

The Testimony of the Presence of God, Numbers 10

by John Nelson Darby

The sermon explores the significance of the trumpets in the Israelites' journey, highlighting the power of communion, the sovereignty of God, and the presence of Jesus.

Scripture: Numbers 10:1

Topics: "Communion with God", "God's Presence"

Description

John Nelson Darby emphasizes the significance of the trumpets in Numbers 10 as instruments for gathering the congregation and signaling God's presence among His people. He explains that the trumpets symbolize communion with God, calling the assembly to journey together in faith and reliance on God's strength. The sermon highlights the importance of public utterance in recognizing God's sovereignty and the need for believers to manifest grace rather than judgment. Darby draws parallels between the Israelites' journey and the Christian experience, underscoring that God's presence is a privilege that guides and empowers believers. Ultimately, he encourages the congregation to trust in God's power and presence as they navigate their spiritual journey.

Transcript

In this chapter we get the first movement of the armies of the Lord; but before anything is set in motion the trumpets are brought into use. They were for the calling of the assembly, and for the journeying of the camp; this was their proper but not their only use. The energy of the Spirit is here brought out in public utterance before all the congregation. As the Levites were given to the priests, so here the priests are to blow the trumpets. The priest is always the type of communion with God, and here is the character of the power of gathering: it is in the power of communion. All the testimony flowed only from the mouth of those in communion with God, the testimony of those in the sanctuary. There were three special uses of the trumpets: first, gathering the congregation together - not here in figure the quickening power of the Spirit, but gathering; the energy of the Spirit in the power of communion bringing out the utterance of the Lord, and acting collectively, calling the assembly. Next, journeying. And when in the land "ye shall blow an alarm;" also, "In the day of your gladness and in your solemn days . . . ye shall blow," the utterance of that which is in the mind of God. So when in the war; it was not merely supplication, asking God to help them, but a memorial of their calling on God. "Be not afraid of their terror." They were to blow an alarm; and "ye shall be remembered" in this public utterance of God's mind; blowing an alarm because God was there to

help them - not to call the people to come and help, but calling on Israel to lean on Israel's strength. Thus it was the power of faith in the consciousness of God's strength, God's presence being already there. In 1 Sam. 13:3 Saul blew a trumpet, saying, "Let the Hebrews hear." This was not according to God's mind; for he did not say, Let Israel hear, nor, Let God hear, but, "Let the Hebrews hear." The Gentiles called them Hebrews; God called them Israel.

The natural effect of the trumpet was gathering them together. While in the wilderness there was no question of oppression. There might be trial, but there could only be oppression in the land. It was no privilege to be in the wilderness, it was a trial; but to have God's presence with them was a privilege. We are in these days leaving the wilderness; we know very little about war, it is more getting out of the world into the wilderness. The natural use of the trumpet was gathering the assembly together, to move onward according to the power of God's presence, which was with them, and not for war.

We may get oppression by unfaithfulness. The apostles were occupied with the calling of assemblies - the souls of men. They never said a word against the high priest; but when they were called before rulers said, "Whether it be right to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye," giving no heed to the opposition of men. The saints are not to be "fenced with a spear," but to exercise and manifest grace. When the tares were found in the field, the servants were not to root them up, but let them grow, because they were not to exercise judgment, but grace. The fishermen gathered the good fish into vessels; their business was with the good fish. The consequence of blowing the trumpet, though it might arouse the enemy, was to bring in God.

In verse 10 there is another use of the trumpet, the utterance recognizing God and the people. "Blow up the trumpet in the new moon" (Ps. 81:3); the old moon had passed away, and now it is the new moon. "Thou calledst in trouble, and I delivered thee" (v. 7); but now it is "the day of their gladness," and they "sing aloud to God their strength." (v. 1) In Lev. 23 we have first the Sabbath, then the passover and feast of unleavened bread, the waving of the sheaf of first-fruits and Pentecost; but Israel is left until the seventh month. "Speak unto the children of Israel in the seventh month, ye shall have a memorial of blowing of trumpets," then the feast of tabernacles, the day of gladness. (v. 24)

Note the sovereignty of God in ordering their journeyings; the directions here are more minute than in the beginning of the book, as showing the energy of the Spirit more than occupation with outward order. In chap. 2 it is simply, "Then the tabernacle in their midst;" here more detail. In Ps. 80:2, "Before Ephraim and Benjamin and Manasseh stir up thy strength," calling on God to act as in those days. The proper place of the ark was in the centre, but it went before them; and so in Josh. 3:4, "A way they had not passed heretofore" - death. We have the power and presence of Jesus with us in our journey and our worship. If we are resting, it is to learn God; if journeying, it is for the display of God's power in ordering. Among them ought to have been the resting-place of the ark; God's sovereign goodness takes its own place, beyond all set order, in seeking a resting-place for them. Thus it is now, when He putteth forth His own sheep He goeth before them; or resting, "Where two or three are gathered together, there am I." In verse 35, "Let them that hate thee flee before thee, not those that hate us." Faith blows the trumpet, the battle is the Lord's. Then, when it is resting, "Return thou unto the many thousands of Israel."

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