

A thought.

When we read the Old Testament we have a problem.

The men and women of that time had great difficulty in distinguishing between the living God and the one they called “Baal” (the Boss). It is often written that, “They forsook the LORD, and served Baal and Ashtaroth [his goddess wife]” without knowing what they were doing. Judges 2:13. Elijah had to ask them to choose in his time. “And Elijah came to all the people, and said, ‘How long halt you between two OPINIONS? If the LORD be God, follow Him: but if Baal, then follow him’. And the people answered him not a word” [for they did not know the difference]. 1 Kings 18:21.

They were supposed to do as Gideon was asked to do. “And it came to pass the same night, that the LORD said to him, ‘Take your father's young bullock, even the second bullock of seven years old, and throw down the altar of Baal that your father has, and cut down the grove that is by it: and build an altar to the LORD your God upon the top of this rock, in the ordered place, and take the second bullock, and offer a burnt sacrifice with the wood of the grove which you shall cut down”. Judges 6:25-26. But they hadn't done that.

Here's a text which should be of great interest to those of us who believe that we are living in the last days, because it sets out what Ahab did as a picture of what the professed Christian churches of today will do – join with the modern “Jezebel” church.

“And Ahab the son of Omri did evil in the sight of the LORD above all that were before him. And it came to pass, as if it had been a light thing for him to walk in the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, that he took to wife Jezebel the daughter of Ethbaal king of the Zidonians, and went and served Baal, and worshipped him. And he reared up an altar for Baal in the house of Baal, which he had built in Samaria” [c. 860BC]. 1 Kings 16:30-32.

When that happens the living God has said that He will send an “Elijah” to deal with the situation. Malachi 4:5-6. But how will “he” know who is the living God when “he” reads the Bible?

Let me try contrasting the two in the words of the same messenger. In the following quotes some sentences have been separated from their paragraphs and the upper case added, for emphasis.

God's way

{PK 255.2 - PK 259.1}

And God never forsook His chosen messenger. On one occasion, during a Syrian invasion [of Elisha's homeland, about 840BC], the king of Syria [Benhadad] sought to destroy Elisha because of his activity in apprising the king of Israel [Jehoram] of the plans of the enemy. The Syrian king had taken counsel with his servants, saying, "In such and such a place shall be my camp." This plan was revealed by the Lord to Elisha, who "sent unto the king of Israel, saying, Beware that thou pass not such a place; for thither the Syrians are come down. And the king of Israel sent to the place which the man of God told him and warned him of, and saved himself there, not once nor twice [but many times]. {PK 255.2}

"Therefore the heart of the king of Syria was sore troubled for this thing; and he called his servants, and said unto them, Will ye not show me which of us is for the king of Israel? And one of his servants said, None, my lord, O king: but Elisha, the prophet that is in Israel, telleth the king of Israel the words that thou speakest in thy bedchamber." {PK 256.1}

Determined to make away with the prophet, the Syrian king commanded, "Go and spy where he is, that I may send and fetch him." The prophet was in Dothan [where he lived]; and, learning this, the king sent thither "horses, and chariots, and a great host: and they came by night, and compassed the city about. And when the servant of the man of God was risen early, and gone forth, behold, an host compassed the city both with horses and chariots." {PK 256.2}

In terror Elisha's servant sought him with the tidings. "Alas, my master!" he said, "how shall we do?" {PK 256.3}

"Fear not," was the answer of the prophet; "for they that be with us are more than they that be with them." And then, that the servant might know this for himself, "Elisha prayed, and said, Lord, I pray Thee, open his eyes, that he may see." "The Lord opened the eyes of the young man; and he saw: and, behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha." Between the servant of God and the hosts of armed foemen was an encircling band of heavenly angels. **THEY HAD COME DOWN IN MIGHTY POWER, NOT TO DESTROY, NOT TO EXACT HOMAGE, BUT TO ENCAMP ROUND ABOUT AND MINISTER TO THE LORD'S WEAK AND HELPLESS ONES.** {PK 256.4}

When the people of God are brought into strait places, and apparently there is no escape for them, the Lord alone must be their dependence. {PK 257.1}

As the company of Syrian soldiers boldly advanced [into the force field of the protecting angels, a dangerous area for sinful humans when they are congregated in large numbers], ignorant of the unseen hosts of heaven, “Elisha prayed unto the Lord, and said, Smite this people, I pray Thee, with blindness. And He smote them with [temporary] blindness according to the word [and action] of Elisha. [They did not advance far enough to die, because Elisha went to them.] And Elisha said unto them, This is not the way, neither is this the city: follow me, and I will bring you to the man whom ye seek. [So he gave himself to them.] But [then] he led them to [the city of] Samaria [the capital of Israel, about twelve miles away]. {PK 257.2}

“And it came to pass, when they were come into Samaria, that Elisha said, Lord, open the eyes of these men, that they may see. And the Lord opened their eyes, and they saw; and, behold, they were in the midst of [the city of] Samaria. And the king of Israel said unto Elisha, when he saw them, My father, shall I smite them? Shall I smite them? And he answered, Thou shalt not smite them: wouldest thou smite those whom thou hast taken captive with thy sword and with thy bow?

[Unfortunately, many in Israel and Judah had done what the king of Israel was suggesting – killed prisoners of war in cold blood. Even prophets of the LORD have done it! For example, “So Samuel turned again after Saul; and Saul worshipped the LORD. Then said Samuel, ‘Bring you hither to me Agag the king of the Amalekites’. And Agag came to him delicately [in fear]. And Agag said, ‘Surely the bitterness of death is past’ [You wouldn’t kill an unarmed man, would you?]. And Samuel said, ‘As your sword has made women childless, so shall your mother be childless among women’. And Samuel hewed Agag in pieces (with many angry thrusts) before the LORD in Gilgal”. 1 Samuel 15:31-33.]

[Elisha continued] “Set bread and water before them, that they may eat and drink, and go to their master. And he prepared great provision for them: and when they had eaten and drunk, he sent them away, and they went to their master.” See 2 Kings 6. {PK 257.3}

[So what did the living God do to those men?
He fed them and sent them home safe.]

For a time after this, Israel was free from the attacks of the Syrians.

But later, under the energetic direction of a determined king, Hazael [a traitor and a murderer who had usurped the throne], the Syrian hosts surrounded Samaria and besieged it. Never had Israel been brought into so great a strait as during

this siege. The sins of the fathers were indeed being visited upon the children and the children's children. The horrors of prolonged famine were driving the king of Israel to desperate measures, when Elisha predicted deliverance the following day. {PK 258.1}

As the next morning was about to dawn, the Lord “made the host of the Syrians TO HEAR A NOISE of chariots, and a noise of horses, even the noise of a great host;” and they, seized with fear, “arose and fled in the twilight,” leaving “their tents, and their horses, and their asses, even the camp as it was,” with rich stores of food. They “fled for their life,” not tarrying until after the Jordan had been crossed. [He didn’t hurt any of them!] {PK 258.2}

During the night of the flight, four leprous men at the gate of the city, made desperate by hunger, had proposed to visit the Syrian camp and throw themselves upon the mercy of the besiegers, hoping thereby to arouse sympathy and obtain food. What was their astonishment when, entering the camp, they found “no man there.” With none to molest or forbid, “they went into one tent, and did eat and drink, and carried thence silver, and gold, and raiment, and went and hid it; and came again, and entered into another tent, and carried thence also, and went and hid it. Then they said one to another, We do not well: this day is a day of good tidings, and we hold our peace.” Quickly they returned to the city with the glad news. {PK 258.3}

Great was the spoil; so abundant were the supplies that on that day “a measure of fine flour was sold for a shekel, and two measures of barley for a shekel,” as had been foretold by Elisha the day before.

Once more the name of God was exalted before the heathen “according to the word of the Lord” through His prophet in Israel. See 2 Kings 7:5-16. {PK 259.1}

But what about this story?

Baal (Satan’s) way

{PK 360.3 - PK 361.4}

The land of Judah [not Israel] had been laid waste by the army of occupation, but God had promised to provide miraculously for the needs of the people. To Hezekiah came the message [through Isaiah about 700BC]: “This shall be a

sign unto thee, Ye shall eat this year such things as grow of themselves, and in the second year that which springeth of the same; and in the third year sow ye, and reap, and plant vineyards, and eat the fruits thereof. And the remnant that is escaped of the house of Judah shall yet again take root downward, and bear fruit upward. For out of Jerusalem shall go forth a remnant, and they that escape out of Mount Zion: the zeal of the Lord of hosts shall do this. {PK 360.3} [See Isaiah 37:30-35..]

“Therefore thus saith the Lord concerning the king of Assyria, He shall not come into this city, nor shoot an arrow there, nor come before it with shield, nor cast a bank against it. By the way that he came, by the same shall he return, and shall not come into this city, saith the Lord. For I will defend this city, to save it, for Mine own sake, and for My servant David's sake.” Verses 29-34. {PK 361.1} [We should note that God does not say HOW He will do this.]

That very night deliverance came. “The angel of the Lord [so they thought] went out, and smote in the camp of the Assyrians an hundred fourscore and five thousand [185,000 people].” Verse 35. “All the mighty men of valor, and the leaders and captains in the camp of the king of Assyria,” were slain. 2 Chronicles 32:21. {PK 361.2}

[This was not accomplished in God’s will, for it was a rebel “angel of the lord” who killed the soldiers. It was Satan and his followers. Satan can do what he likes when God’s protection is rejected. There doesn’t seem to have been an Elisha around to save the Assyrians.]

Tidings of this terrible judgment upon the army that had been sent to take Jerusalem, soon reached Sennacherib, who was still guarding the approach to Judea from Egypt. STRICKEN WITH FEAR, the Assyrian king hastened to depart and “returned with shame of face to his own land.” Verse 21. But he had not long to reign. In harmony with the prophecy that had been uttered concerning his sudden end, he was assassinated by those of his own home, “and Esarhaddon his son reigned in his stead.” Isaiah 37:38. {PK 361.3}

The God of the Hebrews had prevailed over the proud Assyrian.

[But which god? They worshipped Baal as often as they worshipped the living God. They called both “Lord”.]

The honor of Jehovah was vindicated in the eyes of the surrounding nations. In Jerusalem the hearts of the people were filled with holy joy. Their earnest entreaties for deliverance had been mingled with confession of sin and with many tears. In their great need they had trusted wholly in the power of God to save, and He had not failed them.

Now the temple courts resounded with songs of solemn praise.

“In Judah is God known:

His name is great in Israel.

In Salem also is His tabernacle,

[“Have you offered to Me sacrifices and offerings in the wilderness forty years, O house of Israel? But you have borne the tabernacle of your Moloch and Chiun your images, the star of your god, which you made to yourselves”. Amos 5:25-26.]

And His dwelling place in Zion.

There brake He the arrows of the bow,

The shield, and the sword, and the battle.

[This god uses force.]

“Thou art more glorious and excellent

Than the mountains of prey.

The stouthearted are spoiled, they have slept their sleep [of death]:

And none of the men of might have found their hands.

[They were killed in their sleep!]

At Thy rebuke, O God of Jacob,

Both the chariot and horse are cast into a DEAD sleep.

“Thou, even Thou, art TO BE FEARED:

And who may stand in Thy sight when once Thou art angry?

[“Forasmuch then as the children [of God] are partakers of flesh and blood, He also Himself likewise took part of the same; that through death He might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; and deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage”. Hebrews 2:14-15. Rather than allow any human to die from their sins, He died for them.]

Thou didst cause judgment to be heard from heaven;

THE EARTH FEARED, and was still,

When God arose to judgment,

To save all the meek of the earth.

[This god killed for those who do not.]

“Surely the wrath of man shall praise Thee:

The remainder of wrath shalt Thou restrain.

[Those who love to hate, love a god who hates.]

Vow, and pay unto the Lord your God:

Let all that be round about Him bring presents unto Him

THAT OUGHT TO BE FEARED.

[This god wants rewards.]

He shall cut off the spirit of princes:
He is terrible to the kings of the earth.”

Psalm 76. {PK 361.4}

What I see in this case is a very clever creature who assumes the mantle of the living God and then does horrible things in His name whenever ever he can! And God’s people fall for it! Satan rejoices when the love of the living God is apparently turned into a hateful slaughtering passion, and he makes Him out to be a ravaging beast. He doesn’t care about killing his own men (he just loves killing, John 8:44), for that also causes pain to the living God, who loves the unjust as much as the justified ones. But wherever God’s protection is minimum, Satan works his evil. (This is just like in the Passover in Egypt when he was able destroy the firstborn of Egypt, where the LORD said He “will not suffer [allow] the destroyer to come in unto your houses to smite you”. See Exodus 12:12-13; 23.

So we have a situation where the works of Satan are attributed to the living God even by those who wrote the Bible and the Spirit of Prophecy!

We NEED the guidance of the Spirit to rightly divide the word and to see that one God NEVER punishes, hurts or destroys, at any time, to any person, for any reason, while the other hurts and destroys whenever he can! Satan can use any method of conduct because he is a liar and a murderer, while the living God can ONLY work in righteousness.

So, as you read the Bible, choose you which Lord is God!

Baal worship:

“So let all your enemies perish, O Lord: but let them that love Him be as the sun when he goes forth in his might”. Judges 5:31.

God worship:

“You have heard that it has been said, ‘You shall love your neighbour, and hate your enemy’. But I say to you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; that you may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for He makes His sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust”. Matthew 5:43-45.