

of Daniel is especially fitted to be a battlefield between faith and unbelief. It admits of no half-measures. It is either Divine or an imposture". Brother Gaston goes on to say: "The first step in reclaiming the book of Daniel is to re-establish the historicity of its hero. That is why the historical issues of the book of Daniel are so important: they justify the believer in taking the book seriously". This is true, but our faith in Daniel comes from

reading and understanding its message, as Jesus counsels us to do, and trying to follow in the steps of Daniel's faith.

Brother Gaston's book has ten pages of references, and contains three appendices. It has a key to abbreviations used, and a total of 174 pages. It is commended to all who wish to know in detail the kind of evidence that would convince scholars of the historicity of the prophecy of Daniel.

Exposition

Phinehas the zealous

Malcolm Edwards

In Phinehas the grandson of Aaron we find a man of decisive action for God's honour. His life is also one of continuing faithfulness, and his righteous influence was of benefit to later generations.

PHINEHAS can be termed one of the most unsung heroes of Biblical history. In fact many Bible readers probably know more about his disgraced namesake, the son of Eli, who with his brother Hophni so abused their priestly office that they are called "sons of Belial" in 1 Samuel 2:12.

This Phinehas was very much the opposite. He was the son of Eleazar and grandson of Aaron. He first appears in Scripture as Israel's champion, whose bold initiative stopped the plague that killed 20,000 people, following the discovery that a Simeonite named Zimri had brought into the assembly a Midianitish woman (Num. 25:6-13). The Lord's praise to Moses for his action was:

"Phinehas, the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron the priest, hath turned My wrath away from the children of Israel, while he was zealous for My sake among them, that I consumed not the children of Israel in My jealousy. Wherefore say, Behold, I give unto him My covenant of peace: and he shall have it, and his seed after him, even the covenant of an everlasting priesthood; because he was zealous for his God, and made an atonement for the children of Israel" (vv. 11-13).

Phinehas and his descendants were given a special *covenant* because of what was a most unusual kind of *atonement* action, in that it involved the execution of an offender and his wife. The psalmist of a much later period in history remembered his ac-

tion in song: "Then stood up *Phinehas*, and executed judgment: and so the plague was stayed" (Ps. 106:30).

The zeal of this man is again exemplified, later in the book of Numbers, in the battle between Israel and the Midianites, the same battle in which Balaam was killed:

*"And Moses spake unto the people, saying, Arm some of yourselves unto the war, and let them go against the Midianites, and avenge the LORD of Midian. Of every tribe a thousand, throughout all the tribes of Israel, shall ye send to the war. So there were delivered out of the thousands of Israel, a thousand of every tribe, twelve thousand armed for war. And Moses sent them to the war, a thousand of every tribe, them and *Phinehas* the son of Eleazar the priest, to the war, with the holy instruments, and the trumpets to blow in his hand" (31:3-6).*

Some commentators take the "holy instruments" to mean the ark of the covenant, citing the carrying of the ark around Jericho in Joshua 6:6, but one would have thought that, if this had been the case, the ark itself would be specifically mentioned. However, we are only concerned with Phinehas being a military commander, who by the use of silver trumpets, not rams horns, ordered the battle (*cf.* Num. 10:2,9).

A courageous leader

A much older Phinehas figured once again after the land of Canaan had been subdued, when he led the armies of the tribes on the west of Jordan to investigate a rumour of idolatry amongst the tribes on the east of Jordan:

“And when *Phinehas* the priest, and the princes of the congregation and heads of the thousands of Israel which were with him, heard the words that the children of Reuben and the children of Gad and the children of Manasseh spake, it pleased them. And Phinehas the son of Eleazar the priest said unto the children of Reuben, and to the children of Gad, and to the children of Manasseh, This day we perceive that the LORD is among us, because ye have not committed this trespass against the LORD: now ye have delivered the children of Israel out of the hand of the LORD” (Josh. 22:30,31).

Although Joshua was still judging Israel at that time, it is clear that Phinehas was his military assistant, if not deputy judge over the tribes in the west.

The last we read of Phinehas in his capacity as army general is in the terrible matter of the Levite and his concubine in Judges 19, and the response of the rest of the tribes, in the following chapter, to Benjamin’s refusal to deal with the problem. As a result, Benjamin suffered a terrible defeat at their hands. Phinehas once again led the battle, but did so with some understandable misgivings:

“And the children of Israel enquired of the LORD, (for the ark of the covenant of God was there in those days, and Phinehas, the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron, stood before it in those days,) saying, Shall I yet again go out to battle against the children of Benjamin my brother, or shall I cease? And the LORD said, Go up; for to morrow I will deliver them into thine hand” (Judg. 20:27,28).

We learn, much later in Scripture, that the same Phinehas had considerable influence over the Sons of Korah:

“And Shallum the son of Kore, the son of Ebiasaph, the son of Korah, and his brethren, of the house of his father, the Korahites, were over the work of the service, keepers of the gates of the tabernacle: and their fathers, being over the host of the LORD, were keepers

of the entry. And *Phinehas* the son of Eleazar was the ruler over them in time past, and the LORD was with him” (1 Chron. 9:19,20).

It might be asked, Were not the sons of Korah all destroyed in the rebellion of Numbers 16? Apparently not. There is no doubt that Korah himself perished, as did Dathan and Abiram and their sons; but not the sons of Korah (*cf.* Num. 26:11). Only “the men that appertained” to him, that is, who were directly involved in the rebellion:

“And it came to pass, as he had made an end of speaking all these words, that the ground clave asunder that was under them: and the earth opened her mouth, and swallowed them up, and their houses, and *all the men that appertained* unto Korah, and all their goods. They, and all that appertained to them, went down alive into the pit, and the earth closed upon them: and they perished from among the congregation” (Num. 16:31-33).

This corroborates Ezekiel 18:20, which says that God does not destroy the children of a wicked man if they themselves are not party to his deeds.

From 1 Chronicles 6:22-38 we discover that the same Korah was a Kohathite, and that his sons were involved in temple duties. Also, from the Psalms, that the sons of Korah were very much involved in temple music. There are two Elkanahs in this particular genealogy; the second, who was son of Jeroham, was the father of Samuel (vv. 27,28). Thus Samuel himself was actually one of Korah’s descendants.

We can see, then, how far-reaching was the influence of this amazing man Phinehas. What more can be said about him? He was a decisive leader, a man of great zeal and courage, and a priest who took the sons of a rebel under his wing and nurtured them towards such higher things that their descendants were honoured eternally in praising God with thanksgiving and song,

Phinehas deserves no more fitting epitaph than those brief but telling words from 1 Chronicles 9:20: “the LORD was with him”.