed times, according to His Sovereignty at the end of the Silence of God. These were God’s YES at the end of His times of NO. They are the heroes, our examples, our encouragers.

There are those even now who are being trained in the backwaters of God’s wilderness who will be the next Finneys, Brainerds, and John the Baptists, who will arise when God says YES.

But, there are those who comprise the fibers of the Scarlet Threads who are not the visible manifestations of God’s YES. They are the commoners, the subdued, the quiet ones, who by virtue of the Holiness and fairness of God, desire Jesus to be enthroned no less than do the heroes who eventually arise after them.

Who are these unseen, unsung, un-swayed moles in the Kingdom? These unnamed, unashamed, undaunted peasants whose names never see the light of day and whose faces never soar in the sky like the eagles who come later?

The Olympians who win the Gold are our heroes, our encouragement, our banners of patriotism, our hopes acted out. Not to deter from their accomplishments nor their determination and perseverance, but what about the ones who through their loins gave them their ability, and through their sacrifices gave them opportunity, who though no fault of their own, were born out of sync in time and place and had no chance to be a Michael Jordan, or a Jesse Owens, or a Jim Thorpe?

It is to these behind the scenes that this message is addressed. These are the ones who know they’ll never be heroes, whose feats (though they equally dream with those who do) will be miniscule, and their efforts unheralded. Do not these moles in the Kingdom not feel as the heroes do? Do they not grieve as much? Do their hearts not pain for the abominations the same? Do they not have to be every bit as tenacious as the winner of the gold?

So the question is repeated not only to the future David Brainerds and John the Baptists, but to the moles as well. What is it that we do in times of the Silence of God, under the un-admitted absence of His Presence, under the specter of His “NO.”

Do you know the name of the woman who prayed in the Temple night and day until she was 84? Do you know the name of the old man who was promised he would see Jesus before he died?

Do you know what their hearts were like? Do you know their anguish, their lamentations, their hopes, their seemingly endless times of despair, having as yet not seen Jesus?

Behind this man and woman, do you know what their parents were like, or whoever it was who inspired them? Were they, though largely unheralded, any less used by the Father to accomplish the Lordship of Jesus?

It is no coincidence that the wilderness experiences and the thoughts and pains of the moles are not recorded; they are too Holy to be treated such, and God maintains their secrecy.

But I repeat the question: What should we do? – or be?

There was an impression to present the above to a Sunday night group that we have, as well as to my family of five. Their responses to this questions were very simple and only two in number:

1. “That I might know Him, and have true intimacy with Him.”
2. “I have tried to get hold of God during these times (of silence) through His Word, I cannot. I have tried through prayer, I cannot. I have tried through meetings like this, I cannot. What has happened in my groping, my searching, is that the Holy Spirit told me, “By faith only is it possible to please God, and obedience to that which I believe by faith I am supposed to do, which now is limited to caring for my family in preparing for the dark times to come, as was told me by one of His watchmen.” This young man was reflecting what all of the Heroes of the faith, particularly Noah, did in times of the Silence of God. Hebrews 11:6-7 “For without faith it is impossible to please God. For whoever would draw near to God must believe that He exists and that He is the rewarder of those who diligently seek Him. By faith Noah, being warned by God concerning events as yet unseen, took heed and constructed an ark for the saving of his household.”

The first young man was essentially saying what Jesus said, “that we might know Thee, the only true God.”

So that is what we “do” during the times of the Silence; we do only that which we have faith to do, but firstly, to seek to know Him. There won’t be much time to do that when He breaks His Silence, nor will you be prepared to endure nor participate in the breaking.

In my deepest moments of privacy, I yearn for the release of rightness, of seeing God be God, causing men to once again truly fear Him and know He is LORD; of seeing fraudulent believers pay the penalty of being ripped to shreds by a she-bear for mocking a Holy God; for the return of Him before whom mockers would fall as Ananias and Sapphira; of seeing axe heads float, the darkness being exposed and broken, and a Bride worthy of being received.

I have “spoken” many a reproof, and rehearsed many a brave discourse to a rebellious people in my bed late in the night, to little avail. I am a paper tiger, a little boy playing soldier in the woods, where no one can see

I have hopes of seeing all of Jesus' character traits show up. The side of Him which attracts me most is His Warrior side, His righting of wrongs, His exposure of evil, His destroying the works of the Evil One, restoring justice to the downtrodden, and rebuking the arrogant and froward.

By faith I believe that will happen. But I may never have a podium taller than the threshold of my house. I may never be closer to the mighty works of God than the woods and creeks that run through my farm. My congregation may never be larger than my family, nor my thread of redemption any thicker than the stems of vegetables grown for others. All my warnings may fall to the ground like so much unwanted mucus blown out of the nose. My deeds may never exceed an encouraging word to a future John the Baptist, or for that matter a bolstering of a fading Elijah.....

But by faith I shall continue to plow with the oxen my Father has given me. There may never be a day when a mantle is thrown over my back, and I may die behind the handles. But that's OK.

That's what I am to do.

1993

Ben Issachar

¹ David Wilkerson, The Refiner's Fire, Volume I: *But Ye Are Come Unto Mt. Zion*, by T. Austin Sparks, (David Wilkerson Ministries, Publishers, Post Office Box 260, Lindale, Texas, 75771, 1989).