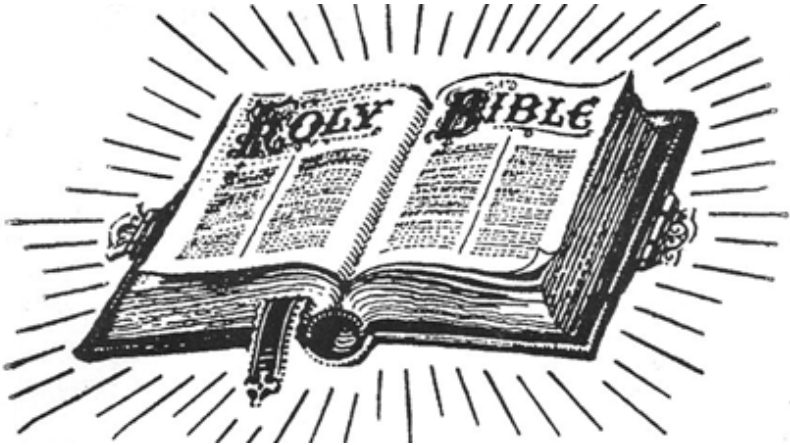


Bible Lessons



*“For whatsoever things were written aforetime
were written for our learning,
that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures
might have hope.”*

Romans 15:4

Volume 52, No 1
January • February • March

2020

Quarterly Bible Lessons for Adults and Young People

Bible Lessons for Adults and Young People

Volume 52

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No 1

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*Publishing the Bible truths in the interest of Jesus Christ and His Church.
In this issue: Reflections contributed by Bro. Harlan Sorrell,
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THEME FOR BIBLE LESSONS 1ST QUARTER 2020

FROM EGYPT TO CANAAN

A brand new year and a brand new issue of Bible Lessons opens for study and discovery! Our beginning theme this year is the journey of the Israelites from the time they were promised to be a nation to their entrance into the land of promise. Although we will not be able to cover every detail, we want to focus on the many spiritual lessons which can be learned from this important time in history.

Paul wrote in I Corinthians 10:11, “Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition...” In Romans 15:4 he said, “For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope.” The message in these lessons is one of hope. I pray we will get a greater vision of the character of God, the power of God, the plan of God and what He can do for us when we trust Him.

The story we are studying is long and very detailed in Scripture. There is no way we can put all the reading material into the lessons, so I will use verses that summarize what we are studying and include an extra list of scriptures that pertains to each individual lesson. Some of the discussion questions may involve material from those lists, and not just from the verses printed in the lesson. It may help to have several members of the class open their Bibles to those different passages and be ready to supply information for the lesson from those scriptures.

—Sis. Angela Gellenbeck

JANUARY 5, 2020

A SOJOURN FORETOLD

(Background Reading: Genesis 15, 46, 47, 49 and 50)

Genesis 15:13 And he said unto Abram, Know of a surety that thy seed shall be a stranger in a land that is not theirs, and shall serve them; and they shall afflict them four hundred years;

14 And also that nation, whom they shall serve, will I judge: and afterward shall they come out with great substance.

15 And thou shalt go to thy fathers in peace; thou shalt be buried in a good old age.

16 But in the fourth generation they shall come hither again: for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full.

18 In the same day the LORD made a covenant with Abram, saying, Unto thy seed have I given this land, from the river of Egypt unto the great river, the river Euphrates:

19 The Kenites, and the Kenizzites, and the Kadmonites,

20 And the Hittites, and the Perizzites, and the Rephaims,

21 And the Amorites, and the Canaanites, and the Girgashites, and the Jebusites.

Genesis 46:1 And Israel took his journey with all that he had, and came to Beersheba, and offered sacrifices unto the God of his father Isaac.

2 And God spake unto Israel in the visions of the night, and said, Jacob, Jacob. And he said, Here am I.

3 And he said, I am God, the God of thy father: fear not to go down into Egypt; for I will there make of thee a great nation:

4 I will go down with thee into Egypt; and I will also surely bring thee up again: and Joseph shall put his hand upon thine eyes.

5 And Jacob rose up from Beersheba: and the sons of Israel carried Jacob their father, and their little ones, and their wives, in the wagons which Pharaoh had sent to carry him.

6 And they took their cattle, and their goods, which they had gotten in the land of Canaan, and came into Egypt, Jacob, and all his seed with him:

7 His sons, and his sons' sons with him, his daughters, and his sons' daughters, and all his seed brought he with him into Egypt.

26 All the souls that came with Jacob into Egypt, which came out of his loins, besides Jacob's sons' wives, all the souls were threescore and six;

27 And the sons of Joseph, which were born him in Egypt, were two souls: all the souls of the house of Jacob, which came into Egypt, were threescore and ten.

Genesis 47:11 And Joseph placed his father and his brethren, and gave them a possession in the land of Egypt, in the best of the land, in the land of Rameses, as Pharaoh had commanded.

12 And Joseph nourished his father, and his brethren, and all his

father's household, with bread, according to their families.

27 And Israel dwelt in the land of Egypt, in the country of Goshen; and they had possessions therein, and grew, and multiplied exceedingly.

Genesis 48:21 And Israel said unto Joseph, Behold, I die: but God shall be with you, and bring you again unto the land of your fathers.

Genesis 50:22 And Joseph dwelt in Egypt, he, and his father's house: and Joseph lived an hundred and ten years.

24 And Joseph said unto his brethren, I die: and God will surely visit you, and bring you out of this land unto the land which he sware to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob.

25 And Joseph took an oath of the children of Israel, saying, God will surely visit you, and ye shall carry up my bones from hence.

26 So Joseph died, being an hundred and ten years old: and they embalmed him, and he was put in a coffin in Egypt.

MEMORY VERSE: Israel also came into Egypt; and Jacob sojourned in the land of Ham. And he increased his people greatly; and made them stronger than their enemies. —**Psalm 105:23-24**

CENTRAL THOUGHT: The journey of Israel into Egypt and, many years later, the exodus out of Egypt, was foretold by God unto Abraham, repeated in a vision from God to Jacob, who, as he was dying, promised Joseph that God would indeed bring his people out of Egypt. Joseph also, upon his dying bed, prophesied that God would visit them and they would carry his bones out of Egypt.

WORD DEFINITIONS

Genesis 15:16 “In the fourth generation”: As Moses was the fourth generation from Levi, and Caleb was the fourth from Judah, it seems that a generation meant here about one hundred years, or the average age of man (at that time) from birth to death.

LESSON BACKGROUND

In Genesis 15 we read how God made a covenant with Abram to bring his descendants, a great nation of people, out of the land which was “not theirs,” in which they would have served some four hundred years in great bondage. He had called Abram out to see the stars and promised that his descendants would be as numerous as the uncountable stars. Abram believed God; however, he asked for a confirmation. God asked for a specific burnt offering to be prepared in a certain way. While waiting on God’s answer by fire, Abram had to drive away the birds of prey and endured a “horror of great darkness.” God’s voice came out of the darkness and gave him this promise; afterward, the fire fell upon his sacrifice.

Ten years after this covenant was made with Abram, his wife Sarai, seeing that Abram was now eighty-five years old and still had not even conceived Isaac, gave him her handmaid, Hagar, to be his secondary wife, with whom he had Ishmael (Genesis 16). However, God still maintained the original covenant that his promised seed would be through his wife, Sarai, and visited Abram at age ninety-nine, where He foretold his son’s name; established the covenant of circumcision; changed Abram’s name to Abraham; and Sarai to Sarah (Genesis 17). Abraham was one hundred years old when he and Sarah finally embraced their newborn son, Isaac (Genesis 21).

When God later called Abraham to sacrifice Isaac on Mount Moriah, God took his willing obedience for the actual deed, provided a substitute sacrifice, and pronounced His blessing upon Isaac, that his seed would possess the gate of his enemies (Genesis 22).

Isaac’s son, Jacob, was also visited by God, who now established His covenant with him and promised his descendants the land of Canaan. As we can see by the original promise to Abraham, even though the children of Jacob would be detoured in Egypt for several hundred years, His intent was to show them mercy and deliver them. The little hint about the “iniquity of the Amorites” lets us know that during this delay, God was not only working with the Israelite people, but was also showing mercy upon the nations around them.

The remainder of the verses show the progression of events and how they unfolded, just as they were foretold to Abraham. Jacob’s older sons, in a fit of envy, sold their younger brother, Joseph, into Egypt. In an amazing story of God’s unfailing providence, Joseph rose

from slavery and prison to be governor of Egypt, just in time to save his people and the entire world from starvation. There they remained and prospered in Egypt's most fertile land, eventually falling into idolatry and extreme bondage to a Pharaoh who did not welcome them. In God's fullness of time, He delivered them as He had promised.

—Sis. Angela Gellenbeck

DISCUSSION:

1. When God said Abram's seed would be strangers in a "land which was not theirs," which land did He mean?
2. Discuss the meaning of the words "not yet full."
3. Share how the promise of being brought out of Egypt was given to Jacob.
4. Share Joseph's words of faith that the Israelites would be brought out of Egypt.

COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

Two things stand out to me as I consider what may have taken place during the four hundred years Israel was in Egypt. The first was hinted at when God mentioned the iniquity of the Amorites. In searching what people these were, I found several different viewpoints. One is that they were simply the people in the land about Abraham's place of nativity; the heathen, idol-worshipping nations. They were pantheistic, worshipping many gods. As we know, imbedded within idol worship are wicked, immoral practices; violence, superstition, bloodshed and fear accompany the false religions of the world. Yet God didn't just overthrow them immediately.

A word picture found several places in Scripture is of the Lord God holding a cup in His hand. When the cup, containing the wickedness of the people, becomes full, He pours it out in retribution and destruction, as in the Great Flood of Noah's time or the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. During the time of the sojourn of Abraham's family in Egypt, God was tarrying His destruction upon the "Amorites" until their cup was "full." I am persuaded that there

were many things God did during this time to work with the hearts of the people in that area.

The second discovery came when I was reading in Ezekiel. In the 20th chapter God mentions the judgment He brought to Israel WHILE they were yet in Egypt. During the forty years between Moses' first attempt at delivering his brethren and the time of the Exodus, God sent judgment upon the idolatry into which they had fallen while they lived in Egypt. Finally, they began to cry the kind of cry that brought deliverance from their oppressors.

This reveals that while the four hundred years was a time of God's dealings to bring His chosen nation out of their idolatry, their long years in Egyptian idolatry made a lasting mark upon them. Did you ever wonder how it was so easy for them to worship a golden calf so soon after their miraculous deliverance from Egypt? They were reverting back to the idolatry in which they had been involved for so long.

Isaiah 30:18 says, "Therefore will the Lord wait, that He may be gracious unto you." There is always perfect timing, purpose and method in God's dealings. They are always for the good of His creation; they are always that He might show His love and mercy...until the cup of wickedness fills up and He must purge the land of it, or until His chosen ones heed His message and turn back to Him.

—Sis. Angela Gellenbeck

REFLECTIONS

The first line of song #60 in the Evening Light Songs hymnal says, "Onward moves the Great Eternal in the order of His plan..." How comforting it is, and how encouraging to our faith, to observe in the Holy Scriptures that God has a plan. God has a plan for nations, and He has a plan for each of us as individuals. It is an all-wise and perfect plan. It goes far beyond our ability, as finite human creatures, to comprehend and understand. Sometimes His plan moves our lives directly opposite to what seems right and good to us. We just can't see the big picture until after it all unfolds.

I'm sure that poor, young Joseph wrestled with many dark days of loneliness, depression, and discouragement as he trusted in God

to fulfill His will and purpose concerning his life. Yet, we have no record that he ever murmured or complained about his lot. He just submitted to what the providence of God allowed to come his way and let God work out His plan and purpose. And, although it took years of suffering, God brought him out in a wealthy and good place. God used Joseph to accomplish a great and important part of His plan. We can rest assured that the same God whom we also serve will so work in our behalf, regardless how dark and gloomy our present circumstances may appear.

“Light after darkness, Gain after loss, Strength after weakness, Crown after cross;
Sweet after bitter, Hope after fears, Home after wandering, Praise after tears.

“Sheaves after sowing, Sun after rain, Sight after mystery, Peace after pain;
Joy after sorrow, Calm after blast, Rest after weariness, Sweet rest at last.

“Near after distant, Gleam after gloom, Love after loneliness, Life after tomb;
After long agony, Rapture of bliss, **Right was the pathway, Leading to this.**

“Now comes the weeping, Then the glad reaping;
Now comes the labor hard, Then the reward.”

—Frances R. Havergal, Evening Light Songs #322

—Bro. Harlan Sorrell

JANUARY 12, 2020

THE BIRTH AND CALLING OF MOSES

(Background Reading: Exodus 1, 2, 3, and 4)

Acts 7:17 But when the time of the promise drew nigh, which God had sworn to Abraham, the people grew and multiplied in Egypt,

18 Till another king arose, which knew not Joseph.

19 The same dealt subtilly with our kindred, and evil entreated our fathers, so that they cast out their young children, to the end they might not live.

20 In which time Moses was born, and was exceeding fair, and nourished up in his father's house three months:

21 And when he was cast out, Pharaoh's daughter took him up, and nourished him for her own son.

22 And Moses was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and was mighty in words and in deeds.

23 And when he was full forty years old, it came into his heart to visit his brethren the children of Israel.

24 And seeing one of them suffer wrong, he defended him, and avenged him that was oppressed, and smote the Egyptian:

25 For he supposed his brethren would have understood how that God by his hand would deliver them: but they understood not.

26 And the next day he shewed himself unto them as they strove, and would have set them at one again, saying, Sirs, ye are brethren; why do ye wrong one to another?

27 But he that did his neighbour wrong thrust him away, saying, Who made thee a ruler and a judge over us?

28 Wilt thou kill me, as thou diddest the Egyptian yesterday?

29 Then fled Moses at this saying, and was a stranger in the land of Madian, where he begat two sons.

30 And when forty years were expired, there appeared to him in the wilderness of mount Sina an angel of the Lord in a flame of fire in a bush.

31 When Moses saw it, he wondered at the sight: and as he drew near to behold it, the voice of the Lord came unto him,

32 Saying, I am the God of thy fathers, the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. Then Moses trembled, and durst not behold.

33 Then said the Lord to him, Put off thy shoes from thy feet: for the place where thou standest is holy ground.

34 I have seen, I have seen the affliction of my people which is in Egypt, and I have heard their groaning, and am come down to deliver them. And now come, I will send thee into Egypt.

35 This Moses whom they refused, saying, Who made thee a ruler and a judge? the same did God send to be a ruler and a deliverer by the hand of the angel which appeared to him in the bush.

36 He brought them out, after that he had shewed wonders and signs in the land of Egypt, and in the Red sea, and in the wilderness forty years.

37 This is that Moses, which said unto the children of Israel, A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me; him shall ye hear.

38 This is he, that was in the church in the wilderness with the

angel which spake to him in the mount Sina, and with our fathers: who received the lively oracles to give unto us.

MEMORY VERSE: By faith Moses, when he was born, was hid three months of his parents, because they saw he was a proper child; and they were not afraid of the king's commandment. By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; Esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompence of the reward.

—**Hebrews 11:23-26**

CENTRAL THOUGHT: Divinely preserved at birth and providentially prepared and trained by God, at age eighty Moses was called to go back to Egypt and deliver God's people from their bondage.

WORD DEFINITIONS

Acts 7:18 "Which knew not Joseph": had no knowledge of the great favor Joseph had done for Egypt and the known world by implementing a wise economic plan to prepare for seven years of famine; neither did he feel an obligation to Joseph's descendants to sustain them.

Acts 7:19 "Dealt subtilly": deal craftily with; circumvent; take shrewd advantage.

Acts 7:20 "Moses": "The word is no doubt Egyptian in its origin, and Josephus gives its true derivation—from the two Egyptian words, *mo*, water, and *use*, saved. With this accords the Septuagint form, *Mouses*. The Hebrews by a slight change accommodated it to their own language, as they did also in the case of some other foreign words; calling it *Moshie*, from the verb *Masha*, to draw" (*ATS Bible Dictionary*). "Exceeding fair": beautiful; handsome; elegant. The Jewish historian, Josephus, noted that those who saw him turned to gaze in admiration, and that Pharaoh's daughter was so captivated by his size and beauty she spoke to her father about his "divine beauty."

Acts 7:22 “Learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians and mighty in words and deeds”: instructed or trained. Egypt boasted of two universities. Philo says that Moses was instructed in music, geometry, arithmetic, and hieroglyphics; the whole circle of arts and sciences. Josephus tells that for twenty years he was an Egyptian military general, commanding Egypt’s forces in the war with Ethiopia.

Acts 7:29 “Madian”: Midian.

Acts 7:30 “Mount Sina”: Mount Sinai.

Acts 7:32 “Durst”: dared.

Acts 7:37 “A prophet”: a quote from Deuteronomy 18:15-19.

LESSON BACKGROUND

Our lesson today is from the summary of Israel’s history given by the New Testament martyr, Stephen, as he testified before the Sanhedrin.

As recorded in Exodus 1, Moses was born at a time when God’s people were in dire straits. Their numbers since coming into Egypt had multiplied so that they filled the land, until the new Pharaoh looked upon them with suspicion. His plan was to subdue them by making them his slaves to build his temples and cities, but as Exodus 1:12 records, “The more they afflicted them, the more they multiplied and grew.” He then gave commands to the midwives to kill the boy babies of the Hebrews upon delivery, but God caused the babies to be born before the midwives could arrive. Finally, the royal edict was that the families themselves should dispose of their newborn sons into the river.

Amram and his wife, Jochebed, both of the tribe of Levi, already had an older daughter, Miriam, and a small son, Aaron, when they gave birth to yet another boy. The Hebrews writer tells us it was their faith which caused them to recognize the special quality he had and gave them courage to hide him from the Egyptian authorities three months. It was their faith which directed them to place him in a waterproof bassinet/boat, which they constructed from reeds and bitumen pitch, and launch it into the canal. With Miriam watching nearby, they trusted him into the hands of God and were rewarded when his cries caused the Egyptian princess, who had come to bathe in the water, to discover him and be moved with compassion. She

then allowed him to be nursed by his own mother, who obviously took advantage of this providential arrangement to teach Moses of his true heritage in his formative years. Assuming weaning age to be about three years, he was then returned to the Egyptian princess and brought up in the palace; however, the faith instilled in him by his mother later caused him to return to his roots and forsake the life of Egyptian royalty.

At age forty, Moses' first attempt to help his people ended with him fleeing to the wilderness, where he met the seven daughters of the priest of Midian, Jethro, or Reuel. Moses married Jethro's daughter, Zipporah, and had two sons, Gershom and Eliezer (Exodus 18:3-4).

At the end of forty years, he saw the bush burning and not being consumed. Exodus 3:4 says that when God saw that Moses "turned aside to see, God called unto him out of the midst of the bush." This time—with Moses having possibly twenty years of military experience and forty years' experience of herding sheep in the desert, and the Hebrews in Egypt crying out to God in repentance and true sorrow—it was GOD'S time; time for deliverance; time for a man who was now fully prepared, seasoned, and humble enough to lead the greatest exodus the world had ever known.

—Sis. Angela Gellenbeck

DISCUSSION:

1. Explain the meaning of Moses' name.
2. Explain again what this means: "the time of the promise which God had sworn to Abraham" (this was mentioned in the previous lesson).
3. Using the scriptures in our lesson and the information from the Lesson Background, explain the situation regarding the birth of Hebrew boy babies at the time of Moses' birth.
4. What happened when Moses first tried to help his brethren?

COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

What life lessons can we take away from the beginning story of Moses? Our verses from Hebrews show how the apostle ranked

Moses' parents and Moses himself among the great heroes of faith. We can learn from the trust in God they demonstrated when placing him in the little boat in the water and the obvious diligence they put into training the infant and toddler Moses in the heritage of faith—an amazing view into the power and potential of early—very early—parental training.

We can learn much from the burning bush—an extraordinary illustration of God's relationship with His chosen people. He, the God who is a consuming fire, was going to dwell among a rebellious, faithless collection of humanity. How was it that He didn't consume them? "It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed" (Lamentations 3:22).

We perceive that our God does not get in a hurry. He is thorough and His plans are perfectly executed. Fullness of time means just that. There are no substitutions for divine preparation.

We learn that God values humility and dependence upon Him more than human talent, expertise, or ability, and that only certain kinds of training produce that. Hardship. Faithfulness in small things. Self-denial. Waiting.

We also learn that being misunderstood by people is not necessarily a moratorium on our calling. We can wait, be faithful, and trust God to open the hearts of the people.

What did you learn from the lesson today?

—Sis. Angela Gellenbeck

REFLECTIONS

While ancient Egypt is well-known for the architectural marvels of its pyramids and cities, during its time as one of the most advanced civilizations on earth it boasted world-class universities, equivalent to how Oxford and Harvard are viewed today. As a member of the royal household, Moses was likely trained in everything such advanced education could offer. In addition, as a prince he likely had access to and was trained in the work of the scribes of that day, recording the history of that great civilization on papyrus scrolls (made from the reeds that grew along the river Nile and from which our word "paper" is derived) through the use of hieroglyphics and the scribes' long form of writing, hieratic. This

training was most likely very useful for the work he did in his later years.

Astounding to me is the fact that Moses, obviously precocious and well-trained by his parents at a very early age in the oral history started by Abraham and passed down so efficiently from generation to generation among the Hebrew people, established his concepts of God so strongly that his convictions and identity never wavered, even while a member of Pharaoh's royal household. His desire to help his people reflected this sense of purpose.

However, while formal education is useful and spiritual training is vital, neither can replace being trained by God Himself. Taught indirectly by God in keeping wayward sheep for forty years, no doubt great preparation for leading wayward people, Moses was then able to establish a direct relationship with Jehovah when he was called from the burning bush, ready to now be used of God in His timing.

Because of these things, Moses was uniquely qualified as a scribe to record for all mankind via the Pentateuch—the foundational books of scripture—the written history and stories God wanted the world to know. Although many modern scholars dispute Moses' authorship of these books, the Bible is clear that God directed him, the man to whom God spoke "face to face," to record these things, for it is through him we've received the recorded stories of creation, the fall of mankind and our need for a Redeemer, as well as the totally unusual concept during his time of monotheism, the belief in one supreme God. It is no wonder Moses stood on the Mount of Transfiguration with Jesus as representative of God's written word!

—Bro. Fari Matthews

JANUARY 19, 2020

A TEN-FOLD JUDGMENT ON EGYPT, PART ONE

(Background Reading: Exodus 5, 6, 7, 8, and 9:1-7)

Psalm 105:5 Remember his marvellous works that he hath done; his wonders, and the judgments of his mouth.

26 He sent Moses his servant; and Aaron whom he had chosen.

27 They shewed his signs among them, and wonders in the land of Ham.

Exodus 7:20 And Moses and Aaron did so, as the LORD

commanded; and he lifted up the rod, and smote the waters that were in the river, in the sight of Pharaoh, and in the sight of his servants; and all the waters that were in the river were turned to blood.

21 And the fish that was in the river died; and the river stank, and the Egyptians could not drink of the water of the river; and there was blood throughout all the land of Egypt.

Exodus 8:6 And Aaron stretched out his hand over the waters of Egypt; and the frogs came up, and covered the land of Egypt.

16 And the LORD said unto Moses, Say unto Aaron, Stretch out thy rod, and smite the dust of the land, that it may become lice throughout all the land of Egypt.

17 And they did so; for Aaron stretched out his hand with his rod, and smote the dust of the earth, and it became lice in man, and in beast; all the dust of the land became lice throughout all the land of Egypt.

22 And I will sever in that day the land of Goshen, in which my people dwell, that no swarms of flies shall be there; to the end thou mayest know that I am the LORD in the midst of the earth.

23 And I will put a division between my people and thy people: to morrow shall this sign be.

24 And the LORD did so; and there came a grievous swarm of flies into the house of Pharaoh, and into his servants' houses, and into all the land of Egypt: the land was corrupted by reason of the swarm of flies.

Exodus 9:3 Behold, the hand of the LORD is upon thy cattle which is in the field, upon the horses, upon the asses, upon the camels, upon the oxen, and upon the sheep: there shall be a very grievous murrain.

5 And the LORD appointed a set time, saying, To morrow the LORD shall do this thing in the land.

6 And the LORD did that thing on the morrow, and all the cattle of Egypt died: but of the cattle of the children of Israel died not one.

MEMORY VERSE: Wherefore say unto the children of Israel, I am the LORD, and I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, and I will rid you out of their bondage, and I will redeem you with a stretched out arm, and with great judgments.

—Exodus 6:6

CENTRAL THOUGHT: The first five plagues upon Egypt: first, Moses smote the river and turned the water into blood; the second time God sent frogs, and thirdly, lice. The fourth was a swarm of flies only upon the Egyptians; the fifth was a disease upon only the Egyptians' livestock and not those of the Israelites.

WORD DEFINITIONS

Psalm 105:27 "The land of Ham": meaning Egypt, in which lived the descendants of Noah's son, Ham, according to Genesis 10:6.

Exodus 8:16 "Lice": an unclear meaning; could be lice; some translations have *gnats*.

Exodus 9:3 "Grievous murrain": pestilence; fatal disease.

LESSON BACKGROUND

When Moses heard God speaking to him out of the burning bush, calling him to go to Pharaoh and bring the children of Israel out of Egypt, Moses had questions. "Who am I?" and "What shall I say when they ask who sent me?"

God said, "Say, 'I AM has sent me unto you.'" He promised that the king would not let them go, but that He would have to smite Egypt with "wonders." Then the king would have to let them go, and the people would favor them and send them away with gifts of gold and silver.

Moses protested, "They will not believe that You sent me." God showed him a miracle He would work with Moses' rod. Moses argued again, this time kindling God's anger. He promised him that Aaron would be his mouthpiece and speak for him. Sure enough, Aaron met him in the desert and the two of them went before the elders and the people. The people believed their words and the signs which the Lord did before them, and worshipped the Lord.

Afterward Moses and Aaron went to Pharaoh, who responded, "Who is the Lord?" and ordered the Israelites to make as many bricks as before, only without furnishing them with straw. When they complained about the hardship, they were beaten and came to Moses and Aaron. Moses did what he would repeat many times in the future: he took his burden to the Lord. God answered, "Now

shalt thou see what I will do to Pharaoh!" Although the Israelites were in such despair they didn't listen to God's words at this point, God sent him to speak to Pharaoh and have Aaron throw down his rod before Pharaoh. God miraculously turned it into a serpent. When Pharaoh's magicians' rods also became serpents, Aaron's rod swallowed them up. At this, Pharaoh hardened his heart and God sent the plagues, beginning with turning the water of Egypt into blood. The magicians copied the plague of the blood and the frogs, but could not bring forth lice from the dust. "That is the finger of God," they told Pharaoh, yet he hardened his heart again as before.

Each time God sent a plague, Pharaoh would seem to relent, and begged them to pray to God for him. When God would stop the plague, then he did as Exodus 8:15 records: "But when Pharaoh saw that there was respite, he hardened his heart, and hearkened not unto them; as the LORD had said."

—Sis. Angela Gellenbeck

DISCUSSION:

1. The reading in Psalm 105 uses four different words to describe what God did in Egypt. What are they?
2. Egypt was described as the "land of _____." What does this mean?
3. When God smote the river, it became _____. Was the plague only confined to the river?
4. Which wonders did Pharaoh's magicians copy, and which were they unable to do?
5. In which plagues did Aaron use his rod?

COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

When we look at the plagues, five of which are described in this lesson, we can learn several things:

1. The reasons for the plagues. In Exodus 6:7 He says, "I will be to you a God: and ye shall know that I am the LORD your God..." In Exodus 7:5 He says, "And the Egyptians shall know that I am the LORD." He not only wanted *His* people to know He was their God, He wanted the *Egyptians* to see clearly who was LORD.

2. Not only did God want them to know Him as LORD, He wanted to show Pharaoh there was *none like Him* in all the earth

(Exodus 9:14). God isn't a *god among gods*. He proved His uniqueness over and over by the ten plagues. The Egyptians worshipped a pantheon of gods. As we study, we will discover that many of the plagues seemed to target specific gods among the Egyptians and reveal Jehovah's conquest over them. As Moses' father-in-law, Jethro, later stated, "Now I know that the LORD is greater than all gods: for in the thing wherein they dealt proudly he was above them" (Exodus 18:11).

3. The reasons God used the plagues to bring deliverance. The first was because of His word and oath to Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, to Moses and to the Israelites themselves. He had promised to show His judgments and wonders to deliver them. Additionally, God commanded Pharaoh to let His "son," Israel, go out of Egypt. Because Pharaoh refused to do this, God smote the firstborn son of Pharaoh and of all Egypt.

4. We can learn many things about God's character as we consider His dealings with Pharaoh. His mercy. His longsuffering. The way He mercifully warns of future catastrophes and gives a chance for repentance before He finally strikes. In the plagues of the flies and of the livestock murrain, God "appointed a set time." He gave Pharaoh a night to contemplate and change his mind. "Thus God is known by his judgments: for in every operation of his hand his design is to enlighten the minds of men, to bring them from false dependencies to trust in himself alone; that, being saved from error and sin, they may become wise, holy, and happy. When his judgments are abroad in the earth, the inhabitants learn righteousness" (*Clarke's Commentary*).

—Sis. Angela Gellenbeck

REFLECTIONS

It has always been a puzzle as to why the Lord sent the plagues to the Egyptians when He knew it would only harden the heart of Pharaoh. However, the stubbornness of Pharaoh gave God opportunity to show himself strong on the behalf of His people and renounce the false gods that the Egyptians so highly revered and worshipped.

The Nile River was an important part of livelihood for the

Egyptians. Its waters provided the irrigation for the fertile soil to grow food, and the water itself was considered of pristine quality when filtered. The first plague of the water turning to blood was a direct rebuttal against the highly revered Nile River and the river god Hapi.

The second plague was of the frogs coming out of the river Nile to invade the houses of the people. This was in renunciation of their fertility goddess, Heket, who was depicted with the head of a frog. The plague of the frogs was a loathsome disaster that only grew worse when the Lord allowed the frogs to rot in the land of Egypt rather than just disappear.

The plague of the dust turning to lice was the third plague visited upon the Egyptians. This plague could not be replicated by the Egyptian magicians. It was a direct denial against their false god named Geb, the god of earth and vegetation.

The fourth plague, the swarm of flies, appeared soon after the lice. Clark's Commentary states it is probable that the swarm was a multitude of different kinds of insects and not just flies. This plague was in rejection of the god Khepri, who was depicted with a fly or scarab for a face.

The death of the Egyptian's livestock was the fifth plague. This was a direct renunciation of their love goddess named Hathor. This goddess was depicted with horns or the face of a cow. Further proof was given as to the Lord's favor over the children of Israel when "Pharaoh sent, and behold, there was not one of the cattle of the Israelites dead."

Moses was very humble in his entreaty to the Lord regarding the plight of the Israelites. He was in an awesome place to be able to witness firsthand the power of God with each affliction given to the Egyptians. This was a fulfillment of the promise the Lord gave to Moses at the onset of the plagues: "And the Egyptians shall know that I am the LORD, when I stretch forth mine hand upon Egypt, and bring out the children of Israel from among them" (Exodus 7:5). When it was all finished, the Egyptians, as well as the Israelites, witnessed the power of God: the power of the great I AM!

—Sis. LaDawna Adams

JANUARY 26, 2020
A TEN-FOLD JUDGMENT ON EGYPT, PART TWO
(Background Reading: Exodus 9:8-35; 10)

Exodus 9:8 And the LORD said unto Moses and unto Aaron, Take to you handfuls of ashes of the furnace, and let Moses sprinkle it toward the heaven in the sight of Pharaoh.

9 And it shall become small dust in all the land of Egypt, and shall be a boil breaking forth with blains upon man, and upon beast, throughout all the land of Egypt.

10 And they took ashes of the furnace, and stood before Pharaoh; and Moses sprinkled it up toward heaven; and it became a boil breaking forth with blains upon man, and upon beast.

11 And the magicians could not stand before Moses because of the boils; for the boil was upon the magicians, and upon all the Egyptians.

12 And the LORD hardened the heart of Pharaoh, and he hearkened not unto them; as the LORD had spoken unto Moses.

13 And the LORD said unto Moses, Rise up early in the morning, and stand before Pharaoh, and say unto him, Thus saith the LORD God of the Hebrews, Let my people go, that they may serve me.

14 For I will at this time send all my plagues upon thine heart, and upon thy servants, and upon thy people; that thou mayest know that there is none like me in all the earth.

15 For now I will stretch out my hand, that I may smite thee and thy people with pestilence; and thou shalt be cut off from the earth.

16 And in very deed for this cause have I raised thee up, for to shew in thee my power; and that my name may be declared throughout all the earth.

17 As yet exaltest thou thyself against my people, that thou wilt not let them go?

18 Behold, to morrow about this time I will cause it to rain a very grievous hail, such as hath not been in Egypt since the foundation thereof even until now.

19 Send therefore now, and gather thy cattle, and all that thou hast in the field; for upon every man and beast which shall be found in the field, and shall not be brought home, the hail shall come down upon them, and they shall die.

20 He that feared the word of the LORD among the servants of

Pharaoh made his servants and his cattle flee into the houses:

21 And he that regarded not the word of the LORD left his servants and his cattle in the field.

22 And the LORD said unto Moses, Stretch forth thine hand toward heaven, that there may be hail in all the land of Egypt, upon man, and upon beast, and upon every herb of the field, throughout the land of Egypt.

23 And Moses stretched forth his rod toward heaven: and the LORD sent thunder and hail, and the fire ran along upon the ground; and the LORD rained hail upon the land of Egypt.

24 So there was hail, and fire mingled with the hail, very grievous, such as there was none like it in all the land of Egypt since it became a nation.

25 And the hail smote throughout all the land of Egypt all that was in the field, both man and beast; and the hail smote every herb of the field, and brake every tree of the field.

26 Only in the land of Goshen, where the children of Israel were, was there no hail.

Exodus 10:3 And Moses and Aaron came in unto Pharaoh, and said unto him, Thus saith the LORD God of the Hebrews, How long wilt thou refuse to humble thyself before me? let my people go, that they may serve me.

4 Else, if thou refuse to let my people go, behold, to morrow will I bring the locusts into thy coast:

13 And Moses stretched forth his rod over the land of Egypt, and the LORD brought an east wind upon the land all that day, and all that night; and when it was morning, the east wind brought the locusts.

14 And the locusts went up over all the land of Egypt, and rested in all the coasts of Egypt: very grievous were they; before them there were no such locusts as they, neither after them shall be such.

15 For they covered the face of the whole earth, so that the land was darkened; and they did eat every herb of the land, and all the fruit of the trees which the hail had left: and there remained not any green thing in the trees, or in the herbs of the field, through all the land of Egypt.

21 And the LORD said unto Moses, Stretch out thine hand toward heaven, that there may be darkness over the land of Egypt,

even darkness which may be felt.

22 And Moses stretched forth his hand toward heaven; and there was a thick darkness in all the land of Egypt three days:

23 They saw not one another, neither rose any from his place for three days: but all the children of Israel had light in their dwellings.

24 And Pharaoh called unto Moses, and said, Go ye, serve the LORD; only let your flocks and your herds be stayed: let your little ones also go with you.

25 And Moses said, Thou must give us also sacrifices and burnt offerings, that we may sacrifice unto the LORD our God.

26 Our cattle also shall go with us; there shall not an hoof be left behind; for thereof must we take to serve the LORD our God; and we know not with what we must serve the LORD, until we come thither.

27 But the LORD hardened Pharaoh's heart, and he would not let them go.

28 And Pharaoh said unto him, Get thee from me, take heed to thyself, see my face no more; for in that day thou seest my face thou shalt die.

29 And Moses said, Thou hast spoken well, I will see thy face again no more.

MEMORY VERSE: Marvellous things did he ... in the land of Egypt, in the field of Zoan. —**Psalm 78:12**

CENTRAL THOUGHT: The next four plagues were the boils upon man and beast, hail with thunder and fire, devouring locusts, and thick darkness; however, Pharaoh yet hardened his heart against God and would not let the children of Israel go.

WORD DEFINITIONS

Exodus 9:8 “Ashes of the furnace”: soot; probably from the very furnaces in which they had made the Israelites labor. Possibly a brick-kiln; or an iron-smelting furnace. Later, in Deuteronomy 4:20, God used the words “iron furnace” to describe the Israelites’ suffering in Egypt (I Kings 8:51 and Jeremiah 11:4 also use this term). “A furnace of this kind is round, sometimes thirty feet deep, and requiring the highest intensity of heat. Such is the tremendous image chosen to

represent the bondage and affliction of the Israelites [Rosenmuller]” (*Jamieson-Fausset-Brown Bible Commentary*).

“Sometimes God shows men their sin in their punishment. They had oppressed Israel in the furnaces, and now the ashes of the furnace are made a terror to them” (*Matthew Henry Commentary*).

Exodus 9:9 “Boils ... blains”: eruptions with blisters.

Psalm 78:12 “The field of Zoan”: Zoan or Tanis (a Greek word in the *Septuagint*); “an ancient city of Lower Egypt, situated on the eastern side of the Tanitic arm of the Nile. The name given to it in the Egyptian language signified ‘low region.’ The Hebrews seem to have been located in this region, and it was in this part of Egypt—that is, in the country lying roundabout Zoan—that the wonders of God were principally manifested in behalf of his people” (*Barnes’ Notes on the Bible*).

LESSON BACKGROUND

Several details in our lesson are worth a closer look: The cattle of Egypt had just died, but Israel’s cattle survived the sixth plague. The Lord began this separation in the plague with the flies. From this time forward, His people were spared the devastation of the Egyptians.

The next plague was sent unannounced. Moses and Aaron simply stood before Pharaoh, lifted their hands into the air and tossed handfuls of soot toward the sky. The resulting boils on man and beast hit the magicians so hard they could not stand. Little by little their powerful standing in the sight of the people had been weakened. In the plague of lice, they had been unable to reproduce the wonder and protested to Pharaoh, “This is the finger of God!” The magicians could no longer stand upright. From this time forward, there was no further mention of them.

In this lesson God speaks the words which were quoted by Paul in Romans 9:17. “For this same purpose have I raised thee up, that I might shew my power in thee...” Some believe this shows that Pharaoh was created to be an instrument of judgment and by God’s sovereignty had no choice but to be hardened. But consider how God yet gave Pharaoh time to humble himself before He sent the plague of hail, fire and thunder. As He had done with the plague of flies and murain upon the livestock, God gave Pharaoh a future time for a

plague. “Tomorrow.” Pharaoh had all night! He had an opportunity to show reverence and fear for God by taking his cattle into shelter. Those who did so among his servants were spared the death of their cattle. Yet he did not yield all that night. After the terrible devastation, He did make a confession of his sin and a hasty promise to let the Israelites go, which he retracted after God stopped the thunder and hail.

God gave Pharaoh another all-night chance with the locust plague. He could hear the wind blowing all night. At any time he could have humbled his heart. Again, he did not until after the plague when he repented and asked for forgiveness. After God took away the locusts, he changed his mind, thus hardening his heart again. God’s purpose was to show His power to the Egyptians and to His people. He used Pharaoh for this purpose while still giving him a chance to change, all along the way.

Do you notice what God did for the Israelites during the time of palpable darkness? “All the children of Israel had light in their dwellings.” From where did this light come? Surely it was the very light of God, such as was in the time of creation before God made the sun, moon and stars!

—Sis. Angela Gellenbeck

DISCUSSION:

1. Name and number the nine plagues we have studied so far.
2. Share what became of Pharaoh’s magicians.
3. What accompanied the hail?
4. Describe the timing and manner of the plague of locusts.
5. How was the darkness described?

COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

Many Bible scholars and commentators agree that Exodus 9:15, “For now I will stretch out my hand, that I may smite thee and thy people with pestilence; and thou shalt be cut off from the earth,” may more accurately mean, “HAD I stretched out my hand ... you would have been cut off....” This opens a great possibility to the mind. It was of the Lord’s mercies to the Egyptians and the Israelites that he allowed Pharaoh to remain, or be sustained through all of

these pestilences. He could have cut him off at the very first. But to show his power, he supported Pharaoh's life and gave him opportunity after opportunity to yield to God's command.

He is no less merciful to mankind today. Have you been spared miraculously when you were yet in your sins? "For this cause" God raised you up, that he might show in you His power. You can change the course of things in your life if you will fully yield to God.

—Sis. Angela Gellenbeck

REFLECTIONS

Moses asked Pharaoh to let the people go, and four times Pharaoh tried to compromise with him.

1. "Go sacrifice in the land" (Exodus 8:25). In other words, "Just stay right here and you can all worship together." Moses knew that wouldn't ever work. He said, "They [the Egyptians] will stone us," because he knew the Egyptians revered the [sacrificial] animals as gods.

2. "Go not very far away" (Exodus 8:28), which meant, "Stay close enough so you can come right back, and we can still use you."

3. "Only the men can go" (Exodus 10:11), meaning, "Keep your wives and children here so you will come back often."

4. "Leave all the animals here" (Exodus 10:24). Pharaoh was very wily. If they left the animals, they wouldn't have anything to sacrifice, so they wouldn't even leave; also, since all the Egyptians' cattle were destroyed they needed the Israelite's cattle to replace theirs.

In this lesson we can compare Egypt's bondage to the bondage of sin and show how Satan wouldn't mind us leaving if we didn't go very far away. He may suggest that we could just stay where we are and worship together with him; however, we would still be under his bondage. Or, we could leave part of our treasures behind in Egypt, go worship—and come back; or we could worship without sacrifices.

We need to run away from him as far as we can go and never look back. Take your loved ones, take your sacrifices, and flee. "I once was in bondage in Egypt's dark night, but Jesus has brought me out into the light. He banished my sins and hath made my heart right. I'll never go back again" (*Evening Light Songs*, #168).

—Bro. James Bell

FEBRUARY 2, 2020

A TEN-FOLD JUDGMENT ON EGYPT, PART THREE

(Background Reading: Exodus 10:24-29; 11 and 12)

Exodus 11:1 And the LORD said unto Moses, Yet will I bring one plague more upon Pharaoh, and upon Egypt; afterwards he will let you go hence: when he shall let you go, he shall surely thrust you out hence altogether.

2 Speak now in the ears of the people, and let every man borrow of his neighbour, and every woman of her neighbour, jewels of silver, and jewels of gold.

3 And the LORD gave the people favour in the sight of the Egyptians. Moreover the man Moses was very great in the land of Egypt, in the sight of Pharaoh's servants, and in the sight of the people.

4 And Moses said, Thus saith the LORD, About midnight will I go out into the midst of Egypt:

5 And all the firstborn in the land of Egypt shall die, from the firstborn of Pharaoh that sitteth upon his throne, even unto the firstborn of the maidservant that is behind the mill; and all the firstborn of beasts.

6 And there shall be a great cry throughout all the land of Egypt, such as there was none like it, nor shall be like it any more.

7 But against any of the children of Israel shall not a dog move his tongue, against man or beast: that ye may know how that the LORD doth put a difference between the Egyptians and Israel.

8 And all these thy servants shall come down unto me, and bow down themselves unto me, saying, Get thee out, and all the people that follow thee: and after that I will go out. And he went out from Pharaoh in a great anger.

9 And the LORD said unto Moses, Pharaoh shall not hearken unto you; that my wonders may be multiplied in the land of Egypt.

10 And Moses and Aaron did all these wonders before Pharaoh: and the LORD hardened Pharaoh's heart, so that he would not let the children of Israel go out of his land.

Exodus 12:29 And it came to pass, that at midnight the LORD smote all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, from the firstborn of Pharaoh that sat on his throne unto the firstborn of the captive that was in the dungeon; and all the firstborn of cattle.

30 And Pharaoh rose up in the night, he, and all his servants, and all the Egyptians; and there was a great cry in Egypt; for there was not a house where there was not one dead.

MEMORY VERSE: For I will pass through the land of Egypt this night, and will smite all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both man and beast; and against all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgment: I am the LORD. —**Exodus 12:12**

CENTRAL THOUGHT: The last plague God executed upon Egypt was the killing of all the firstborn, from which God provided a way of escape for the Israelites through the blood of a lamb. With this final plague, God’s judgments on Egypt were complete and His power as God over all gods was fully shown.

LESSON BACKGROUND

Today we will study only the part of the last plague in which God showed His judgment upon Pharaoh and the Egyptians. In the next lesson we will study how God spared His people from the great slaughter by instituting the Passover. Although they are interconnected—the plague and the Passover—we will try to separate them into two lessons for the sake of time and space.

After three days of heavy darkness, Pharaoh somehow got the message to Moses: “You may go! I’ll even let your little ones go with you. Only—your flocks and herds must stay.” When Moses repeated what he had said so many times, that their flocks and herds were needed for the offerings which were a part of their worship, Pharaoh got so angry that he threatened Moses’ life if he ever saw him again. Moses knew the final blow was coming. He agreed, “I will see your face no more.”

God gave Moses step-by-step instructions for what was ahead. On the tenth day of the month, the people were to take an unblemished lamb, one per family, and keep it penned up until the fourteenth day, when they were to kill it, apply the blood in a certain way to the posts of their doors, roast it and eat it with bitter herbs and unleavened bread, and prepare for their journey.

The men and women were to borrow traveling supplies, gold,

silver, and clothing from their Egyptian neighbors. By this time the Egyptians were ready to do anything to help these people get on their way out of Egypt. “The Lord gave the people favor in the sight of the Egyptians.” Also, Moses was now held in very high esteem by not only the Israelites, but also the Egyptians and Pharaoh’s servants. At midnight, just as God had said, a great cry of terror was heard all over Egypt. Not one Egyptian household escaped the hand of death. Every firstborn child lay dead. Even the firstborn of the animals—those who were left from the other plagues—died. The Egyptians were known for their mourning at a time of death. They would run into the streets howling and whipping or beating themselves frantically. What a scene of horror this night must have been!

Pharaoh at last called for Israel to leave his country: men, women, little ones, flocks and herds. The Egyptian people were urgent. “We are all dead men,” they said.

The exodus had begun.

—Sis. Angela Gellenbeck

DISCUSSION:

1. The Israelites were asked to borrow gold and silver from their neighbors. Can you suggest a reason for this?
2. How did God express the ultimate protection he had put over the children of Israel? Find the phrase showing this.
3. The memory verse tells that the plagues were really judgments upon the _____ of Egypt.

COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

“For the Egyptians buried all their firstborn, which the LORD had smitten among them: upon their gods also the LORD executed judgments” (Numbers 33:4). In the January 19 lesson we learned some of the names of the various gods which were targeted by the plagues God sent upon Egypt. Here are several more which can be named: The plagues of “hail (No. 7) and locusts (No. 8) were...directed against Seth, who manifests himself in wind and storms; and/or against Isis, goddess of life, who grinds, spins flax and weaves cloth; or against Min, who was worshiped as a god of fertility

and vegetation and as a protector of crops. Min is an especially likely candidate for these two plagues because the notations in Exodus 9:31 indicate that the first plague came as the flax and barley were about to be harvested, but before the wheat and spelt had matured. “Darkness (No. 9), pursuing this line of interpretation, could have been directed against various deities associated with the sun—Amon-Re, Aten, Atum or Horus.

“Finally, the death of the firstborn (No. 10) was directed against the patron deity of Pharaoh, and the judge of the dead, Osiris” (Ziony Zevit, *Three Ways to Look at the Ten Plagues* in biblicarcheaology.org).

—Sis. Angela Gellenbeck

REFLECTIONS

The most powerful thing that man possesses is his free will. He can refuse God’s commands, resist His dealings or reject Him altogether. God respects man’s will to the point that He refuses to override it or to force man to do anything against it; even though it may clearly be against God’s own will. That is powerful! But with this power comes a grave responsibility. There are consequences to disobedience and rejection of God’s way.

Each approach Moses made to Pharaoh was an expression of God’s mercy to Pharaoh and to the nation of Egypt. Each rejection demonstrates the freedom of our will and the inherent power God has given us. However, we can cross a “line” where the heart grows harder and, with each appeal, becomes more and more impenetrable; until at last the cry of mercy is silenced, and all that is left is the demand for judgment.

We must not look at judgment as merely being punitive. It is God’s last resort—the one solution left after mercy has been extended and expended. It is ultimately the only thing that stops the undesirable behavior and, in the process, teaches valuable lessons. The Egyptians learned about the God of Israel and about the inferiority of their gods. They learned of the power of God’s kingdom over every other kingdom and his power over life and death. These were valuable lessons learned at extraordinary costs.

Simple obedience to God’s Word would have spared them from

so much pain and suffering. Yet Pharaoh continued to refuse, and God continued to respect his choice until at last all mercy was exhausted.

Disobedience to God is no small matter. If we reject the commands of an eternal God, we place ourselves in jeopardy of eternal consequences. May God help us to learn the lessons while there is yet time to respond to His merciful dealings.

—Bro. Darrell Johnson

FEBRUARY 9, 2020

THE PASSOVER ESTABLISHED

(Background Reading: Exodus 12 and 13:1-16)

Exodus 12:1 And the LORD spake unto Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt, saying,

2 This month shall be unto you the beginning of months: it shall be the first month of the year to you.

3 Speak ye unto all the congregation of Israel, saying, In the tenth day of this month they shall take to them every man a lamb, according to the house of their fathers, a lamb for an house:

4 And if the household be too little for the lamb, let him and his neighbour next unto his house take it according to the number of the souls; every man according to his eating shall make your count for the lamb.

5 Your lamb shall be without blemish, a male of the first year: ye shall take it out from the sheep, or from the goats:

6 And ye shall keep it up until the fourteenth day of the same month: and the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel shall kill it in the evening.

7 And they shall take of the blood, and strike it on the two side posts and on the upper door post of the houses, wherein they shall eat it.

8 And they shall eat the flesh in that night, roast with fire, and unleavened bread; and with bitter herbs they shall eat it.

9 Eat not of it raw, nor sodden at all with water, but roast with fire; his head with his legs, and with the purtenance thereof.

10 And ye shall let nothing of it remain until the morning; and that which remaineth of it until the morning ye shall burn with fire.

11 And thus shall ye eat it; with your loins girded, your shoes on your feet, and your staff in your hand; and ye shall eat it in haste: it is the LORD'S passover.

12 For I will pass through the land of Egypt this night, and will smite all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both man and beast; and against all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgment: I am the LORD.

13 And the blood shall be to you for a token upon the houses where ye are: and when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and the plague shall not be upon you to destroy you, when I smite the land of Egypt.

14 And this day shall be unto you for a memorial; and ye shall keep it a feast to the LORD throughout your generations; ye shall keep it a feast by an ordinance for ever.

21 Then Moses called for all the elders of Israel, and said unto them, Draw out and take you a lamb according to your families, and kill the passover.

22 And ye shall take a bunch of hyssop, and dip it in the blood that is in the bason, and strike the lintel and the two side posts with the blood that is in the bason; and none of you shall go out at the door of his house until the morning.

23 For the LORD will pass through to smite the Egyptians; and when he seeth the blood upon the lintel, and on the two side posts, the LORD will pass over the door, and will not suffer the destroyer to come in unto your houses to smite you.

24 And ye shall observe this thing for an ordinance to thee and to thy sons for ever.

25 And it shall come to pass, when ye be come to the land which the LORD will give you, according as he hath promised, that ye shall keep this service.

26 And it shall come to pass, when your children shall say unto you, What mean ye by this service?

27 That ye shall say, It is the sacrifice of the LORD'S passover, who passed over the houses of the children of Israel in Egypt, when he smote the Egyptians, and delivered our houses. And the people bowed the head and worshipped.

42 It is a night to be much observed unto the LORD for bringing them out from the land of Egypt: this is that night of the LORD to be observed of all the children of Israel in their generations.

43 And the LORD said unto Moses and Aaron, This is the ordinance of the passover: There shall no stranger eat thereof:

44 But every man's servant that is bought for money, when thou hast circumcised him, then shall he eat thereof.

45 A foreigner and an hired servant shall not eat thereof.

46 In one house shall it be eaten; thou shalt not carry forth ought of the flesh abroad out of the house; neither shall ye break a bone thereof.

47 All the congregation of Israel shall keep it.

48 And when a stranger shall sojourn with thee, and will keep the passover to the LORD, let all his males be circumcised, and then let him come near and keep it; and he shall be as one that is born in the land: for no uncircumcised person shall eat thereof.

49 One law shall be to him that is homeborn, and unto the stranger that sojourneth among you.

50 Thus did all the children of Israel; as the LORD commanded Moses and Aaron, so did they.

51 And it came to pass the selfsame day, that the LORD did bring the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt by their armies.

MEMORY VERSE: For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us. —**I Corinthians 5:7**

CENTRAL THOUGHT: Before the tenth and last plague, God prepared His people by instituting a special memorial feast to be observed on the same day each year thereafter, which was called Passover, to commemorate the day God passed over the houses of the believing Israelites, sparing their firstborn from the death angel, and brought them out of Egypt.

WORD DEFINITIONS

Exodus 12:2: "The beginning of months": "It is supposed that God now changed the commencement of the Jewish year. The month to which this verse refers, the month Abib, answers to a part of our March and April; whereas it is supposed that previously to this the year began with Tisri, which answers to a part of our September; for in this month the Jews suppose God created the world, when the

earth appeared at once with all its fruits in perfection. From this circumstance the Jews have formed a twofold commencement of the year, which has given rise to a twofold denomination of the year itself, to which they afterwards attended in all their reckonings: that which began with Tisri or September was called their civil year; that which began with Abib or March was called the sacred or ecclesiastical year” (*Clarke’s Commentary*).

Exodus 12:8 “Unleavened bread”: bread made without yeast or a leavening agent. “Bitter herbs”: “The *Mishna* enumerates endive, chicory, wild lettuce, and nettles” (*Pulpit Commentary*).

Exodus 12:9 “Sodden with water”: boiled in water. “His head with his legs”: “Justin Martyr says that it was prepared for roasting by means of two wooden spits, one perpendicular and the other transverse, which extended it on a sort of cross, and made it aptly typify the Crucified One” (*Ellicott’s Commentary for English Readers*). “Purtenance”: the intestines, which were taken out, washed, and then put back inside and the lamb roasted in some sort of oven.

Exodus 12:46 “Neither shall ye break a bone thereof”: In other cases of sacrifice, the limbs were to be separated from the body. This was to be roasted whole, and no bones broken, to show it as a type of Christ, as was written in John 19:33-36, which Jesus truly fulfilled in His death on the cross.

LESSON BACKGROUND

God showed Moses how the Israelites were to observe the Passover from year to year. It was to be a feast of seven days. They were to thoroughly cleanse all yeast or leaven out of their houses all seven days or they would be cut off from the congregation. A holy convocation, or specially called assembly, was to be held on the first and seventh days, in which (as on the weekly Sabbath) they could do no work, except for that which was required for their eating.

God specified for each household to take a bunch of hyssop dipped in the lamb’s blood and apply the blood to the doorposts of their houses. The hyssop plant was known for its cleansing properties and was also used for the cleansing ceremony for leprosy and in the water of purification. David referred to being cleansed with hyssop in his prayer of repentance in Psalm 51.

—Sis. Angela Gellenbeck

DISCUSSION:

1. "This month shall be the beginning of months." What did He name this month and on what day of the month did He establish the Passover?
2. Describe the age, condition and other instructions for the Passover lamb.
3. Describe where on the house the blood was to be applied, and how it was to be applied.
4. What were the Israelite parents to say to their children when they asked about the Passover?
5. Describe who could and who could not eat of the Passover
6. Explain the meaning of "neither shall ye break a bone thereof."

COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

Matthew Henry has such a thorough explanation of the spiritual lessons contained in the Passover:

"Observe, 1. The paschal lamb was typical. Christ is our passover (1Corinthians 5:7). Christ is the Lamb of God (John 1:29); often in the Revelation he is called the Lamb. It was to be without blemish; the Lord Jesus was a Lamb without spot. Not a bone of it must be broken, which was fulfilled in Christ (John 19:33).

"2. The sprinkling of the blood was typical. Faith is the bunch of hyssop, by which we apply the promises, and the benefits of the blood of Christ laid up in them, to ourselves. It was not to be sprinkled upon the threshold; which cautions us to take heed of trampling under foot the blood of the covenant. It is precious blood, and must be precious to us. The blood, thus sprinkled, was a means of preserving the Israelites from the destroying angel, who had nothing to do where the blood was. The blood of Christ is the believer's protection from the wrath of God (Romans 8:1).

"3. The solemn eating of the lamb was typical of our gospel duty to Christ. The paschal lamb was not to be looked upon only, but to be fed upon. So we must by faith make Christ our own; and we must receive spiritual strength and nourishment from him, as from our food (John 6:53, 55). It was all to be eaten; those who by faith feed upon Christ, must feed upon a whole Christ; they must take Christ

and his yoke, Christ and his cross, as well as Christ and his crown.

“4. The feast of unleavened bread was typical of the Christian life (1 Corinthians 5:7, 8). The Jews were very strict as to the passover, so that no leaven should be found in their houses. It must be a feast kept in charity, without the leaven of malice; and in sincerity, without the leaven of hypocrisy.”

—Sis. Angela Gellenbeck

REFLECTIONS

I am the oldest child, the oldest son, in my family. Growing up, my mother often referred to me as her firstborn son. Naturally, as a youth the story of the Passover resonated with me quite strongly. It wasn't hard to imagine what would have been if I had lived during that time. Would my parents have obeyed exactly the instructions of God given to Moses and proclaimed to the people, sparing my life? Or would they have missed some small detail, or even worse, not known about or even cared about, the orders given, thereby leading to my destruction by the death angel?

I am grateful that the Passover through which the Israelites lived was a type of what was to come, used by God to establish what He would do once and for all through His own firstborn Son, Jesus Christ! God allowed the perfect Lamb to be killed, not one bone broken, and the blood of that Lamb flows freely for anyone who will access it!

Since Jesus' sacrifice, neither I nor any other person, need worry about whether anyone else has applied the blood for our salvation. If one is willing to be circumcised in heart and, as more than one song states, "the blood has been applied" to the doorposts of his or her heart also, that person will not be a stranger to God and may live under the covenant of the Passover forever.

—Bro. Fari Matthews

FEBRUARY 16, 2020
DELIVERANCE AT THE RED SEA

(Background Reading: Exodus 13:17-22; 14 and 15)

Nehemiah 9:8b For thou art righteous:

9 And didst see the affliction of our fathers in Egypt, and heardest their cry by the Red sea;

10 And shewedst signs and wonders upon Pharaoh, and on all his servants, and on all the people of his land: for thou knewest that they dealt proudly against them. So didst thou get thee a name, as it is this day.

11 And thou didst divide the sea before them, so that they went through the midst of the sea on the dry land; and their persecutors thou threwest into the deeps, as a stone into the mighty waters.

12 Moreover thou leddest them in the day by a cloudy pillar; and in the night by a pillar of fire, to give them light in the way wherein they should go.

Psalms 106:7 Our fathers understood not thy wonders in Egypt; they remembered not the multitude of thy mercies; but provoked him at the sea, even at the Red sea.

8 Nevertheless he saved them for his name's sake, that he might make his mighty power to be known.

9 He rebuked the Red sea also, and it was dried up: so he led them through the depths, as through the wilderness.

10 And he saved them from the hand of him that hated them, and redeemed them from the hand of the enemy.

11 And the waters covered their enemies: there was not one of them left.

12 Then believed they his words; they sang his praise.

MEMORY VERSE: By faith they passed through the Red sea as by dry land: which the Egyptians assaying to do were drowned.

—**Hebrews 11:29**

CENTRAL THOUGHT: The children of Israel left Egypt and camped by the Red Sea, entrapped by mountains, the sea and the pursuing Egyptians. At Moses' cry, God sent an east wind and divided the sea, allowing the children of Israel to pass through on dry land; after which He destroyed the Egyptians in the middle of the sea.

LESSON BACKGROUND

The scriptures from Nehemiah are from the words of the Levites as they stood on the stairs before an assembly of fasting, repentant Jews, after having read the book of the law of the Lord for three hours and offered confession and worship another three hours. In this prayer, given with a loud voice, they repeated the story of Israel's deliverance from Egypt and the Red Sea.

Psalm 106 is thought to be a prayer of the captives in Babylon as the Jews gathered to confess their sins and ask God to restore them to their own land. They also recounted the history of their deliverance from Egypt and the triumph at the Red Sea. The writer of Hebrews added this to his account of heroes of faith.

The story is told in full in Exodus, chapters 13, 14 and 15. As soon as Pharaoh let them go, God was right there to lead them. He furnished a constant, visible pillar of cloud in the daytime and a pillar of fire at night to go before them. First, He led them around the land of the Philistines because He knew they would immediately return to Egypt if they were met with a military obstacle. Carrying Joseph's bones, as he had commanded years before, they camped that night at the edge of the wilderness by the sea. God communicated continually with Moses, preparing him for what was ahead.

The murmuring that went up from the Israelites when they saw the approaching Egyptians was the first of many times in their journey to Canaan. "Didn't we tell you back in Egypt? You should have left us to serve the Egyptians rather than die out here in the wilderness!" Moses was bolstered by his preparation from the Lord. He knew God was in control! His words to Israel have cheered many a weary pilgrim through the years. "Stand still and see the salvation of the LORD! The LORD will fight for you!"

The Lord told Moses to stretch out his hand over the sea. He moved the pillar of cloud to a position between the camp of Israel and the Egyptians. All night long, the Israelite side of the pillar was a glowing fire, the Egyptian side was thick darkness, and a strong east wind blew, making a dry path through the middle with walls of water on either side. In the early morning, God's people—men, women, children, belongings, flocks and herds—marched between the walls of water to the other side. Immediately, the Egyptians followed. The

unique way Exodus 14:24 describes this is “the Lord looked through the pillar...and troubled the host of the Egyptians.” His presence was on Israel’s side! Beware to all those on the opposing side!

The Lord so disturbed the Egyptians that the wheels fell off their chariots, and they began to flee on foot. At that moment God caused the waters to fall back upon the fleeing army. As their dead bodies began to wash up on the shore, the Israelites were filled with awe.

Chapter fifteen is the inspired song of Moses and the people; Miriam also took a timbrel and led the other women in a triumphant dance. “Sing ye to the Lord, for He hath triumphed gloriously; the horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea” (Exodus 15:21).

—Sis. Angela Gellenbeck

DISCUSSION:

1. Tell of other scriptures which mention the victory at the Red Sea.
2. Describe the special way God led His people by day and night.
3. What detail is included in Exodus 13 that was the fulfillment of a request by Joseph?
4. God predicted what Pharaoh would think and say. What words in Exodus 14 describe the difficult place about which Pharaoh gloated?
5. What promise did God make to the Israelites about the Egyptians, and did He fulfill it?
6. In Exodus 15:3 Moses calls God a _____ of _____.

COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

It really touches my heart to see how tenderly God led His people. He made sure they avoided a war situation. He knew and pitied their fragile faith! He gave them a physical sign of His presence. He proved that He is the God of the day and the God of the night. He stood between the faltering Israelites and their enemy who said, “I will overtake, I will divide the spoil; my lust shall be satisfied upon them; I will draw my sword, my hand shall destroy them (Exodus 15:9). On His children’s side, He was light to them. “When I sit in darkness, the Lord shall be a light unto me” (Micah 7:8). On the enemy’s side, He was darkness and trouble (Exodus 14:24). The word “troubled” in this passage is described in Psalm 77:16-20. “The waters saw thee, O God, the waters saw thee; they were afraid: the depths also were troubled. The clouds poured out water: the skies

sent out a sound: thine arrows also went abroad. The voice of thy thunder was in the heaven: the lightnings lightened the world: the earth trembled and shook. Thy way is in the sea, and thy path in the great waters, and thy footsteps are not known. Thou leddest thy people like a flock by the hand of Moses and Aaron."

Friend, this is the God who cares for you! This is what He does when we cry to Him when we are being pursued by the enemy. Stand still, even if you feel "entangled in the land" and the wilderness has shut you in; see the salvation of the LORD, who will fight for you.

—Sis. Angela Gellenbeck

REFLECTIONS

How frightening it must have been for the children of Israel to face the Red Sea with no hope of crossing. They heard the hoof beats of the Egyptian horses and the grinding of the chariot wheels coming rapidly behind them. The Israelites were no match for the battle that would surely ensue. But, the Lord commanded Moses to "stand still and see the salvation of the Lord." The Red Sea was parted by a strong wind which dried up the sea bed so that the people of God could pass safely through. No doubt there was still great fear as they witnessed their enemies take advantage of crossing the Red Sea on dry land! However, those circumstances quickly changed for the Egyptians. Their chariot wheels came off and the horses would not budge. The deliverance God gave the Israelites in crossing the Red Sea also proved to be the complete destruction of their enemies. There was no need for a bridge to be built or a sword to be raised. What a mighty God we serve!

"Enemies may strive to injure, Satan all his arts employ;
He will turn what seems to harm me, Into everlasting joy."

—Sis. LaDawna Adams

FEBRUARY 23, 2020

QUAIL AND MANNA FROM HEAVEN AND WATER FROM THE ROCK

(Background Reading: Exodus 15:22-27; 16; 17:1-7; John 6:31-58)

Psalm 78:15 He clave the rocks in the wilderness, and gave them drink as out of the great depths.

16 He brought streams also out of the rock, and caused waters

to run down like rivers.

24 And had rained down manna upon them to eat, and had given them of the corn of heaven.

25 Man did eat angels' food: he sent them meat to the full.

I Corinthians 10:1 Moreover, brethren, I would not that ye should be ignorant, how that all our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea;

2 And were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea;

3 And did all eat the same spiritual meat;

4 And did all drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ.

MEMORY VERSE: The people asked, and he brought quails, and satisfied them with the bread of heaven. He opened the rock, and the waters gushed out; they ran in the dry places like a river. For he remembered his holy promise, and Abraham his servant.

—**Psalm 105:40-42**

CENTRAL THOUGHT: After the Red Sea, the Israelites faced bitter water, lack of food, and no water; in all three conditions they murmured against the Lord, Moses cried to the Lord, and the Lord brought them water and food miraculously.

WORD DEFINITIONS

Psalm 78:24 “Manna”: From Hebrew *man* or *mah* (what?) and *hu* (is it). It was described as being a small, round thing, white, like hoar-frost on the ground, the size of coriander seed, and tasted like wafers made with honey, fresh oil, or cakes baked with oil. They could beat it, grind it, and bake or boil it. Someone who gathered too much could share so another person who had too little could be supplied. They were not to gather extra so it could be hoarded for the next day, except on the day before the Sabbath when they were to gather enough for the Sabbath also. When one did try to gather extra and hoard it on days other than the Sabbath, it would stink and breed worms. Manna appeared each day except the Sabbath for as long as the Israelites journeyed in the wilderness. When they harvested the new corn in Canaan, it suddenly disappeared and no more was supplied (Joshua 5:12). It has been called the bread of

heaven, corn of heaven, angels' food, and bread of the mighty. (References include: Exodus 16:14-36; Numbers 11:7-9; 11:5; Joshua 5:12; Psalm 78:24-25).

I Corinthians 10:3 "Spiritual meat": food that came from heaven.

LESSON BACKGROUND

After their victory at the Red Sea, the Israelites traveled for three days in the wilderness with no water. Coming to Marah, they complained because the water they found there was bitter. God instructed Moses to throw a tree into the water, making it sweet, and establishing a statute that He would heal all their diseases if they would diligently hearken and obey all of God's commandments. Soon they camped at Elim, an oasis with twelve wells of water and seventy palm trees.

Coming into the wilderness of Sin, west of Mount Sinai, the whole congregation murmured against Moses and Aaron (Exodus 16:3). At this third murmuring God told Moses, "I will rain bread from heaven for you." He also provided quail for them that evening before sending the manna the next morning.

Some people went against God's instructions for gathering the manna and tried to save a portion for the next day, for which they were rewarded with wormy, smelly manna. Others tried to gather on the Sabbath, but God rebuked them, commanded them to rest in their places on the Sabbath, and eat the manna which had been baked the day before. As a testimony of His provision to the generations, God commanded Moses and Aaron to preserve an omer of manna in a golden pot. In the New Testament, Jesus applied the concept of the manna to Himself (John 6).

Their next stop was Rephidim, where again the people murmured. This fourth murmuring was especially offensive to God, who called it "tempting" Him, because they said, "Is the LORD among us, or not?" (Later, in Deuteronomy 6:16, He even made a specific command, "Ye shall not tempt the LORD your God, as ye tempted him in Massah.") This time, there wasn't just bitter water, there was NO water. Moses feared for his life as he once again cried to the Lord. God told him to take his rod and smite the rock in Mt. Horeb. He promised to go before him and stand upon the rock, and that

water would come out of it for the people to drink. Psalm 78:16 says the water ran down like rivers. It was no feeble stream that came out and watered over a million people and herds of animals! The apostle Paul wrote that the rock was Jesus Christ; indeed, it is a perfect type of Christ being the fountain-source of our salvation. Christ's body was broken and wounded so that we could be redeemed; also from His sacrifice came the promised Holy Spirit, the living Water (John 7:38-39).

—Sis. Angela Gellenbeck

DISCUSSION:

1. Give the different Biblical terms for manna.
2. Explain the instructions for gathering manna during the week.
3. Explain the special instructions for gathering on the Sabbath.
4. Describe the four instances of murmuring.
5. Why was the fourth so offensive to God?
6. Share how the manna points to Jesus Christ.
7. Share how the smitten Rock points to Jesus Christ.

COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

After the Red Sea, it would seem that the Israelites would never doubt or murmur again. Yet in every difficulty they went into panic mode. They accused Moses, and ultimately God, of bringing them into the wilderness to kill them. God answered by turning bitter water into sweet. He led them into a pleasant oasis. He sent quails flying right into their camp. Morning by morning they picked up an amazing, multivitamin super-food—pleasantly flavored, a little sweet. They watched the rock split under Moses' rod, and quenched their thirst with torrents of water gushing down the mountainside.

Are you tasting the bitter waters of affliction? Jehovah-Rapha is there to be your healer. "Can God furnish a table in the wilderness?" You can answer that like David, "Thou preparest a table before me," because Jesus is the true bread from heaven. He is the heavenly manna. And He is also the source of Living Water. No matter where we are or how hot and dry is our desert situation, Jesus is everlasting life to us.

Let us refuse to doubt His sustaining presence. If it angered the Lord when, after many miraculous deliverances, the Israelites threw at God, “Are you with us or not,” how grieved must He be when we resentfully look at our circumstances and wonder if our Lord has deserted us?

—Sis. Angela Gellenbeck

REFLECTIONS

By the time the children of Israel reached the wilderness, there was much evidence of God’s power and care for them. They saw the plagues brought upon the Egyptians. They witnessed the pillar of cloud by day and fire by night which led them. They passed through the Red Sea and saw the Egyptian army destroyed before their eyes. They ate bread from heaven, and drank water from a rock. Still they murmured and stumbled in unbelief.

Unbelief is often a result of being shortsighted, of focusing on the immediate need or crisis. It overlooks or is forgetful of the faithfulness of God. It doesn’t perceive the Hand that is guiding toward the eternal. In contrast, faith is based on the “evidence” of a God who revealed Himself through His Word. Faith is also established through creation which proclaims a most wondrous Creator. And finally, it is confirmed by His personal workings with every single soul. When faith is being tested, two things will help it to not be shaken: looking back at the faithfulness of God and forward to things eternal.

The songwriter of “How Firm a Foundation” asks a challenging question: “What more can He say, than to you He hath said...?” Today, you get to decide if the evidence God has given you is enough. Will you believe, or will you continue in unbelief?

—Sis. Sarah L. Herron

MARCH 1, 2020

THE GIVING OF THE LAW AT MOUNT SINAI

(Background Reading: Exodus 17:8-16; 18; 19; 20; Deuteronomy 5)

Exodus 19:1 In the third month, when the children of Israel were gone forth out of the land of Egypt, the same day came they into the wilderness of Sinai.

2 For they were departed from Rephidim, and were come to the desert of Sinai, and had pitched in the wilderness; and there Israel

camped before the mount.

3 And Moses went up unto God, and the LORD called unto him out of the mountain, saying, Thus shalt thou say to the house of Jacob, and tell the children of Israel;

4 Ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and how I bare you on eagles' wings, and brought you unto myself.

5 Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine:

6 And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation. These are the words which thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel.

7 And Moses came and called for the elders of the people, and laid before their faces all these words which the LORD commanded him.

8 And all the people answered together, and said, All that the LORD hath spoken we will do. And Moses returned the words of the people unto the LORD.

9 And the LORD said unto Moses, Lo, I come unto thee in a thick cloud, that the people may hear when I speak with thee, and believe thee for ever. And Moses told the words of the people unto the LORD.

10 And the LORD said unto Moses, Go unto the people, and sanctify them to day and to morrow, and let them wash their clothes,

11 And be ready against the third day: for the third day the LORD will come down in the sight of all the people upon mount Sinai.

12 And thou shalt set bounds unto the people round about, saying, Take heed to yourselves, that ye go not up into the mount, or touch the border of it: whosoever toucheth the mount shall be surely put to death:

13 There shall not an hand touch it, but he shall surely be stoned, or shot through; whether it be beast or man, it shall not live: when the trumpet soundeth long, they shall come up to the mount.

14 And Moses went down from the mount unto the people, and sanctified the people; and they washed their clothes.

15 And he said unto the people, Be ready against the third day: come not at your wives.

16 And it came to pass on the third day in the morning, that there were thunders and lightnings, and a thick cloud upon the

mount, and the voice of the trumpet exceeding loud; so that all the people that was in the camp trembled.

17 And Moses brought forth the people out of the camp to meet with God; and they stood at the nether part of the mount.

18 And mount Sinai was altogether on a smoke, because the LORD descended upon it in fire: and the smoke thereof ascended as the smoke of a furnace, and the whole mount quaked greatly.

19 And when the voice of the trumpet sounded long, and waxed louder and louder, Moses spake, and God answered him by a voice.

Exodus 20:1 And God spake all these words, saying,

2 I am the LORD thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.

3 Thou shalt have no other gods before me.

4 Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth:

5 Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the LORD thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me;

6 And shewing mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments.

7 Thou shalt not take the name of the LORD thy God in vain; for the LORD will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain.

8 Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy.

9 Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work:

10 But the seventh day is the sabbath of the LORD thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates:

11 For in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the LORD blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it.

12 Honour thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long upon the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee.

13 Thou shalt not kill.

14 Thou shalt not commit adultery.

15 Thou shalt not steal.

16 Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour.

17 Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's house, thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's wife, nor his manservant, nor his maidservant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor any thing that is thy neighbour's.

MEMORY VERSE: The LORD came from Sinai, and rose up from Seir unto them; he shined forth from mount Paran, and he came with ten thousands of saints: from his right hand went a fiery law for them. —**Deuteronomy 33:2**

CENTRAL THOUGHT: After a safe deliverance from the attack of the Amalekites in Rephidim and a visit from Moses' father-in-law, Jethro, and Moses' wife and two sons, God led the children of Israel to Mount Sinai, where, after definite instructions for preparation, He gave the Ten Commandments to them.

WORD DEFINITIONS

Exodus 19:1 "In the third month": about fifty days after the exodus from Egypt God gave the Ten Commandments.

Exodus 19:4 "I bare you on eagles' wings": an expression of the strength, care and tenderness of God's deliverance from Egypt. "And brought you unto myself": the journey from Egypt to Sinai, the place where God revealed Himself to them; or possibly, the whole journey from the idolatry of Egypt to the true worship of Jehovah.

Exodus 19:5 "Peculiar treasure": from a Hebrew root meaning *to acquire*. Of Israel it is said that God "redeemed" them or "purchased" them and therefore has the right to claim them for His own.

Exodus 19:13 "There shall not an hand touch it": rather, There shall not an hand touch **him**, meaning, that if a person or animal broke through the boundary, another person would not be allowed to go beyond the bounds and apprehend him; instead, he would be stoned or shot with an arrow.

Exodus 19:13 and 19: "Trumpet": a long, curved wind instrument shaped like a horn; a ram's horn.

Exodus 20:5 "A jealous God": demanding exclusive service; one who will not see His glory given to another nor allow a rival. "Visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children": "God again manifestly does by the laws which obtain in his moral universe, entail on children many consequences of their parents' ill-doing—as the

diseases which arise from profligacy or intemperance, the poverty which is the result of idleness or extravagance, the ignorance and evil habits which are the fruit of a neglected education. It is this sort of visitation which is intended here. The children and grandchildren of idolaters would start in life under disadvantages. The vicious lives of their parents would have sown in them the seeds both of physical and moral evil. They would commonly be brought up in wrong courses, have their moral sense early perverted, and so suffer for their parents' faults. It would be difficult for them to rise out of their unhappy condition. Still, 'each would bear his own iniquity.' Each would 'be judged by that he had, not by that he had not.' An all-wise God would, in the final award, make allowance for the disadvantages of birth and inherited disposition, and would assign to each that position to which his own conduct—his struggles, efforts, endeavours after right—entitled him. The visitation intended consists in temporal disadvantages, not in the final award of happiness or misery" (*Pulpit Commentary*).

LESSON BACKGROUND

As the huge company of men, women and children marched onward toward Sinai, those who were weak and sick, the elderly, and the very young, who most likely occupied the back part of the caravan were suddenly attacked by the Amalekites (Exodus 17:8-16). In the battle that ensued, Moses stood at the top of the hill and held up his rod over the defending Israelite army led by Joshua. When he grew weary, Aaron and Hur seated him on a stone and each held up his arms steadily until sundown and the army of Amalek was defeated. A memorial book was written for the occasion and an altar was erected which was named Jehovah-nissi, "The Lord our Banner/Victory."

The tale of Israel's trials and triumphs spread to where Moses' father-in-law, Jethro, lived and he decided to take Moses' wife, Zipporah and their two sons, Gershom and Eliezer, back to join Moses (Exodus 18). They built an altar of worship together, offering sacrifices and enjoying a fellowship feast. Jethro noticed that Moses was exhausted from dealing with the legal matters, quarrels and problems from such a large company of people. Before he left he helped establish a representative type of judicial system, which

greatly relieved Moses' burdens.

Now they were in the desert of Sinai, camped before the mountain. God called Moses up to the mountain and gave him instructions; Moses then instructed the elders, who carried the message to the people. The people gave consent to God's words, "All that the LORD hath spoken we will do." In Deuteronomy 5, Moses reminded the congregation of what God had said and what they had answered, and how God had responded with this heartfelt cry: "O that there were such an heart in them, that they would fear me, and keep all my commandments always, that it might be well with them, and with their children forever!" All of God's desire for His people, His commandments and His decisions centered on their wellbeing!

—Sis. Angela Gellenbeck

DISCUSSION:

1. Summarize the events since the Israelites left Egypt.
2. About how many days were between Egypt and Sinai?
3. How did God describe His dealings with His people?
4. List the ten commandments.
5. From Deuteronomy 5:29, state God's longing which revealed His intention behind the laws He gave them.

COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

"The promulgation of the Ten Commandments stands out as the most notable event in all the wilderness sojourn of Israel. There was no greater day in history before the coming of the Son of God into the world" (*International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*).

The Jewish feast of Pentecost, the fiftieth day after Passover, commemorated the giving of the law at Mt. Sinai. A comparison may be made between the giving of the law at Sinai and the giving of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. Sinai was the establishment of the law covenant between Jehovah and His chosen people, called by Stephen the "church in the wilderness." Pentecost was the establishment of the new covenant of grace between Christ and the New Testament church. In each there was tempestuous wind and fire.

The memory verse picks up on the idea of *fire*. "From his right

hand went a fiery law for them.” Months before, when Moses had been at this very place in the desert, God had called to him out of a fiery bush. In Hebrews 12:29 God is said to be a “consuming fire.” In the vision Daniel had of the throne of God, it was “like the fiery flame, and his wheels as burning fire. A fiery stream issued and came forth from before him” (Daniel 7:9-10). Fire has a fearful, consuming quality, yes; however, fire also has beneficial qualities such as warmth, energy and light. When I consider the intent of this fiery law that went forth from Him—the wellbeing of mankind—I begin to see the fire as the fire of Divine love. D. S. Warner, in his song, “Fire in the Soul” (ELS #222), writes, “Yes, ‘tis love, ‘tis burning love divine, Filling all my soul’s desire, Oh, how sweet its glories ever shine! Now I feel the glowing fire.” Indeed, Jesus and the New Testament writers apply the fulfillment of all of the Mosaic law to the law of love—love to God and love to man (Matthew 22:40; Romans 13:10; Galatians 5:14).

There are many other lessons and applications in this story which we do not have time to discuss. Each of the commandments has great spiritual meaning and much could be said of the way Jesus applied them to the heart.

—Sis. Angela Gellenbeck

REFLECTIONS

Laws, though restrictive in nature, are the true essence of freedom. Man has never existed without them. Adam was given one law, that had he obeyed, would have ensured his liberty and that of his offspring. The world would be a different place today had he adhered to the one restriction God commanded of him.

The breaking of that one law created the necessity for all subsequent laws. Self-governance was the initial objective. It remains the objective. The commandments that God gave on Mt Sinai were pointed and personal: thou shalt.... Though He speaks to all Israel collectively, it is a message to each one of them individually and to us as well.

The message is simple: thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and... thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. That love is manifested by self-restraint and self-regulation. It constrains us to

stop where our liberty encroaches on the rights and freedoms of our fellowman. It penetrates our private thoughts and uncovers any seed of dishonesty, covetousness or anything else that may negatively impact our brother. It forces us to examine our reverence for God and our relationship with Him. Do we have the proper respect for God? Is the dominant place in our heart reserved for Him alone or is there a rival? Our actions reveal our answers.

The law gives us a glimpse into the character of the Lawgiver and the expectations He has of us. For any nation to function effectively there must be laws that govern them. These commands were not just given to, and for the nation of Israel, they are for the benefit of every nation. They continue to be just as vitally important today as when they were given to Moses on Mt Sinai.

Laws are inherent to liberty; without them there can be no freedom.

—Bro. Darrell Johnson

MARCH 8, 2020
THE BUILDING OF THE TABERNACLE
(Background Reading: Exodus 21-40)

Exodus 24:16 And the glory of the LORD abode upon mount Sinai, and the cloud covered it six days: and the seventh day he called unto Moses out of the midst of the cloud.

17 And the sight of the glory of the LORD was like devouring fire on the top of the mount in the eyes of the children of Israel.

18 And Moses went into the midst of the cloud, and gat him up into the mount: and Moses was in the mount forty days and forty nights.

Exodus 25:1 And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying,

2 Speak unto the children of Israel, that they bring me an offering: of every man that giveth it willingly with his heart ye shall take my offering.

3 And this is the offering which ye shall take of them; gold, and silver, and brass,

4 And blue, and purple, and scarlet, and fine linen, and goats' hair,

5 And rams' skins dyed red, and badgers' skins, and shittim

wood,

6 Oil for the light, spices for anointing oil, and for sweet incense,

7 Onyx stones, and stones to be set in the ephod, and in the breastplate.

8 And let them make me a sanctuary; that I may dwell among them.

9 According to all that I shew thee, after the pattern of the tabernacle, and the pattern of all the instruments thereof, even so shall ye make it.

Exodus 31:1 And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying,

2 See, I have called by name Bezaleel the son of Uri, the son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah:

3 And I have filled him with the spirit of God, in wisdom, and in understanding, and in knowledge, and in all manner of workmanship,

4 To devise cunning works, to work in gold, and in silver, and in brass,

5 And in cutting of stones, to set them, and in carving of timber, to work in all manner of workmanship.

6 And I, behold, I have given with him Aholiab, the son of Ahisamach, of the tribe of Dan: and in the hearts of all that are wise hearted I have put wisdom, that they may make all that I have commanded thee;

7 The tabernacle of the congregation, and the ark of the testimony, and the mercy seat that is thereupon, and all the furniture of the tabernacle,

8 And the table and his furniture, and the pure candlestick with all his furniture, and the altar of incense,

9 And the altar of burnt offering with all his furniture, and the laver and his foot,

10 And the cloths of service, and the holy garments for Aaron the priest, and the garments of his sons, to minister in the priest's office,

11 And the anointing oil, and sweet incense for the holy place: according to all that I have commanded thee shall they do.

Exodus 40:17 And it came to pass in the first month in the second year, on the first day of the month, that the tabernacle was reared up.

18 And Moses reared up the tabernacle, and fastened his

sockets, and set up the boards thereof, and put in the bars thereof, and reared up his pillars.

33 And he reared up the court round about the tabernacle and the altar, and set up the hanging of the court gate. So Moses finished the work.

34 Then a cloud covered the tent of the congregation, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle.

35 And Moses was not able to enter into the tent of the congregation, because the cloud abode thereon, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle.

MEMORY VERSE: But Christ being come an high priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building; Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us.

—**Hebrews 9:11-12**

CENTRAL THOUGHT: Much of the law which God gave to Moses while he was in the mountain with God was the pattern for the tabernacle—its materials, measurements, furniture, and rituals—and instructions as to who would build it. When the work was finished, the glory of God filled the tabernacle, a glorious foreshadowing of the spiritual tabernacle established by the Lord Jesus Christ.

WORD DEFINITIONS

Exodus 25:3 “Brass”: copper or bronze, a compound of copper and tin. “To understand how the Israelites could supply all that was wanted, we must remember, 1. That they had a certain amount of ancestral wealth, as that which Joseph had accumulated, and what Jacob and his sons had brought with them into Egypt. 2. That they had received large presents of gold and silver from the Egyptians just before their departure (Exodus 12:35); and 3. That they had recently defeated, and no doubt despoiled, the Amalekites (Exodus 17:8-13)” (*Pulpit Commentary*).

Exodus 25:5 “Badgers’ skins”: possibly “a species of seal found in the Red Sea. Burckhardt remarks that he ‘saw parts of the skin of a

large fish, killed on the coast, which was an inch in thickness, and is employed by the Arabs instead of leather for sandals.' Others think it was an animal of the antelope species, the skins of which the Jews had obtained in Egypt" (*ATS Bible Dictionary*). "Shittim wood": a species of acacia wood.

Exodus 25:7 "Onyx": *shosham* (Hebrew), which refers to a fingernail. It has been translated variously as "sard," "sardonyx," "onyx," and "beryl." As the color of the flesh shines through the nail, so the reddish layer below shines through the whitish surface of the onyx.

Exodus 40:17 "The first month in the second year": "It is generally supposed that the Israelites began the work of the tabernacle about the sixth month after they had left Egypt; and as the work was finished about the end of the first year of their exodus, (for it was set up the first day of the second year), that therefore they had spent about six months in making it: so that the tabernacle was erected one year [minus] fifteen days after they had left Egypt" (*Clarke's Commentary*).

LESSON BACKGROUND

After God finished giving the Ten Commandments, the people stood far off, but Moses drew near to the thick darkness where God was and God continued to give him various laws and ordinances, commandments and promises, one of which was "Behold, I send an Angel before thee, to keep thee in the way ... Beware of him, and obey his voice, provoke him not...." Moses told the people all that God had said, and they entered into a covenant of blood, agreeing to obey all He had commanded them. Moses, Aaron, Aaron's sons and seventy elders had a special experience where they saw the throne of God and feasted in His presence; after which Moses took Joshua, telling the elders, "Wait for us. If you have any needs, Aaron and Hur are here for you," and the two of them went up the mountain. Joshua waited on the slopes for Moses, but Moses went up into the cloud and was gone forty days and nights. While he was there, all the instructions contained within chapters 25 through 31 of Exodus were given to him; in addition to the two tables of "testimony, tables of stone, written with the finger of God" (Exodus 31:18).

During the 40-day delay, the waiting congregation grew restless and skeptical. In Stephen's account (Acts 7:39), they refused to obey the "Angel" and "in their hearts turned back again into Egypt." They complained to Aaron and demanded him to make idols for them. The golden calf he created from their own jewelry was erected, and an altar was made before it. It is interesting to note that Aaron commanded, "Tomorrow is a feast to the LORD." They had all night to contemplate their doings!

The scripture says they rose "early ... and offered burnt offerings, and brought peace offerings; and the people sat down to eat, and to drink, and rose up to play" (Exodus 32:6). God spoke to Moses on the mountain and revealed what they were doing, ready to destroy them immediately. Moses pleaded for their pardon, and God turned away His anger. As Moses and Joshua descended, they could hear the riotous music and dancing. This time Moses became angry and threw down the tables of stone, breaking them physically as the disobedient Hebrews had done spiritually, burnt the golden calf to powder, mixed it into the water, and made the people drink it. More punishment ensued, and when the day was done, three thousand men were dead. Moses continued to intercede with God for the people, who, when they heard the threatenings of God's wrath and realized that He had withdrawn His presence from them, put off their jewelry and mourned. Moses erected a small "tabernacle" or tent outside the camp for the purpose of seeking God, and the cloudy pillar descended once more. In Exodus 33:11 we read that Joshua, a young man, "departed not out of the tabernacle"—a small hint of the source of Joshua's spirit of bravery and might!

Moses again went up into the mount with God for forty more days (Exodus 34). There the glory of God passed by him and God made a covenant with him. When he came back with two new tables of testimony, his face was shining so much that the people begged him to cover it with a veil. He wore it while he conveyed all that the Lord had shown him. They immediately set to work building the tabernacle according to the pattern God had revealed.

—Sis. Angela Gellenbeck

DISCUSSION:

1. How many total days was Moses in the mountain with God?
2. How had the children of Israel acquired their jewels and fabrics which they now willingly donated to build the tabernacle?
3. Name the two craftsmen appointed by God to direct the building of the tabernacle.
4. About how long did it take to build the tabernacle?
5. What took place when the tabernacle was all completed?

COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

Although the Israelites had grieved and angered God by worshipping the golden calf, He forgave them and went forward with His original plan to have them build a special place of worship where He would meet with them and commune with them (Exodus 25:22). In this we can see the longsuffering and mercy of God.

We can see the love God has for order and beauty and His meticulous attention to detail as we consider the specifications for the sanctuary, the furniture, and the rites of worship. His desire to commune intimately with His people can be seen as well. His holiness was symbolically written in the details of color, fabrics, and embroidery, as well as in the pure gold that was used so lavishly.

The New Testament—the book of Hebrews in particular—takes these details and applies them directly to the plan of salvation and the worship of the New Testament church. Moses was a type of Christ, who erected His own “tabernacle,” the Church, with whom He dwells and communes. The rituals of cleansing and atonement point to Christ, who with His own blood now makes the worshippers holy (Hebrews 9:14; 10:10). The continual burning lamps and incense, the bread, the mercy seat, the altars, the offerings, the laver, the curtains—each has its significant meaning in the experience of the redeemed one.

It is not my intention to study these things in depth in this lesson; however, by personal study of these details we can discern much about God’s plan to save, sanctify and preserve a pure and holy people for sacred communion and spiritual worship.

—Sis. Angela Gellenbeck

REFLECTIONS

God enjoys variety. He also enjoys patterns. To illustrate this, one need only look at the various intricate patterns found in nature. For instance, every snowflake follows a hexagonal pattern, but every single snowflake that has ever fallen has been uniquely formed so that none are exactly the same! The rainbow, in all its beauty, demonstrates the variety of colors across the spectrum presented in mathematical precision through angles and refraction. The Fibonacci sequence, a numerical pattern of numbers, is identified as the basis of a mathematical ratio found in the spiral formation of shells, hurricanes, solar systems, various systems of the human body, and even shows up in musical patterns!

In the building of His tabernacle, we can see through God's use of the many types of materials, the myriad colors, and special human skillsets the ability of the Creator to orchestrate such a grand project. Each precious stone or metal, each fabric or wood species, each dye, oil, or spice used, all individually bring glory to God, but what beauty must have been evident when they were woven into a glorious tapestry within which God was so pleased to dwell!

That tableau of the tabernacle in the wilderness translates in much the same way to you and me today. As human beings we all share approximately 99.83% of our DNA. As those that have been redeemed, we all have come back to God through the blood of Jesus Christ. Yet, with that small percentage or uniqueness that makes each of us individuals, along with our unique experiences and the various giftings that God has imparted to His body, He takes each of us as vessels yielded to Him and blends us all together through His Holy Spirit into a glorious Church in which He is content to abide. Thank the Lord that "...the tabernacle of God is with men..." (Revelation 21:3a)!

—Bro. Fari Matthews

MARCH 15, 2020

TRIALS AND TRIUMPHS IN THE WILDERNESS

(Background Reading: Leviticus 10, Numbers 10-17; 21)

Psalm 106:13 They soon forgot his works; they waited not for his counsel:

14 But lusted exceedingly in the wilderness, and tempted God in the desert.

15 And he gave them their request; but sent leanness into their soul.

16 They envied Moses also in the camp, and Aaron the saint of the LORD.

17 The earth opened and swallowed up Dathan, and covered the company of Abiram.

18 And a fire was kindled in their company; the flame burned up the wicked.

24 Yea, they despised the pleasant land, they believed not his word:

25 But murmured in their tents, and hearkened not unto the voice of the LORD.

26 Therefore he lifted up his hand against them, to overthrow them in the wilderness:

27 To overthrow their seed also among the nations, and to scatter them in the lands.

28 They joined themselves also unto Baalpeor, and ate the sacrifices of the dead.

29 Thus they provoked him to anger with their inventions: and the plague brake in upon them.

30 Then stood up Phinehas, and executed judgment: and so the plague was stayed.

31 And that was counted unto him for righteousness unto all generations for evermore.

32 They angered him also at the waters of strife, so that it went ill with Moses for their sakes:

33 Because they provoked his spirit, so that he spake unadvisedly with his lips.

I Corinthians 10:5 But with many of them God was not well pleased: for they were overthrown in the wilderness.

6 Now these things were our examples, to the intent we should not lust after evil things, as they also lusted.

7 Neither be ye idolaters, as were some of them; as it is written, The people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play.

8 Neither let us commit fornication, as some of them committed, and fell in one day three and twenty thousand.

9 Neither let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, and

were destroyed of serpents.

10 Neither murmur ye, as some of them also murmured, and were destroyed of the destroyer.

11 Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come.

12 Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall.

13 There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.

14 Wherefore, my dearly beloved, flee from idolatry.

MEMORY VERSE: Wherefore (as the Holy Ghost saith, To day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts, as in the provocation in the day of temptation in the wilderness: when your fathers tempted me, proved me, and saw my works forty years. —**Hebrews 3:7-9**

CENTRAL THOUGHT: During their journey in the wilderness, the Israelites were led by God through many tests, temptations, and chastenings; to humble them, try them and prove them, and bring them triumphantly to the land of promise.

WORD DEFINITIONS

Psalm 106:13 “They waited not”: or, “did not wait for the development of God’s plans.”

Psalm 106:16 “Saint”: one set apart to be holy unto the Lord; priest. This was applied more to his official sanctity rather than his personal holiness.

LESSON BACKGROUND

In today’s lesson we will consider notable times of Israel’s murmuring or disobedience, and God’s chastening which followed.

In Leviticus 10, after the tabernacle and its system of worship had been established and the fire from the Lord had fallen as a sign of His blessing, two sons of Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, recklessly and

presumably offered strange fire on the altar. They were immediately consumed with fire from the Lord. In the word from the Lord which followed, Aaron and his sons were commanded not to drink wine or strong drink when they went into the tabernacle, which leads us to believe that Nadab and Abihu had behaved so recklessly because they had been drinking. When we consider that shortly before, they had been present with the elders who saw a rare and beautiful vision of the throne of God, it makes us realize how responsible they were in God's sight.

The next example we will note is in Numbers 11. The people complained, angering the Lord, and again He sent fire to consume them until they repented. Shortly afterward they complained again, this time about the manna they ate every day. "Our soul is dried away," they wept. God's anger was kindled again, and Moses was so despondent he prayed to die. God answered in two ways. First, he put the spirit of prophecy upon the seventy elders, ordaining them to help bear Moses' immense burden.

The other way God answered was to send a windfall of quail, "Until it come out at your nostrils," the Lord said. Even while the meat was in their mouths, God sent a plague upon them. They memorialized the place where so many died in their greed, "Kibroth-hattavah," or "The Graves of Lust." "He gave them their request, but sent leanness (or, 'a wasting') to their souls"—the same souls which they had bitterly insisted were "dried up" from the daily manna!

The 12th chapter of Numbers records the envy and racial prejudice Miriam and Aaron demonstrated against Moses and his wife, Zipporah, and how God judged them. In His ever-present mercy, when Moses fervently prayed for her, He healed Miriam of the leprosy with which He had cursed her.

In the 13th chapter Moses sent out twelve chosen men to spy out the land of Canaan. Ten spies returned with an evil report. "We are not able to go against them!" Moses' servant, Joshua, and one other man, Caleb, had "another spirit" about them. They had "fully followed" the Lord. "We are well able to overcome!" they shouted. The people grew so angry they organized a revolt and a return to Egypt, threatening to stone Joshua and Caleb, who passionately tore their clothes and urged the people, "Fear them not!" At this the Lord God determined to wipe them out. Once again, Moses interceded for

the people and for the Name of the Lord which would suffer if He exterminated His people now, and God relented in answer to Moses' plea. The judgment He did bring upon all the congregation of people over twenty years old was to sentence them to forty years of wandering in the wilderness because of their faithless refusal to go into Canaan. Only Joshua and Caleb would be allowed to go into Canaan with the younger generation at the end of this long period.

Well, now that God had said they could not go, they decided to go! "Go up!" Moses said, "But God will not go with you! It won't prosper!" Sure enough, they were defeated.

Not long afterward, an uprising against Moses and Aaron began with Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, who, together with 250 famous princes of Israel, falsely accused them of being lifted up and usurping the authority over the congregation. Moses did what he always did: he fell on his face to God. He then pled with Korah, "Do you count it a small thing to be called to the special office of a Levite who serves the congregation in the tabernacle? Don't you see the honor God has placed on you to be near to Him in that way?" Indeed, they had been honored above most men to have been able to see the vision of God's magnificent throne, and that made them doubly responsible.

As they persisted, saying that Moses hadn't fulfilled his promise to bring them to Canaan, and was probably intending to hurt them, Moses cried again to the Lord. He told Korah and his company to gather with their lit censers at the tabernacle the next morning. Here again, God gave a space for repentance. In stubborn defiance, the group gathered the next day. God threatened again to destroy all the people, at which Moses and Aaron fell on their faces for mercy. God commanded Korah, Dathan and Abiram and their families to be separated from the rest of the congregation and Moses said to the people, "If these men die a common death, then you will know God has not sent me. But if the Lord makes a new thing, and the earth swallows them up, you shall all understand that these men have provoked the Lord." As the earth opened up and closed again upon them, and fire consumed the 250 princes, the people fled and cried. Yet the next day, many of the people murmured against the judgment of the Lord. A plague went out from God's presence and struck many of them so that in the end, close to 15,000 people were consumed.

You would think there would be no more murmuring against

God. But before they reached Canaan, they angered God in Kadesh where there was no water, and struck out at Him resentfully, “Would that we had died when our brethren died before the Lord!” Moses and Aaron fell on their faces, and God told them what to do next. Oh, Moses! With the shock and horror of Korah’s gainsaying and the resulting deaths of 15,000 people still so vivid in his mind—he picked up his rod to follow God’s instruction and something broke in him, resulting in hot words of desperation and two wrathful blows with his rod. God read his inward thoughts and judged him accordingly: he had seen the carnage and what happened when people were bitter, and now he had allowed the bitterness to seep into his own soul. His words of anger against the people were actually words of unbelief against God, causing him to dishonor the Lord and not lift Him up before the people, which cost Moses his chance to personally enter Canaan. They called that place Meribah, or the waters of strife.

Numbers 21 tells of the murmuring the people fell into “because of the way.” This time the Lord sent fiery serpents among them. As they prayed and repented, God had Moses make a bronze serpent and mount it on a pole. If the stricken people would look at it, they would be healed. Jesus later opened up the true meaning of the ensign. He was the one lifted up on the cross, and if souls would look to Him, they would be saved (John 3:14-15).

The last instance mentioned by the Psalmist is the great battle the Moabites and Midianites waged against Israel. The Moabite king, Balak, employed a prophet named Balaam to curse the Israelites. The Spirit of God came over Balaam when he would try to curse them, and he could only bless them. However, he counseled Balak how he could overcome Israel—by seduction (Numbers 31:16). Balak lured the Israelite men by placing his beautiful young women within sight of the battle. The Israelites not only fell into fornication but actual idolatry with the Midianites, one man boldly bringing a heathen woman into his tent. A zealous Levite, Phineas, executed God’s judgment upon the evil act, while another 24,000 perished because of God’s anger. Balaam later killed in the battle with the Midianites (Numbers 31:8). His covetousness, willingness to consort with Israel’s enemies and his evil counsel brought his name dishonorable mention in New Testament writings (II Peter 2:15 and Revelation 2:14); some writers have put him analogous to Judas Iscariot.

—Sis. Angela Gellenbeck

DISCUSSION:

Share what can we learn from:

1. The sin of Nadab and Abihu.
2. The sending of the quail.
3. The envy of Miriam and Aaron.
4. The evil report of the ten spies.
5. The uprising of Korah, Dathan and Abiram.
6. The murmuring at Kadesh.
7. The fornication with the Midianites.

COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

What stands out the most to me as I finish this study is the grief and anger the Israelites brought to God's heart when they murmured and complained after all He had done for them.

The miracle of manna—they should have been so grateful for this faithful, pleasant-tasting wonder food! We have so much food available at the grocery store, in our gardens and on our tables each day. How grievous it is when we complain! As fiery serpents took the lives of many ungrateful people in the camp, I believe fiery and sore afflictions—I'm thinking spiritual, but maybe physical as well—come into our lives when we gripe and complain. Murmuring can destroy a marriage when we do not appreciate and cherish each other. Our children will turn away from God if they see us being angry, resentful, discontented and covetous when we profess to love and serve Jesus.

How much of the glory and presence of God in our worship services do we forfeit when we fail to offer up praises and jubilant thanksgivings to God? God help us to be more deliberate with our worship and praise!

—Sis. Angela Gellenbeck

REFLECTIONS

The book of James has a good bit to say about lust: "But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death. Do not err, my beloved brethren" (James 1:16). "Ye lust, and have not: ye kill, and desire to

have, and cannot obtain: ye fight and war, yet ye have not, because ye ask not. Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts" (James 4:2,3). Discontentment is the seed of lust. When we study the people of Israel, God's chosen people, it seems preposterous that they would have been so discontented. They were disappointed with being in the wilderness and had the audacity to long for the leeks and garlic of Egypt. They were unhappy with the manna and desired quail. They were dissatisfied with their leaders and wanted new ones. And the list goes on. Each new discontentment started them on a path of lust which always ended in disaster and death. It is easy to pass judgment on the Israelites, but are we so different in this day and time?

It seems to be a common thread we see these days. We see discontentment all around us. People dissatisfied with their occupations. Men unhappy with their wives; wives unhappy with their husbands. We have families unable to get along with other family members. Women who are discontented with their physical features. There is a strong division and discontentment with our government. But, beware! This discontentment can sprout into a lustful plant, bearing sinful fruit that, when eaten, causes certain death.

—Sis. LaDawna Adams

MARCH 22, 2020
JORDAN AND GILGAL

(Background Reading: Numbers 27:15-23; Deuteronomy 30-31;
Joshua 1-5)

Joshua 1:1 Now after the death of Moses the servant of the LORD it came to pass, that the LORD spake unto Joshua the son of Nun, Moses' minister, saying,

2 Moses my servant is dead; now therefore arise, go over this Jordan, thou, and all this people, unto the land which I do give to them, even to the children of Israel.

3 Every place that the sole of your foot shall tread upon, that have I given unto you, as I said unto Moses.

4 From the wilderness and this Lebanon even unto the great

river, the river Euphrates, all the land of the Hittites, and unto the great sea toward the going down of the sun, shall be your coast.

5 There shall not any man be able to stand before thee all the days of thy life: as I was with Moses, so I will be with thee: I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee.

6 Be strong and of a good courage: for unto this people shalt thou divide for an inheritance the land, which I swore unto their fathers to give them.

Joshua 3:7 And the LORD said unto Joshua, This day will I begin to magnify thee in the sight of all Israel, that they may know that, as I was with Moses, so I will be with thee.

8 And thou shalt command the priests that bear the ark of the covenant, saying, When ye are come to the brink of the water of Jordan, ye shall stand still in Jordan.

11 Behold, the ark of the covenant of the Lord of all the earth passeth over before you into Jordan.

12 Now therefore take you twelve men out of the tribes of Israel, out of every tribe a man.

13 And it shall come to pass, as soon as the soles of the feet of the priests that bear the ark of the LORD, the Lord of all the earth, shall rest in the waters of Jordan, that the waters of Jordan shall be cut off from the waters that come down from above; and they shall stand upon an heap.

14 And it came to pass, when the people removed from their tents, to pass over Jordan, and the priests bearing the ark of the covenant before the people;

15 And as they that bare the ark were come unto Jordan, and the feet of the priests that bare the ark were dipped in the brim of the water, (for Jordan overfloweth all his banks all the time of harvest,)

16 That the waters which came down from above stood and rose up upon an heap very far from the city Adam, that is beside Zaretan: and those that came down toward the sea of the plain, even the salt sea, failed, and were cut off: and the people passed over right against Jericho.

17 And the priests that bare the ark of the covenant of the LORD stood firm on dry ground in the midst of Jordan, and all the Israelites passed over on dry ground, until all the people were passed clean over Jordan.

Joshua 5:1 And it came to pass, when all the kings of the Amorites, which were on the side of Jordan westward, and all the kings of the Canaanites, which were by the sea, heard that the LORD had dried up the waters of Jordan from before the children of Israel, until we were passed over, that their heart melted, neither was there spirit in them any more, because of the children of Israel.

2 At that time the LORD said unto Joshua, Make thee sharp knives, and circumcise again the children of Israel the second time.

4 And this is the cause why Joshua did circumcise: All the people that came out of Egypt, that were males, even all the men of war, died in the wilderness by the way, after they came out of Egypt.

5 Now all the people that came out were circumcised: but all the people that were born in the wilderness by the way as they came forth out of Egypt, them they had not circumcised.

6 For the children of Israel walked forty years in the wilderness, till all the people that were men of war, which came out of Egypt, were consumed, because they obeyed not the voice of the LORD: unto whom the LORD sware that he would not shew them the land, which the LORD sware unto their fathers that he would give us, a land that floweth with milk and honey.

7 And their children, whom he raised up in their stead, them Joshua circumcised: for they were uncircumcised, because they had not circumcised them by the way.

9 And the LORD said unto Joshua, This day have I rolled away the reproach of Egypt from off you. Wherefore the name of the place is called Gilgal unto this day.

10 And the children of Israel encamped in Gilgal, and kept the passover on the fourteenth day of the month at even in the plains of Jericho.

11 And they did eat of the old corn of the land on the morrow after the passover, unleavened cakes, and parched corn in the selfsame day.

12 And the manna ceased on the morrow after they had eaten of the old corn of the land; neither had the children of Israel manna any more; but they did eat of the fruit of the land of Canaan that year.

MEMORY VERSE: I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy,

acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good and acceptable, and perfect, will of God. —**Romans 12:1-2**

CENTRAL THOUGHT: When the wilderness journey had ended, God miraculously parted the swollen Jordan River for the new leader, Joshua, and the new generation of Israelites, and brought them safely and triumphantly into Canaan where, on their first stop, God gave them the covenant of circumcision as a spiritual foreshadowing of how He purifies the consecrated soul and takes away the reproach of “Egypt.”

WORD DEFINITIONS

Joshua 1:1 “Moses the servant of the Lord”: originally, *a slave*; “a closer and more familiar relation than the word minister, below. It suits well with the special and peculiar mission which Moses had above the rest of mankind. He was, as it were, the household servant of the Most High, His steward and representative, ruling over the family of God in His name, and giving to them the directions of which they stood in need” (*Pulpit Commentary*). “Joshua”: originally, “Hoshea,” which meant *salvation*. But it was changed—either when he entered Moses’ service or when he went to fight the Amalekites—to “Jehoshua,” which meant *GOD is my salvation*. “Moses’ minister”: assistant; personal attendant; minister of state; minister of religion; servant.

Joshua 5:9 “Gilgal”: a circle. “In Hebrew, *gal* signifies *to roll*; and the doubling of the root, *galgal* or *gilgal*, signifies *rolling round and round, or rolling off or away*, because, in circumcising the children that had been born in the wilderness, Joshua rolled away, rolled off completely, the reproach of the people” (*Clarke’s Commentary*).

LESSON BACKGROUND

Today we will visit the Israelites as they make the transition from the wilderness to Canaan, from Moses to Joshua, from manna to the grain of the land. Much has transpired between where they were in

our last lesson and now. Aaron has died, 123 years old, in Mount Hor. Moses now readies the people for their entrance into the promised land. The book of Deuteronomy records his analysis of their wanderings, failings and victories; a review of important commandments and ordinances; his final instructions, blessings, curses, and warnings; and a farewell song full of reminiscing, prophesy and judgment. The last chapter tells of his death at age 120, his secret burial by God, Israel's thirty days' mourning, and the introduction of Joshua as the new leader.

An entire book of lessons could be written about Moses and the unique place he filled in history. Let us never forget his passion, his intimate communion with God, his humility and the example he gave us of always falling on his face before God in times of trouble.

Next, we will look briefly at Joshua. In today's lesson, God visits Joshua and reassures him of His Presence. He gave him commandments concerning the passage over the Jordan River. Joshua sent two spies into Jericho, their first and very formidable city to conquer. A woman who harbored the spies extracted a solemn promise from them that she and her household would be saved when their city was destroyed. The third and fourth chapters of Joshua give the account of the crossing of Jordan. Chapter five tells of the rite of circumcision God instituted for the Israelites and the heavenly visitor Joshua had prior to the battle of Jericho.

—Sis. Angela Gellenbeck

DISCUSSION:

1. What was the encouraging promise given to Joshua in Joshua 1:5?
2. Who were the first to enter the water of the Jordan, and what were they carrying?
3. What was the condition of the Jordan River at this time?
4. What was the reaction of the Canaanite kings to the miracle God did at Jordan?
5. What is the significance of Gilgal?
6. What change in diet occurred at this time?

COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

I hardly know how to express the magnitude of Divine truth that has come from a closer study of this journey, its people, and its significance to all the world and all time. Both Moses and Joshua point us to Jesus Christ. That I had known, but to see the comparisons in a new light has been personally impacting. Moses, as deliverer from Egypt, points to Christ as the deliverer from sin. In Hebrews 3 the two are put together in contrast, with Moses being a “servant” who was faithful in all his house, and Jesus being the One who built the house, and is a Son over his own house. Both were considered “faithful,” oh, praise God!

In the form “Jeshua—Jehovah saves,” Joshua’s name was the same as our Lord’s, by which he is actually called two times in the New Testament (Acts 7:45; Hebrews 4:8); and in the sense of what he did, bringing the children of Israel into the promised land, so also has Christ, who only is our rest-giver. Also, consider how that his leadership began at Jordan, as did our Lord’s, when He was baptized. As Joshua chose twelve stones out of the Jordan for a memorial, so Jesus chose twelve disciples, foundation “stones” for the New Testament church (Ephesians 2:20; Revelation 21:14). Joshua was the triumphant leader of the Israelite army; so is Christ (Revelation 17:14; 19:11-16).

Very inspiring is the comparison of the literal circumcision at Gilgal to the spiritual circumcision given by Christ. Several New Testament passages explain this: Romans 2:29 and Colossians 2:11-17. Even the Old Testament shows God’s true meaning of the rite: Deuteronomy 10:16; 30:6 and Jeremiah 4:4. Our memory verse is key to how God does this for the believer.

—Sis. Angela Gellenbeck

REFLECTIONS

In the passage of scripture referenced in Colossians 2:11-17 we read, “... ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ: buried with him in baptism ...”

For many years I read this scripture, but its depths eluded me. I

thought “baptism” here was referring to water baptism. But I couldn’t quite see how water baptism connected with spiritual circumcision. It wasn’t until recent years that the Holy Spirit illuminated my mind regarding this. It is Holy Spirit baptism that buries us with Christ and thus circumcises our hearts by putting off the body, or substance, of the sins of the flesh. That substance is our self-oriented, carnal nature with which we were born. Just as all men are born uncircumcised in the flesh by nature, so all are born uncircumcised in heart by nature. Only the Holy Spirit can remove that self-oriented nature with which we were born and replace it with supreme love for God, as Deuteronomy 30:6 so beautifully says. Love, as also described in 1 Corinthians, chapter 13, is the opposite of selfishness.

“Entire sanctification,” or “perfect love,” as it has also been called, is the deeper aspect of Christianity. It is only attainable by grace, through faith, as is justification, or pardon from committed sins. It is a deeper work of the Holy Spirit relative to believers. Defined in a nutshell, it simply means committing yourself and all that pertains to your life in complete consecration to God and letting God fulfill all His purpose and desire concerning you. When we so dedicate ourselves to God, putting our faith completely in God’s operation, the Holy Spirit takes it from there. And there is a spiritual baptism that accompanies this grace which completes our burial with Christ. “In regeneration the Holy Spirit baptizes the believer into Christ [1 Corinthians 12:13]; in sanctification Christ baptizes the believer with the Holy Spirit [Matthew 3:11-12; Acts 1:5; 2:1-4, 16-18, etc.]” (J. W. Byers, *The Gospel Trumpet*, December 29, 1910 issue, article “The Holy Spirit Life”). Charles Wesley wrote,

“Adam’s likeness now efface, Stamp thine image in its place:
Second Adam from above, Reinstat us in thy love.”

This is that “circumcision made without hands.”

—Bro. Harlan Sorrell

MARCH 29, 2020
JERICHO AND BEYOND

(Background Reading: Joshua 5:13-15; 6-24)

Joshua 5:13 And it came to pass, when Joshua was by Jericho, that he lifted up his eyes and looked, and, behold, there stood a man

over against him with his sword drawn in his hand: and Joshua went unto him, and said unto him, Art thou for us, or for our adversaries?

14 And he said, Nay; but as captain of the host of the LORD am I now come. And Joshua fell on his face to the earth, and did worship, and said unto him, What saith my lord unto his servant?

15 And the captain of the LORD'S host said unto Joshua, Loose thy shoe from off thy foot; for the place whereon thou standest is holy. And Joshua did so.

Joshua 6—The city of Jericho destroyed.

Joshua 7—The defeat at Ai; the sin of Achan.

Joshua 8—The victory at Ai; Joshua builds an altar, writes the Ten Commandments thereon, and reads the entire law to the people.

Joshua 9—The Gibeonites obtain a league by deception; are made Israel's servants.

Joshua 10—The Israelites defend the Gibeonites in an attack from five kings; God aids them by sending hailstones from heaven and making the sun and moon stand still at Joshua's word.

Joshua 11—The land of Canaan subdued.

Joshua 12—The two kings destroyed by Moses and the thirty-one kings smitten by Joshua listed.

Joshua 13—The land not conquered listed; the two and one-half tribe disbursement.

Joshua 14-21—Nine and one-half tribes receive their inheritance by lot; Caleb asks for Hebron; further distribution of the land.

Joshua 22—Dispute between the children of Reuben, Gad, the half tribe of Manasseh and the other tribes settled peacefully.

Joshua 23-24—The last days, words, and death of Joshua.

Joshua 23:14 And, behold, this day I am going the way of all the earth: and ye know in all your hearts and in all your souls, that not one thing hath failed of all the good things which the LORD your God spake concerning you; all are come to pass unto you, and not one thing hath failed thereof.

Joshua 24:14 Now therefore fear the LORD, and serve him in sincerity and in truth: and put away the gods which your fathers served on the other side of the flood, and in Egypt; and serve ye the LORD.

15 And if it seem evil unto you to serve the LORD, choose you this day whom ye will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites,

in whose land ye dwell: but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD.

29 And it came to pass after these things, that Joshua the son of Nun, the servant of the LORD, died, being an hundred and ten years old.

32 And the bones of Joseph, which the children of Israel brought up out of Egypt, buried they in Shechem, in a parcel of ground which Jacob bought of the sons of Hamor the father of Shechem for an hundred pieces of silver: and it became the inheritance of the children of Joseph.

MEMORY VERSE: For he remembered his holy promise, and Abraham his servant. And he brought forth his people with joy, and his chosen with gladness: And gave them the lands of the heathen: and they inherited the labour of the people; That they might observe his statutes, and keep his laws. Praise ye the LORD.

—Psalm 105:42-45

CENTRAL THOUGHT: Directed by the captain of the host of the Lord, Joshua conquered Canaan and divided the land among the tribes of Israel, burying Joseph's bones in Shechem as he had requested; thus he led Israel in the worship of the true God until his death.

LESSON BACKGROUND

Joshua was ready. He had heard God say, "Be strong and of a good courage." He sent spies to check out the city of Jericho, made a promise to secure Rahab and her family, and gave traveling orders to the camp of Israel. The people followed the priests bearing the ark safely across the Jordan River by a miracle from God. The memorial was erected and the new generation was circumcised. Now they were poised to take the city of Jericho.

God knew Joshua needed another special heavenly visit; in mercy He appeared and brought the mighty man to his knees in humble worship. Now he was *really* ready!

God gave Joshua strange orders for taking the city, which he followed in strict obedience. The men of war, headed by seven priests bearing the ark and holding trumpets (rams' horns), were to compass the city, once each day for six days. On the seventh day they were to

march around the city seven times, then blow with the trumpets. At the sound of the trumpets, all the people were to shout, and the wall of the city would “fall down flat.”

An article in *Answers in Genesis* describes this wall: “The mound, or ‘tell’ of Jericho was surrounded by a great earthen rampart, or embankment, with a stone retaining wall at its base. The retaining wall was some four to five meters (12–15 feet) high. On top of that was a mudbrick wall two meters (six feet) thick and about six to eight meters (20–26 feet) high. At the crest of the embankment was a similar mudbrick wall whose base was roughly 14 meters (46 feet) above the ground level outside the retaining wall” (Bryant Wood, *The Walls of Jericho*, answersingenesis.org). Other amazing finds (John Garstang, 1929-1936) include grain bins that were full, food in abundance, and bread in ovens ready to bake, which were covered over by fallen debris. Burnt and charred remains were evident everywhere.

Joshua was sure they could go on and defeat Ai. He didn’t even send all of his army. When they came back in a surprise defeat, Joshua fell on his face. God told him to get up and search among the people by lot to find out the traitor in the camp who had done a grievous sin and hidden it. The drawing of lots pointed out Achan. He then confessed he had disobeyed Joshua and had taken from Jericho the things Joshua had cursed—gold, silver and heathen clothing—and had buried them beneath his tent. Achan and his whole family were stoned in a place they named “The valley of Achor.” Years later, in a prophecy of the Messiah, God said he would give his adulterous people the valley of Achor for a “door of hope” (Hosea 2:15).

Joshua went on and defeated Ai, erecting a stone altar there, upon which he inscribed the words of the “law of Moses,” probably the Ten Commandments. He then read all the words of the law to the men, women, children, and strangers in their midst.

Hearing all that God had done for Israel made the inhabitants of the land band together to fight it out with him, but one country decided to trick Joshua into a peace treaty. The scriptures point out that the elders and Joshua “asked not counsel at the mouth of the Lord.” A lesson can be learned here, that the young man who “departed not out of the tabernacle,” the man who knew his master

Moses had always fallen on his face before the Lord, the man who could not face the Jordan until he had divine help, failed this one time to seek the Lord, and it cost him and the nation of Israel dearly. When they discovered the true identity of the Gibeonites, that they were close neighbors instead of travelers from a far-off country as they had claimed, they kept their treaty to not destroy them; instead, they made them cut wood and haul water for the Israelites.

—Sis. Angela Gellenbeck

DISCUSSION:

1. How did the “man” with the sword answer Joshua?
2. Describe the method for defeating Jericho.
3. How did God send help to the battle with the five kings?
4. What did Joshua write on the altar at Ai?
5. What did Joshua fail to do in dealing with the Gibeonites?
6. What did the Israelites do to fulfill the Joseph’s command?
7. How old was Joshua when he died?

COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

A closer look at the life of Joshua has been especially inspiring in this study. Except for his failure to ask God’s counsel concerning the Gibeonites, it was a perfect career. Obviously, the reason for his astounding success, and the success of the great man before him, was the all-important detail of always falling on his face before the Lord.

If we could take only one thing away from the entire study, it would be that very detail. We cannot do ANYTHING without the Lord. These were only normal men; they had no greatness of their own, and neither do we. But with God, all things are possible. “By faith, Moses!” “By faith, Joshua fought the battle of Jericho!” And, by faith, Polycarp, and Wycliffe, Luther, Wesley, Warner—and you and me.

The other important thing that stands out in all the lessons is the longsuffering of God and the merciful opportunity He gives individuals to stop the wicked way they are choosing, turn around, and go the other way. How many times have we read where God

said, “Tomorrow.” At any time during the night between the deed and the death, the people could have chosen LIFE.

Our series ends with that choice. “Choose ye this day whom ye will serve.” As an individual, as a family, and as a nation, God help us to choose LIFE.

—Sis. Angela Gellenbeck

REFLECTIONS

Many have the erroneous belief that their worship is merely personal. Who they worship (whether the one true God or other gods) or how they worship (whether devotedly or causally) affects only them and that it’s no one else’s business. But though our spiritual relationship is a personal one, there is a societal component to it as well.

Achan’s casual worship led to his disobedience; as a result, his choice not only affected him but his family, the congregation of Israel, and for a moment, it affected Ai’s perception of God. Everyone involved was affected.

On September 11, 2001, a day of infamy, 19 men in the “worship” of their god, changed the course of history. Their names have been forgotten but the profound impact that their “worship” has had on the world still lingers and is ever fresh in our minds. We are reminded of it each time we go to an airport or each time we hear of a terrorist attack on innocent civilians.

They got it wrong. We must get it right. They worshipped a false god. And the worship of any false god is not just an innocent nor individual act; it is a subtle but vicious attack against the one true God. This in turn, produces a ripple effect that is felt throughout the world.

Our true worship of the one true God is not just about us and how we choose to live. We are the salt of the earth! We are the light of the world! We are to conspicuously affect everyone around us. Our reputations should precede us. Our spiritual enemies should tremble as we approach, and the world should see the light of Christ from the mountain of holiness. The one true God still seeks for true worshippers who will worship Him in spirit and in truth.

—Bro. Darrell Johnson

