

SANCTIONS

Part I

Scripture citations are to the Authorised Version (KJV) unless noted otherwise.

According to the Oxford English Dictionary, the word ‘sanctions’ derives from 16th-century French, and denotes a formal decree, originally of an ecclesiastical nature, *favourable* – ratifying or authorising some course of action; or *unfavourable* – prohibiting some course of action, under penalty. In modern parlance the word usually carries a negative connotation.

Examples -

In the Religious Arena: Disfellowshippment or excommunication from a church or congregation for immoral behaviour or the espousing of doctrines contrary to a particular faith. Note that fellowship is to be reinstated on the repentance of the erring one – Gal. 6: 1.

Under the Law: incarceration; corporal, capital. or some other legally-prescribed punishment.

In Society: Giving a person ‘the silent treatment’ for his or her betrayal of an implicit code of behaviour, as, for instance, by a trade union against those who refuse to go on strike or who cross the picket line (also known as ‘being sent to Coventry’).

Economic: An order issued by one nation or group of nations against a country or its government to stop it infringing norms of international law. Punitive measures may include any or all of the following: suspension of trading privileges (import and export); imposition of financial penalties (tariffs); denying to the sanctioned country the use of its own assets by the seizure or confiscation of those assets. The most recent example of the sanction regime in action is that imposed on Russia, consequent on its military operations against Ukraine.

God Sanctions Moses and Aaron

Num. 20: 1-12 (*with emphases*); *comp. with Ex.17: 1-7, which gives a less detailed account*

1 Then came the children of Israel, even the whole congregation, into the desert of Zin in the first month: and the people abode in Kadesh; and Miriam died there, and was buried there.

2 And there was no water for the congregation: and they gathered themselves together against Moses and against Aaron.

3 And the people chode with [*chided, rebuked*] Moses, and spake, saying, Would God that we had died when our brethren died before the LORD!

4 And why have ye brought up the congregation of the LORD into this wilderness, that we and our cattle should die there?

5 And wherefore have ye made us to come up out of Egypt, to bring us in unto this evil place? it is no place of seed, or of figs, or of vines, or of pomegranates; neither

is there any water to drink.

6 And Moses and Aaron went from the presence of the assembly unto the door of the tabernacle of the congregation, and they fell upon their faces: and the glory of the LORD appeared unto them.

7 And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying,

8 Take the rod, and gather thou the assembly together, thou, and Aaron thy brother, and *speak ye* unto the rock before their eyes; and it shall give forth his water, and thou shalt bring forth to them water out of the rock: so thou shalt give the congregation and their beasts drink.

9 And Moses took the rod from before the LORD, as he commanded him.

10 And Moses and Aaron gathered the congregation together before the rock, and he said unto them, Hear now, ye rebels; must we fetch you water out of this rock?

11 And Moses lifted up his hand, and with his rod he *smote the rock twice* [*indicating his exasperation with the people*]: and the water came out abundantly, and the congregation drank, and their beasts also.

12 *And the LORD spake unto Moses and Aaron, Because ye believed me not, to sanctify me in the eyes of the children of Israel, therefore ye shall not bring this congregation into the land which I have given them.*

Consequences

These two heroes of the wilderness wanderings were compromised because of Moses' disobedience of Jehovah's explicit command to 'speak' to the rock and his ascribing credit for the miracle to himself and Aaron – 'must we?'. As a result, God denied to both the privilege of entering the land of promise.

Peake's Commentary says of this incident that [Moses and Aaron] had become ". . . too much bound with the Israel of the desert to avoid their [same] fate'. The complaint of the people (v. 5) that they were led into 'this wilderness . . . to die', was accidentally prophetic of Moses and Aaron, whose feet never came to rest on the land they had themselves dreamed of. *See also* Deut. 34: 4 (emphasis added):

And the LORD said unto him [Moses], This is the land which I swear unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob, saying, I will give it unto thy seed: I have caused thee to see it with thine eyes, *but thou shalt not go over thither.*

Other Interpretations

Of the incident at the rock, Clarke writes: '[Moses] did not acknowledge GOD in the miracle which was about to be wrought, but took the honour to himself and Aaron . . . '.

In 1 Cor. 10: 4 the Apostle Paul tells us that the Israelites 'did all drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ'. By striking the rock twice, Moses types those who 'crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh [*a second time*], and put him to an open shame' (Heb. 6: 6). Picking up on this hint, C.T. Russell observes:

'In this [Moses] spoiled a type, while he made another type. Christ Jesus, the true Rock, was to be smitten but once for our sins, and as a result of that one smiting at Calvary the water of life would be obtained for all true Israelites to all time; and if for a season the flow was stopped it was only necessary that the Rock should be

invoked in the name of the Lord, that the waters might again flow forth. Christ dieth no more; death has no dominion over him; therefore in the type the Rock should not have been smitten a second time. But the second smiting, nevertheless, made a new type, because as the Apostle explains, there are some [who have crucified] Christ afresh, and put him to an open shame – some of his professed followers denying or ignoring the value of the original sacrifice, denying the blood that bought them, are counted as committing the sin unto death . . . and of these Moses became a type, and as a type of a class which would have to do with the antitype of the rock, he was debarred from Canaan. (Heb. 6: 4-6.)’

To be continued

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