

Monday Week 18 **Generations in the Wilderness**

Q 69 What did God promise would happen to the Israelites if they disobeyed Him?

A. Their enemies would live in their land, they would be scattered, and a sword would follow them.

Bible Reading: Leviticus 26:14-16; 32-33

“Don’t build your house on that land. It is not solid. If you build there your house will be ruined and you won’t be able to live in it.” This warning was given to people in parts of the city of Fairbanks, Alaska. Some people listened and made sure they had solid land to build on. Some didn’t listen to the warnings. If you travel up the mountain on a small road near the city, you come to a house that is broken in the middle. The people built it on a place where the ground was not solid. Now the house is ruined and no one can live in it. They should have listened to the warnings.

The Children of Israel should have listened to God’s warnings. He told them what would happen if they didn’t follow Him. Sure enough, after many years, they forgot God’s ways and followed idols. The time came when they were chased out of their land. God’s word came true. It is always the right thing to follow God’s word.

Thinking Deeper

God’s word contains several types of prophecies. Some are very specific, to be fulfilled in specific ways. For example, the prophecy in Psalm 22 that the Messiah’s hands and feet would be pierced is very specific in its description of the kind of death Jesus would die. Other prophecies are more general. That is, they have a wider application than just to one individual. Yet these prophecies are precise enough for us to be able to clearly observe their fulfillment. The prophecy that God made concerning Israel’s disobedience identified three clear results: 1) their enemies would live in their land. That happened. Israel was inhabited by non-Jews for many years. 2) They would be scattered among the heathen. It is interesting that after the land of Israel was re-established in 1948, people of Jewish descent came “back to Jerusalem” from nations all over the globe. 3) The sword was drawn after them. The history of the violent persecution of Jews is legendary. There was the Roman destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D., the 11th Century slaughter in the Rhineland, later great persecution against Jews in France and Spain, Russia then became party to anti-Jewish bigotry and violence, and in the 20th Century the Nazis pursued to the death of millions of European Jews. *

God’s warnings are to be heeded, and His prophecies will be fulfilled. It is a lesson to us to learn His Word with care and hold His declarations of future things in awe. Jesus said, “The scripture cannot be broken” (John 10:35).

*See McDowell, Josh, *Evidence That Demands a Verdict*, Campus Crusade, 1972, pp.329,330.

Tuesday Week 18 **Generations in the Wilderness**

Q 70 After Moses sent spies into Canaan, what report did they give?

A. Caleb gave a good report, but ten spies gave an evil report.

Bible Reading: Numbers 13:1-2, 30-33

“Larry, go outside to the garden and see if the beans are ready to pick,” said Mother. Larry went and looked at the beans. There were a lot of them. But Larry wanted to play, not pick beans. He came back in the house. “Mom, I don’t think they are quite ready yet. Maybe they’ll be ready tomorrow.” Just then Larry’s older brother Ben walked into the room.

“Oh, Mother,” said Ben. “I looked at the beans last night and I’m sure we need to pick them today. We don’t want them to be too old.”

Mother looked at Larry. “Young man, you march right out there and pick those beans. I would have asked Ben to help you, but since you weren’t honest with me, you must pick them all by yourself.”

Later, as he was picking beans in the garden, Larry felt awful. He not only had to work harder because he had to do it alone, but he had a heavy heart because he had not been truthful.

The Bible says that “the way of the transgressor is hard.” It was hard for the Israelites because they listened to the ten spies who didn’t have faith. They didn’t receive the blessing of God’s promise because they didn’t believe Him.

Thinking Deeper

The walk with Jesus is a journey through life during which we come to new places. In our experience, we will face new opportunities, otherwise known as challenges. The experience of Israel approaching Canaan is a type from which we are to learn lessons for our journey. When they heard from the spies, they found two contrasting reports. One came from Joshua and Caleb, who focused on the abundant blessings in the Promised Land. Their proof of what was there was exhibited in samples of the fruit of the land. They showed off “a branch with one cluster of grapes, and they bare it between two upon a staff.” Abundant blessings were waiting to be claimed! The second report came from the ten who focused on the giants in the land. Compared to them, they said, “we were in our own sight as grasshoppers.” Their lack of faith was their doom. The giant of unbelief destroyed them before they ever faced any giant in Canaan.

In contrast, Joshua and Caleb were able to receive the blessings of Canaan because they believed God. It is not difficult to see what God is placing before us as we are on this journey. The decision to make is whether we will focus on the blessings available as we walk on, or whether we will stop because we see giants in front of us. Can you believe God to cleanse your heart from all sin? Can you lay hold on the blessing He offers in going into the “Land of Canaan?” Can you believe for a baptism of perfect love? Or do you so fear your own weakness, or your own coldness of heart, or your own past performance that you can’t believe? Look at the blessings God promises, not the giants. “For ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise” (Heb. 10:36).

Q 71 What happened to the generation that refused to enter Canaan?

A. They died in the wilderness, but their children went in after forty years.

Bible Reading: Numbers 14:26-33

Squanto was an American Indian. He had been kidnapped by some bad men and taken to England. After some time he sailed back to America. When he landed, he looked for his tribe. He couldn't find them anywhere. A sickness had come upon them and they all died. Squanto was very sad. He lived with another tribe. Then he learned that the Pilgrims had come. They were living on the land of his tribe. Squanto went to help them. He showed them how to fish. He helped them plant crops. He was a great blessing. Squanto overcame the great sorrow of the whole generation of his people that had been lost.

The generation of the Children of Israel that refused to enter Canaan when God led them were lost in the wilderness. They never made it to the Promised Land. "So we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief" (Hebrews 3:19). Only Joshua and Caleb made it. The next generation obeyed God and went into Canaan. It is important to obey God when He speaks.

Thinking Deeper

If you had been twenty years old when God told the generation they would be forty years in the wilderness, you would have known that your life span could not exceed sixty. If you married, you would never have a house to live in and land of your own. But if you were nineteen, you had hope that sometime in the future, there was a land waiting. If you obeyed God, you could get to that land and find your own place. God made that clear. One generation would be gone, and the next would have the hope of the promise.

Those four decades in the wilderness were not without God's intervention. The people had a daily reminder of His provision of Manna. They were led by the cloud and the fire. As the years went on, they had to have noticed something unusual about their clothing, because at the end of that time, God reminded them with these words: "And I have led you forty years in the wilderness: your clothes are not waxen old upon you, and thy shoe is not waxen old upon thy foot" (Deut. 29:5). God made their clothes and shoes last beyond any reasonable expectation. The miraculous evidence of God's presence was with them.

Miracles were a daily part of that journey through the wilderness. As long as we walk in faith, God is with us in our journey today, even when we encounter dry times. He is there. He is our help and our provider and our defender. "Fear not: for I *am* with thee" (Isa. 43:5a).

Thursday Week 18 **Generations in the Wilderness**

Q 72 When the people complained and were bitten by snakes, what did Moses do?

A. He lifted up a brass snake on a pole for people to look at and be healed.

Bible Reading: Numbers 21:4-9

In the United States there are about 8,000 poisonous snakebites every year. From those bites, less than ten people die from being bitten. That does not mean you shouldn't be careful. When you are in the country, or in the woods, you need to be careful where you step. Also, if you do come across a snake, stay away from it. Some people get bitten because they are foolish. They may try to pick the snake up. Or they may make it angry by poking at it. There are four kinds of poisonous snakes in the United States. They are the rattlesnake, the copperhead, the cottonmouth water moccasin, and the coral snake. These snakes are dangerous. Be careful.

The Israelites sinned by complaining in the wilderness. Because of their sin, God sent poisonous snakes to bite them. Many of them were dying. They needed God's help. Moses prayed for them. God gave them a way to be saved. They were to look at a brass snake on a pole. If they looked, God saved them. Jesus is our way to be saved from our sins. We need to look to him by faith. "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth" (Isa.45:22a).

Thinking Deeper

What is it about complaining that was such a grievous sin? It was evil enough for God to send a major plague of "fiery serpents." Why is complaining so wrong? In this case unbelief was at the root of their complaining. They "spoke against God and against Moses." They knew that Moses was leading them under God's direction. And they accused God and Moses of bringing them to die in the wilderness. "Wherefore have ye brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness?" Three things were wrong with this complaint.

One, they were acting as though God had done something wrong by bringing them out of Egypt, when in reality they had called on God to deliver them. He had answered their prayers in a great deliverance. Second, God had promised to lead them to the Promised Land. They were accusing God of lying, in that they said He had led them out to have them die. Third, they had already disobeyed God by refusing to go into the Promised Land when they had the chance. So they were blaming God for what was their fault. If they had obeyed God, they would have already been in the Promised Land by this time.

It is a mark of a carnal heart to accuse God of things that God did not do. When complainers accuse God of creating a world of suffering and death, they are ascribing to Him what is really man's fault. It is because of sin that death came into the world. Death, disease, and suffering are all the result of the fall of man. To complain to God about His imperfect creation is to engage in the same kind of false accusation of which the Israelites were guilty. If man wants to see who is at fault for the troubles on earth, he should look in the mirror.

Friday Week 18 **Generations in the Wilderness**

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- Q 70 After Moses sent spies into Canaan, what report did they give?
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A. He lifted up a brass snake on a pole for people to look at and be healed.

A man was lost in the jungle. He had no idea where to go. A native found him and offered to help. The man asked the native, "Can you tell me how to go?" With his machete, The native began to chop a path through the jungle. The man asked again, "Can you tell me how to go?" The native man stopped for a moment and then said, "Follow me. I am your way."

God showed the people of Israel the way through the wilderness. He was there to help them. He fed them when they were hungry. He gave them water when they were thirsty. He healed them when they were sick. He caused their clothes and shoes to last for forty years. He was their way through the wilderness. Later, one of the Children of Israel wrote a psalm of praise: "To him which led his people through the wilderness: for his mercy *endureth* for ever" (Ps. 136:16). The Lord still leads His people. He will lead you as you trust in Him.

Thinking Deeper

God gave a great illustration of grace to the Israelites in the wilderness. When they had sinned and He sent fiery serpents, many were bitten and lay dying. When they called on Moses to pray for them, he did. God instructed Moses to make a brass serpent and put it on a pole. When the people looked at the serpent, they were healed. They did not earn their healing. They could not do anything to accomplish their healing. They could not go to church to find healing. They could not do good works, or turn over a new leaf to find healing. The one thing they could do was look. That's what God told them to do, and when they did that, they were healed.

Jesus used this incident to teach about grace, saving grace. He said, "And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life" (John 3:14, 15). Jesus didn't tell people to go to church to be saved, or to turn over a new leaf, or to do good works. He told them that they should believe on Him. When man is in sin, he cannot heal himself. He needs grace. Grace comes when we do what God says, and God says to look to him by faith. It is that look of faith that opens the door to God's great salvation. "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ" Romans 5:1).