

Joy of Living

Bible Studies

Enriching lives through the study of God's Word

Exodus:

From Egypt to the Promised Land

Part 2: Exodus 25-40 & portions of Numbers, Deuteronomy & Joshua

A 12-Lesson Study Containing
Weekly Commentary and Daily Study Questions

Commentary by

Jean W. Randall

Daily Study Questions by

Kathy Rowland

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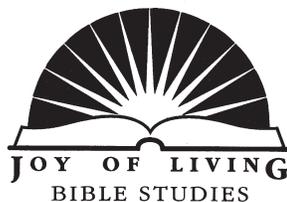
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About Joy of Living

For over 50 years Joy of Living has been effectively establishing individuals around the world in the sound, basic study of God's Word.

Evangelical and interdenominational, Joy of Living reaches across denominational and cultural barriers, enriching lives through the simple, pure truths of God's inspired Word, the Bible.

Studies are flexible, suited for both formal and informal meetings, as well as for personal study. Each lesson contains historical background, commentary, and a week's worth of personal application questions, leading readers to discover fresh insights into God's Word. Courses covering many books in both the Old and New Testaments are available. Selected courses are also available in several foreign languages. Contact the Joy of Living office for details.

Joy of Living Bible Studies was founded by Doris W. Greig in 1971 and has grown to include classes in nearly every state in the Union and many foreign countries.

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How to Use Joy of Living Materials

This unique Bible study series may be used by people who know nothing about the Bible, as well as by more knowledgeable Christians. Each person is nurtured and disciplined in God's Word, and many develop a personal relationship with Jesus Christ as they study.

Joy of Living is based on the idea that each person needs to open the Bible and let God speak to them by His Holy Spirit, applying the Scripture's message to their needs and opportunities, their family, church, job, community, and the world at large.

Only a Bible is needed for this study series. While commentaries may be helpful, it is not recommended that people consult them as they work through the daily study questions. It is most important to allow the Holy Spirit to lead them through the Bible passage and apply it to their hearts and lives. If desired, additional commentaries may be consulted after answering the questions on a particular passage.

The first lesson of a series includes an introduction to the study, plus the first week's daily study questions. Some questions are simple, and some are deeper for those who are more advanced.¹ The individual works through the Bible passages each day, praying and asking God's guidance in applying the truth to their own life. (The next lesson will contain the commentary on the Bible passage being covered in the study questions.)

To Use in a Group Setting:

After the daily personal study of the passage has been completed, the class gathers in a small group, where they pray together and discuss what they have written in response to the questions about the passage, clarifying problem areas and getting more insight into the passage. The small group/discussion leader helps the group focus on biblical truth, and not just on personal problems. The student is the only person who sees their own answers and shares only what they feel comfortable sharing.

After small groups meet for discussion and prayer, they often gather in a large group meeting where a teacher gives a brief lecture covering the essential teaching of the Bible passage that was studied during the prior week and discussed in the small groups. The teacher may clarify the passage and challenge class members to live a more committed daily life.

At home, the student begins the next lesson, which contains commentary notes on the prior week's passage and questions on a new Scripture passage.

1. Challenge questions are optional for those who want to dig deeper or write their personal opinion. The Personal questions are between the individual doing the study and God. Those answers may be shared in class only if the individual would like to.

Do You KNOW You Have Eternal Life?

Your condition...

For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. (Romans 3:23)

But your iniquities (sins) have separated you from your God. (Isaiah 59:2)

For the wages of sin is death. (Romans 6:23)

There is help...

For Christ died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God. (1 Peter 3:18)

The gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Romans 6:23)

What do I do?...

Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out. (Acts 3:19)

Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved. (Acts 16:31)

You CAN know...

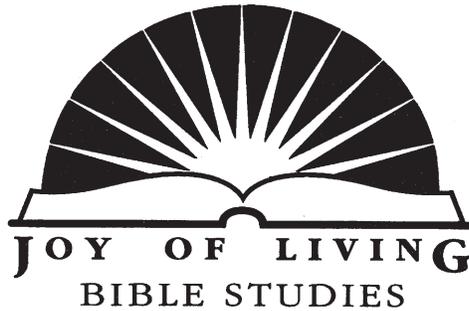
He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life. I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may know that you have eternal life. (1 John 5:12-13)

If you would like to make the decision today to repent and trust Christ as your Savior, either for the first time or as a re-commitment of your life, you may want to pray a prayer similar to this one:

Lord Jesus, I admit that I am a sinner. Please forgive my sins. Thank You for dying on the cross for me, and for coming alive again. I accept Your gifts of forgiveness and eternal life. I place my life in Your hands. I want to be Yours forever. Thank you for loving me so much. In Your Name I pray. Amen.

Exodus

Lesson 15



Introduction

This is the second half of a two-part study on *Exodus: From Egypt to the Promised Land*.

The primary commentary for Lesson 15 (covering Exodus 20:18—24:18) is found at the end of *Exodus Part 1*, since it addresses the Scripture passage covered in the Lesson 14 Study Questions.

The commentary below is a general introduction to *Exodus Part 2*, which begins with Exodus 25.

As we have seen in Part 1 of this study, the book of Exodus shows how God dealt with His chosen people—the Hebrews, also called the children of Israel—as He redeemed them from slavery in Egypt.

We have seen God presented as Lord over nature (the plagues, dividing the Red Sea) and over nations (power over Egypt and establishing Israel as a nation). At Mount Sinai He revealed His holiness to Israel through the spectacular display on the mountain—the smoke and fire, the thick cloud and the trumpet blasts.

Throughout the remainder of Exodus and on through Leviticus and part of Numbers, the Bible presents God as the Lord of worship. Israel had always worshiped God, but after He gave the Law, God gave the Israelites both new *forms* of worship and new *meaning* for the old forms. We will see that the tabernacle symbolizes the glories of Christ, the Redeemer of all humanity.

The tabernacle, or Tent of Meeting, was always to be located in the center of Israel's camp and represented God's dwelling place among His people. Here God met with Moses (see Exodus 25:21-22; 30:6; Leviticus 1:1). The tabernacle was the place of worship and of sacrifice. Although it was rather unimpressive on the outside, we will discover that inside "the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle" (Exodus 40:34).

When Christ came to earth it would not be His splendor, majesty or grandeur that would allure the world. His background and physical appearance were rather unimpressive. He was born in Bethlehem, and lived in Nazareth with His mother Mary and His stepfather Joseph, a mere carpenter. Outwardly there may have been little to attract the spiritually blinded, because when the Lord Jesus walked this earth He was humble, not seeking pomp, glory or praise of people. Yet within Him was grace and wisdom (see Luke 2:40). To those who have trusted the Lord Jesus Christ as their Savior, He is the "fairest of ten thousand."¹ Christ, our "perfect tabernacle" (Hebrews 9:11), must be in the center of our lives.

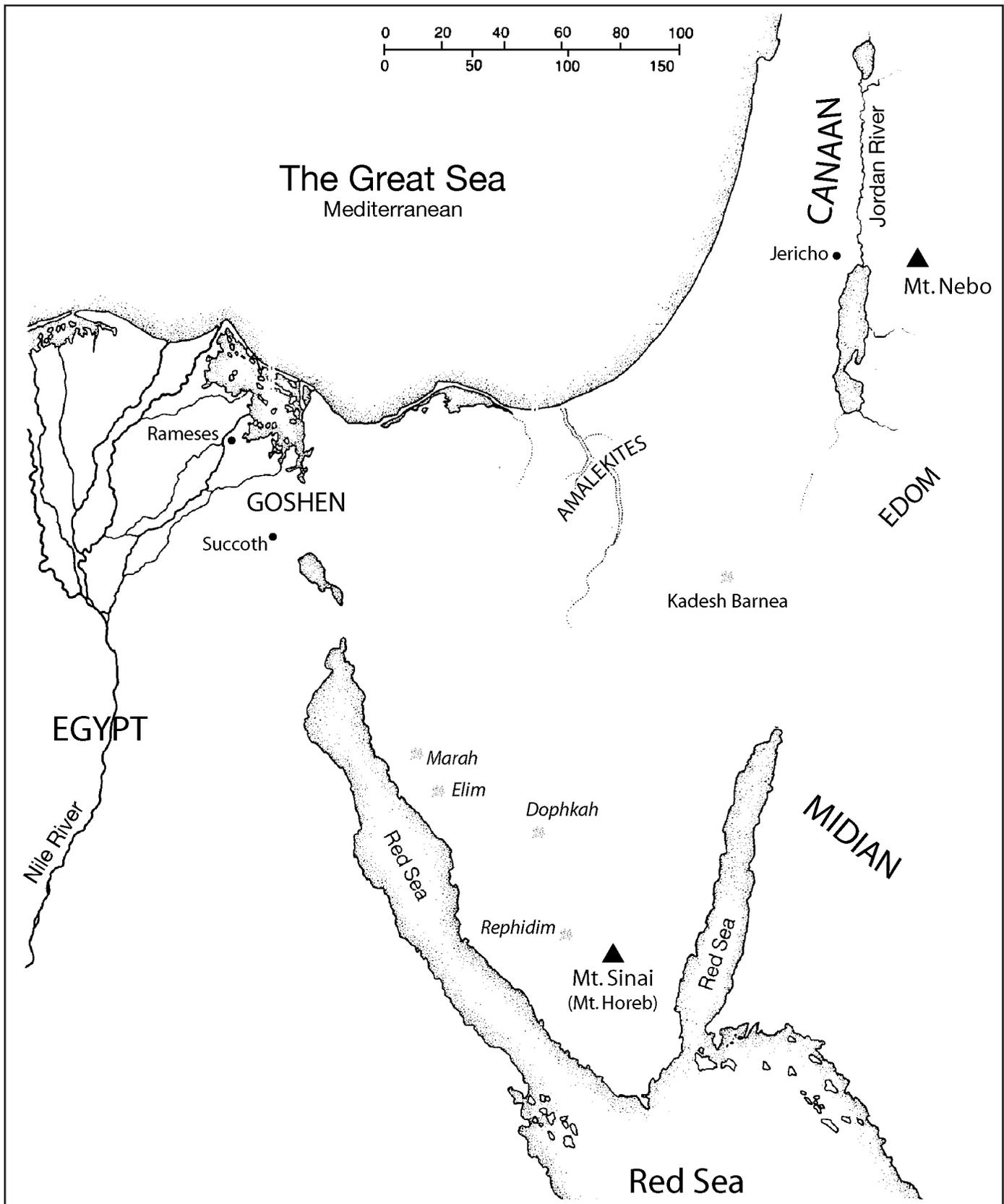
The Israelites who wanted to come near to God had to come to the door of the tabernacle, plain though it was. The Lord Jesus Christ said, "I am the door" (John 10:7, NASB), and He has invited us to draw near to Him and to receive forgiveness and eternal life. The apostle Peter said, "Salvation is found in no one else [no one other than Jesus Christ], for there is no other name under heaven given to mankind by which we must be saved" (Acts 4:12).

Exodus is the redemption book; however, in this second half of our study, we will also look at portions of Leviticus and Numbers. We will learn that we must be redeemed (Exodus), that we must worship the Lord and follow His leading (Leviticus), that we will always have battles and trials in our walk toward Christian maturity, and that we have God's power to help us as we go through these difficult experiences (Numbers).

May the Holy Spirit Himself nourish us as we feed on His Word, that we may exclaim with Job, "I have treasured the words of his mouth more than my daily bread" (Job 23:12).

1. From the hymn, "The Lily of the Valley," words by Charles W. Fry (1881).

Where the Events of Exodus Took Place



This map has been adapted from *Reproducible Maps, Charts, TimeLines & Illustrations* (Ventura: Gospel Light, 1989). Used by permission.

Study Questions

Before you begin each day:

- ☛ Pray and ask God to speak to you through His Holy Spirit.
- ☛ Use only the Bible for your answers.
- ☛ Write down your answers and the verses you used.
- ☛ Answer the “Challenge” questions if you have the time and want to do them.
- ☛ Share your answers to the “Personal” questions with the class only if you want to share them.

First Day: Read the Introduction.

1. If you recently completed Part 1 of this study, what meaningful or new thought did you find in commentary on Exodus 20:18—24:18 or from your teacher’s lecture? What personal application did you choose to apply to your life?

2. Look for a verse in the lesson to memorize this week. Write it down and post it in a prominent place. Make a real effort to learn the verse and its “address” (reference of where it is found in the Bible).

Second Day: Read Exodus 25, concentrating on verses 1-9.

1. a. Whom did God ask to bring an offering to Him? Was it mandatory or voluntary? (Exodus 25:1-2)

b. Read 2 Corinthians 9:7. Does God ask the same attitude of His people today?

2. a. What materials did God ask for? (Exodus 25:3-7)

b. Challenge: The Israelites had been slaves in Egypt for hundreds of years. From Exodus 12:35-36, where might they have obtained many of these costly items?

3. a. What was the purpose of collecting these items? (Exodus 25:8)

b. Read John 1:14. How was this sanctuary a picture of what God would one day do through Jesus Christ?

4. a. How would the Israelites know how to build this sanctuary? (Exodus 25:9)

b. Challenge: The tabernacle, the new place of worship, was to be a moveable sanctuary where God would dwell in the midst of His people. There could be no permanent building for worship until Israel was settled in the Promised Land. God eventually chose David’s son, Solomon, to build His permanent temple in Jerusalem. Read 1 Chronicles 28:11-12,19. Compare the way God gave instructions for the temple with the way He gave instructions for the tabernacle.

5. God told Moses to build the tabernacle according to the pattern He would give. Read Hebrews 8:5; 9:24. What was the pattern based upon?

6. Personal: Upon reading the next few chapters of Exodus, some people may wonder why it matters. Why should we care about the details of the furniture and the construction of a moveable place of worship for a people who lived so long ago? However, as the writer of Hebrews noted, God gave detailed instructions with a purpose. Every detail points to the reality of what He has done for us through His Son, Jesus Christ. How will this change your attitude toward the study of these details?

Third Day: Review Exodus 25, concentrating on verses 10-22.

1. a. God begins His instructions with the items that would be contained within the tabernacle. What was the first item to be made? (Exodus 25:10-11)
- b. How was this item to be carried when Israel was traveling? (Exodus 25:12-15)
2. a. What was to be placed in the ark or chest? (Exodus 25:16)
- b. Challenge: What items were put into the ark, according to do the following verses?
Deuteronomy 10:4-5
- Hebrews 9:3-4
3. a. How were they to make the ark's cover? (Exodus 25:17-20)
- b. The verb that lies behind the noun "atonement" in the expression "atonement cover" means "to ransom or deliver by means of a substitute."¹ How did the ark and its "atonement cover" point to Christ's payment for our sin, according to the following verses?
Romans 3:22-25a
- 1 John 2:1-2
4. Personal: God sent His Son to die for the entire world. However, each person must make a decision to trust in the Lord Jesus as his or her Savior from sin. Will you make that decision now? If you are a Christian, how are you helping others to know Christ?
5. What did God say He would do after the ark and the atonement cover were completed? (Exodus 25:22)
6. Just as God met with Moses over the ark of the Testimony to give instructions to Israel, He also guides those who trust in His Son, Jesus Christ. How does John 14:26 say this takes place?

1. *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*.

Fourth Day: Review Exodus 25, concentrating on verses 23-40.

1. What was the next item to be made for the tabernacle, and how was it described? (Exodus 25:23-29)

2. a. What was always to appear on the table? (Exodus 25:30)

b. Challenge: What do you learn about this bread from Leviticus 24:5-9?

3. The table and the bread point to the Lord Jesus Christ. What does Jesus say about this in John 6:32-35,51?

4. Describe the next item to be made for the tabernacle. (Exodus 25:31-40)

5. a. Read John 8:12. How did the lampstand of the tabernacle point to Jesus Christ?

b. Read Act 26:17-18, in which God gives a commission to the apostle Paul. What does He say the darkness and the light represent?

6. Personal: Whom do you know that walks in spiritual darkness? If you belong to Jesus Christ, He wants to send you to them, to show them the way to the light. Why not pray now and ask Him to guide you to the person He wants you to speak to, and to give you the right words to say?

Fifth Day: Read Exodus 26, concentrating on verses 1-30.

1. Now God begins to give instructions for the tabernacle itself. (As you study these instructions, you may find it helpful to refer to the diagram of the tabernacle on page 95.) There are two sets of coverings and two sets of curtains, each having an outer set and an inner set. What were the inner curtains—those visible only to the priests who served in God's presence—made of, and how were they joined? (Exodus 26:1-6)

2. What was the outer set of curtains made of, and how were they joined? (Exodus 26:7-13)

3. Challenge: Read Numbers 28:15 and Leviticus 16:7-10,15,20-22. Of what would the outer curtains of goats' hair remind the people of Israel?

4. What were the two layers of coverings over the tabernacle made of? (Exodus 26:14)

5. Describe the framework of the tabernacle from Exodus 26:15-30. This framework formed a trellis-like structure over which the four curtains were draped.¹

6. Personal: Try to imagine how the tabernacle would have looked. Remember that the tabernacle was “a copy and shadow of what is in heaven” (Hebrews 8:5). As believers, we have been given a glimpse of heaven, of the beautiful and marvelous presence of our holy God. Read David's words in Psalm 27:4. Have you thanked God for revealing His beauty to you?

Sixth Day: Review Exodus 26, concentrating on verses 31-37.

1. Describe what separated the Holy Place from the Most Holy Place. (Exodus 26:31-33)

2. Where were the ark and its cover, the table, and the lampstand to be placed in the tabernacle? (Exodus 26:34-35)

3. Read Matthew 27:50-51. What happened to this inner curtain of the temple when Jesus died?

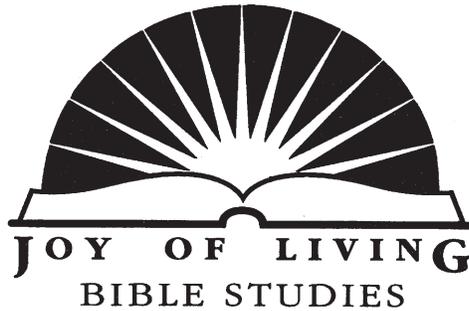
4. Read Hebrews 6:19-20a and 10:19-22. How did this event show that believers now have permanent access to the presence of God?

5. What was made to cover the entrance of the tabernacle? (Exodus 26:36-37)

6. Personal: Does your hope rest on the “anchor for the soul, firm and secure” that is Jesus Christ? He has accomplished all that is needed for your sins to be forgiven, for you to be able to enter God's presence. There is nothing you can do, nothing that God expects of you, to add to what Jesus has done.

1. *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*..

Exodus Lesson 16



Exodus 25-26

As we mentioned in the last lesson, after God gave the Law, He gave the Israelites both new *forms* of worship and new *meaning* for the old forms.

First, He revealed a *place* of worship, which He called the tabernacle. The Hebrew word for “tabernacle” appears for the first time in Exodus 25:9. It comes from the Hebrew word for “to dwell,” and so designates the place where God dwells among His people.

Moses had instructed Israel to wait for him as he climbed Mount Sinai and disappeared in the cloud-enveloped summit. During the forty days of Moses’ absence from Israel, God showed him the pattern for the tabernacle, where God would dwell in the midst of His people. There could be no permanent building for worship until Israel was settled in the Promised Land. The tabernacle therefore was to be constructed so it could be moved from place to place.

God gave specific instructions regarding the place in which He chose to be worshiped. As you study these instructions, you may find it helpful to refer to the diagram of the tabernacle on page 95. As we will discover in the next few chapters of Exodus, the tabernacle was a rectangular structure. Its frame was made of acacia wood, and measured about 45 feet by 15 feet.¹ It was divided into two parts, the Holy Place, and Most Holy Place. This structure stood within an outer court, 150 feet long and 75 feet wide. A fence of curtains enclosed the entire area. The worshiper approached through this outer court, and we shall see the reason why he must enter through the one way of access.

God revealed His plan from the inside out—moving from the heart of the tabernacle, the Most Holy Place, to the outer gate where the sinner approached. Here is a picture of our Savior, Jesus Christ, coming from heaven’s glory to seek and to save the lost sinner—the grace of God that brought salvation to us. The study of the tabernacle points to the Lord Jesus Christ, who in the future “became flesh and made his dwelling among us” (John 1:14).

Exodus 25:1-9 Materials for the Tabernacle

Have you ever heard of a church or Christian organization who received so many donations that people were told to stop giving? Did you know that is what happened when the children of Israel were

1. A cubit was an ancient unit of length, equal to the distance from the elbow to the tip of the middle finger, approximately 17-22 inches.

asked to bring an offering to build the tabernacle? The Israelites gave so abundantly they eventually had to be restrained (see Exodus 36:6-7). What was their motivation? They gave without restraint from hearts that overflowed with gratitude to God.

All these treasures represented the back wages the Israelites had collected from the Egyptians as they fled Egypt, when “the LORD had made the Egyptians favorably disposed towards the people” (see Exodus 12:35-36). So it was God Himself who made possible the offerings He required of them.

Whatever we have as Christians comes from God—whether spiritual endowments or temporal blessings. The Lord did not demand Israel’s gifts, nor does He demand ours. He will accept only what is given voluntarily and from a willing heart. We are simply stewards, given charge of what really belongs to God. What are you doing with what He has entrusted to you? Are you prepared to give an account to Him of the use you make of your time, talents, and possessions?

Exodus 25:10-22 The Most Holy Place

The tabernacle was divided into two rooms, separated by a curtain. The innermost room was the Most Holy Place. The outer room was the Holy Place. Once a year, on the Day of Atonement, the High Priest was permitted to enter the Most Holy Place. The other priests and the Levites ministered daily in the Holy Place.

God began by giving Moses specific instructions for the furniture to be used within the tabernacle. The ark and the atonement cover, the only items to be placed in the Most Holy Place, are the first described of the seven pieces of furniture in the tabernacle.

The ark was a small chest measuring about 45” x 27” x 27”, made of acacia wood overlaid with gold. It was fitted with rings of gold and poles overlaid with gold so it could be carried easily. After the ark was finished, Moses was to “put in the ark the Testimony, which I will give you” (Exodus 25:16). God was speaking of the stone tablets containing His law, which He Himself wrote and gave to Moses (see Exodus 31:18).

The materials of which the ark was made—the acacia wood and gold—portray the Lord Jesus Christ in His humanity and His deity. Acacia wood is a species of the mimosa, whose wood is darker and harder than oak and therefore avoided by wood-eating insects. It is

common in the Sinai Peninsula.¹ This “incorruptible” wood speaks of the untainted humanity of the Lord Jesus Christ, conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of a virgin, sinless in His life and being. While He is repeatedly referred to in Scripture as “the Son of Man” (i.e. see Matthew 8:20), and “the man Christ Jesus” (1 Timothy 2:5), His humanity was not corrupt because “in him is no sin” (1 John 3:5).

The gold overlay of the ark portrays the divine nature of Christ. God the Son “became flesh” (John 1:14), and took upon Himself “the very nature of a servant” (Philippians 2:6-7). He was real and human, yet God, “for in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form” (Colossians 2:9).

God next gave instructions for making a cover for the ark—“the atonement cover” (Exodus 25:17). Two cherubim made of gold were to be placed at the ends of the cover, their wings spread upward as they faced each other with heads bowed toward the atonement cover. The Bible first mentions these creatures in Genesis 3:24, where God stationed them to guard the tree of life after He expelled Adam and Eve from the Garden of Eden. Other Scriptures indicate they are living heavenly beings, with features both human and animal—winged creatures with faces of a man, lion, ox, and eagle (see Ezekiel 1:5-10; 10:1-22). God instructed Moses, “There, above the cover between the two cherubim that are over the ark of the Testimony, I will meet with you and give you all my commands for the Israelites” (Exodus 25:22). In their placement on the atonement cover, the cherubim symbolically guarded the throne of God.

On the Day of Atonement each year, the high priest sprinkled the blood of the sin offering on the atonement cover, as described in Leviticus 16:14 (see also Hebrews 9:7). The blood-sprinkled atonement cover covered the law, which condemned transgressors. God met the sinner, represented by the high priest. By faith we approach God’s throne of grace through the Lord Jesus Christ, our priest, entering into the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus (see Hebrews 10:19-22).

The atonement cover was the place of communion with God. Numbers 7:89 says Moses heard God’s voice, speaking “from between the two cherubim above the atonement cover on the ark of the Testimony.” Because Jesus has made us “priests to serve his God and Father” (Revelation 1:6), each one of us has access into God’s presence. The privilege of every Christian is to come boldly to the throne of grace, made possible because we are His blood-bought children, there to fellowship in His very presence (see Hebrews 9:11-12).

Exodus 25:23-40 Items for the Holy Place

Next God gave instructions for items to be placed in the outer room of the tabernacle, the Holy Place. He described the table that would hold the bread of the Presence, a golden lampstand, and the golden vessels to be used at the table.

Like the ark, the table was made of acacia wood and overlaid with gold. It was finished with a rim and a molding of gold. The table was fitted with rings of gold and wood poles overlaid with gold, so that

it could be easily transported. With the table there were to be plates, dishes, pitchers and bowls made of pure gold.

Leviticus 24:5-6,8-9 tells more about the bread of the Presence: “Take fine flour and bake twelve loaves of bread...Set them...on the table of pure gold before the LORD...This bread is to be set out before the LORD regularly, Sabbath after Sabbath, on behalf of the Israelites, as a lasting covenant. It belongs to Aaron and his sons, who are to eat it in a holy place.” The bread of the Presence referred to the presence of God Himself with Israel. These twelve loaves, one for each tribe of Israel, were an offering to God of the fruit of their labor, acknowledging that His blessing had produced it all.²

Again our thoughts are directed to the Lord Jesus Christ. He is the Bread of life, the very substance of our fellowship with God (see John 6:48-51). Around Him Christians gather as spiritual priests (see 1 Peter 2:5). The Lord Jesus explained in John 6 that those who would eat of Him would never die. Manna portrayed Christ as the life-giver, the bread of the Presence shows Him as the One who sustains life. He promised eternal life to all who would eat of the living bread—by personally accepting Him and His sacrificial death.

Sad to say, many Christians stop here, with the assurance of eternal life. But there is more! Jesus said, “I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full” (John 10:10). Food must be eaten if it is to nourish us. The more we feed on Christ and His Word, the more our minds and hearts will be in tune with Him and open to His will.

The next article of furniture mentioned is the lampstand, a shaft of pure gold with six branches, three on each side. It was hammered and formed by craftsmen to whom God had given skill and wisdom to create the shaft and to shape the ornamented branches with the three stages of the almond—the bud, the flower, and the fruit.

The lampstand reminds us of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Light of the World. The Bible said of Him, “I will also make you a light for the Gentiles, that you may bring my salvation to the ends of the earth” (Isaiah 49:6). Christ is “the true light that gives light to every man” (John 1:9). To those who have never received Him as Savior, He says, “I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life” (John 8:12).

Exodus 26:1-6 The Inner Curtain

Four layers of materials were used to cover the tabernacle. The two outer layers were called coverings; the two inner layers were designated curtains. The inner layer, visible from inside the tabernacle, was composed of ten curtains of the finest linen, each measuring six feet by forty-two feet, joined by loops and clasps into groups of five. They were white, interwoven with blue, purple, and scarlet. Figures of cherubim, with outspread wings, delicately embroidered in the three colors, made this canopy a thing of rare beauty.

Some biblical commentators view the colors of this magnificent canopy as emblems of certain aspects of the person and character of the Lord Jesus Christ. The fine twined linen is expressive of the

1. *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*. See notes on Exodus 25:5.

2. *The NIV Study Bible*. See note on Exodus 25:30.

spotless purity of Jesus in His humanity. Blue is the celestial color, speaking of Him as “the Lord from heaven.” Purple has long been identified with royalty. In Christ’s genealogy recorded in Matthew, the “purple” is evidenced in the royal line traced from King David. Scarlet, the color of blood, speaks of the Son of Man in His suffering. So the tabernacle curtains remind us of the spotless Man from heaven; the royal One, born a King; and the suffering Savior, “pierced for our transgressions...crushed for our iniquities” (Isaiah 53:5).

Exodus 26:7-14 Outer Curtains and Coverings

Over the curtains of fine linen were placed curtains woven of goats’ hair. They were longer and wider than the inner curtain of linen, so that they hung down over the structure on three sides. Ten covered the tabernacle; the eleventh was doubled and hung over the five pillars at the entrance. The significance of the goats’ hair curtains is in the fact that the goat was the animal set apart for the sin offering (see Numbers 28:15; Leviticus 16). This is symbolic of the Lord Jesus Christ, who was made sin for us (see 2 Corinthians 5:21).

Seeing the curtains of goats’ hair at the door, the priest was reminded of the sacrifice that made his entrance possible. Within, the exquisite beauty of the colorful inner curtains was his delight, for in God’s presence is fullness of joy (see Psalm 16:11). Only the priests enjoyed the privilege of entering the Holy Place. So today, only those who have put their trust in the Lord Jesus Christ may “have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus” (Hebrews 10:10), and can discern His beauty and His perfection.

The goats’ hair curtains were held together with fifty clasps of brass. Brass in Scripture is symbolic of God’s judgment. This perfectly completes the picture of the goats’ hair curtains depicting the suffering the Savior endured on the cross as He bore God’s judgment.

The two outer coverings were more for protection than for beauty. Rams’ skins dyed red were placed over the goats’ hair curtains. The red skins foreshadowed Christ being obedient unto death. The blood He shed on the cross covered our sin (see 1 Peter 1:18-19).

The outermost covering was made from the “hides of sea cows” (Exodus 26:14). This covering, subject to desert storms and the heat of the sun, was most durable. No mention is made of its color or eye appeal. No one who saw the tabernacle would have dreamed what a wealth of beauty lay beneath the tough exterior. Only when the priest entered did he see the gleaming gold, the pure white linen with its skillful needlework, the blue, purple, and scarlet of the amazing cherubim. Only within could he walk in the light of the golden candlestick and breathe the fragrance of the incense as it rose from the golden altar.

Just as when the Lord Jesus Christ was on earth, so today many fail to recognize Him as the One sent from God, in whom is the beauty and glory of heaven itself. The casual observer cannot see Christ in His divine perfection as the holy, spotless Son of God, Savior and Lord. No one can really know Him and all He is until that one is in Christ, until he enters by the only way ever revealed. Israel entered in because a lamb or a goat was sacrificed. The way of the cross—the shed blood of the Lamb of God, a personal identification with Him in

His sacrifice for your sin—is the only way you may experience the beauty, the glory, and grace of the Savior.

Exodus 26:15-30 Boards, Bases, and Bars

The framework of the tabernacle was made up of boards of acacia wood overlaid with gold. The structure faced east, and the entrance was protected with curtains hung from five pillars. Twenty boards were used on the north and south sides, six on the west, with an extra one to form the two rear corners. The corner boards gave added strength and stability to the tabernacle. The Lord Jesus is spoken of as the “foundation” (1 Corinthians 3:11) and “the chief cornerstone” (Ephesians 2:20).

Detailed descriptions of silver bases are given, and then of the crossbars which held the vertical boards together, giving firmness and rigidity to the structure. Again, the symbolic meaning of the gold of the boards and bars, the divine nature of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the wood, His humanity, is further emphasized as they are bound and held together as one. Though difficult for our finite minds to grasp, the truth is that He is God and also Man, not two persons but one.

Exodus 26:31-37 Curtain of Separation

God instructed that a curtain was to serve as a partition between the Holy Place and the Most Holy Place. It was suspended by gold hooks from four pillars of wood and gold, set in silver sockets. The blue, purple, and scarlet are used again and the same fine linen, with cherubim worked into the it. While it was in full view and a joy to behold, yet it was also a barrier, for it hid the Most Holy Place and prevented access to that which symbolized the throne of God.

The curtain of separation in the tabernacle, and later in the temple built in Jerusalem, simply pointed up the fact that the way into God’s presence was not yet revealed. God made clear that the only way by which the high priest could go within the curtain was by the blood of a sacrifice. The fact that it was a curtain and not a wall of stone indicated its temporary nature. Hebrews 10:19-20 defines the symbolism of the veil as Christ’s humanity: “Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way opened for us through the curtain, that is, his body.”

We must turn to the New Testament for insight into the full significance of the veil as foreshadowing Christ. According to Matthew 27:46, it was the ninth hour, three o’clock in the afternoon, that He died on the cross. At that hour, the lamb of the evening sacrifice was on the temple altar. And at the very moment He cried, “It is finished,” the veil in the temple was torn from the top to the bottom (see Matthew 27:51). No longer is there any curtain or barrier. By faith we may now come unhindered into the very presence of the Lord, through Him who said, “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me” (John 14:6).

Study Questions

Before you begin each day:

- ☞ Pray and ask God to speak to you through His Holy Spirit.
- ☞ Use only the Bible for your answers.
- ☞ Write down your answers and the verses you used.
- ☞ Answer the “Challenge” questions if you have the time and want to do them.
- ☞ Share your answers to the “Personal” questions with the class only if you want to share them.

First Day: Read the Commentary on Exodus 25-26.

1. What meaningful or new thought did you find in the Commentary on Exodus 25-26, or from your teacher’s lecture? What personal application did you choose to apply to your life?

2. Look for a verse in the lesson to memorize this week. Write it down and post it in a prominent place. Make a real effort to learn the verse and its “address” (reference of where it is found in the Bible).

Second Day: Read Exodus 27:1-19.

1. a. What is described in Exodus 27:1-8, and of what materials was it constructed?

b. Read Exodus 40:6,29. Where was this altar placed, and what was it used for?

2. a. Read Leviticus 17:11. Why was it necessary to make the burnt offerings?

b. What was foreshadowed in the animal sacrifices, according to the following verses?
John 1:29

Hebrews 9:28a

1 Peter 2:24

3. a. What was the size of the courtyard for the tabernacle, and what material was used to make it? (Exodus 27:18)

b. On which side of the courtyard was the entrance? How did the entrance curtain of the courtyard differ from the other courtyard curtains? (Exodus 27:13a,16)

4. The one entrance by which to approach the tabernacle reminds us that there is only way that we may come to God. What do you learn about this in the following verses?

John 10:9

John 14:6

Acts 4:12

5. Personal: Have you come to God through the only true way? If so, how are you helping others to know Him?

Third Day: Read Exodus 27:20—28:30.

1. God now begins to instruct Moses about the priesthood and its duties. What did He command the Israelites to bring, and how were the priests to use it? (Exodus 27:20-21)
2. a. Whom did God designate as His priests? (Exodus 28:1)
- b. What do you learn about the responsibilities of the priests from the following verses?
Hebrews 5:1-4
- Nehemiah 8:2,8
3. a. What was the purpose of the sacred garments to be made for the high priest? (Exodus 28:2)
- b. What six pieces comprised the high priest's garments? (Exodus 28:4)
4. The ephod probably was a high priestly waistcoat or vest woven of blue, purple, scarlet, and white linen thread—all entwined with gold thread. Instead of having sleeves or being joined at the sides, it was hung from the shoulders by straps.¹ What was mounted on the straps ("shoulder pieces") and what was their purpose? (Exodus 28:9-12)
5. a. The breastpiece was a square piece of cloth folded in half upward to form a pouch, and fastened to the ephod using rings, blue cord, and golden chains. What was its purpose? (Exodus 28:15a)

1. *The Expositor's Bible Commentary.*

- b. What were mounted on the breastpiece, what was engraved on them, and what was their purpose? (Exodus 28:17a,21,29)

 - c. What were placed in the pouch of the breastplate, and for what purpose? (Exodus 28:30. These items will be addressed in the Lesson 17 commentary.)
6. Personal: Many aspects of the high priest's garments reflected his representation of all Israel before the Lord. Read Hebrews 4:14-16. If you have trusted Jesus as your Savior, He is your high priest, who continually bears your name upon His breast before God. What does that mean to you?

Fourth Day: Read Exodus 28:31-43.

1. Under the high priest's ephod was a long, blue robe, woven without a seam, worn over a "tunic of fine linen" (Exodus 28:39). It had slits for the arms and a hole for the head to pass through.¹ What were fastened to the hem of the robe, and what was their purpose? (Exodus 28:33,35)

 2. The high priest wore a linen turban. What was attached to it, and for what purpose? (Exodus 28:36-38)

 3. What garments were made for Aaron's sons, and for what purpose? (Exodus 28:40)

 4. What other garments were made for all the priests, and why were they needed? (Exodus 28:42-43; see also Exodus 20:26)

 5. a. What was Moses to do for Aaron and his sons after all of the priestly garments were ready? (Exodus 28:41)

 - b. The clothing of the priests was designed by God to give them dignity and honor (Exodus 28:2,40). In addition, their priestly garments allowed them to enter the tabernacle—into God's presence—without incurring guilt and dying (Exodus 28:43). What does this portray regarding those who have faith in Jesus Christ, according to the following verses?

Luke 24:49

Galatians 3:26-27

Colossians 3:9-10
6. Personal: Isaiah 64:6 says, "All our righteous acts are like filthy rags." It is impossible for us to clean ourselves up enough to come into God's presence. But He has graciously made the clothing of salvation through Jesus Christ available to anyone who will accept it. Have you received this gift from God, and put on these beautiful garments that give you dignity and honor?

1. *The Expositor's Bible Commentary.*

Fifth Day: Read Exodus 29.

1. God now tells Moses how to consecrate Aaron and his sons, demonstrating the seriousness and central mission they were being given in Israel's worship of God.¹ What offerings were to be brought to the Lord on this occasion? (Exodus 29:1-3)

2. a. How were the priests prepared for the ceremony? (Exodus 29:4)

b. After the priestly garments were put on Aaron, what was done as a sign of his being set apart? (Exodus 29:7)

c. Challenge: How are these things reflected in the life of a Christian, according to the following verses?
2 Corinthians 1:21-22

Ephesians 5:25-26

3. a. Offerings were now made to the Lord as part of the consecration ceremony. How were they specifically shown to be on behalf of Aaron and his sons? (Exodus 29:10,15,19-21,24)

b. What were names of the various offerings? (Exodus 29:14,18,22-24,26)

c. What was God's plan to provide food for the priests? (Exodus 29:27-28,31-33)

4. a. What was the duration of the ordination and consecration service? (Exodus 29:35-37)

b. What did God instruct Moses about the offerings to be made in the future? (Exodus 29:38-42a)

5. In Exodus 29:42b-46, how does God summarize the meaning and purpose of all the items He has instructed Israel to make and the ceremonies He has instituted?

6. Personal: It is easy for us to become sidetracked and focus on the services we do for the Lord, on the religious ceremonies we take part in, and on the gifts we give to Him. God continually calls us back to the true meaning and purpose of these things—in them He meets and speaks with us, He consecrates us for His service, and He dwells among us. Where is your focus when you take part in these things? How would you ask God to adjust your focus and your attitude?

1. Ibid.

Sixth Day: Read Exodus 30:1—31:11.

1. a. What additional item for the tabernacle is described, where was it placed, and what was its purpose? (Exodus 30:1,6a,7)

b. Read Psalm 141:2. What did the continual burning of incense on this altar represent?

c. How did the altar of incense point to what the Lord Jesus, our high priest, does for us, according to the following verses?
John 17:9

Romans 8:34

Hebrews 7:25
2. God now instructed Moses to take a census of Israel. He extended the principle of ransoming the firstborn, applying it to every Israelite. What was the atonement money to be used for? (Exodus 30:16)
3. a. What was the final item for the tabernacle described in Exodus 30:18-21, and what was its purpose?

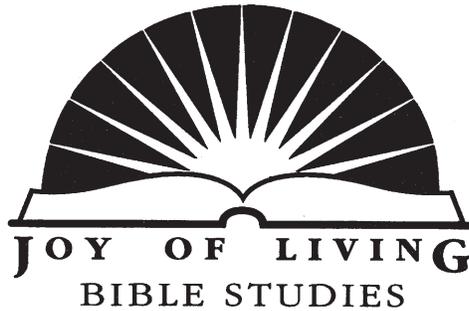
b. What two substances did God instruct Moses to make for use exclusively in the tabernacle? (Exodus 30:25,35)
4. a. Whom did God appoint to lead the craftsmen that would make everything for the tabernacle? (Exodus 31:2,6a)

b. How were the leaders and the craftsmen prepared for this work? (Exodus 31:3,6b)
5. How does God prepare us to serve Him, according to the following verses?
Romans 12:6a

1 Corinthians 12:4-6

1 Peter 4:10
6. Personal: God has given you particular physical skills and particular spiritual gifts. Are you using your gifts for His service? Is He calling you to serve Him in a particular capacity? If you fear that you cannot do what He asks, remember that our service is merely “administering God’s grace.” We do not have to dig deep within ourselves to find the skills, aptitude and courage to do God’s will. We need to realize that only His grace and His gifts allow us to obey Him and serve Him.

Exodus Lesson 17



Exodus 27:1-8 The Altar of Burnt Offering

After giving directions for the tabernacle and most of its furnishings, God moved on to an important article that would be located outside the tabernacle. He described it to Moses in Exodus 27:1-8, and then in Exodus 40:6 He called it “the altar of burnt offering”—the altar upon which animal sacrifices would be burned.

Surrounding the tabernacle was the courtyard, which will be detailed in Exodus 27:9-19. The altar of burnt offering stood just inside the gate of this courtyard, in front of the entrance to the tabernacle. It measured about 7 1/2 feet square and was about 4 1/2 feet high. To it the Israelites brought their sacrifices, and it was in use constantly. God’s pattern for the altar included all of its necessary utensils, and He designed it to be carried by poles inserted into rings, as was the ark. Unlike the golden furniture within the tabernacle, the altar of burnt offering was overlaid with bronze.

The bronze altar, able to withstand the heat of the fire, points to the cross, the place where Christ endured the wrath of God. Not only the altar, but the sacrifices as well, portray the Lord Jesus. Here He is seen as the Lamb of God, made sin for all who will believe. At the cross, as at the bronze altar, the righteousness and holiness of God were satisfied, for God hates sin and must judge and punish it. In Leviticus 17:11 He said, “For the life of a creature is in the blood, and I have given it to you to make atonement for yourselves on the altar; it is the blood that makes atonement for one’s life.” The sin question must be dealt with in the courtyard, where sinners stand. There must be a substitute, a sacrifice, before one can enter into the Holy Place. As every Israelite had to come by way of the bronze altar, so today the cross is the only way to heaven.

Exodus 27:9-19 The Courtyard

The courtyard measured about 75 by 150 feet, and was enclosed by a fence of linen curtains hung from 60 pillars. It was the place where the Israelites gathered for worship. The Israelite bringing his offering was confined to the courtyard. Only the priests ministered within the tabernacle.

The curtain for the entrance to the courtyard was made from the same fabric and colors as the interior curtains of the tabernacle. Both priests and worshipers must pass through the courtyard entrance before he had access to God. The Lord Jesus Christ said, “I am the

gate; whoever enters through me will be saved” (John 10:9). Standing before the door knowing it to be the way is not enough. You cannot receive full and complete cleansing from sin until you enter in.

Exodus 27:20—28:1 The Priesthood

Now God interrupts His directions for the tabernacle and its furnishings, and introduces the leaders of worship. All that was mentioned regarding the tabernacle in the preceding chapters foreshadowed God coming to His people; the articles of furniture, in symbol, revealed God in Christ. The bronze basin and the altar of incense that will be discussed in Exodus 30 have to do with man approaching God. Before this can take place, there must be priests designated for this special privilege of access to God. The tabernacle without the furnishings was of no use, but unless God had appointed priests to the service of the tabernacle, its furnishings would have been unusable.

God chose Aaron, Moses’ brother, as high priest and Aaron’s sons as priests. Hebrews 5:4 tells us the office of high priest was special. “No one takes this honor upon himself; he must be called by God, just as Aaron was.”

Israel was redeemed by the blood of the Passover lamb, so the priesthood had nothing to do with obtaining or securing their relationship to God. Rather, the priests maintained Israel’s fellowship with God. The author of Hebrews, under the Holy Spirit’s guidance, points out that the ritual of the tabernacle was a “an illustration for the present time...a shadow of the good things that are coming—not the realities themselves” (Hebrews 9:9; 10:1). It foreshadowed spiritual truths that were fulfilled in the Lord Jesus. No longer is there an order of priests who alone are endowed with the authority to go to God in behalf of others. That old order ended at the cross! All believers are priests and have direct access into the presence of God (see Hebrews 10:19,22).

In Exodus 27:20-21, God commanded the Israelites to bring oil for the lampstand continuously, so that the priests could keep the lamps burning every night. The “clear oil of pressed olives” was extracted from unripened olives that were beaten and pounded in a mortar rather than crushed in a mill. The pulpy mass was then placed in a basket; and the oil, without any mixture of other parts of the olive, dripped through the basket, giving a clear, pure oil that burned with little or no smoke.¹ Oil is a symbol of the Holy Spirit. The pure olive oil denotes

1. *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*

the work and witness of the Holy Spirit in the believer's mind and heart, enabling Christians to shine for the Lord (see Ephesians 5:8-9).

Exodus 28:2-43 Priestly Garments

God instructed Moses, "Make sacred garments for your brother Aaron, to give him dignity and honor" (Exodus 28:2). The outer garments are mentioned first, beginning with the ephod. The ephod probably was a high priestly waistcoat or vest woven of blue, purple, scarlet, and white linen thread—all entwined with gold thread. Instead of having sleeves or being joined at the sides, it was hung from the shoulders by straps.¹ Two onyx stones set in gold filigree settings were attached by braided gold chains to the shoulder pieces of the ephod. Each stone bore the names of six of the sons of Israel (Jacob) from the eldest to the youngest. Thus the names of the children of Israel were borne by Aaron into the Lord's presence.

The breastpiece was a square piece of cloth—made of same cloth as the ephod—folded in half upward to form a pouch, and fastened to the ephod using rings, blue cord, and golden chains. Mounted upon the breastpiece were twelve precious stones, set in gold filigree, each inscribed with the names of a tribe of Israel. So the names of the tribes were borne on the shoulders of Aaron, the place of strength, and upon his heart, that he might represent them before God with tenderness. The Lord's people are precious in His sight. If you are a child of God by faith in the shed blood of Christ, you are His precious jewel, redeemed to reflect the love and the beauty of the Lord Jesus Christ.

God further instructed, "Also put the Urim and the Thummim in the breastpiece, so they may be over Aaron's heart whenever he enters the presence of the LORD. Thus Aaron will always bear the means of making decisions for the Israelites over his heart before the LORD" (Exodus 28:30). No one knows exactly the description of the Urim and the Thummim, or how they functioned. The text does not include instructions for their making, suggesting that perhaps God revealed their identity privately to Moses. We do know that by the Urim and Thummim the will of God was determined.

Under the high priest's ephod was a long, blue robe, woven without a seam, worn over a "tunic of fine linen" (Exodus 28:39). It had slits for the arms and a hole for the head to pass through.² God instructed, "Make pomegranates of blue, purple and scarlet yarn around the hem of the robe, with gold bells between them" (Exodus 28:33). Every step Aaron took filled the air with the musical sound of the bells. All of Israel was cognizant of the fact that Aaron's high priestly duties must be carried out precisely as God instructed, lest he die. When he entered the Most Holy Place each year, the sound of the bells gave evidence that Aaron was alive and representing them before God.

Next, instructions are given for a plate of pure gold engraved with the words, "HOLY TO THE LORD." The gold plate was fastened to the front of a turban of fine linen by a blue cord. God said, "It will be on Aaron's forehead, and he will bear the guilt involved in the sacred gifts the Israelites consecrate, whatever their gifts may be" (Exodus 28:38). As

Israel's representative before God, Aaron was responsible for, and bore the blame for, every neglect or shortcoming in the manner in which the people worshiped or brought their offerings and gifts to the Lord. God saw in that golden plate holiness to His name, and was pleased to accept worship and gifts represented by the priest's moral beauty, he being clothed with the righteousness of God. Such is the magnificent grace of our great God to make provision for the imperfections in our worship and service. The Christian's high priest, the Lord Jesus Christ, bears our imperfections and our iniquities. Because God accepts us, we can look beyond our own miserable failures to Him who is able to present us "before his glorious presence without fault and with great joy" (Jude 24)!

Aaron's sons were outfitted with tunics, sashes and headbands. Even though these garments were not as elaborate as the garments of the high priest, they were also made "to give them dignity and honor" (Exodus 28:40). The garments of the high priest and the priests were to be worn at the time of their dedication. After that the garments were used only when the priests ministered in the tabernacle—they were set apart and holy for the service to God.

Exodus 29:1-35 Ceremony of Consecration

God now gave Moses clear instruction for the consecration of the priests. This was a solemn and impressive ceremony. It left no doubt in the minds of Aaron and his sons, and of the entire congregation of Israel, that this was indeed a holy calling.

The seven-day consecration service was to take place when the tabernacle was completed, and Moses, the mediator, would act as God's representative. Aaron and his sons were to be brought to the tabernacle and washed with water, which symbolized cleansing of the human nature. Child of God, you have been cleansed through the Lord Jesus Christ. Titus 3:5 expresses it this way: "He saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit." The Lord Jesus told Nicodemus, "No one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit" (John 3:5) It implies an inward washing by application of the truths of God's Word made known through the ministry of the Holy Spirit.

Symbolically the priests had put off the defilement of sin. Next they were to put on the garments of holiness. First Aaron was dressed and the anointing oil was poured on his head. Then the sons were dressed, but their anointing did not take place until the "ram for the ordination" (Exodus 29:22) had been slaughtered. At that point some of the anointing oil was sprinkled on the garments of both Aaron and his sons, to consecrate them. Oil in Scripture speaks of the Holy Spirit. Only as every servant of God, every believer, is set apart, yielded, and empowered by the Holy Spirit can he be effective in his service for the Lord.

The final part of the consecration ceremony was the sacrifices. Moses was to bring forward three animals for sacrifice—a bull for the sin offering, a ram for the burnt offering, and a ram for the ordination—and Aaron and his sons were to lay their hands on each animal's

1. *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*

2. *Ibid.*

head before it was slaughtered. Before the priests could act for the people, they must offer a sacrifice for their own sin. As with water baptism, the ceremonial washing with water could never remove the guilt of sin. It was designed to be an outward sign of an inward work of grace. Israel understood that God requires a blood sacrifice that He might accept them.

The sacrifices under the law did not remove sin, but covered it. The offering implied confession and recognition that death was the penalty, borne by the substitute sacrifice. The Old Testament sacrifices always pointed to the fact that it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take sin away (see Hebrews 10:1-4). The animal sacrifices for sin anticipated the coming of Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God who put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself (see John 1:29).

Exodus 29:38-46 The Continual Burnt Offering

In Exodus 29:38-43, God instructed Moses about offerings that Israel would bring in the future. A lamb would be brought morning and evening every day to atone for the daily sins of the people.

Unlike the daily sacrifices made by the priests of Israel, the sacrifice of the Lamb of God, Jesus Christ, was made “once for all” (Hebrews 7:27). Our sins are forgiven by Jesus’ all-sufficient sacrifice, but just as Israel met with the Lord daily, we also are called to daily fellowship with Him, speaking to Him in prayer, and hearing Him speak through His Word.

The chapter closes with great and precious promises to Israel. God said He would meet not only with Moses, but also with the people. He promised to dwell among them, to be their God, His glory filling the tabernacle. To these promises, the riches and depths of which we cannot fathom, God puts His majestic signature, “I am the LORD their God” (Exodus 29:46)

Exodus 30:1-10 The Altar of Incense

There were two altars used in the tabernacle—the bronze altar, or the altar of burnt offering, and the golden altar, also known as the altar of incense. The two altars differed not only in size and material, but also in their purpose. The bronze altar was in the tabernacle courtyard, just inside the entrance. It was more than seven feet square and was used for sacrifice—to burn the animal offerings. The golden altar, the smaller of the two, was the place of worship. It stood in the Holy Place, in front of the curtain that separated the two rooms of the tabernacle. The curtain hid the ark and atonement cover in the Most Holy Place from view of the priests in the Holy Place, yet their knowledge and understanding of the atonement cover, God’s dwelling place among them, was a continual reassurance that their sacrifice of prayer and praise were before Him.

Exodus 30 begins, “Make an altar of acacia wood for burning incense.” Before instructions were given as to material and measurements, God revealed the purpose for which this altar would be used. The altar of incense, overlaid with gold, speaks of Christ in His divine glory, the risen Christ who has been “taken up in glory” (1 Timothy

3:16). The fragrant incense speaks of His intercession on our behalf as He appears in the presence of God (see 1 John 2:1). Scripture also compares the prayers of God’s people to the smoke of the incense rising before God (see Psalm 141:2; Revelation 8:3-4).

The high priest was to burn incense on the altar every morning and every evening. Luke 1:10 provides a clear picture of what happened while the priests were at the altar of incense: “And when the time for the burning of incense came, all the assembled worshippers were praying outside.” So the golden altar not only symbolizes Christ’s intercession for the believer, but it also symbolizes the need for our daily prayers.

Exodus 30:11-15 Atonement Money

Once again God interrupts His directions for the tabernacle and its furnishing. This time He gives instructions to Moses to take a census and collect a contribution from every man twenty years or older. Each was to give a ransom for himself to the Lord of a half shekel of silver. Note that the offering was the same for rich and poor alike. There may have been many who experienced hardship in giving even this small amount, but by the same token, no one was excluded. In addition, no one could boast that his gift would gain special favor.

The ransom in no way signified that salvation could be obtained by any effort on the part of the sinner, any more than his bringing a lamb or bull implied that he was bargaining for God’s favor. Ransom money was but a foreshadow of the great cost of Christ’s sacrifice. His precious blood was the price of redemption for us.

Just as Israel was obligated to assume responsibilities of their redemptive position, so Christians must meet the obligations of their calling: saved from sin—saved for service. The apostle Paul wrote, “You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your body” (1 Corinthians 6:19-20).

Exodus 30:17-33 Preparation for Worship

God now instructed Moses concerning the final piece of tabernacle furniture, the bronze basin. It stood, filled with water, in the courtyard between the altar of burnt offering and the tabernacle. The basin was used only by the priests. “Aaron and his sons are to wash their hands and feet with water from it” (Exodus 30:19).

Why was the basin necessary? The water was for purification. Each priest was in need of cleansing before he could enter the tabernacle, the place of worship and communion. The cleansing water is symbolic of the Scriptures, the written Word of God. Psalm 119:9 asks, “How can a young man keep his way pure? By living according to your word.” First Peter 1:22 tells us that we purify ourselves by obeying the truth, which we find in the living and abiding Word of God. Let the purifying power of God’s Word renew and refresh you, so that your communion with Him is unbroken.

Next came the recipe for the anointing oil used in tabernacle worship. A special blend of precious spices was mixed with olive oil. When

the oil had absorbed the rich perfume, the mixture was strained, and the “sacred anointing oil” was then stored for exclusive use by the priests. Its purpose was for anointing Aaron and his sons, the tabernacle and its furnishings.

Today believers are anointed by the Holy Spirit—He indwells every believer. The Holy Spirit equips, enlightens, and empowers His own. We read in 1 John 2:27, “The anointing you received from him remains in you.” The gifts and the fruit of the Spirit are evidenced only in the lives of those who are born again (see 1 Corinthians 12:4-6; Galatians 5:22-23). All do not possess the same gifts, but each one has particular gifts of the Spirit. You cannot be effective in any service for the Lord unless the Holy Spirit opens your mind and heart to understand His Word, to comprehend His will and leading, and to show through your life the sweet aroma of the knowledge of Him in every place.

Exodus 31:1-11 Divine Appointments

Special skill was needed for the intricate work to make the tabernacle and its furnishings, thus God named those He would appoint to the tremendous task—those to whom He had given special gifts of craftsmanship: “Then the LORD said to Moses, “See I have chosen Bezalel son of Uri, the son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah, and I have filled him with the Spirit of God, with skill, ability and knowledge in all kinds of crafts” (Exodus 31:1-3). To assist Bezalel, God appointed Oholiab, the son of Ahisimach, of the tribe of Dan, and in addition said, “I have given skill to all the craftsmen to make everything I have commanded you” (Exodus 31:6).

These phrases—“I have chosen,” “I have filled,” “I have appointed,” “I have given,” “I have commanded”—leave no room for self to be projected into God’s divine plan. The intricacies of the design of the tabernacle and furniture could only be fashioned by those equipped with the Spirit of the Lord in wisdom, understanding, knowledge, and craftsmanship.

God’s selection of individuals to serve Him assures that He will fully equip them for their particular tasks. All do not have the same talents. If you feel inadequate, remember it is the Holy Spirit who supplies the wisdom and understanding. The Holy Spirit reveals the truths of God’s Word so that you may share with others (see John 16:5-15). Human wisdom or academic achievements are of little consequence unless the Spirit of God rules the mind and heart. The essence of service is obedience. No task is too menial and none too great but that God will supply what it takes to execute it to His glory. There are countless gifts God has given His children. Discover yours and serve Him with joy.

Study Questions

Before you begin each day:

- ☞ Pray and ask God to speak to you through His Holy Spirit.
- ☞ Use only the Bible for your answers.
- ☞ Write down your answers and the verses you used.
- ☞ Answer the “Challenge” questions if you have the time and want to do them.
- ☞ Share your answers to the “Personal” questions with the class only if you want to share them.

First Day: Read the Commentary on Exodus 27:1—31:11.

1. What meaningful or new thought did you find in the Commentary on Exodus 27:1—31:11, or from your teacher’s lecture? What personal application did you choose to apply to your life?

2. Look for a verse in the lesson to memorize this week. Write it down and post it in a prominent place. Make a real effort to learn the verse and its “address” (reference of where it is found in the Bible).

Second Day: Read Exodus 31:12-18.

1. God has just finished giving instructions about all the work to be done on the tabernacle and its furnishings. What did He caution Israel not to overlook as they carried out His instructions? (Exodus 31:13)

2. How were they to observe the Sabbath, and what was the penalty for disobedience? (Exodus 31:14-15)

3. Challenge: In Exodus 31:16-17, God said the observance of the Sabbath was the sign of a “lasting covenant” between Himself and Israel. What other lasting covenants did He establish in the following Scriptures?

Genesis 9:14-17

Genesis 17:4-7,10-13,19

Leviticus 24:5-8

4. The “lasting covenants” that God established were His gifts to a person or a group of people, signifying what God had committed Himself to do for and through them. Some people may regard God’s requirements that Israel observe the rite of circumcision, the Sabbath, and the preparation of the bread of the presence as burdensome rules or legalistic requirements. But what did God say in Exodus 31:17 that Israel’s observance of the Sabbath signified?

5. a. Look back at Exodus 24:18. How long had Moses been on the mountain with the Lord?

- b. What did God give to Moses at the end of the forty days and nights? Read Exodus 31:18 with Exodus 32:15-16 and Deuteronomy 4:13 for a more complete description.
6. Personal: Everything that God did for Israel, every covenant, command and instruction, was a gift to His people. But you may wonder why this matters to you, if you are not a Jewish believer. Read Ephesians 2:11-16. Does this help you understand that as a believer you are also a citizen of God's chosen people of Israel, because of what Jesus Christ has done?

Third Day: Read Exodus 32, concentrating on verses 1-14.

1. a. What did the Israelites propose to Aaron? (Exodus 32:1)

b. What did Aaron do in response? (Exodus 32:2-4a)

c. How did both Aaron and the people of Israel continue in and magnify their sin? (Exodus 32:4b-6)
2. a. How did Moses learn of Israel's sin? (Exodus 32:7)

b. What did Israel do before the golden calf idol, and what did they say about it? (Exodus 32:8)
3. What did God say He would do because of Israel's unfaithfulness? (Exodus 32:9-10)
4. a. We have seen that Moses has been acting as a mediator between Israel and the Lord. What did Moses do now in this role? (Exodus 32:11a)

b. What argument did Moses make against God's destruction of His people? (Exodus 32:11b-13)
5. What was the result of Moses' intercession for Israel? (Exodus 32:14)
6. Personal: God's "relenting" is an anthropomorphism—a description of God in human terms—that aims at showing us that He can and does change in His actions and emotions toward people when given proper grounds for doing so, although He does not change in His basic integrity or character.¹ Are you concerned about someone who has fallen into repeated and serious sin? Read James 5:16. What will you do on their behalf before the Lord?

1. *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*

Fourth Day: Review Exodus 32, concentrating on verses 15-35.

1. When Moses returned to Israel's camp, how did he react to what he heard and saw? (Exodus 32:19-20)

2. From Exodus 32:22-24, did Aaron assume responsibility for Israel's sin? What excuses did he give? Compare Aaron's account of what happened to what he actually did in Exodus 32:2-4a.

3. What action did Moses take when he realized that the people were running wild? Who answered Moses' call to stand with him for the Lord? (Exodus 32:26)

4. How did God deal with those who continued in their revelry and sin? (Exodus 32:27-28)

5. a. What did Moses ask of the Lord as he interceded for Israel once again? (Exodus 32:30-32)

b. Moses so identified himself with Israel that he made his own death the condition for God's destruction of the nation.¹ How did God respond to this offer? (Exodus 32:33-34)

6. Personal: God made it clear to Moses that every person who sins is accountable for his or her own sin. Read 1 John 1:9. How are we to deal with our own sin? Have you done this?

Fifth Day: Read Exodus 33.

1. God commanded Moses and the people of Israel to continue traveling to the Promised Land. Who did He say would go before them? What would change because of Israel's repeated sin? (Exodus 33:2-3)

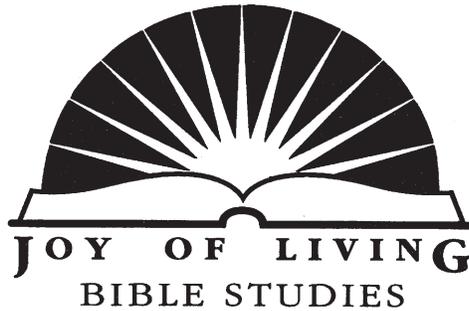
2. What did Moses customarily do in order to meet with the Lord? What did the people of Israel see when Moses met with the Lord, and how did this contrast with Moses' experience of the meeting? (Exodus 33:7,9,11a)

3. God had told Moses that He would send an angel before them, but that God Himself would not be present with them on their journey. What concern does Moses express in Exodus 33:12a? What did Moses ask of the Lord and what did God promise him? (Exodus 33:13-17)

4. a. What further request did Moses make of the Lord, and how did God answer this request? (Exodus 33:18-23)

1. *The NIV Study Bible*

Exodus Lesson 18



Introduction

For forty days Moses stayed on Mount Sinai with the Lord, receiving instructions for building the tabernacle—a sanctuary where God would dwell among them (see Exodus 24:18; 25:8). At the end of that time God gave Moses two tablets of stone, “the two tablets of the Testimony...inscribed by the finger of God” (Exodus 31:18) to take back to the people. Beginning with chapter 32 of Exodus we find out what awaited Moses in the camp of the Israelites.

God’s final instructions to Moses concerned the way the people were to observe His Sabbath.

Exodus 31:12-18 A Sabbath for Israel

At the time of creation, the seventh day was recognized as a special day in God’s calendar. God had completed His work and declared it “very good.” He “blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it he rested from all the work of creating that he had done” (Genesis 2:3).

The Sabbath was mentioned on occasions of particular importance to the people of God. In Exodus 16:23, it was in giving the manna that God commanded Israel to observe the Sabbath. A double portion of manna was gathered on the sixth day because none fell on the seventh day. The sacredness of the day was again proclaimed when God included observing the Sabbath as one of the Ten Commandments (see Exodus 20:8-10).

Once again the Sabbath is now brought before Israel at the conclusion of God’s instructions concerning the skilled, Spirit-filled craftsmen who would be working on the tabernacle: “The Israelites are to observe the Sabbath, celebrating it for the generations to come as a lasting covenant. It will be a sign between me and the Israelites for ever” (Exodus 31:16-17). God had entered into a covenant with Israel, and Sabbath-keeping was a sign of that covenant. The consequence of disobedience was death (see Exodus 31:15).

The last verse in Exodus 31 tells us that when God finished speaking with Moses He gave him “the two tablets of the Testimony, the tablets of stone inscribed by the finger of God.” God graciously communicates His commands to believers today, as well. In fact, the “finger of God”—the Holy Spirit—writes His law directly upon the mind and heart of every believer (see 2 Corinthians 3:3; Hebrews 10:16).

Exodus 32:1-14 Peaks and Valleys

We have been on the mountaintop with Moses, viewing “the copies of the heavenly things” (Hebrews 9:23). The perfection of the person and work of our blessed Savior, foreshadowed in the tabernacle, have lifted us beyond the awesome fire and smoke, into the wonder of the grace of God that permits us to see the glories of such revelation. But there, at the foot of Mount Sinai, an unbelievable scene unfolded before Moses’ eyes, as he and Joshua descended the mountain.

Before Moses left the mountain, God warned Him of Israel’s wickedness in making and worshipping the golden calf. The Lord told him of the sacrifices they had brought and of their declaration: “These are your gods, O Israel, who brought you up out of Egypt” (Exodus 32:8). Israel thus denied the one true God and renounced their allegiance to Him.

The leaders of Israel’s rebellion had suggested to Aaron that perhaps Moses would not return, and that Israel should have some tangible evidence of leadership—“gods who will go before us” (Exodus 32:1). Aaron apparently offered no resistance to those whose evil design could bring nothing but the wrath and judgment of God. Aaron knew that God had said they must have no other gods, nor make any idols (see Exodus 20:3-4). Yet he offered to collect Israel’s gold earrings, melt them and fashion the image of the calf, perhaps reminiscent of Egypt’s bull-god, Apis.¹

Next Aaron built an altar and proclaimed a festival to the Lord. The *NIV Study Bible* suggests that he may have recognized the idolatrous consequences of his making of the golden calf, and acted quickly to keep the people from turning completely away from the Lord.² But it is clear that a golden calf and a festival to the Lord are incompatible.

When God warned Moses of Israel’s rebellion, God called them “your people, whom you brought up out of Egypt” (Exodus 32:7), and said He was ready to destroy the entire nation of Israel. He told Moses, “I will make you into a great nation” (Exodus 32:10). This was a real test for Moses. Israel’s destruction was not God’s plan, and underlying every human decision is God’s sovereign will. If Moses had been seeking glory for himself, he would have welcomed this opportunity to be so honored. Instead, he implored God for the honor of His name and His glory to turn from His anger and relent. Moses cited the pos-

1. *The NIV Study Bible*

2. *Ibid.*

sibility of the Egyptians deriding God, should He forsake Israel. Moses reminded God of the promises He had made to the patriarchs.

Exodus 32:14 tells us, “Then the LORD relented and did not bring on his people the disaster he had threatened.” Moses’ appeal was effective because God would not deny Himself. The Lord had established an everlasting covenant with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob (see Psalm 105:8-10). Israel’s unbelief could not negate God’s promise. God’s repentance or “relenting” is a description of God in human terms that aims at showing us that He can and does change in His actions and emotions to men when given proper grounds for doing so, but He does not change in His basic integrity or character. The grounds for the Lord’s repenting are three: (1) intercession (see Amos 7:1-6); (2) repentance of the people (see Jonah 3:9-10); and (3) compassion (see Judges 2:18).¹

Moses, the mediator, claimed God’s help on the basis of His grace, His glory and His faithfulness. Here is encouragement to intercessory prayer. Are you concerned about a believer who has fallen into repeated and serious sin? What will you do on their behalf before the Lord?

Exodus 32:15-29 Ridiculous Responses

As Moses and Joshua neared the camp, Joshua thought the noise of the people’s revelry sounded like a war. The sight of the calf and the dancing confirmed to Moses the depths to which Israel had plunged. In holy anger Moses threw down the tablets of the law, breaking them into pieces. This action testified against Israel that they had broken the covenant.

Moses confronted Aaron, whom he had put in charge of the people during his absence. His question was to the point and inferred Aaron’s guilt: “What did these people do to you, that you led them into such great sin?” (Exodus 32:21). Moses was asking Aaron if he had been threatened, frightened or overcome by the people, that he should yield to their demands and displease God. Was there no alternative? Could he have used his God-given gift of speech to assure Israel that the Lord had not removed their leader? Nor had Moses deserted them. Aaron’s persuasion, with God’s blessing, could have lifted his fellow Israelites from their spiritual doldrums and led them to give honor and glory to their Redeemer, to whom they had sworn allegiance. But instead, Aaron exchanged his golden opportunity for a golden idol.

Aaron’s answer was ridiculous. Of course, he did not blame himself, but reminded Moses that the people were prone to evil. When they brought their gold as he directed, Aaron said, he simply threw it in the fire and out came the calf! He denied all personal responsibility, as if some magic had produced the idol, yet Exodus 32:4 tells us that Aaron actually fashioned it with a tool. How prone we are not only to sin, but also to make excuses for ourselves when we have sinned. Aaron’s lie didn’t fool God; He knew what Aaron had done. We, too, must be careful not to rationalize our sin; instead we must acknowledge our sin and turn from it. God desires us to be honest with ourselves and with Him (see Psalm 51:6; 1 John 1:9,10).

1. *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*

Only the mercy and patience of God, in answer to Moses’ prayer of intercession, spared Aaron the penalty of his sin. Moses recounted the entire experience in Deuteronomy 9 and concludes by saying, “The LORD was angry enough with Aaron to destroy him, but at that time I prayed for Aaron” (Deuteronomy 9:20). This is a beautiful illustration of the truth that “the prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective” (James 5:16). Be faithful in prayer for the salvation of family and friends, and for the restoration of any you know who have been ensnared by the idols of the world.

Moses turned next to the people, who were “running wild and... out of control” (Exodus 32:25). They had freed themselves of all moral restraints, and perhaps indulged in the same things they had witnessed in Egypt’s idolatrous worship. Their revelry was interrupted by Moses’ return. Moses challenged them to repent, to forsake their sin and to stand up and be counted: “Whoever is for the LORD, come to me” (Exodus 32:26). The sons of Levi were those who came forward. Perhaps they and others had not joined in worship of the calf and the sinful celebration. Moses did not pat them on the back, but rather commanded them to take up the sword against their fellow Israelites.

God dealt severely with the sins of idolatry and apostasy. The three thousand Israelites who were slain that day may have been the ringleaders who persisted in their sin, even after Moses’ return to the camp. Often, people object to the teaching and preaching about God’s wrath. But God’s holiness is unchangeable. He cannot and will not condone sin. He still warns, “Do not be idolaters, as some of them were” (1 Corinthians 10:7).

God’s judgment does not always fall upon sinners immediately because, Scripture says, “He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance” (2 Peter 3:9). God’s Word assures that He so loved the world that He gave His Son to die for your sin so that you might have eternal life (see John 3:16).

His Word also tells us that God “will punish those who do not know God and do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. They will be punished with everlasting destruction and shut out from the presence of the Lord and from the majesty of his power” (2 Thessalonians 1:8-9).

Exodus 32:30-35 Moses’ Mediation

“The next day Moses said to the people, ‘You have committed a great sin. But now I will go up to the Lord; perhaps I can make atonement for your sin’” (Exodus 32:30). Nothing is said of Israel’s repentance or of their remorse for having so grievously offended God. Moses emphasizes the seriousness of their sin, and intimates that it is no simple matter to settle things with the Lord. Moses inferred that Israel’s sin was so enormous there was a possibility they could not be restored to their former status, especially since they had evidenced no sorrow for their sin.

Moses’ prayer in the next few verses reveals his concern for Israel and his loyalty to them as their leader and mediator. If Israel were

to be blotted out from God's book, Moses would choose to cast his lot with them.

Israel's total and immediate destruction had been averted when Moses sought God's mercy and forgiveness before descending from Mount Sinai (Exodus 32:14). God had then told Moses that He would make of him a great nation, but here Moses is saying that he could not bear to see his own glory and honor built on Israel's ruins. He would rather be cut off with his fellow Israelites. If they were not permitted to enter Canaan, Moses could not enjoy the Promised Land without them.

God now refused Moses' gracious offer to join the guilty Israelites in their punishment: "Whoever has sinned against me I will blot out of my book. Now go, lead the people to the place I spoke of, and my angel will go before you. However, when the time comes for me to punish, I will punish them for their sin" (Exodus 32:33-34). God deals with sin on an individual basis. His principles never change. In the New Testament we read, "A man reaps what he sows" (Galatians 6:7). Although God will deal personally with each Israelite because of his or her sin, God will see that the nation is taken safely to the Promised Land. Although in the past the Lord had personally led Israel (see Exodus 12:42,51), and Moses was only His servant, from then on Moses and an angel were to lead the nation.¹ The concluding verse of this chapter tells us that "the LORD struck the people with a plague because of what they did with the calf Aaron had made" (Exodus 32:35). The nation was not consumed; but God would not overlook their sin.

Have you wondered as you studied this chapter how such a crisis could have arisen in Israel so soon after her redemption from Egypt, and her unanimous declaration of allegiance to God? Even before this are the instances of complaining and unbelief which evidenced spiritual immaturity. Satan was at work to frustrate the purposes of God. From a lack of faith and trust in God there is only a step to idolatry. When John wrote, "Dear children, keep yourselves from idols" (1 John 5:21), he was not thinking of golden calves. Rather he was appealing to Christians not to be drawn to the false gods of the world. Our salvation does not guarantee perfection, and no one is immune to Satan's craftiness. When anything takes priority over your loyalty to the Lord Jesus and affects your spiritual growth and commitment to Him, it becomes an idol. Ask the Lord to guard you from anything that would pull you away from Him (see 1 John 2:15-17).

Exodus 33:1-6 Repentance and Mourning

Although God promised that Israel would be given protection and guidance into Canaan, His declaration that He would not be in their midst in the same intimate relationship brought dismay to the people. God called them stiff-necked—unwilling to bow in humility to His commands.

The Lord told Moses to tell the Israelites, as a sign of repentance, to take off their ornaments, and they obeyed. This was an action similar to putting on sackcloth and ashes—a sign of mourning for their sin.²

1. Ibid
2. Ibid.

The absence of God's presence was cause to mourn. It is the same when a Christian's sin goes unconfessed, and the joy of fellowship is disrupted. As the apostle Peter preached, "Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord" (Acts 3:19). And James wrote, "Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up" (James 4:10).

Exodus 33:7-23 Moses' Prayer Answered

The pattern of the tabernacle fresh in his memory, Moses pitched a temporary tent of meeting. He may have chosen a site outside the camp because the camp itself had been desecrated. The tent of meeting was not for Moses' exclusive use, but for "anyone inquiring of the LORD" (Exodus 33:7).

The people all stood by their tents watching Moses as he went in and out of the tent of meeting. Whenever Moses entered it, a pillar of cloud would come down, indicating that the Lord was communicating with him. When the Israelites saw the pillar of cloud, they were moved to worship God. One of the most beautiful sentences in the Bible is written here: "The LORD would speak to Moses face to face, as a man speaks with his friend" (Exodus 33:11). This is not to be understood as actually seeing God, but indicates an intimate fellowship between God and His servant Moses, of whom God said, "He is faithful in all my house" (Numbers 12:7).

In one of his visits to the tent, Moses reminded the Lord that He had not told him who would go with him as he continued the journey to Canaan. God had declared His favor toward Moses; now Moses pleads that if God will do anything for him, let it be to manifest His grace to Israel by His continued presence and direction. "If your Presence does not go with us, do not send us up from here" (Exodus 33:15). Moses could not bear the thought of going forward unless God Himself would carry them on eagles' wings, as He had said in Exodus 19:4. God's presence with Israel distinguished them from all other nations. He answered Moses, "My Presence will go with you, and I will give you rest... I will do the very thing you have asked, because I am pleased with you and I know you by name" (Exodus 33:14,17).

Having twice petitioned God on behalf of Israel and having been assured his petitions were granted, Moses presents a personal request before the Lord: "Now show me your glory" (Exodus 33:18). He longed to know more of his Redeemer. God had spoken with Moses as with a friend; they communicated freely with each other. Moses' desire was a result of his intimate fellowship with God. It is also true of Christians—the more we know of Him, the more we want to know. God told Moses, "I will cause all my goodness to pass in front of you" (Exodus 33:19). God's goodness *is* His glory—all He is in Himself—His sovereignty, His righteousness, His grace, His mercy. The Lord told Moses of a place near by where he could stand on a rock while God's glory passed by. God said He would put Moses in a cleft in the rock, and cover him with His hand. Moses would be permitted only a glimpse after God had passed by. God said, "You cannot see my face, for no one may see me and live" (Exodus 33:20).

God is Spirit and invisible. We humans are incapable of translating into our experience all the majesty and glory of the eternal Spirit. First Timothy 6:15-16 says of Him, “God, the blessed and only Ruler, the King of kings and Lord of lords, who alone is immortal and who lives in unapproachable light, whom no one has seen or can see.” Yet we today, as Christians, have the privilege of knowing Him in the person of His Son, the Lord Jesus.

Exodus 34:1-35 The Tablets Replaced

The Lord told Moses to make two new stone tablets, and bring them to the top of Mount Sinai. There, God wrote again the words that were on the first tablets that Moses had broken. He fulfilled His promise that Moses would see His glory. As He passed in front of Moses, He proclaimed His name and His attributes—“compassionate...gracious...slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness, maintaining love to thousands, and forgiving wickedness, rebellion and sin” (Exodus 34:6-7). God’s presence caused Moses to bow low in reverence and adoration.

God renewed the covenant that He had made earlier, promising, “Before all your people I will do wonders never before done in any nation in all the world. The people you live among will see how awesome is the work that I, the LORD, will do for you” (Exodus 34:10). Who could have even a fleeting moment of fear with a commitment like that from One who had already proved His faithfulness to those whom He had declared to be His treasured possession? Then, God reviewed the commands He had previously given to Moses.

The Bible tells us, “Moses was there with the LORD forty days and forty nights without eating bread or drinking water.” (Exodus 34:28). This was a miracle of God’s supernatural care. His communion with the Lord made his face radiant, although Moses was not aware of it. The people recognized this as a reflection of God’s holiness, and “they were afraid to come near him” (Exodus 34:30). Moses covered his face with a veil, except when he went into the tent of meeting to speak with the Lord.

Take a moment to consider the communication you have with the Lord. First, you must have a relationship to Him by faith in Christ, so that you may “approach the throne of grace with confidence” (Hebrews 4:16). Next, confession of known sin clears the atmosphere for communion with your heavenly Father. Psalm 66:18 says, “If I had cherished sin in my heart, the Lord would not have listened.” Just as the glory of God shone on Moses’ face, so your light will shine before others who will recognize God’s working in your life and will be led to glorify Him (see Matthew 5:16).

Study Questions

Before you begin each day:

- ☞ Pray and ask God to speak to you through His Holy Spirit.
- ☞ Use only the Bible for your answers.
- ☞ Write down your answers and the verses you used.
- ☞ Answer the “Challenge” questions if you have the time and want to do them.
- ☞ Share your answers to the “Personal” questions with the class only if you want to share them.

First Day: Read the Commentary on Exodus 31:12—34:35.

1. What meaningful or new thought did you find in the Commentary on Exodus 31:12—34:35, or from your teacher’s lecture? What personal application did you choose to apply to your life?

2. Look for a verse in the lesson to memorize this week. Write it down and post it in a prominent place. Make a real effort to learn the verse and its “address” (reference of where it is found in the Bible).

Note: From this point on in the study we will be covering longer passages of Scripture in each day’s questions. If you don’t have time to read the entire passage, you may just read the verse(s) referenced in each question.

Second Day: Read Exodus 35.

1. Exodus chapters 35-40 are for the most part a repetition from chapters 25-31. Such repetition was a common feature of ancient Near Eastern literature, and was intended to fix the details of a narrative in the reader’s mind.¹ What important reminder did Moses again give to the Israelites in Exodus 35:2?

2. a. What additional instruction on this topic did Moses give in Exodus 35:3 that had not been specifically mentioned before?

 b. Challenge: Read Exodus 16:23. How is the new instruction in Exodus 35:3 implied in the earlier passage?

3. a. What is mentioned repeatedly in Exodus 35:21-29 about the attitude of those who gave offerings to the Lord for work on the Tent of Meeting and all its related items?

 b. Read 2 Corinthians 9:6-8. How does the apostle Paul say believers should give to the Lord?

4. a. What skills did the Lord give to Bezalel? (Exodus 35:30-33)

 b. What particular gift did God give to both Bezalel and Oholiab that would make the work on the Tent of Meeting go much more quickly? (Exodus 35:34-35)

1. *The NIV Study Bible.*

5. a. Are all Christians equipped to serve the Lord in the same way? What do you learn about this in the following verses?

1 Corinthians 12:4-7

1 Peter 4:10

- b. Read 1 Corinthians 12:11. Who decides which gift(s) a particular believer will have?
6. Personal: If you are a believer, the Holy Spirit has given you particular gifts to be used in His service. God may also have blessed you with many material blessings. Have you thanked Him for these gifts and skills and material blessings? What is your attitude about serving God with your gifts and skills, and sharing your material blessings with the needy as He leads you?

Third Day: Scan Exodus 36-38.

1. How did the people respond to the need for material and workers? (Exodus 36:3-5)
2. What order did Moses finally have to give? (Exodus 36:6-7)
3. Challenge: The start of the actual work on the tabernacle begins here. Briefly describe the various items that were made in Exodus 36:8—38:20.
4. The tabernacle and many other aspects of Old Testament worship foreshadowed the truth fulfilled with the coming of Jesus Christ. Read 1 Corinthians 3:9-11. What is the true building of God, and what is its foundation?
5. Personal: Read 1 Corinthians 3:12-16. Every Christian individually—as well as the church corporately—is God's temple, because the Holy Spirit lives within us. Jesus Christ is the foundation, and He gives us the privilege of building on His foundation. Do you willingly give Him yourself and all that you have, as you build your life in Him?

Fourth Day: Read Exodus 39.

1. a. Briefly summarize what additional items were made for worship in the tabernacle from Exodus 39:1-31.

- b. What phrase is repeated eight times in this passage? Why do you think this is important?
2. What is the final summary in Exodus 39:32?
3. What did Moses do in Exodus 39:43?
4. Read Psalm 19:9-11. How does the psalmist describe the ordinances, or commands, of the Lord? What happens when we keep, or obey, them?
5. Personal: Have you experienced God's blessing because you obeyed His commands? In what way?

Fifth Day: Read Exodus 40.

1. The Israelites had provided all the resources for the tabernacle and made all the components. What did God now authorize His servant Moses to do in Exodus 40:2-8?
2. What was Moses then to do in Exodus 40:9-11? What was the purpose of doing this?
3. What was Moses' final task after he set up and consecrated the tabernacle? (Exodus 40:12-15)
4. How did God give His seal of approval to what Moses and the Israelites had done? (Exodus 40:34)
5. How did the Lord lead Israel to the Promised Land? (Exodus 40:36-38)
6. Personal: The Lord made His dwelling with Israel, and led them to the land He had promised. He has promised to do the same thing for every person who believes in His Son, Jesus Christ. We receive His Holy Spirit when we trust Jesus as our Savior (see John 14:15-17), and He will guide us in His paths until the joyful day that we go to be with Him in heaven (see John 14:1-6). Have you trusted Jesus as your Savior? Do you know that the Holy Spirit lives in you and is guiding you?

Sixth Day: Scan Numbers 1-8.

1. a. We will now take a look at selections from the books of Numbers, Deuteronomy and Joshua, following Israel's journey until they arrive in the Promised Land. The Book of Numbers begins thirteen months after Israel's Exodus from Egypt. Israel had spent the previous year in the region of Mount Sinai receiving the law, erecting the tabernacle, and becoming a people. What did God now tell Moses to do and for what purpose? (Numbers 1:2-3)

b. What exception did God make to this command? (Numbers 1:49)
2. a. What were the Levites to be responsible for, since they were excluded from the military listings? (Numbers 1:50-51)

b. How did the arrangement of the tribes' encampments reflect this division? (Numbers 1:52-53) See diagram on page 95.
3. a. Numbers 3 further addresses the priestly and Levitical families. From Numbers 3:5-8, what were the responsibilities of the Levites, and whom did they assist?

b. What was the responsibility of Aaron and his descendants? (Numbers 3:10)
4. a. In what way did the Levites especially belong to the Lord? (Numbers 3:12-13)

b. What new type of census did God command Moses to take in Numbers 3:15,40?

c. The male Levites over the age of one month were regarded by the Lord as a redemption for the firstborn of the nation. How many more firstborn sons of Israel than Levites were there, and how did the Lord instruct Moses to redeem them? (Numbers 3:46-48)
5. Though Israel as a whole was under the blood of the Passover, God commanded that the redemption price for each individual firstborn person had to be paid—and provided the means for it to be paid. This foreshadowed what He would do for all of us through His Son, Jesus Christ. What do you learn about this in the following verses?

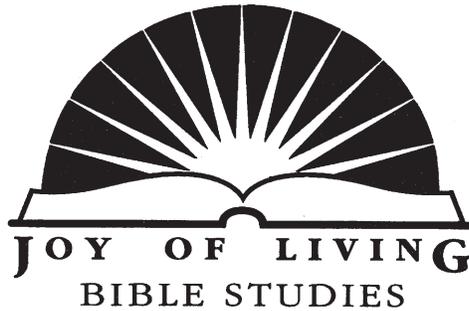
Romans 3:22-25a

Galatians 3:10,13

Galatians 4:4-5
6. Personal: Have you personally acknowledged the Lord Jesus Christ as your Substitute? He paid the penalty for sin in your place. If you have done this, write a prayer to God expressing how you feel. If you have not yet done this, are you ready to accept His gift to you?

Exodus

Lesson 19



Introduction

Exodus chapters 35-40 are for the most part a repetition from chapters 25-31. Such repetition was a common feature of ancient Near Eastern literature, and was intended to fix the details of a narrative in the reader's mind.¹ Moses here proclaims God's instructions to the whole Israelite community, so that the tabernacle might be built exactly as ordered.

The Scriptures often emphasize the Lord's commands and precepts by much repetition. Israel's only glimpse into the glories and magnificence of the tabernacle and its sacred treasures was through the words of Moses, so it was important that they hear Moses' descriptions as many times as necessary.

In the same way, the Holy Spirit led the writers of the Gospels to record many of the same incidents, miracles and conversations regarding the life of the Lord Jesus on earth, so that we might read and read again the truths He would teach us. For both the Israelites under Moses and for believers today, it is vitally important to understand the Lord's commands and His revealed will so that we may obey Him.

Exodus 35-36 Willing Hearts and Hands

As Moses prepared to reveal to Israel God's plan for His dwelling place in their midst, he first reemphasized the holiness of the Sabbath. He included a prohibition that had not been specifically mentioned in the past—they were not to light a fire on the Sabbath. Without fire it would be impossible to work with metal for the tabernacle construction. The Lord knew the people were likely to become overzealous in their work on the tabernacle, and in their enthusiasm they might continue their labors without a day of rest. But not even the work on the sanctuary superseded the Lord's Sabbath, which was to be observed as a day of rest by every man, woman and child in Israel.

During Israel's years of slavery, the people were reduced to a meager existence. Then suddenly they came into great wealth by reason of the vast amount of precious metals and other articles given to them when they left Egypt. Human nature being what it is, it is quite amazing that they were willing to part with their newly acquired possessions. But Exodus 35:21 tells us, "Everyone who was willing and whose heart moved him came and brought an offering to the LORD for the work on the Tent of Meeting." The offerings were voluntary. There

were no unwilling participants, no burden of taxation, and no pledges to be met later. Upon hearing what Moses said, they immediately prepared to act. In the same spirit, 2 Corinthians 9:7 urges, "Each man should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver."

The leaders of each tribe set a good example by bringing onyx and other gems for the ephod and breastpiece. Some contributed olive oil and costly spices. They brought their earrings, their bracelets and other articles of gold. Those who possessed blue, purple or scarlet yarn or fine linen, or goat hair, ram skins or hides of sea cows, brought them for the curtains and coverings of the tabernacle. Others gave silver, bronze and acacia wood.

Material gifts had been given in abundance. Willing hands were needed to convert them into the gorgeous tabernacle structure and furnishings. Every skillful man and woman was asked to rally to the task. To coordinate and supervise all the work, the Lord appointed Bezalel, and endowed him with "the Spirit of God, with skill, ability and knowledge" (Exodus 35:31). The Spirit of God enabled Bezalel to create the articles according to all the Lord would show him. Oholiab, second in command, was likewise given skills to perform the work, and together they taught those whose hearts had stirred them to volunteer. And so the work of the tabernacle was begun as Moses gave into their care the contributions of the people. The people continued to bring their possessions—much more than enough—so that Moses issued a statement restraining them from bringing more. Surely God must have been pleased with such evidence of their willingness to serve Him.

Those who know and love the Lord Jesus as Savior do not need to be persuaded to honor Him by doing His bidding. The Holy Spirit will prompt them to give of self and substance. Jesus said it briefly, but emphatically, "Freely you have received, freely give" (Matthew 10:8). The Lord has need of each of us who belong to Him, for all are a part of the Body of Christ. First Corinthians 12:12-20 compares the individuals within the church to the parts of a human body, recognizing their varied purposes, and the need for all to function together in harmony. The work of the Lord requires all the members of His Body, the assembly of believers—all the treasures, the talents and gifts God has given each one.

It is never burdensome to serve the Lord because we love Him. The Lord summons His own to use their special talents for His glory. Remember the staff in Moses' hand, and how it was used of the Lord (see Exodus 4:2-5,17)? Ask yourself again, "What is the staff in my

1. *The NIV Study Bible*

hand, and is it dedicated to the Lord Jesus to be used as He chooses?" As the Holy Spirit leads, dedicate the staff in your hand to the Master's service.

Exodus 37 Furnishings for the Sanctuary

Exodus 37:1-9 records the making of the ark, with the cherubim and atonement cover. These represented the presence of God, attended, as it were, by the cherubim with outspread wings.

Next the table of the bread of the Presence was completed. The table always was laden with twelve loaves of bread, to be eaten by the priests after seven days, and replenished with a fresh supply (see Exodus 25:30; Leviticus 24:5-9). The Lord is a gracious Provider. He blesses us with abundant harvests, oceans of fish, sparkling streams, everything that is needed to sustain life. In the words of the psalmist, let us "give thanks to the LORD for his unfailing love and his wonderful deeds for men, for he satisfies the thirsty and fills the hungry with good things" (Psalm 107:8-9). Bread has long been called "the staff of life," and here on the table of the sanctuary it foreshadowed the Lord Jesus who gives and sustains life. He is the Bread of life, giving spiritual nourishment to believers (see John 6:35).

Exodus 35:17 continues with the fashioning of the lampstand, made of pure gold. Each branch was decorated with almond buds and flowers. The lampstand provided the only light within the tabernacle. The priests were charged with the responsibility to keep the lamps burning continually (see Leviticus 24:2). The lampstand is a picture of Jesus Christ, who is "the true light that gives light to every man" (John 1:9).

The altar of incense, on which incense burned twice daily (see Exodus 30:7-8), was overlaid with gold. The altar of incense was the place of worship. It signified the prayers of God's people, which rise to Him as a sweet fragrance (see Revelation 5:8). The altar of incense speaks of the Lord Jesus Christ, the great Intercessor continually praying for those who are His own (see John 17:6-9; Hebrews 7:25). We can come to God in prayer only through Him (see John 14:6).

All these furnishings and vessels of the sanctuary were made of or overlaid with gold, pure and costly. It was necessary to melt and mold the metals that were given for the tabernacle, to make them into usable items. Only the Lord can make you what He wants you to be, and then only if you put yourself into His hands. He will purify you (see Isaiah 48:10; 1 Peter 1:7); provide His strength for your weaknesses (see Philippians 4:13); and equip you with every good thing to do His will, working in you that which is pleasing in His sight (see Hebrews 13:20-21).

Exodus 38-39 The Courtyard

Next the workers turned their attention to the courtyard and its furnishings. A fence of fine linen curtains enclosed the tabernacle and the courtyard. At the entrance of the courtyard were hung gorgeous curtains, richly embroidered in blue, purple and scarlet. The Israelite coming to worship entered by this curtain, the one way of access.

The priest led him first to the altar of burnt offering. Then, as now, sin had to be dealt with before worship and praise were acceptable to God. This altar overlaid with bronze was for the sacrifices brought by individual Israelites (see Leviticus 1), and it was here the high priest officiated on the Day of Atonement, when confession was made and a sacrifice was offered to atone for the sins of all Israel (see Leviticus 23:27).

The sinner coming to seek forgiveness and cleansing identified himself with the sacrificial animal or bird by placing his hand on its head, in effect transferring his guilt to the victim. We must keep in mind the fact that the blood of animals could never take away sin; the animal sacrifices pointed to Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God (see Hebrews 10:1-10). Only the blood of the Lord Jesus can remove our sin and guilt. Scripture assures us, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9).

The Israelite could go no farther than the area of the altar of burnt offering. From here on the priest represented him. The priest proceeded from the scene of the sacrifice to the bronze basin. This contained water for the priest's cleansing before he entered the tabernacle (see Exodus 30:18-20). Perhaps the priest could see his reflection in the basin, made from mirrors given by the women, as he prepared to enter the Holy Place. The Word of God is a mirror in which we may examine ourselves. As our own hearts and lives are compared with it, our blemishes and imperfections are exposed. It also serves as a cleansing agent, bringing us to repentance, then to obedience. Ephesians 5:25-26 says, "Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word."

The first portion of Exodus 39 describes how the garments were made for Aaron, the high priest, and his sons, the priests. The text is punctuated with the phrase, "as the Lord commanded Moses." God's specific instructions required specific obedience. A servant of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart, will seek to follow closely all the Lord has spoken in His Word.

In summary, Exodus 39:32-43 declares, "So all the work on the tabernacle, the Tent of Meeting, was completed. The Israelites did everything just as the LORD commanded Moses. Then they brought the tabernacle to Moses: the tent and all its furnishings... Moses inspected the work and saw that they had done it just as the LORD had commanded. So Moses blessed them."

Only Moses was qualified to inspect the work and to know that it was done according to the commandment of the Lord. What joy must have welled up in the hearts of the workers to know that what they had done was pleasing to Moses and to the Lord.

Exodus 40 The Tabernacle is Set Up

The Lord ordered Moses to set up the tabernacle on the first day of the first month, which was almost a year after their departure from Egypt.¹ *The Expositor's Bible Commentary* calculates, "Since Israel

1. *The NIV Study Bible*.

entered the Sinai Desert in the third month after the Exodus (19:1) and Moses was on Mount Sinai for two forty-day periods (24:18; 34:28) plus the events covered in 19:1—24:11 and chapters 32-33, the building of the tabernacle took less than six months.¹ Every board was put in place, the curtains hung, the fence of linen curtains secured. Moses placed each piece of furniture according to the Word of the Lord. “And so Moses finished the work” (Exodus 40:33). Numbers 7:1 confirms that “When Moses finished setting up the tabernacle, he anointed it and consecrated it and all its furnishings. He also anointed and consecrated the altar and all its utensils.”

Exodus 40:34 continues, “Then the cloud covered the tent of meeting, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle.” After all the months of hard work and preparation, this supernatural light, the visible manifestation of God’s presence, was a magnificent benediction, signifying that God was pleased. The cloud of His presence rested on the tabernacle. When the cloud lifted, it was a sign that Israel should continue their journey to the Promised Land, assured of God’s presence and guidance.

Numbers 1-8 Family Affairs

The families of the sons of Levi—Gershon, Kohath and Merari—were appointed by God as custodians of the tabernacle. Moses and Aaron were grandsons of Kohath. The Levites, at God’s direction, pitched their tents around the tabernacle. The remaining tribes surrounded them, each in an assigned position. (See diagram on page 95.)

The first few chapters of the book of Numbers describe the duties of each Levite family. When Israel moved from place to place, the tabernacle was dismantled and carefully transported. The sons of Gershon “were responsible for the care of the tabernacle and tent, its coverings, the curtain at the entrance to the Tent of Meeting, the curtains of the courtyard, the curtain at the entrance to the courtyard surrounding the tabernacle and altar, and the ropes—and everything related to their use” (Numbers 3:25-26). Two carts, drawn by four oxen, were needed to carry it all (see Numbers 7:7). The sons of Merari were responsible for “the frames of the tabernacle, its crossbars, posts, bases, all its equipment, and everything related to their use, as well as the posts of the surrounding courtyard with their bases, tent pegs and ropes” (Numbers 3:36-37). These heavy items were transported on four carts by eight oxen (see Numbers 7:8). Upon reaching their destination the Gershonites and Merarites reassembled the tabernacle.

When the tabernacle was to be moved or set up, Aaron and his sons first prepared the ark and the furnishings of the Holy Place. Numbers 4:5-6 tells us that the ark of the Testimony was first covered with the shielding curtain, which in turn was protected with the hides of sea cows and a blue cloth. Likewise, the table of the Presence and its utensils, the lampstand and its accessories, the golden altar and the bronze altar were painstakingly wrapped in hides and cloth.

After the articles of the sanctuary were covered, the sons of Kohath came forward to carry them by the poles made for this purpose.

The Lord cautioned them not to touch the “holy things” (Numbers 4:15) or they would die. Eleazer, Aaron’s son, was given the oversight of “the entire tabernacle and everything in it, including its holy furnishings and articles” (Numbers 4:16). He was responsible for the oil for the lamps, the incense, the holy anointing oil, and the daily offerings.

You will recall that shortly after Israel’s deliverance from Egypt, the Lord instructed that the firstborn were to be dedicated to Him (see Exodus 13:2). Now, however, God said He would take “the Levites from among the Israelites in place of the first male offspring of every Israelite woman” (Numbers 3:12).

In effect the Levites were substitutes, serving instead of the firstborn sons of each Israelite family. Their term of service was from age 30 to 50 (see Numbers 4:3), while they were in their prime. Apparently there was a five-year apprenticeship beginning at age 25 (see Numbers 8:24). Their best years were given to the work of the Lord. This arrangement insured continuity in the service of the tabernacle.

God instructed Moses to count all male Levites over the age of one month and all the firstborn sons of Israel. According to Moses’ census there were 273 more firstborn sons of Israel than there were male Levites. The Lord instructed Israel to redeem each of these 273 firstborn for five shekels, which were to be given to Aaron and his sons. Though Israel as a whole was under the blood of the Passover, God commanded that the redemption price for each individual firstborn Israelite had to be paid—and provided the means for it to be paid. This foreshadowed what He would do for all of us through His Son, Jesus Christ.

When the Lord Jesus Christ died on the cross for you and for me, He became our substitute. God said the soul that sins must die, and none is excluded, for all have sinned (see Romans 3:23; 6:23). If you have never trusted in His shed blood for your salvation from sin, won’t you ask the Lord Jesus now to be your Savior?

If you do know Him as Savior, He has called you into service for Him. He wants to use your hands, your feet, your lips and your willing heart to do His bidding. Will you pray with the hymn writer?

Take my life, and let it be
 Consecrated, Lord, to Thee;
 Take my moments and my days,
 Let them flow in ceaseless praise...
 Take my hands, and let them move
 At the impulse of Thy love...
 Take my intellect, and use
 Every power as Thou shalt choose.²

1. *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*

2. Frances R. Havergal, 1836-1879.

Study Questions

Before you begin each day:

- ☞ Pray and ask God to speak to you through His Holy Spirit.
- ☞ Use only the Bible for your answers.
- ☞ Write down your answers and the verses you used.
- ☞ Answer the “Challenge” questions if you have the time and want to do them.
- ☞ Share your answers to the “Personal” questions with the class only if you want to share them.

First Day: Read the Commentary on Exodus 35-40 and Numbers 1-8.

1. What meaningful or new thought did you find in the Commentary on Exodus 35-40 and Numbers 1-8, or from your teacher's lecture? What personal application did you choose to apply to your life?

2. Look for a verse in the lesson to memorize this week. Write it down and post it in a prominent place. Make a real effort to learn the verse and its “address” (reference of where it is found in the Bible).

Second Day: Read Numbers 9.

The arrangement of materials in the Book of Numbers is not strictly chronological. The events in chapter 9 take place about a month before the beginning of the census in chapter 1. Israel is camped near Mount Sinai, celebrating the goodness and mercy of the Lord and preparing to march into the land of Canaan.

1. What did God tell Moses to communicate to Israel? (Numbers 9:2-3)

2. Challenge: The first Passover was held in Egypt. The second is here at Sinai a year later. From Exodus 12:1-17, what did the Passover commemorate, and how was it to be observed? Summarize briefly.

3. a. What gracious provision did God make for those who could not celebrate the Passover for a legitimate reason? (Numbers 9:10-11)

b. Did this exception apply to those who had no reason to miss the Passover feast and simply failed to celebrate it? (Numbers 9:13)

4. How did Israel know when to continue on their journey to Canaan, and when to stop and camp? Summarize Numbers 9:15-23.

5. God always wants to guide His people. How does He guide us, according to the following verses?
Psalm 119:105

Psalm 143:10

Proverbs 3:5-6

John 16:13a

6. Personal: Are you allowing God to guide you according to His perfect plan? He cannot do so until you surrender your will to His. Share an example of God's guidance which you have experienced.

Third Day: Read Numbers 10:1-32.

1. What did the Lord instruct Moses to make? (Numbers 10:2a)
2. On what different occasions were the trumpets used? (Numbers 10:2b-7)
3. When did the Israelites set out from Sinai? (Numbers 10:11-12)
4. a. What did Moses request of his brother-in-law, Hobab son of Reuel, in Numbers 10:29? (Note: Moses' father-in-law is also called Jethro. See Exodus 2:18; 3:1.)

b. Why would Hobab be of help to Moses? (Numbers 10:31)
5. a. What did Moses promise Hobab in Numbers 10:32?

b. Read Judges 1:16 and 4:11, which took place many years after Israel had entered the Promised Land. From these verses do you think Hobab went with the Israelites?
6. Personal: Hobab wasn't sure he wanted to come, but the verses from Judges indicate that he did come. The *Expositor's Bible Commentary* compares Moses' invitation to Hobab to an act of evangelism: "[Hobab] is like Ruth who joins Naomi en route to the Land of Promise, leaving all behind, with a promise of something ahead that is of more value than anything left at home. Coming with Moses was not just a change of address; it was a radical reorientation of life itself. To come with Moses was to have a new family. To come with Moses was to gain a new land. To come with Moses was to come to believe in a new God."¹ Who can you invite to come along on your journey with God's family? They may not immediately accept your invitation, but keep asking!

1. *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*.

Fourth Day: Read Numbers 10:33—11:35.

1. a. How long had Israel been traveling? (Numbers 10:33a)

b. Numbers chapters 1-10 emphasized the complete obedience of the people to the commands of the Lord. But now, after so short a time of traveling, what did the people do? (Numbers 11:1a)

c. What was the consequence of the people's action, and how did the Lord respond to Moses' prayer? (Numbers 11:1b-2)

2. a. Even after this judgment, who instigated further complaints and what did they say? (Numbers 11:4-6)

b. Read Exodus 12:37-38. From these verses, who were "the rabble"?

3. How did Moses react to this new bout of complaints from the people? (Numbers 11:10-15)

4. a. What was the Lord's response to Moses' dilemma? (Numbers 11:16-17)

b. What was God's response to Israel's complaint? (Numbers 11:18-20)

5. a. How did God answer the people's cry for meat? (Numbers 11:31-32)

b. Although God sent abundant meat in answer to the people's complaint, what consequence did many of them suffer for their rejection of the Lord's gracious provision of manna? (Numbers 11:33-34)

6. Personal: The sin of the Israelites was not that they desired meat, but that they did not show gratitude to the Lord, who was in their midst and who was their constant source of good.¹ Read 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18. Do you have an attitude of gratitude to the Lord in all circumstances? If you find it easy to complain, ask Him to change your heart and mind.

1. *The NIV Study Bible.*

Fifth Day: Read Numbers 12.

1. a. Who now attacked Moses, and what was their complaint? (Numbers 12:1-2a)

b. What had Miriam and Aaron possibly forgotten when they made this complaint to other Israelites? (Numbers 12:2b)
2. a. What did the Lord do in response, and how soon did He do it? (Numbers 12:4-5)

b. How did God defend Moses? (Numbers 12:6-8)
3. What was the effect of God's anger upon the body of Miriam, the principal offender?¹ (Numbers 12:9-10a)
4. a. To whom did Aaron appeal when he saw Miriam's condition? (Numbers 12:10b-12)

b. What did Moses do? (Numbers 12:13)
5. What was God's gracious response? (Numbers 12:14-15)
6. Personal: Do you realize that the Lord hears every word you say, and every thought you think? If you truly realized this at all times, how would your thoughts and words be different?

Sixth Day: Read Numbers 13 and Deuteronomy 1:1-33.

1. a. Many years later, Moses reflected on the events of this chapter. As he recounted the story to the sons and daughters of those who lived the account, he filled in some details that Numbers 13 omits.² What were Moses' initial words to the people in Deuteronomy 1:21?

1. *The Expositor's Bible Commentary* says, "The feminine singular verb that initiates the chapter (lit., "and she spoke," v.1) and the placement of her name before that of Aaron indicate that Miriam is the principal in the attack against Moses. Aaron apparently joined her at her instigation...Miriam was the principal offender. Now God has spoken out against her; his hand has struck."

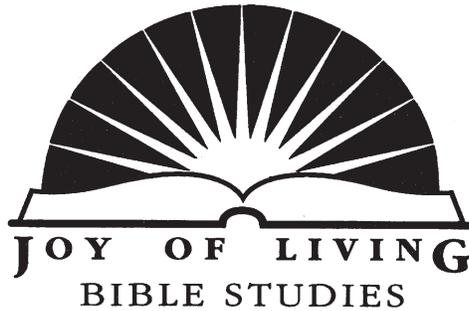
2. *Ibid.*

- b. What did the people request in Deuteronomy 1:22?
 - c. Whom does this show the Israelites feared most—God, or the people of Canaan?
2. a. How does Numbers 13:1-2 relate this incident?
 - b. Personal: The *Expositor's Bible Commentary* notes that when the people made their request, Moses decided—on the basis of the will of God—to agree to their request. Both accounts meld into a whole—the very idea of sending spies to the land was a further example of the grace of God to the people.¹ He shows this grace to each one of us as well, meeting our needs that arise from our fear and weakness. Read Isaiah 51:11-14. How does this help you to face a fearful situation today?
3. a. What were the explorers to report on? (Numbers 13:17-20)
 - b. What did the men report about the land and its inhabitants? (Numbers 13:27-29)
4. a. According to Numbers 13:30, who disagreed with this assessment?
 - b. Did he convince the others? (Numbers 13:31-33)
5. Read Deuteronomy 1:29-31. How did Moses respond to the fear of the people?
 6. Personal: Have you experienced the Lord “carrying” you through difficult times? Did you recognize His presence at the time? Remembering these experiences in our own past, as well as the experiences of God’s people in the Bible, should be a powerful faith-builder. Ask God to help you remember His grace to you and to His people, and to help you follow His leading no matter the circumstances.

1. *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*

Exodus

Lesson 20



Introduction

The Exodus narrative ends with the children of Israel encamped at Sinai, where they had stayed for almost a year. The tabernacle, standing in the midst of the camp, had been dedicated, and “the cloud covered the Tent of Meeting” (Exodus 40:34). The pillar of cloud and fire assured that God was in their midst. In fact the glory of God so filled the tabernacle that not even Moses could enter it. The cloud would lead the Israelites onward to the “land flowing with milk and honey” (Exodus 3:8). Moses continued the record of Israel’s experience from Sinai to Canaan in writing the books of Numbers and Deuteronomy. To these books and to the book of Joshua we turn for the remaining lessons in this series. Our attention is directed to selected portions from all three books.

Numbers 9:1-14 Israel’s Anniversary

The first anniversary of Israel’s deliverance from Egypt occurred while they were camped at Mount Sinai, and the Lord instructed them to celebrate their redemption: “Make the Israelites celebrate the Passover at the appointed time” (Numbers 9:2).

As Israel prepared for her second celebration of Passover, we can well imagine the people reminisced as they met and spoke with one another. Only a year had passed since the first Passover lambs had been slain and the blood put upon the door-frames of their dwellings in Egypt. Perhaps they remembered that some Egyptians questioned the meaning of the blood, and ridiculed the idea that it would ensure their deliverance from Pharaoh’s grip. Do you hear their animated conversation as they recalled the events of that last night in Egypt? They had to be ready to leave when God, through Moses, gave the command. That first Passover meal of lamb, bitter herbs and bread made without yeast was eaten with haste, and last minute preparations were quickly consummated. Perhaps only the children, wearied with the excitement of anticipation, slept.

The anguished cry of their Egyptian neighbors had pierced the midnight air as they discovered that God’s warning was realized in the death of their firstborn sons. The Israelites recalled that now the Egyptians urged them to hasten their departure from Egypt. Meanwhile, the joy of Israel’s release was increased with a shower of incalculable wealth from the Egyptians, in the form of gold and silver, clothing, fine linen and other articles. This second Passover observed in obedience

to God in the desert was a remembrance feast. Now Israel’s praise and thanksgiving mingled with thoughts of God’s grace in forgiving their grumbling and sinfulness, and His provision day by day.

God’s original instruction was that every Israelite should celebrate the Passover (see Exodus 12:47). It is interesting to observe the significance of Passover to the people who came seeking the counsel of Moses and Aaron as Israel prepared for its second celebration (see Numbers 9:6). These people were ceremonially unclean, not because of sin, but because they had to handle dead bodies for burial (see Numbers 19:11). Under Levitical law the unclean person was excluded from eating “any meat of the fellowship offering belonging to the Lord” (Leviticus 7:20).

In Numbers 9:8, Moses went to the Lord for direction in this matter. God told Moses that the unclean people, and those who missed the Passover celebration because they were away on a journey, were to observe the Passover in the second month, while the rest of Israel observed it in the first month. If anyone neglected to observe the Passover he was cut off from Israel.

To this day, Passover is a most important event in the Jewish community, for it is a memorial of Israel’s redemption. Christians are privileged to celebrate the Lord’s Supper, instituted by Jesus Christ Himself (see Luke 22:19-20). It is a memorial of our redemption through Christ our Passover lamb, who was sacrificed for us (see 1 Corinthians 5:7). This remembrance feast draws us to the Lord in a very special way, as our hearts respond in love to the One who loved us and gave Himself for us. Those who are redeemed by the precious blood of Christ need not be confined to schedules in the observance of the Lord’s Supper, “For *whenever* you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes” (1 Corinthians 11:26, italics added). It is a great honor that our Lord seeks a place of remembrance in these willful, sinful, stubborn hearts of ours.

Numbers 9:15-23 Divine Direction

The remainder of Numbers chapter 9 directs attention to the cloud that led the great multitude across the trackless desert. No route was marked out, no road signs read, “This way to Canaan.” They were totally dependent on God to move or halt the cloud. They could make no plans from day to day. When the cloud was taken up they moved, whether it was morning or midnight.

The record indicates that the children of Israel were not all alike in their spiritual discernment. No doubt some were unhappy at giving up their independence, being unable to come and go as they pleased. But there were many who loved God and trusted Him implicitly. They were submissive to His will and it was their joy to obey Him, to confidently wait, and to look up for guidance.

“At the LORD’s command the Israelites set out, and at his command they encamped” (Numbers 9:18). If you have trouble knowing what God’s will is, could it be that you are not following Him? Perhaps your will is in the way, and you zig when you should zag. Maybe you are busy doing something when you should be listening for Him to say, “This is the way; walk in it” (Isaiah 30:21). Pray and ask the Lord to help you pay attention to His guidance.

Numbers 10:1-10 Silver Trumpets

Between one and five million people and their herds were spread over a large area surrounding the tabernacle.¹ You can see the problem of informing everyone of upcoming events. The Lord gave Moses directions for making two silver trumpets, one for each of Aaron’s priestly sons, Eleazar and Ithamar.² God instructed them to use a system of signals that would be understood by every Israelite. There were long blasts and short ones; sometimes one trumpet sounded, and sometimes both were used.

The people were summoned to the tabernacle by the silvery notes of the trumpets. The trumpets served to rally them to move forward; they called them to a solemn assembly, a time of festivity, or to battle. The sound of the trumpets was loud and clear, and communicated the mind of God through His servants, the priests. Their tents were close to the sanctuary where God spoke His commands to Moses. Here also they were able to observe the first signs of movement when the cloud lifted from the tabernacle.

Numbers 10:11-36 Forward March

After Israel celebrated the second Passover, the Lord spoke to Moses. He tells us in Deuteronomy 1:6-8 what God said: “You have stayed long enough at this mountain. Break camp and advance... See, I have given you this land. Go in and take possession of the land that the LORD swore he would give to your fathers—to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob—and to their descendants after them.” And Moses informed the people of God’s word.

The air must have been charged with excitement as the cloud began to lift from above the tabernacle. The families of Israel scur-

ried about, folding their tents and packing their belongings, while the priests and Levites took down the tabernacle, each performing his assigned task.

When Israel left Egypt, no doubt there was little or no organization in how the tribes marched. However, on this march every tribe was organized in an orderly fashion just as God directed. Judah led the way, with the other tribes following in the order designated. The three divisions of the Levites joined the march in their assigned places, carrying the carefully disassembled tabernacle and the “holy things” (Numbers 10:21).

In the midst of the preparations, Moses records his conversation with Hobab, his brother-in-law. Hobab may have come to Israel’s camp with his father Reuel, also called Jethro (see Exodus 18:1-11; Jethro’s return home is recorded in Exodus 18:27). Apparently, now that Israel was to move on, Hobab had decided he would return to Midian. Moses invited him to go with them and share the good things the Lord would give them in Canaan, even suggesting that because Hobab was knowledgeable about the desert he could be of help to them. From references in Judges 1:16 and 4:11, it appears that Hobab may have been persuaded to join the march.

Numbers 11:1-35 Complaints

Which tent do you live in: con-tent or discon-tent? Israel seemed to possess more of the latter variety. Here we find them complaining to one another, “and when [God] heard them his anger was aroused. Then fire from the LORD burned among them and consumed some of the outskirts of the camp” (Numbers 11:1). In desperation the people went to Moses, the great intercessor, and again God heard his prayer, and the fire died down.

Even after this judgment, the complaints began again. Numbers 11:4 says, “The rabble with them began to crave other food, and again the Israelites started wailing.” Exodus 12:38 says that when Israel left Egypt, “Many other people went up with them.” These were a non-Israelite mixed group of people who followed the people of Israel from Egypt. Apparently they did not truly know the Lord and his mercies. In the same way, the involvement of Christians with unbelievers in marriage or other relationships may bring disastrous results; rather than having an influence for the Lord, the Christian’s spiritual life suffers.

So we read that the rabble had greedy desires, and Israel joined them in their cry for the vegetables, fruit, fish and meat of Egypt. The scars of their beatings had healed; their muscles no longer ached from the burdens they bore under Pharaoh’s cruel commands. All was forgotten in their clamor for other food. Rather than being grateful to God for His provision of manna in the desert—without which they would have starved—they chose to complain about the monotony of the miraculous food He provided.

God was angered by their discontent; Moses came unglued. As always he sought the Lord, with whom he spoke as to a Friend. His words are filled with emotion. “Why have you brought this trouble on your servant? What have I done to displease you that you put the bur-

1. “The numbers of soldiers in each listing [Numbers 1 and 26] total in excess of 600,000... These numbers of men mustered for warfare demand a total population in excess of 2 million. Indeed, perhaps a population of nearly 5 million might be required to supply a conscripted army of 600,000 able-bodied men over twenty years old.” From the “Introduction to Numbers”, part 10. Frank E. Gaebel, editor. *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1990)

2. Aaron’s other two sons, Nadab and Abihu, had died when they “took their censers, put fire in them and added incense; and they offered unauthorized fire before the LORD, contrary to his command” (Leviticus 10:1-2).

den of all these people on me?... Where can I get meat for all these people?...I cannot carry all these people by myself; the burden is too heavy for me. If this is how you are going to treat me, put me to death right now” (Numbers 11:11-15). We must not minimize the pressures put upon Moses by these unreasonable and ungrateful people, but Moses, in his humanity, blew his responsibility all out of proportion by claiming that the entire burden lay upon him. It was the Lord, not Moses, who bore the burden of responsibility for Israel's safety and sustenance. To suppose for a minute that Moses was to provide meat for the multitudes was presumption. Moses knew full well that if they were to have meat to eat, it must be heaven-sent.

The Lord did not chide Moses for his inappropriate behavior. Instead He told Moses to appoint seventy men, whom God would empower to share the responsibilities with him. God then told Moses that meat would be supplied in abundance in answer to Israel's cry: “Now a wind went out from the LORD and drove quail in from the sea. It brought them down all around the camp to about three feet above the ground, as far as a day's walk in any direction” (Numbers 11:31). The excited people spent two days and a night gathering them by the basket full, the least amount being nearly 60 bushels.¹ God gave the Israelites the desires of their hearts, but it was accompanied by judgment. To show His displeasure with their unyielding self-will, a plague broke out in their midst.

The sin of the Israelites was not that they desired meat, but that they did not show gratitude to the Lord, who was in their midst and who was their constant source of good.² As believers, Christ is our Provider; He fills our hungry souls with what is good. When we walk with Him in the wilderness of this world He will never fail to satisfy us, for He is an all-sufficient Savior. If we allow our desires for other things to take the place of dependence on the Lord, we also may find that we are spiritually “choked” by those other things.

Numbers 12 Family Trouble

It must have been a crushing blow to Moses to have his sister and brother, Miriam and Aaron, criticize him. Disturbances created by the people, whose faith shrank in the face of adversity, were disarming to Moses and dishonoring to God. But here, two who were leaders with Moses—Miriam, a prophetess, and Aaron, the high priest—rebelled against God's honored servant.

First they started a whispering campaign because of the “Cushite” woman Moses had married, and then they said, “Has the LORD spoken only through Moses?...Hasn't he also spoken through us?” (Numbers 12:2). The Lord soon set them straight. They were not to pretend to be equal with Moses; his position was unique. Of him God said, “He is faithful in all my house” (Numbers 12:7).

Miriam may have been guilty of instigating the complaint, for it was she who was stricken with leprosy. Aaron quickly confessed their sin and begged Moses to intercede on their behalf. Moses' prayer evidenced his forgiveness for the insults heaped upon him.

1. *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*.

2. *The NIV Study Bible*.

The Lord graciously relented. He granted Miriam healing but demanded a period of time of public shame, instructing that Miriam must be confined outside the camp for seven days before she could be brought back into Israel's midst. God's words, “If her father had spat in her face” (Numbers 12:14) referred to a type of public rebuke in the culture of that day, and the period of shame that would follow.³ If Miriam had suffered this indignity she would have borne the humiliation of it for many, many days. So she must suffer no less for the sin of rebellion against her greater Father, God, and must reside outside Israel's camp for seven days.

Numbers 13 Near and Yet so Far!

Many years later, Moses reflected on the events of Numbers 13. As he recounted the story to the sons and daughters of those who lived the account, he filled in some details that Numbers 13 omits. In Deuteronomy 1:21, after Israel had reached the border of Canaan, we read, “See, the LORD your God has given you the land. Go up and take possession of it as the LORD, the God of your fathers, told you. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged.”

The people of Israel answered, “Let us send men ahead to spy out the land for us and bring back a report about the route we are to take and the towns we will come to” (Deuteronomy 1:22). It is evident that they feared the people of Canaan more than they trusted God to do what He had promised. The wrong was not in the act of sending the spies, but that they felt the need to send them. Some refused to believe God's word—that He had already given them the land, and they were simply to go in and possess it. Knowing their hearts, God directed Moses to agree to their request, and twelve men were chosen to explore the land and bring back the report.

The spies had a tremendous responsibility, for their evaluation would affect the lives of over a million people, and shape the history of a nation. It is quite likely that Moses, and perhaps thousands among the tribes, never entertained the thought of a negative report. They relied on God's promise that Canaan was the good land, His gift to the people who were His special treasure. The men traveled up and down the land for forty days, taking note of all they saw.

Upon their return the spies confirmed the fact that the land flowed “with milk and honey” (Number 13:27). It took two men to carry the huge cluster of grapes they brought back. But there was disagreement among the spies over the inhabitants of the land. All were in accord with the fact that the cities were walled, the people strong, and that giants, the descendants of Anak, lived there. The majority report was that Israel's 600,000 men would be overpowered by the people of the land. Caleb, spokesman for the minority (of all the spies, only Joshua agreed with him according to Numbers 14:6) said, “We should go up and take possession of the land, for we can certainly do it” (Numbers 13:30). But the men who had gone with him said, “We can't attack those people; they are stronger than we are” (Numbers 13:31).

If only they had remembered God's great strength, the Amorites, the Hittites, Jebusites, the Canaanites—all the “ites”—would have

3. *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*.

been reduced to mere “mites” in their sight! The eyes of unbelief were clouded and covered by the immediate pressures, and God was seen but dimly, if at all. So it was that ten men persuaded the entire nation that they could not trust God and enter the land. They were guilty of influencing Israel to disobey God’s command to “go up and take possession.” Their mission ended in miserable failure and disappointment.

Faith would have reasoned that God, who had proven Himself sufficient in all their need, was able to conduct them into Canaan. He had seen the twelve spies safely through. He was stronger than the giants, greater than the cities, and His strength towered above the highest wall. Notice in Numbers 13:29 that the people whom Israel feared were scattered in the land; some lived in the mountains, others by the sea, indicating that Israel would not confront all at the same time, but “little by little,” just as God had said in Exodus 23:30. They had only to recall the miracle of their deliverance from Pharaoh’s pursuing army (see Exodus 14:28), and the defeat of the Amalekites (see Exodus 17:13) to reassure them that nothing is too hard for the Lord. But they chose the path of unbelief, being unwilling to trust the God of heaven and earth. They forfeited much and paid dearly for their choice.

Unbelief is always a hindrance. It is Satan’s tool to keep people from Christ. He delights to fill the mind with doubts about the trustworthiness of the Word of God. Unbelief denies us the privilege of seeing the Lord work miracles in our lives, not only the miracle of redemption but also the miracle of the day-by-day victories He will give.

Jesus Himself said, “Did I not tell you that if you believed, you would see the glory of God?” (John 11:40). To trust in His shed blood for forgiveness of sins, to believe Him and His Word, is to see in your life the miracle of His grace and glory. Don’t let unbelief plug your ears and blind your eyes. Faith is the victory; by it you are in touch with the Source of all power and strength, whose delight is in making the crooked places straight (see Isaiah 40:4). The great Bible teacher Henrietta Mears said,

- ☛ Faith is believing what God says because God says it.
- ☛ People of faith are linked to God and are ready to move when God moves, and to move in His way.
- ☛ Faith puts God between us and our circumstances.
- ☛ Faith is believing in, and acting according to, the will of God.

Study Questions

Before you begin each day:

- ☞ Pray and ask God to speak to you through His Holy Spirit.
- ☞ Use only the Bible for your answers.
- ☞ Write down your answers and the verses you used.
- ☞ Answer the “Challenge” questions if you have the time and want to do them.
- ☞ Share your answers to the “Personal” questions with the class only if you want to share them.

First Day: Read the Commentary on Numbers 9-13 and Deuteronomy 1.

1. What meaningful or new thought did you find in the Commentary on Numbers 9-13 and Deuteronomy 1, or from your teacher’s lecture? What personal application did you choose to apply to your life?

2. Look for a verse in the lesson to memorize this week. Write it down and post it in a prominent place. Make a real effort to learn the verse and its “address” (reference of where it is found in the Bible).

Second Day: Read Numbers 14.

1. a. In response to the ten spies’ negative report, whom did the Israelites grumble against first? (Numbers 14:1-2)

b. Much worse, who was the actual target of their complaints? (Numbers 14:3)

c. What was their plan? (Numbers 14:4)
2. a. How did Joshua and Caleb try to bring the Israelites back to faith? (Numbers 14:6-9)

b. Were the Israelites persuaded to turn back to the Lord in faith? (Numbers 14:10a)
3. Again the Lord proposed to destroy all Israel and make a new nation from Moses’ line, and again Moses interceded for the people. What did the Lord reply in Numbers 14:20-23?
4. a. Who from the current generation of adults would be permitted to enter Canaan? (Numbers 14:30)

b. Although God would eventually allow the Israelites who were currently under age 20 into the Promised Land, how would both they and their parents suffer? (Numbers 14:33-34)
5. a. When the Israelites heard God’s judgment against them, how did they react, and what did they decide to do? (Numbers 14:39-40)

- b. What did Moses warn them? (Numbers 14:41-43)

 - c. Did the people listen? What happened? (Numbers 14:44-45)
6. Personal: How can you avoid the disaster of “doing your own thing”? If you have not yet done so, will you ask the Lord Jesus to be your Savior and the Lord of your life? Trust Him now to forgive your sin of rebellion and unbelief. Reading God’s Word and praying will help you understand His will for you, and help you be sensitive to the leading of His Holy Spirit within you.

Third Day: Read Numbers 15.

1. Although the adult population of Israel would not be able to enter Canaan, God had pardoned His people. The second generation would enter the land. How does Numbers 15:2 demonstrate this?

2. What were the Israelites to present to the Lord after they entered the Promised Land? (Numbers 15:3)

3. What did the odor of the sacrifices point to? Read Ephesians 5:2b.

4. a. What two types of sin are defined in Numbers 15:22 and 30-31?

b. God is holy, and He cannot accept sin whether it is unintentional or defiant. However, by His grace He has provided a way for all our sin to be forgiven. What does 1 John 1:9 say about this?

c. Read 1 John 2:1. When we confess our sin, who intervenes for us with the Father so that we may be forgiven?

5. How were the people to be reminded to keep God’s commands? (Numbers 15:38-40)

6. Personal: Do you regularly accept God’s gracious offer of forgiveness of your sins by confessing them to Him? Ask Him to make you more sensitive to His Spirit, so that you will not sin intentionally or unintentionally. And thank Him for doing all this for you!

Fourth Day: Read Numbers 16:1-22.

1. Who began a new rebellion, and what was their complaint? (Numbers 16:1-3)

2. a. What was Moses' first response in Numbers 16:4? What do you think he was doing?
 - b. What did Moses identify as the true goal of those who were in rebellion? (Numbers 16:10)
3. In Numbers 16:12-14, how did Dathan and Abiram respond to Moses' summons?
4. What did Moses tell Korah and his companions to do, so that God could make known His decision? (Numbers 16:5-7,16-17)
5. a. When all the rebels were assembled by the Tent of Meeting with their censers, what did God do? (Numbers 16:19-21)
 - b. What did Moses and Aaron do in response? (Numbers 16:22)
6. a. The fact is that all humanity is infected by sin, and it started with the sin of the first man, Adam. Read Romans 5:14-15,19-21. How has God graciously provided the gift of salvation to all who will receive it?
 - b. Personal: Have you realized that you can never measure up to God's holy requirements by your own good behavior? Have you accepted His gift of righteousness through His Son, Jesus Christ?

Fifth Day: Read Numbers 16:23-50.

1. It appears that Korah had left the 250 false priests and was now standing with Dathan and Abiram to continue their opposition to Moses. What did the Lord tell Moses to warn the rest of Israel, and why? (Numbers 16:23-26)
2. a. How would Israel know that God had appointed Moses to leadership? (Numbers 16:28-30)
 - b. What happened to Korah, Dathan, Abiram and all their households? (Numbers 16:31-33)
3. a. What judgment befell the 250 followers? (Numbers 16:35)
 - b. How were the people to be reminded that only God appointed the priesthood? (Numbers 16:39-40)

4. a. Did the people cease their complaining after this demonstration? (Numbers 16:41)

b. How did God's judgment fall upon Israel in response, and what did Moses and Aaron do then? (Numbers 16:42-49)
5. The people repeatedly attacked Moses, and yet he repeatedly responded by praying that they might be spared God's judgment for their sin. How did Jesus respond when He was attacked? Read Luke 23:33-34a.
6. Personal: How do you respond when you are unfairly attacked? Do you sometimes hope your attackers will "get what they deserve"? The apostle Peter taught that we should follow Jesus' example (see 1 Peter 2:20-23). If you aren't responding as Jesus would, ask Him to change your heart attitude through His Spirit working within you.

Sixth Day: Read Numbers 17:1—18:7.

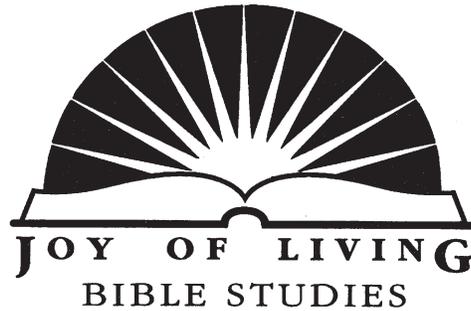
1. What test did the Lord command Moses to make, to settle once and for all the identity of His true high priest? Summarize Numbers 17:1-7.
2. What was the result? (Numbers 17:8-9)
3. What was Moses to do with Aaron's staff, and why? (Numbers 17:10)
4. a. At last the Israelites seemed to understand the enormity of their sin in challenging the role of Aaron. What did they say to Moses in Numbers 17:12-13?

b. The Israelites were right to be remorseful, but their conclusion was an overreaction. Any improper approach to the tabernacle would result in disaster, but there are appropriate ways of approaching the Lord. How did the Lord define the proper way for Israel to approach Him in Numbers 18:1-7? Summarize briefly.
5. These instructions looked forward to the time when God would reveal the only true way for sinful people to approach Him. What do you learn about this new way in the following verses?

John 14:6

Hebrews 10:19-22
6. Personal: Do you believe Jesus' words in John 14:6? It is very popular today to say that all religions are valid, and that there is no "only way" to God. But as followers of Jesus Christ, we cannot go along with this attitude. How will understanding that Jesus is the "only way" change how you relate to those around you who do not know Him? Ask Him to give you compassion for every person you meet who does not know Him—and the courage to tell them about Him.

Exodus Lesson 21



Numbers 14 Same Tune, Tenth Verse

Satan often tempts us to yield to fear rather than to trust in God. Yet God, in His Word, tells us again and again, "Do not be afraid." The Israelites were faced with this choice on their way to possess the land God had given them. At the border of the Promised Land, Israel's fear took control after they heard the report of the spies concerning what they had seen in Canaan.

The chapter opens, "That night all the people of the community raised their voices and wept aloud" (Numbers 14:1). Sighs and cries were heard from those who imagined the terror of meeting the people "of great size" (Numbers 13:32) in Canaan. The Israelites compared themselves to grasshoppers surrounded by unconquerable giants.

There was no thought of going forward under the banner of God's love and protection that was certain to give victory. The Israelites were totally focused upon their human strength, resulting in despair and despondency. If only they had turned their eyes upward, putting their trust in God's infinite power, and resting in His protection. But they had forsaken every thought of God and His promises.

The grumbling had begun with the ten faithless spies, but it soon spread through the entire community. "All the Israelites" (Numbers 14:2) rejected Caleb's faithful assertion, "We should go up and take possession of the land, for we can certainly do it" (Numbers 13:30).

Instead, the people said, "If only we had died in Egypt! Or in this desert! Why is the LORD bringing us to this land only to let us fall by the sword? Our wives and children will be taken as plunder.... We should choose a leader and go back to Egypt" (Numbers 14:2-4). In the extremity of their fear, they were willing to give up life itself, forgetting the bountiful provision God had made throughout the days of their journeying, such as the unexpected supplies of bread, meat and water, and the protection from enemy nations.

To strengthen their courage, the people needed only to return, in retrospect, to the shores of the Red Sea, and recall their own song of praise. With hearts fixed on God, their Deliverer, they had sung, "The LORD is my strength and my song; he has become my salvation. He is my God, and I will praise him, my father's God, and I will exalt him" (Exodus 15:2). Confidently they had continued, "In your unfailing love you will lead the people you have redeemed. In your strength you will guide them to your holy dwelling" (Exodus 15:13). They had sung of the nations that would tremble before them and melt away, assuring

Israel's ultimate victory and safety. And then they sang of the end of their journey, "You will bring them in and plant them on the mountain of your inheritance—the place, O LORD, you made for your dwelling, the sanctuary, O Lord, your hands established (Exodus 15:17).

How great is the contrast between their faith then and their fear now when confronted with the enemy! Fear, not faith, now made them feel that if they went on they would "fall by the sword" (Numbers 14:3), and the enemy would take their wives and children captive. In effect, they charged God with setting a trap for them. Their rebellion reached its zenith in the proposal to appoint a leader other than Moses and return to Egypt. They knew, of course, that Moses would not lead them in retreat.

Joshua and Caleb, the two spies who had remained faithful to God, attempted to quiet Israel's fear. They saw no reason to surrender to death in the desert, or to return to a life of emptiness in Egypt. They pleaded with Israel and urged immediate possession of the Promised Land, saying, "Only do not rebel against the LORD. And do not be afraid of the people of the land, because we will swallow them up. Their protection is gone, but the LORD is with us. Do not be afraid of them" (Numbers 14:9). Their words, however, fell on deaf ears; the people were not about to change their minds. Instead they were intent on stoning Caleb and Joshua for telling the truth.

Believers today face the same choice—to trust God in the face of problems, or not. Some are like the congregation of Israel on the border of Canaan, children of God who have not matured in their faith. They are caught up in their circumstances, worldly influences causing discontent and doubt. Others are like Caleb and Joshua, whose lives evidence a faith that never shrinks, a loyalty to God and His Word that defies the threats of Satan. They know the power of the indwelling Holy Spirit who influences and motivates them to glorify the Lord Jesus Christ. Stop a moment to consider which category you occupy. May God help you to faithfully trust and follow the Lord wherever He leads you.

Before the angry Israelites could carry out their threat to stone Joshua and Caleb, "The glory of the LORD appeared at the Tent of Meeting to all the Israelites." God was provoked to anger over Israel's sin. He again tested Moses by suggesting that He would destroy Israel and make a new nation from Moses line. But Moses began to plead for the people, for his love for them and his desire to glorify God were foremost. He could not bear the thought of God being dishonored among the nations as One whose promises failed.

God honored Moses' petition to forgive Israel and to spare them from total destruction. However, sin must be punished, and it was a sad punishment indeed that Israel suffered. God decreed that none of the adults who had come out of Egypt should enter the Promised Land. They would wander in the desert forty years—a year for each day the spies were in Canaan—until all had died. What a tremendous price to pay for infidelity. Of that generation, only Caleb and Joshua would be privileged to go into the land to possess it. God's immediate judgment fell on the ten unfaithful spies whose negative report caused Israel to sin, and they "were struck down and died of a plague before the LORD" (Numbers 14:37).

The people's grumbling turned to mourning—not for their sin, but for the disappointment of not seeing Canaan, the goal of their hopes. Now that God had said they need not face the armies and giants of Canaan, the people decided they really wanted to go into the land, and they *would* go. Moses forbade them to attempt such an expedition, which was in direct disobedience to God's command. But they didn't obey, and went "up towards the high hill country" (Numbers 14:44). The enemy was ready for them, and "the Amalekites and Canaanites who lived in that hill country came down and attacked them and beat them down all the way to Hormah" (Numbers 14:45). When they disobeyed Moses and went forth in their own human strength, their fear of defeat was fulfilled.

Numbers 15 God's Grace

It is notable that God—having just passed sentence upon all the adults of Israel, excluding them from the land of promise—begins this chapter just as though nothing had happened, as though all was serene and Israel was a loving, obedient people: "After you enter the land I am giving you as a home and you present to the LORD offerings made by fire..." (Numbers 15:2-3). No doubt these words served to reassure the Israelite adults that though they themselves would not see it, the land was indeed secured for their descendants. How often people fail, but God is faithful. No promise of His shall go unfulfilled (see 1 Kings 8:56). The rebellious generation missed the promised blessing of dwelling in the new land, but God's purpose would eventually be carried out.

When the next generation eventually reached the land, God said, they would fulfill special vows, bring freewill offerings, and celebrate festivals to the Lord. It was as though He anticipated the joy of fellowship with those whose hearts were turned to Him. What a vivid portrayal of God's amazing grace that so willingly and fully forgives, and confidently and expectantly shares a heart to heart relationship. Have you ever experienced this "amazing grace"? Grace is God's Riches At Christ's Expense (see John 3:16-18).

In giving instructions for offerings to be made, God speaks of sins of ignorance—sins committed unintentionally—as well as sins committed knowingly, in defiance of God's laws. All sin must be confessed, and Jesus is faithful to forgive those who are trusting in His shed blood. The believer's true safeguard against sins of ignorance is the study of the Word; and the safeguard against presumptuous sin is obedience to the Bible.

We find an example of willful sin and its consequence in Numbers 15:32, "While the Israelites were in the desert, a man was found gathering wood on the Sabbath day." All of Israel had been told time and again that work was strictly forbidden on the Sabbath (see Exodus 20:8-10). Yet, as the *Expositor's Bible Commentary* puts it, "By his action...this man was thumbing his nose at God." Note what Numbers 15:30 says is the true nature of defiant sin: "But anyone who sins defiantly...*blasphemes the LORD*" (italics added). Therefore the severe punishment for such blasphemy was, "That person must surely be cut off; his guilt remains on him" (Numbers 15:31). Because the man sinned defiantly by gathering wood on the Sabbath day, fully knowing that this was forbidden, he was stoned to death.

In the closing verses of this chapter, God then instructed the people to make tassels on the corners of their clothes, with a blue cord on each tassel. The tassels were intended "to look at...so you will remember all the commands of the LORD, that you may obey them and not prostitute yourselves by going after the lusts of your own hearts and eyes" (Numbers 15:39). The tassels would serve to prevent sin through forgetfulness. They also identified Israel as God's people wherever they went.

Many centuries later, these tassels that were designed to prompt obedience and devotion to God were instead used by men for self-exaltation. Jesus said of the teachers of the law and the Pharisees, "Everything they do is done for men to see: They make their phylacteries wide and the tassels on their garments long" (Matthew 23:5).

Today, God's people are not commanded to observe outward signs, such as particular clothing or ornaments, to remind us to obey Him. But God's Word, treasured in the heart of the believer, will help us pursue daily obedience. Do you spend time meditating upon and memorizing God's Word?

Numbers 16:1-15 Korah and His Company

Numbers 16 introduces another problem for Moses, and names some troublemakers. Korah was a cousin to Moses, and as a Levite he had special duties in the tabernacle. But these duties were not enough; it appears that Korah wanted to be a priest. Korah and two other men—Dathan and Abiram, who were Reubenites—became the leaders of an uprising. Accompanied by 250 "well-known community leaders who had been appointed members of the council" (Numbers 16:2), they confronted Moses and Aaron, and accused them of lording it over Israel and of taking upon themselves places of prominence and leadership. They said, "You have gone too far! The whole community is holy, every one of them, and the LORD is with them. Why then do you set yourselves above the LORD's assembly?" (Numbers 16:3).

This accusation was patently false, for God had made it clear many times that He Himself had called Moses and Aaron—they had not set themselves up over Israel. So the quarrel of Korah and his followers was not with Moses and Aaron, but with God Himself.

Dathan and Abiram also blamed Moses for not taking them into the "land flowing with milk and honey" or giving them "an inheritance of fields and vineyards" (Numbers 16:14), conveniently forgetting that it

had been God's judgment against the people's unbelief that truly kept them out of the Promised Land. When Moses issued a summons to these men to deal with the situation, Dathan and Abiram flatly refused to come.

Numbers 16:16-40 The Result of Sin

Moses put the situation into God's hands, by ordering Korah and all his followers to take censers and put fire and incense in them before the Lord. Because the offering of incense was specifically limited to the priesthood (see Exodus 30:30-38), this was to be the crucial test of God's choice and appointment.

Korah, Dathan, Abiram and the 250 community leaders, together with Moses and Aaron, gathered outside the tabernacle. Each took his censer, put fire and incense in it, and stood at the entrance to the Tent of Meeting. Then the Lord spoke to Moses and Aaron, commanding them to move away from the assembly so He could annihilate all of Israel immediately. After Moses and Aaron pleaded, "Will you be angry with the entire assembly when only one man sins?" (Numbers 16:22), the Lord narrowed the focus of His judgment, commanding that the people move away from the tents of Korah, Dathan and Abiram.

Imagine the tension of the moment as Moses spoke these electrifying words: "If these men die a natural death and experience only what usually happens to men, then the LORD has not sent me. But if the LORD brings about something totally new, and the earth opens its mouth and swallows them, with everything that belongs to them, and they go down alive into the grave, then you will know that these men have treated the LORD with contempt" (Numbers 16:29-30). No sooner had these ominous words been spoken than the earth did open up. Korah, Dathan, Abiram, their households and possessions were literally swallowed up. Only Korah's sons did not die (see Numbers 26:9-11). Apparently they did not join their father in his rebellious plan. God's judgment also fell upon the 250 followers, "And fire came out from the LORD and consumed the 250 men who were offering the incense" (Numbers 16:35). Finally, that Israel might be reminded of the sanctity of the priesthood, the censers used by Korah's company were beaten into sheets of metal to cover the bronze altar in the tabernacle where Aaron ministered.

The next day, with the anguished cries of the rebels still ringing in their ears, the people accused Moses and Aaron of killing the rebels. The brothers quickly went to the tent of meeting to seek God's advice and refuge. The chapter concludes with another visitation of God's judgment upon those who would dare to oppose Him. Significantly, it was the office of the priesthood, so recently attacked, that kept the people from being entirely consumed. Aaron, the high priest chosen by God, "stood between the living and the dead, and the plague stopped." (Numbers 16:48).

God continually deals with His people in love and mercy. Psalm 27:5 says, "For in the day of trouble he will keep me safe in his dwelling; he will hide me in the shelter of his tabernacle and set me high upon a rock." If justice were meted out, all of us today would also be consumed. The Bible says, "For all have sinned and fall short of the

glory of God" (Romans 3:23), and, "For the wages of sin is death" (Romans 6:23). Aaron standing in the gap for Israel is but a shadow of the Savior, our High Priest, who, having redeemed us by His precious blood, stands before God, with redemption completed.

Numbers 17 Confirmation and Affirmation

Although the people who rebelled against Moses and Aaron had died, God took further steps to prove whom He had chosen for the priesthood. God commanded that the leader of each tribe was to bring his staff to the tabernacle. Each staff was to have the leader's name written on it, and Aaron's name was on the staff of the tribe of Levi. God told Moses, "The staff belonging to the man I choose will sprout, and I will rid myself of this constant grumbling against you by the Israelites" (Numbers 17:5).

The staffs were placed before the ark of the Testimony, which signified the presence of God, inside the Tent of Meeting. When the staffs were brought out from the Most Holy Place, all but one remained dead sticks. Aaron's staff bore almond buds, blossoms and fruit, all at the same time. The miracle was positive proof of God's choice of Aaron and the tribe of Levi. Israel was finally persuaded to submit to God's will. The priesthood of Aaron and his descendants was finally firmly established.

It was by the same sign—making the dead to live—that God confirmed His appointment of our High Priest, Jesus Christ. The resurrection of God's Son proved that His claims are true. It is the seal of God's acceptance of Christ's sacrifice and finished work on the cross. The writer of Hebrews explained, "So Christ also did not take upon himself the glory of becoming a high priest...Although he was a son, he learned obedience from what he suffered and, once made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him and was designated by God to be high priest" (Hebrews 5:5,8-10).

When the Israelites saw Aaron's budding staff they said, "We shall die! We are lost, we are all lost! Anyone who even comes near the tabernacle of the LORD will die. Are we all going to die?" (Numbers 17:12-13). They were right to be remorseful, but their conclusion was an overreaction. Any *improper* approach to the tabernacle would result in disaster, but there are appropriate ways of approaching the Lord.

Numbers 18:1-7 The Proper Approach

Israel's fears were lessened after God went on to outline the responsibilities of the priests and Levites. The people realized that Aaron represented them, and that individually they need not, nor could they, appear before God in the Most Holy Place. The burden of keeping the sanctuary holy was assigned to the priests, who were to be helped by the Levites. In effect the Lord told the priests and Levites that they were accountable for any neglect or deviation in the services of the tabernacle. They must take the blame if something were done contrary to God's law. The tabernacle, the product of the people's gifts of service and substance to God, was meant to bring them joy, and assurance of the Lord's continued presence.

Study Questions

Before you begin each day:

- ☞ Pray and ask God to speak to you through His Holy Spirit.
- ☞ Use only the Bible for your answers.
- ☞ Write down your answers and the verses you used.
- ☞ Answer the “Challenge” questions if you have the time and want to do them.
- ☞ Share your answers to the “Personal” questions with the class only if you want to share them.

First Day: Read the Commentary on Numbers 14-18.

1. What meaningful or new thought did you find in the Commentary on Numbers 14-18, or from your teacher's lecture? What personal application did you choose to apply to your life?

2. Look for a verse in the lesson to memorize this week. Write it down and post it in a prominent place. Make a real effort to learn the verse and its “address” (reference of where it is found in the Bible).

Second Day: Read Numbers 20:1-13.

1. a. Challenge: Compare Numbers 20:1a; 22-28 with Numbers 33:38 to find out how long the Israelites have been wandering in the desert by the time the events of Numbers 20 take place.

b. When was the last time Israel was at Kadesh? Read Numbers 13:1-2,26.

2. a. After 40 years, Israel had returned to this camp near the border of the Promised Land. Most of the adults from the time of the great rebellion (Numbers 13-14) would have already died. Whose death is recorded in Numbers 20:1b?

b. What problem did the people face, and how did they react? Remember, the adults in this situation are made up of those who were younger than twenty or who had not yet been born at the time Israel left Egypt. (Numbers 20:2-5)

3. a. After Moses and Aaron presented the problem to the Lord, what instructions did He give? (Numbers 20:8)

b. What did Moses actually do in Numbers 20:9-11? How did he fail to follow God's instructions?

4. a. What did God say to both Moses and Aaron in Numbers 20:12?

b. What was this place called? (Numbers 20:13)

5. Challenge: Read 1 Corinthians 10:1-13, in which the apostle Paul refers to this event at Meribah. Why should we concern ourselves with these events of long ago, according to 1 Corinthians 10:6,11-12?

6. Personal: Even Moses, who had been following God obediently for so long, could fall into sin. Do you realize that you, too, can easily fall into sin—even if you have been a believer for years, even if you are a leader in your church, even if you love the Lord? What hope does 1 Corinthians 10:13 give you?

Third Day: Read Numbers 20:14-29.

1. a. To whom did Moses send a message, and by what description did Moses refer to Israel? (Numbers 20:14b)

b. What was Edom's relationship to Israel? See Genesis 25:24-26; 35:10; 36:9.

2. a. What was Moses' request to Edom? (Numbers 20:17)

b. How did Edom answer? (Numbers 20:18)

3. What did Israel do then? (Numbers 20:21-22)

4. What did the Lord tell Moses and Aaron there? (Numbers 20:24)

5. How was Aaron's successor chosen? (Numbers 20:25-26)

6. Personal: This was the end of a long and momentous life for Aaron. It must have been a great disappointment when God told him he could not enter the Promised Land, yet Aaron had the comfort of seeing his faithful son, Eleazar, installed as his successor in the high priesthood. You may have high hopes of attaining a particular goal in your lifetime. How will you react if the Lord does not allow you to attain it? Will you still be able to rest in the fact that God is in control and will bring His perfect will to pass?

Fourth Day: Read Numbers 21:1-9.

1. a. What now happened to Israel as they traveled? (Numbers 21:1)

b. Review Numbers 14:41-45. Forty years earlier, in this same area, with what attitude did Israel fight the Canaanites, and what was the result?

- c. This time, what was Israel's request of the Lord, and what was the result? (Numbers 21:2-3)

2. What familiar pattern did Israel again fall into? (Numbers 21:4-5)

3. How did the Lord punish them? (Numbers 21:6)

4. After the people repented and asked Moses to pray for them, what did the Lord instruct Moses to do? (Number 21:8)

5. a. Read John 3:14-15. What did Jesus say this prescription for the physical healing of Israel foreshadowed?

b. Challenge: According to the following verses, how was Jesus Christ "lifted up"?
John 19:16-18

Acts 2:23

6. Personal: The Israelite who had been bitten by a venomous snake in the desert had only to look at the bronze snake on the pole in order to be physically healed. This was not magic, but the dramatic provision of the Lord to demand a personal response from His people.¹ God also requires a personal response from each person today. We have each been "bitten" by sin, and unless God intervenes, we will certainly die spiritually. Have you looked at and believed on the crucified and risen Lord Jesus, so that you may have eternal life?

Fifth Day: Scan Numbers 21:10—22:20.

1. At last, the people are on the march, heading toward entering the Land of Promise. How was the giving of water in Numbers 21:16-18a different from previous episodes where water was provided?

2. What victories did Israel attain in Numbers 21:21-24 and 33-35? These territories that Israel captured became part of the inheritance of the tribes of Israel.

3. a. Why did Balak, king of Moab, fear Israel? (Numbers 22:3-4a)

1. *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*

b. What did Balak do because of his fear? (Numbers 22:4b-6)

4. Balaam was a famous “prophet” in the ancient Near East, but he was not a prophet of Israel. Rather, he was a pagan who believed that he had a way with the gods, a hold on them. To him, the God of Israel was not the Lord of heaven, but just another deity whom he might manipulate.¹ In order to evaluate him properly as we continue studying his story, what do you find out about him from the following Scriptures?

Joshua 13:22

2 Peter 2:15

Jude 11

5. a. When Balak’s princes first visited Balaam, what did God tell Balaam, and how did Balaam reply to the princes? (Numbers 22:12-13)

b. What happened during the second visit of Balak’s princes? (Numbers 22:15-20)

6. Personal: If you read only the words Balaam spoke to the princes, he appears to be an obedient servant of the one true God, but appearances can be deceiving. We must always look at all the information available when evaluating the words and actions of someone who claims to speak on behalf of God. As we found in the other Scripture verses about Balaam, he was not a man of God. Do you scrutinize the words and lives of those you come in contact with who claim to speak for God? Read Acts 17:11. How did these people evaluate the ministry of the apostle Paul? This is how you can make the same evaluation today.

Sixth Day: Scan Numbers 22:21—24:25.

1. God had given Balaam permission to go with the princes, but He still prohibited Balaam from cursing Israel—which was the point of the princes’ visit. The Lord, who is all-knowing, knew Balaam’s real intentions in this matter. How did He confront Balaam and get his attention? Summarize Numbers 22:22-35.

2. What were Balaam’s first words to Balak?

1. Ibid.

3. a. The seven “oracles” of Balaam, messages the Lord gave to Balaam for Balak, are found in Numbers 23-24. After Balak offered pagan sacrifices with Balaam, what was the first “oracle” God gave Balaam for Balak? (Numbers 23:7-10)

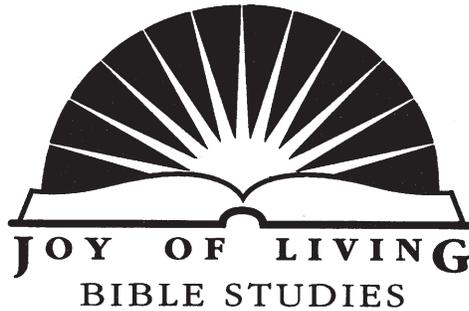
b. From Balak’s answer to Balaam in Numbers 23:11, had the king even listened to what Balaam first told him in Numbers 22:38?
4. a. Balak tried again. After he offered more pagan sacrifices from a different location, what new message did the Lord give Balaam for the king? (Numbers 23:18-24)

b. What did Balak think of this message? (Numbers 23:25)
5. a. Once again, Balak tries a new location, then again builds seven altars and offers sacrifices. What is different about Balaam’s routine this time? Compare Numbers 24:1-2 with 23:4-5 and 23:16.

b. Challenge: What did Balaam say about Israel in his third “oracle”? (Numbers 24:5-9)

c. Challenge: Balak, in anger, sent Balaam home without the promised reward. Before Balaam left, what did he warn Balak about the future in the fourth through seventh “oracles”? Summarize Numbers 24:17-24.
6. Personal: Re-read Numbers 23:19. Do you believe this truth? Think of the many promises He has made to His children in Scripture (for example, Matthew 7:11, John 1:12-13, Philippians 3:20-21, Colossians 3:4). If you are a believer, are you convinced that God will fulfill these promises to you as His child?

Exodus Lesson 22



Numbers 20:1-13 Waters of Meribah

The years of desert wandering were almost over for the Israelites. For almost forty years they had roamed through the desert, staying at one place and then moving on to another section, probably passing through the same sections several times during their wandering. God had miraculously provided for their needs, not only for food and water, but also for clothing and sandals. Moses later told them, "During the forty years that I led you through the desert, your clothes did not wear out, nor did the sandals on your feet" (Deuteronomy 29:5).

Numbers chapter 20 tells us the people are back at Kadesh. Only a few remained alive from the thousands of adult Israelites who had come out of Egypt. Because of unbelief and sin, one by one they had died in the wilderness. Miriam, a leader among the women, had given support to her brothers in the early years with her music and dancing, as the women joined her in songs of praise to God, their Redeemer (see Exodus 15:20-21). But she too had been caught up in the discontent and fault-finding that characterized her people. It was during the encampment at Kadesh that Miriam died and was buried, for she too was denied the privilege of entering Canaan.

Do you suppose you might be a bit impatient if you were within sight of home after roaming the world for many years? The Israelites longed to exchange their tents for permanent dwellings. At Kadesh, on the border of Edom, they had almost reached Canaan. Perhaps it was the tension of being on the verge of attaining their goal that made them restless. When they discovered there was no water at Kadesh they came to Moses and Aaron whining about this lack, and complained that they had not yet tasted the food promised in the land of plenty. The new generation seemed to have more sophisticated appetites than their forefathers. Instead of garlic and cucumbers, they asked for figs, grapes and pomegranates.

Moses and Aaron went to the Tent of Meeting, to the One who never fails, who gives again and again out of the riches of His love. There the glory of the Lord appeared to them. The numerous occasions of Israel's bitter accusations were a trial for Moses. He was well aware that Israel's years of camping in the desert and attendant hardship and misfortune resulted from their own disobedience and unbelief.

One is amazed that, instead of "quarreling" with Moses, the children of Israel did not come to Moses, their mediator, with a sincere request that he petition God on their behalf. Yet, knowing their need and recognizing human frailty, God never denied them any good thing.

Although their vision at times was out of focus, "He led them by a straight way" (Psalm 107:7). He knew the immediate need for water for this great multitude and their cattle.

To meet the need for water God told Moses, "Take the staff, and you and your brother Aaron gather the assembly together. Speak to that rock before their eyes and it will pour out its water" (Numbers 20:8). On a previous occasion when Moses struck the rock at Mount Horeb, it was the elders who witnessed the water miracle (see Exodus 17:6). Now, at Kadesh, God said the entire congregation was to assemble. And this time, Moses was to "speak to the rock," instead of striking the rock.

Moses was a faithful and honored servant of the Lord. It was to him God spoke as with a friend, face to face. However, Moses failed to follow God's instructions in this instance. Instead, he spoke to the people, and then struck the rock, not just once but twice. God in His mercy sent water in abundance, even though His servant had disobeyed. Perhaps Moses' nerves were frayed, with so many people accusing him of failure. Be on your guard in times of stress and crisis. Satan uses such times to undermine and to cause you to doubt God's power and His Word.

By Moses' words, "Must we bring you water out of this rock?" (Numbers 20:10), it seemed as though Moses and Aaron were ensuring their position before the assembly by assuming credit for the miracle. This was dishonoring to God, implying His reluctance to supply their needs. The glory and praise belonged to the Lord, who must be given His rightful place of honor in the hearts and affairs of men.

"But the LORD said to Moses and Aaron, 'Because you did not trust in me enough to honor me as holy in the sight of the Israelites, you will not bring this community into the land I give them'" (Numbers 20:12). Although Moses and Aaron accepted their punishment without complaint, we can well imagine their sad disappointment. Moses was faithful in recording this indictment against himself and Aaron. No doubt he would have preferred to omit it.

Numbers 20:14-22 A Mission That Failed

From Kadesh, Moses sent messengers to the king of Edom, asking permission for Israel to march through his land. To do so would shorten their journey by many miles. The Edomites were descendants of Esau, the twin brother whom Jacob had tricked out of his birthright and the blessing of their father, Isaac (see Genesis 25:21-34; 36:43).

And, of course, the Israelites were descendants of the twelve sons of Jacob.

The messengers briefed the king of Edom as to Israel's long period of slavery and suffering in Egypt, and how God had miraculously freed them and brought them to this place. Moses hoped the king would be sympathetic and show goodwill toward his relatives. The Lord had warned Moses that Edom was Esau's land and the Edomites would be frightened when the Israelites came near the territory. Therefore they were to proceed peacefully through Edom and to pay for the supplies they needed (see Deuteronomy 2:4-8). But the king of Edom denied their request. He sent his army out to frighten Israel and hold them off should they attempt to trespass.

So Israel followed the pillar of cloud and fire from Kadesh to Mount Hor. There God told Moses that Aaron was soon to die. As the congregation watched, Moses, Aaron and Aaron's son Eleazar ascended the mountain. Aaron must have experienced joy in seeing his son clothed in the high-priest's garments, which Moses had removed from Aaron and placed on Eleazar. A successor appointed would eliminate any room for controversy and would safeguard the priesthood's continuance as God had designed it.

Aaron's work was finished and he was "gathered to his people" (Numbers 20:24). The same expression is found in Genesis 25:8, describing the death of Abraham, and indicates the certainty of life after death. Jesus testified to this certainty in Mark 12:26-27, "Now about the dead rising—have you not read in the book of Moses, in the account of the bush, how God said to him, 'I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob'? He is not the God of the dead, but of the living." The believer also has assurance of life after death, for Jesus Christ said, "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in me will never die" (John 11:25-26).

Aaron was not perfect; he sinned. But he had been redeemed, and he knew that the righteous person—made righteous by God's redemption—has a refuge when he dies. Scriptures such as Matthew 25:46 and Revelation 20:15 indicate consciousness and awareness in the future state of the wicked—those who have not been redeemed. Second Thessalonians 1:8-9 warns, "He will punish those who do not know God and do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. They will be punished with everlasting destruction and shut out from the presence of the Lord and from the majesty of his power." Are you assured of eternity in the Father's house, the refuge of the righteous, or of an eternity "shut out from the presence of the Lord"? The choice is yours.

Numbers 21 Enemies Without and Within

When Moses sent the twelve Israelites to spy out the land, the Canaanites may have been unaware of their visit. But they heard about it later. And they had not forgotten, even after nearly forty years. So when word was out that Israel was again near Canaan's borders, there was cause for alarm. Immediately the Canaanite king of Arad mustered his army and attacked the Israelites, capturing some of them. The Israelites this time did not give in to complaining and despair.

They vowed that if God gave them victory over these Canaanites, He should have all the praise, and they promised to destroy their cities, taking no spoil. So the king of Arad and his people, who lived in the south of Canaan, were defeated and completely destroyed.

The Expositor's Bible Commentary notes, "The verb translated 'totally destroy' is the verbal form related to the word *herem*, meaning 'to devote to the ban.' This ruthless action was determined, not just by the rugged spirit of the age, but from a sense that the people were engaging in holy war, where the extermination, not just the subjugation, of her enemies was the spiritual goal for the people in their conquest of Canaan. The cup of iniquity of the people of the land was now full (see Genesis 15:16); Israel was to be the instrument of the Lord's judgment to cleanse the land of the people who had polluted it. All contemporary feelings of revulsion against such 'barbarism' need to be evaluated in terms of the later history of Israel. As is well attested in biblical history, the people did not carry out the policy of *herem* to the peoples of the land, except on rare occasions; thus it happened that the peoples who survived became the instruments of Israel's later judgment."¹

Because they were not permitted to pass through Edom, Israel marched around that land. It must have been disheartening to be forced to turn south when the way to the land of promise was north. They had been on the very edge of the land, with high hopes of soon realizing their goal. Even their recent victory was not enough to bolster their courage and contentment. Satan, the enemy within, could not be crushed, and their restlessness gave way to complaining. Day after day God had provided food—but the Israelites complained that they loathed it, and clamored for something better.

God had miraculously kept His people from being hurt by creatures of the desert, but now venomous snakes invaded the camp. Many people were bitten and died. The snakes' bites brought Israel to repentance. They came to Moses and said, "We sinned when we spoke against the LORD and against you" (Numbers 21:7). They begged Moses to intercede for them, to ask God to remove the snakes. When the Israelites were in trouble and hurting, they quickly changed their attitude toward God.

The Lord provided a miraculous cure for any Israelite who suffered a snake bite. He ordered Moses to make a bronze replica of a snake and place it on a tall pole, so that it could easily be seen from any point in Israel's camp. Anyone afflicted by snakebite had only to look up to the bronze snake to be healed and saved from physical death.

Notice that God did not remove the snakes from Israel's midst. They still had to contend with snakebites, but a remedy was provided. In the same way today, sin bites and stings, but God, ever faithful, has given a remedy. Through the prophet Isaiah, God said, "Turn to me and be saved, all you ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is no other" (Isaiah 45:22). And Jesus said, "Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the desert, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, that everyone who believes in him may have eternal life" (John 3:14-15). The sacrificial death of the Lord Jesus Christ has taken away sin.

1. *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*

Just as the Israelites were told to look and live, so you and I may look unto Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith (see Hebrews 12:2). One who needed healing could not be cured except he look up. A sinner needs only to look to the Lord Jesus for forgiveness of sin—not to other people, or to a church. Ordinances and ceremonies avail nothing. The death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, God's Son, are the basis of Christian faith. Each person must act individually for himself, for there must be a personal relationship to the heavenly Father through faith in Christ. Jesus said, "Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life" (John 3:36).

Numbers 22 Balak and Balaam

Under God's direction Israel had safely traveled around the borders of Edom and through the country of the Amorites. Their desert days were over when they made camp in the plains of Moab near the Jordan River. At last they must have felt a sense of having arrived. The Moabites, however, were greatly disturbed by their presence. News of the Israelite defeat of the Amorites had reached Balak, king of Moab, and he was terrified. He told the elders of Midian, "This horde is going to lick up everything around us, as an ox licks up the grass of the field" (Numbers 22:4).

At once the king sent messengers to Pethor near the Euphrates River to get help from Balaam. Balaam was a famous "prophet" in the ancient Near East, but he was not a prophet of Israel. Rather, he was a pagan who believed that he had a way with the gods, a hold on them.¹

King Balak enlisted the help of the neighboring Midianites, whom he had convinced would be devoured by Israel's hordes. Representatives from both nations appeared before Balaam, taking with them the "the fee for divination" (Numbers 22:7). The message from the king was flattering, music to Balaam's ears, "Come and put a curse on these people, because they are too powerful for me. Perhaps then I will be able to defeat them and drive them out of the country. For I know that those you bless are blessed, and those you curse are cursed" (Numbers 22:6). Balaam asked the messengers to remain overnight, saying he would seek the Lord's permission to go with them. Did he suppose for a minute that God would send him to curse His chosen nation?

Have you ever played the game, Gossip, where a sentence is whispered from one person to another and on to the last player? The message received by the last person is usually totally different from the original. God's answer was clearly stated, "Do not go with them. You must not put a curse on those people, because they are blessed" (Numbers 22:12). But Balaam told Balak's emissaries simply that the Lord refused to let him go with them. And they told King Balak that Balaam had refused to come.

Balak, of course, supposed Balaam was holding out for higher stakes. The king sent even more numerous and distinguished princes back to Balaam with promises of great honor and reward, "Do not let anything keep you from coming to me, because I will reward you

handsomely and do whatever you say. Come and put a curse on these people for me" (Numbers 22:16-17).

Balaam appeared to resist the pleading and the tempting rewards. His answer would lead one to conclude that his intent was to do whatever the Lord directed, "Even if Balak gave me his palace filled with silver and gold, I could not do anything great or small to go beyond the command of the LORD my God" (Numbers 22:18). However, *The Expositor's Bible Commentary* suggests, "It seems best, however, based on the subsequent narrative, to take Balaam's words [in verses 8-18] as examples of braggadocio. Balaam is universally condemned in the Scripture for moral, ethical, and religious faults... Balaam is not a good prophet who went bad or a bad prophet trying to be good. He is altogether outside Israel's prophetic tradition. He is a pagan, foreign national whose mantic [prophetic] acts center on animal divination, including the dissection of animal livers, the movement of animals, and the flight of birds... To him Yahweh was not the Lord of heaven but just another deity whom he might manipulate. He was in for the surprise of his life."

Again Balaam invited his distinguished guests to remain until morning so he could "find out what else the LORD will tell me" (Numbers 22:19). God now gave Balaam permission to go with the princes, but he was only to do what God told him. The Lord, however, knew Balaam's real intentions. Jude 11 describes Balaam's sin as rushing "for profit into...error."

The Voice of a Donkey

Balaam's journey proved to be an interesting one, unlike any he had undertaken previously. Can you visualize this proud man dressed in his best clothes, his donkey groomed and saddled, his two servants and their beasts carrying supplies for the trek to Moab? All went well for awhile as they enjoyed the freshness of early morning. Then suddenly Balaam's donkey turned off the path and across a field, no doubt jostling Balaam in the surprise detour. In his frustration Balaam beat the poor animal, not knowing that the donkey had sidestepped an angel with drawn sword.

Back on the path, bordered by walls on both sides, the donkey again saw the angel of the Lord. She walked so close to the wall that Balaam's foot was crushed against it. Never had his donkey behaved in such a strange manner, and this brought on another beating. The angel of the Lord preceded the entourage down the road a stretch where the path narrowed, with no room to turn one way or the other. Upon approaching the angel, the donkey had only one alternative—to lie down. In exasperation Balaam gave vent to his feelings by using his staff on the donkey. Then the Lord opened the donkey's mouth, enabling her to speak words of rebuke. It was when the Lord opened Balaam's eyes and he saw the angel with drawn sword in his hand that Balaam fell flat on his face in fear.

The angel of the Lord let Balaam know that his actions were not pleasing, and that except for the donkey's perception Balaam would have been killed. For a moment it seemed the prophet relented, "I have sinned" (Numbers 22:34). He excused himself by adding that he had not seen the angel and offered to go back home. The gravity of

1. Ibid.

his sin was not in going; the sin was in the intent of his heart. Balaam had hoped that he might somehow circumvent God's Word and curse Israel, thus gaining Balak's good will and all the rights and privileges that relationship afforded. With another warning from the angel of the Lord to go, but "speak only what I tell you" (Numbers 22:35), Balaam continued on his way.

The question is raised as to whether the donkey actually spoke. Second Peter 2:16 reminds us that Balaam "was rebuked for his wrongdoing by a donkey—a beast without speech—who spoke with a man's voice and restrained the prophet's madness." It was God who taught the first man to speak. Ever since Adam and Eve, speech has been learned by imitation. When God needs a witness, He can make the stones cry out (see Luke 19:40). Our God is One who works miracles and wonders. Is anything too hard for him?

Numbers 22:36—24:25 Balaam's Oracles

Balak can be seen waiting impatiently for the prophet to pronounce doom on Israel. Balaam had given the king no indication that his coming was for a reason other than to carry out Balak's wishes. Balaam had not told the Moabite messengers that God's purpose was to bless Israel. In Moab elaborate preparations were made; seven pagan altars were built to Balaam's order. He would make a show of devotion to the Lord, even though Balak supplied all the material and the animals for sacrifice. Although it cost Balaam nothing, he took credit for the offerings (Numbers 23:4).

After the first "oracle" (Numbers 23:7-10), which wasn't at all what he wanted to hear, Balak took Balaam to a different vantage point to view just a part of Israel's camp. But instead of cursing Israel, Balaam's second oracle (Numbers 23:18-24) again flowed in beautiful poetic language, spelling out God's blessings and mercies toward His redeemed people, saying exactly what God told him to say. The second oracle pointed out that God would not reverse His blessing. It established God's faithfulness and Israel's security. God remains unchanging through time and eternity (see Hebrews 13:8).

In his third oracle (Numbers 24:1-9) Balaam was forced to declare an even greater scope of blessing for Israel. Balak heard himself cursed, in that Israel would devour the nations who were God's adversaries. The climax is reached in the magnificent words of the fourth oracle, "I see him, but not now; I behold him, but not near. A star will come out of Jacob; a scepter will rise out of Israel. He will crush the foreheads of Moab" (Numbers 24:17). The prophecy looks beyond King David, who was victorious over Moab and Edom. It foretells the coming of Israel's Messiah, Christ the Savior. Finally, Balaam gave the last three oracles from God to Balak (Numbers 24:20-24), and then got up and returned to his home.

Although Balaam did not disobey God and curse Israel, he succeeded in enticing them to sin. We read in Revelation 2:14 that Balaam "taught Balak to entice the Israelites to sin by eating food sacrificed to idols and by committing sexual immorality." Israel would have fought valiantly and probably would have been victorious had Balak sent his armies against her. Instead he sent beautiful women to invite the Is-

raelites to idolatrous feasts, and their tempters were their conquerors. The account of their sin and God's judgment is recorded in Numbers 25.

In the prophecies of Balaam, God confirmed the standing of His redeemed people. More often than not Israel's behavior left much to be desired. Their spiritual state belied their standing, but never changed it. If you are a child of God through faith in the Lord Jesus, you are secure in Christ (see John 3:16). Christians sometimes permit many things to come between themselves and the Lord. Sin may break your fellowship with the Lord, but you cannot be separated from His love. In the face of all that tends to divert and distract, He will keep you as you look unto Jesus "the author and perfecter of our faith" (Hebrews 12:2).

Study Questions

Before you begin each day:

- ☛ Pray and ask God to speak to you through His Holy Spirit.
- ☛ Use only the Bible for your answers.
- ☛ Write down your answers and the verses you used.
- ☛ Answer the “Challenge” questions if you have the time and want to do them.
- ☛ Share your answers to the “Personal” questions with the class only if you want to share them.

First Day: Read the Commentary on Numbers 20-24.

1. What meaningful or new thought did you find in the Commentary on Numbers 20-24, or from your teacher's lecture? What personal application did you choose to apply to your life?

2. Look for a verse in the lesson to memorize this week. Write it down and post it in a prominent place. Make a real effort to learn the verse and its “address” (reference of where it is found in the Bible).

Second Day: Read Numbers 27.

1. In Numbers 26 God instructed Moses and Eleazar to take a census of the men of Israel, of the new generation, in preparation for entering the Promised Land. In Numbers 27:1-4, what was the concern of the five daughters of Zelophehad?

2. What instructions did God give for this situation? (Numbers 27:7-11)

3. a. What did the Lord now tell Moses? (Numbers 27:12-13)

b. Why did God say Moses would not be allowed to enter the Land of Promise? (Numbers 27:14)

4. How did Moses show his love for Israel when told he was soon to die? (Numbers 27:15-17)

5. Whom did God designate as Moses' successor, and how was he to be commissioned? (Numbers 27:18-21)

6. Personal: Moses reacted to the news of his impending death by asking God to provide a new leader for Israel. Though he may have grieved at not entering the Land personally, he did not put his own desires first, but thought only of his people's good. Has the Lord ever answered, “No,” to you in response to something you greatly desired? How did you react? How do you think you would react in the future?

Third Day: Scan Numbers 32:1-33; 33:50-56; 35:1-15.

1. What request was made by the sons of Reuben and Gad, and why was Moses reluctant to grant their request? (Numbers 32:1,5-7,14-15)

2. State briefly how the matter was resolved. (Numbers 32:16-19)

3. a. What instructions did the Lord give for conquering Canaan, and how was the land to be divided? (Numbers 33:51-54)

- b. What would happen if they did not completely follow God's instructions? (Numbers 33:55-56)

4. How were the Levites given their portion in Canaan? (Numbers 35:2,6-7)

5. a. Describe the purpose of the cities of refuge. (Numbers 35:11-12,15)

- b. God gave very detailed instructions to Israel as He prepared them to enter the Land of Promise. Here we see His concern for the person, whether Israelite or foreigner, who was unjustly accused of a crime. How is this aspect of the Lord shown in the following Scriptures?
 Proverbs 18:10

 Isaiah 25:4

 Nahum 1:7

6. Personal: Do you know the Lord as a refuge? If you are facing a situation from which you need a refuge, why not personalize the above verses by adding your name to them? Meditate on these promises from God's Word, and be comforted. Flee to the Lord in thought and prayer, and He will shelter you.

Fourth Day: Scan Deuteronomy 4:1-40.

1. In Deuteronomy chapters 1-3, Moses summarized Israel's experiences from the first time they camped at Mount Horeb (Sinai) forty years earlier, to their current encampment by the Jordan River in the plains of Moab and the appointment of the Transjordan cities of refuge. Moses next prepared to review for Israel the laws God had given them. What important truth about these laws does he give in Deuteronomy 4:1-2?

2. Hearing and obeying the laws of God was crucial for Israel. How are believers today to regard God's commands given through His Word, according to the following verses?

Mark 7:6-8

2 Timothy 3:16-17

1 Peter 1:24-25

3. How would Israel's obedience to God's commands be seen by other nations? (Deuteronomy 4:6)
4. a. What did Moses once again warn Israel against in Deuteronomy 4:10-19? Summarize verses 15,16 & 19.
- b. What did Moses say would happen to Israel if they did these forbidden things? (Deuteronomy 4:25-28)
5. a. What marvelous assurance did Moses give them in Deuteronomy 4:29-31?
- b. Why was God doing all these things for Israel? (Deuteronomy 4:37-38)
6. Personal: If you are not a Jew, you may wonder how all of this applies to you. Read Galatians 3:6-9. If you have believed in Jesus Christ as your Savior, you are a child of Abraham. Have you thanked God for the blessings that you have received as a child of Abraham?

Fifth Day: Read Deuteronomy 5:1-21.

1. In Deuteronomy 5:7-21, Moses reviewed the Ten Commandments, earlier recorded in Exodus 20:3-17. The two lists are almost the same. What is added in Deuteronomy 5:14? Compare with Exodus 20:10.
2. Challenge: God was concerned that *every* person in Israel should rest, not just the upper classes. What do you learn about His concern for the lower classes in the following verses?

Exodus 23:6

Deuteronomy 15:11

Deuteronomy 24:14-15

3. The two lists of the Ten Commandments give different reasons for observing the Sabbath. Compare Exodus 20:11 with Deuteronomy 5:15.

4. Israel's deliverance from Egypt foreshadowed the believer's deliverance from sin. What do you learn about this in the following Scriptures?
Romans 6:17-18

Colossians 1:13-14

5. Personal: Have you put your faith in the Lord Jesus Christ—His death on the cross and resurrection from the dead? If so, you have been delivered from slavery to sin, from the power of Satan. From the verses in question 4, write down what you have received, adding your name to the passages.

Sixth Day: Read Deuteronomy 6:1-9.

1. a. For what purpose did God direct Moses to teach Israel His commands? (Deuteronomy 6:2a)

b. What benefits will come from keeping God's commands? (Deuteronomy 6:2b-3)

2. Compare Deuteronomy 6:4-5 with the words of the Lord Jesus in Mark 12:28-30.

3. a. The old covenant that God made with Israel was based on the love of God for his people, and required their love for the Lord in return. What did Jesus say He came to establish in Luke 22:20?

b. Whose love is the new covenant based on, according to 1 John 4:10?

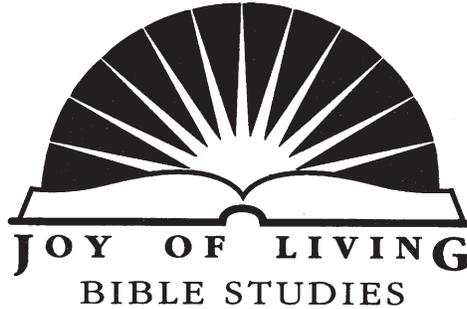
c. How do we respond to God's love shown in His new covenant with us, according to the following verses?
2 Corinthians 5:14-15

1 John 5:3

4. What did Moses say Israel was to do with these commandments? (Deuteronomy 6:6-9)

5. Personal: God's Word is just as important to believers today as His commands were to Israel in the Old Testament. What can you do to keep God's word in your heart and at the forefront of your thoughts and activities?

Exodus Lesson 23



Numbers 27:1-11 Inheritance Rights

In Numbers 26, a second census was taken of the adult men of Israel. The numbering of Israel just prior to their entering Canaan had a twofold purpose: first, to determine the number of warriors for taking the land, and second, for use in dividing the land. God's instructions to Moses were: "To a larger group give a larger inheritance, and to a smaller group a smaller one; each is to receive its inheritance according to the number of those listed" (Numbers 26:54).

Numbers 27:1-11 describes the plight of five sisters. Their father, Zelophehad, had died of natural causes in the wilderness. The sisters knew that the land was to be divided among those who were numbered, and that they were not included. No provision had been made for the inheritance of the head of a family who had daughters, but no sons. These daughters brought their case before Moses, Eleazer the priest, and the leaders of Israel. They said, "Why should our father's name disappear from his clan because he had no son? Give us property among our father's relatives" (Numbers 27:4).

The courage of these five women in coming before Israel's leaders spoke of their faith in the goodness and faithfulness of God. This apparently was the first case of its kind, and Moses went to the Lord for the decision. And the Lord said, "What Zelophehad's daughters are saying is right. You must certainly give them property as an inheritance among their father's relatives and give their father's inheritance over to them" (Numbers 27:7). Not only were these women of faith rewarded, but also an inheritance was secured for all women in like circumstances, since this was made a general rule. The order of succession of inheritances was outlined in Numbers 27:8-11, and in Numbers 36 the stipulation was laid down that an inheritance could not be transferred from one tribe to another by reason of marriage.

Numbers 27:12-23 Moses' Successor Named

Solemnity characterizes the closing paragraphs of Numbers 27. God told His beloved servant Moses of his approaching death. "Then the LORD said to Moses, 'Go up this mountain in the Abarim Range and see the land I have given the Israelites. After you have seen it, you too will be gathered to your people, as your brother Aaron was'" (Numbers 27:12-13). Moses was denied the privilege of leading Israel into the Promised Land because of dishonoring the Lord at Kadesh (see Numbers 20:10-12). Yet here is another example of God's grace in

permitting Moses to see all the land that He had given to Israel. From the top of the mountain most of the land would be visible.

Evidence of Moses' unselfishness is again seen in his prayer for a successor. The Lord had denied Moses' request for a postponement of his death that he might take his people into Canaan (see Deuteronomy 3:25-26). He spent no time in self-pity and regret but sought God's counsel, and His assurance of another leader who would lead the people so that they "will not be like sheep without a shepherd" (Numbers 27:17).

God honored Moses' request and said, "Take Joshua son of Nun, a man in whom is the spirit, and lay your hand on him" (Numbers 27:18). Joshua had proved himself a man of courage and faith. He and Caleb were the only two out of the twelve spies sent to explore Canaan that urged Israel to trust God and take the land by His power (see Numbers 14:6-10). He and Caleb were the only two men of Israel who had been over age twenty at the time of the rebellion that still remained alive and would be permitted to enter the land (see Numbers 14:28-30). It was Joshua who had been closely associated with Moses as his servant. This humble man, God's choice, was given authority to command Israel's obedience. Now Moses was content, confident that his beloved Israel would go forward under God and His servant Joshua.

Numbers 32 East Side of the Jordan

Sacrifices, offerings and vows are the themes of Numbers chapters 28-30. Numbers 31 records Israel's war against the Midianites who lived east of Canaan. Although they were descendants of Abraham, they were idolatrous, and were confederates of the Moabites. They are not to be confused with the Midianites who settled south of Canaan, and who retained the worship of the true God. Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, is identified with the latter group. The Midianites' land east of Canaan was not considered a part of the Promised Land. The reason God said to take full vengeance on these Midianites of Chapter 31 was that at Balaam's suggestion they had sent their beautiful women to ensnare Israel and lead them into idolatry and sexual immorality.

During their encampment in the area of Jazer and Gilead, the tribes of Reuben and Gad recognized the potential of this land east of the Jordan for food production and grazing land for their cattle. Now that it was Israel's by conquest, these two tribes and the half-tribe of

Manasseh¹ asked Moses to give the land to them. “Do not make us cross the Jordan,” they said (Numbers 32:5). Moses reminded them that this might discourage their brothers, that they had yet to conquer the Canaanites: “Shall your countrymen go to war while you sit here?” (Numbers 32:6). The men promised that while their women and children remained on the east side of the Jordan, they would bear arms with Israel until every tribe had possessed its inheritance.

The men from the tribes of Reuben and Gad could have settled down on their land with their families to “enjoy life.” Instead they obeyed God’s instructions given by Moses to help their fellow tribes possess their inheritance, the land across the Jordan River.

Some who profess the name of Christ never enter into the blessings God has prepared for them. Their eyes are on the opportunities the world offers; they seek to satisfy their selfish desires. It is when we yield our lives to the Lord that we experience His joy, and know the riches of His grace. Walk with Him day by day, and let your witness for Him evidence wholehearted surrender to His will. Don’t stop short of God’s best.

Numbers 33-35 Excerpts from Moses’ Diary

Moses kept a detailed account of Israel’s journey from Egypt, and in the first section of Numbers 33, he reminded them of God’s love and care. It was God who chose the places their tents were pitched. As Nehemiah 9:21 declares, “For forty years you sustained them in the desert; they lacked nothing, their clothes did not wear out nor did their feet become swollen.” You might find it helpful to keep a diary describing the Lord’s guidance in your life, answers to prayer, progress in Bible study, Christian witness, etc. A review from time to time would give wonderful reasons for praise and thanksgiving.

Israel’s years in the desert had kept them from association with idol worshipers. God had emphasized that He alone was the One to be worshiped, that He deplored idolatry. Now that they were about to enter Canaan, the Lord told His people at the end of Numbers 33 to utterly destroy the idols and images of the Canaanites, and to demolish their places of worship. The inhabitants were to be driven out of the land. God warned that if any were permitted to remain they would plague Israel all her days. Israel was to possess the land the Lord had given them—it was to be theirs to enjoy.

Have you driven the “Canaanites” from your life? It is impossible to walk with God wholeheartedly when you allow false gods to be a part of your life (see Matthew 6:24).

The boundaries of the Promised Land are described in Numbers 34. Israel had not yet set foot on Canaan, yet the conquest of it was taken for granted. At this point we could expect to read that Moses

1. In Genesis 48, Jacob gave Joseph a double portion of the land (see Ezekiel 47:13) by saying that Joseph’s two sons, Ephraim and Manasseh, would be counted as his, Jacob’s, own sons and given full rights of inheritance. (Any other children born to Joseph after them would inherit territory under these two.) When the land was eventually distributed among the tribes of Israel—descendants of Jacob’s (Israel’s) sons—the tribe of Levi didn’t inherit land (see Joshua 14:4), so the number of territories remained twelve, the same as the number of Jacob’s sons.

appointed generals to command Israel’s forces. But Moses was assured of victory because God fought for them; He would deliver the land to His people. Responsibility for apportioning the land by lot fell to Eleazer, the priest, and to Joshua. A representative from each tribe would see that all was done fairly and would settle any disputes.

The Levites, who served in the tabernacle, inherited no portion by lot, but were given 48 cities within the various tribes. (See Joshua 21 for the names and location of these cities.) Ample land was granted them for their cattle, though they needed none for crops. The Levites’ food was supplied from the tithes of the people. Of the 48 cities, six were designated cities of refuge. Three were on the east side of Jordan and three in Canaan. The purpose of these cities was to protect anyone who unintentionally had killed a person. Here he was safe from the avenger; but here he must remain, virtually a prisoner, until the death of the high priest. Then he could return to his family.

Deuteronomy 4-6 Importance of the Law

The book of Deuteronomy is devoted to a review of the laws of God and of the history of Israel recorded in the three preceding books. Moses spoke to all who gathered within hearing, explaining and expanding upon God’s laws, emphasizing His holiness, His sovereignty, and His command of their obedience and loyalty. “Hear,” “learn,” “keep,” “do”—these words are the epitome of the message of Deuteronomy, delivered by Moses during the last month of his life.

Israel’s journey from Egypt to their present position on Jordan’s east bank is traced in Deuteronomy 1-3. The fourth chapter of Deuteronomy is a plea for obedience, and a warning against idolatry. Moses said, “Do not add to what I command you and do not subtract from it, but keep the commands of the LORD your God that I give you” (Deuteronomy 4:2). The Bible, God’s Word, has been preserved over the centuries in remarkable ways, not that we might have a superb example of literature, or a book of history, or a subject for discussion. God’s purpose was that we might know Him and His love, that we might learn His precepts and promises, and that we might obey Him in all things.

God’s purpose for His Word is also demonstrated in the New Testament. The apostle Paul wrote, “Faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ” (Romans 10:17). To receive eternal life, one must obey the Word. “Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved” (Acts 16:31). And Jesus said, “If you love me, you will obey what I command” (John 14:15). It is the joy of every Christian to know that both the written Word of God and the living Word of God, the Lord Jesus Christ, are eternal and unchanging.

Unfortunately many believers miss the blessings of yielding in loving obedience to the Lord. “Whoever has my commands and obeys them, he is the one who loves me. He who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I too will love him and show myself to him” (John 14:21). The child who leaves their father’s house to go their own way without regard for the principles they have been taught, who no longer shows an interest in their father, and who spends no time with him, never discovers his strength and worth. The child comes around when

they are in trouble or need money, seeking only the fulfillment of selfish desires. They never know the father's deep emotions nor do they experience the love the father longs to share. But the child who enjoys fellowship with the father knows and loves him for what he is. It is the child's pleasure to carry out the father's wishes. Both feel the warmth of companionship; they freely communicate with one another. Which of these describes your relationship with your heavenly Father? It will be only as meaningful and as deep as you will permit it to be. You will know more of God and His love, and experience a more vivid revelation of the things prepared for those who love Him, as you yield in obedience and let the Holy Spirit speak to you through the Word.

Israel was often tempted to idol worship, the sin which so easily entangled them. Again, as Moses was about to lay down his staff and put off his cloak of leadership, he warned his brethren of the consequences of turning away from their God. "Be careful not to forget the covenant of the LORD your God that he made with you; do not make for yourselves an idol...For the LORD your God is a consuming fire, a jealous God" (Deuteronomy 4:23-24). Moses told them that if they turned to idols, God would visit them with judgment and destruction, and they would be scattered among the nations of the earth. This very thing eventually happened to them (see 2 Kings 16:6-8; 25:1-11).

In Deuteronomy 5:7-21, Moses reviewed the Ten Commandments, earlier recorded in Exodus 20:3-17. An interesting comparison is the fourth commandment referring to the Sabbath. In Exodus 20:11, observance of the Sabbath day was related to creation. In Deuteronomy 5:15, God commanded that the Sabbath be set aside as a memorial of Israel's deliverance out of Egypt.

Do you know Christians who have occasional spurts of enthusiasm for the Lord? A misfortune, some circumstance, a nudging of the Spirit, moves them to find the company of other believers and to suddenly show more interest in spiritual things. When they think they have the situation in hand they lapse into indifference, giving little thought to God's Word and the claims of Christ. Israel suffered from this malady of inconsistency. The Lord longed for the constant fellowship and unqualified obedience of His treasured people, as expressed in Deuteronomy 5:29: "Oh, that their hearts would be inclined to fear me and keep all my commands always, so that it might go well with them and their children for ever!"

In Deuteronomy 6:6-9 we read, "These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. Write them on the door-frames of your houses and on your gates." Teaching and discussing God's Word—speaking of it morning, noon, and night and in every situation—would keep it at the forefront of their minds, showing how it applied to every aspect of life and helping them to obey it.

Moses called attention to the fact that when Israel entered Canaan it would be a place already prepared for them. The houses would be filled with stores of food, the vineyards and olive trees would be yielding fruit, wells already dug would supply water for them and their beasts. This was their inheritance. They had no part in build-

ing the "large, flourishing cities" (Deuteronomy 6:10). Moses warned, "Be careful that you do not forget the LORD" (Deuteronomy 6:12). How easy it is to get caught up in the "things" that make us comfortable and provide our pleasure, and to forget that God made it all possible. In times of prosperity people often forget God.

Over and over in this book of Deuteronomy the Holy Spirit through Moses stressed the importance of learning, keeping and doing God's commands. These words were not only for Israel but are written for us also. "For everything that was written in the past was written to teach us, so that through endurance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope" (Romans 15:4). If there is but one thought that takes hold of you from this study, may it be that you determine to study the Word more diligently. You will be immeasurably blessed as you search out its riches. It is spiritual food that satisfies; it is a refreshing spring; it is a deep mine of rare jewels. As Psalm 119:11 says, "I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you." Assimilate, appropriate and treasure God's Word in your heart.

Study Questions

Before you begin each day:

- ☞ Pray and ask God to speak to you through His Holy Spirit.
- ☞ Use only the Bible for your answers.
- ☞ Write down your answers and the verses you used.
- ☞ Answer the “Challenge” questions if you have the time and want to do them.
- ☞ Share your answers to the “Personal” questions with the class only if you want to share them.

First Day: Read the Commentary on Numbers 27-35 and Deuteronomy 4-6.

1. What meaningful or new thought did you find in the Commentary on Numbers 27-35 and Deuteronomy 4-6, or from your teacher’s lecture? What personal application did you choose to apply to your life?

2. Look for a verse in the lesson to memorize this week. Write it down and post it in a prominent place. Make a real effort to learn the verse and its “address” (reference of where it is found in the Bible).

Second Day: Read Deuteronomy 31.

1. a. How does Moses summarize his situation in Deuteronomy 31:2?

b. What man, following the Lord God, would lead Israel into the Promised Land? (Deuteronomy 31:3)

2. a. What did Moses charge the people to do, and why? (Deuteronomy 31:6)

b. What similar charge did Moses give to Joshua in the presence of the people? (Deuteronomy 31:7-8)

3. Challenge: Throughout Scripture, God promises that He will always be with those who have faith in Him. What do the following verses say about this?

2 Chronicles 16:9a

Isaiah 41:13

Romans 8:37-39

4. Why did Moses write down the law? (Deuteronomy 31:9-13)

- b. What may keep the Lord's anger from being fully expressed against His rebellious people? (Deuteronomy 32:26-27)

4. Although God will use Israel's enemies to punish her rebellion, how is her enemies' wickedness described, and what will be their final fate? (Deuteronomy 32:31-35)

5. a. Will the Lord abandon His rebellious people forever? (Deuteronomy 32:36,43)

- b. Challenge: Although Israel would have to suffer for their rebelliousness, the Lord would not let them go. He was their God, and they were His people. Read Isaiah 11:1-12, which speaks of the second coming of the Messiah, our Lord Jesus Christ. How do verses 11-12 say God will fulfill His word to Israel in that day?

6. Personal: How does it make you feel to know how faithful God is to His people, in spite of their unfaithfulness?

Fourth Day: Read Deuteronomy 32:44—33:11.

1. Why did Moses say it was so important that Israel remember to obey God's law? (Deuteronomy 32:46-47)

2. Immediately after Moses wrote down the song and taught it to Israel, what did God tell him to do? (Deuteronomy 32:49-52)

3. a. As Moses prepared for his death, what did he do for the Israelites? (Deuteronomy 33:1)

- b. Before blessing the tribes of Israel, to whom does Moses give highest praise? (Deuteronomy 33:2-5)

4. Challenge: Just as Jacob blessed his twelve sons as he was dying (see Genesis 49:1-28), now Moses blesses each tribe of Israel that has issued from Jacob's sons. Just as Jacob did, Moses spoke prophetically of the Lord's sovereign will that would come to pass for each tribe. Today we will look at Moses' blessing for the first few tribes. Compare Moses' blessing and Jacob's blessing for each tribe. (You may find it interesting to compare this passage with the map of the allotments of the tribes on page 96.)
Reuben (Genesis 49:3-4 and Deuteronomy 33:6)

Simeon and Levi (Genesis 49:5-7 and Deuteronomy 33:8-11). Note that while Jacob spoke of Simeon and Levi together, Moses does not mention Simeon. The Simeonites for the most part found their future together with Judah (see Joshua 19:1-9).¹

Judah (Genesis 49:8-12 and Deuteronomy 33:7)

5. a. How was Jacob's prophecy for Simeon and Levi—"I will scatter them in Jacob and disperse them in Israel" (Genesis 49:7)—fulfilled in Joshua 18:7 and 19:9?

- b. Challenge: Read Exodus 32:21-29. Why were the Levites set apart within Israel to serve the Lord? How did Moses' blessing of the Levites in Deuteronomy 33:8-11 reflect these new responsibilities?

6. Personal: God had a sovereign plan for each one of Jacob's sons' and their descendants. He also has a plan for your life. Read Psalm 33:11, Proverbs 19:21 and Jeremiah 29:11. Do you feel that your future is yours to plan, or God's?

Fifth Day: Read Deuteronomy 33:12-29.

1. Compare Jacob's blessing and Moses' blessing for each remaining tribe of Israel.

Zebulun and Issachar (Genesis 49:13-15 and Deuteronomy 33:18-19)

Dan (Genesis 49:16-18 and Deuteronomy 33:22)

Gad (Genesis 49:19 and Deuteronomy 33:20-21)

Asher (Genesis 49:20 and Deuteronomy 33:24-25)

1. *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*. See note on Deuteronomy 33:6.

Naphtali (Genesis 49:21 and Deuteronomy 33:23)

Joseph (Genesis 49:22-26 and Deuteronomy 33:13-17)

Benjamin (Genesis 49:27 and Deuteronomy 33:12)

2. How did Moses conclude his blessing on the tribes of Israel? (Deuteronomy 33:26-29)

3. Personal: If you have trusted Jesus Christ as your Savior, Israel's God is your God. Write Deuteronomy 33:26-29 in your own words, adding your name to the passage.

Sixth Day: Read Deuteronomy 34.

1. What mountain did Moses climb? Find it on the map on page 6. Who showed the land to Moses? (Deuteronomy 34:1-4)

2. Where did Moses die, and what was his age? (Deuteronomy 34:5,7)

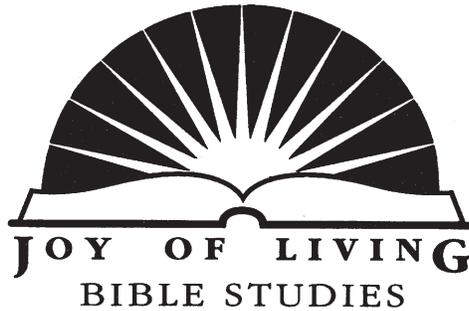
3. Who buried Moses, and where? (Deuteronomy 34:6)

4. Who was to succeed Moses as Israel's leader? (Deuteronomy 34:9)

5. What tribute is paid to Moses in Deuteronomy 34:10-12?

6. Personal: Moses had served the Lord in a powerful way, and he knew the joy of knowing the Lord "face to face." He may have felt some disappointment that he could not personally enter the Promised Land, but he had accomplished the task the Lord gave him, and it was time for him to go home to be with the Lord. The Lord has a plan for every one of His children. Are you paying attention to His leading, so that you can accomplish what God wants you to do? If there are things you wish you could do, but they do not seem to be in God's plan for you, take joy in what He has given you to do, and allow Him to accomplish those other things through other people. His plan is perfect, and only as we fit into His plan will we find true fulfillment.

Exodus Lesson 24



Introduction

The psalmist, in speaking of God's love and care, said, "I was young and now I am old, yet I have never seen the righteous forsaken or their children begging bread" (Psalm 37:25). Moses no doubt could have echoed these words. He had come a long way since God first spoke to him from the burning bush and commissioned him to lead the Israelites. Again and again Moses had witnessed God's faithfulness in providing for the Israelites. Deuteronomy 31 opens with Moses speaking to the Israelites, "I am now a hundred and twenty years old" (Deuteronomy 31:2). He knew that his time of leadership would soon end. As we study together, look for the numerous times Moses expressed his deep concern for his people.

Deuteronomy 31:1-8 Don't Be Afraid

Even though Moses was 120 years of age, "His eyes were not weak nor his strength gone" (Deuteronomy 34:7). Remember he was not to enter the land of Canaan, so here at the border his work was finished. It was God's time for His trusted servant to say farewell to the people he loved and whom he had so faithfully and patiently led for forty years. Moses knew the people well, and he was fearful that after he was gone Israel would turn away from God. With Israel's interest at heart, Moses encouraged and challenged those who were to possess the land under Joshua, the new leader chosen by God.

Because God had already given them victory over the Amorites, Moses claimed the future defeat of all their enemies in Canaan. He assured Israel, "Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid or terrified because of them, for the LORD your God goes with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you" (Deuteronomy 31:6). What God commanded, Moses urged the people to do; He would enable them. All God had said would be fulfilled; they would never be disappointed as long as they were obedient. God keeps His promises, whether for blessing and enrichment of His own, or for punishment of those who disobey Him.

The Lord will not ask you to do anything for Him without supplying everything you need to accomplish the task. Is He calling you? If the Holy Spirit speaks to your heart, don't grieve Him. Let God lead, and in total yieldedness, follow. Let go of self, "For it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose" (Philippians 2:13). Through the Lord Jesus Christ we are more than conquerors, in any circumstance (see Romans 8:37). God's plan will be accomplished—

"Not by [human] might nor by [human] power, but by my Spirit," says the LORD Almighty" (Zechariah 4:6).

After challenging the people, Moses turned his attention to Joshua, who had earned a reputation as an experienced and capable army commander. In his new role as Israel's leader Joshua would need a different sort of courage and bravery than when facing an enemy in warfare. His "battlefield" now was made up of thousands of personalities, with individual and conflicting desires. Moses may have remembered some of his experiences, prompting him to tell Joshua not to be afraid or discouraged. With never-waning confidence Moses declared, "The LORD himself goes before you and will be with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you" (Deuteronomy 31:8).

Deuteronomy 31:9-13 The Sabbatical Year

Deuteronomy 31:9 says, "So Moses wrote down this law and gave it to the priests." The first five books of the Bible—Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy—are called the Pentateuch. The words "this law" may refer to the central legal core of Deuteronomy or to the whole Pentateuch.

It had been established earlier that every seventh year was to be a year of release—a sabbatical year (see Deuteronomy 15). In reminding the Israelites not to drift away from God, Moses instructs them that during the year of release at the Feast of the Tabernacles there was to be a public reading of the law. Men, women, children and "the aliens living in your towns" were to assemble to hear the word of the Lord.

During the sabbatical year the land lay fallow (see Exodus 23:10-11), which gave the Israelites spare time to attend the reading of the law. The year of release marked the time when Hebrew servants could go free, and debts of the poor were cancelled. This was a significant time for all who heard God's Word and sensed their responsibility to yield to its commands and obey its precepts. It was a time of rejoicing before God as Israel heard again all the wonderful ways the Lord had led them.

Moses' command for public reading at the time of the Feast of Tabernacles did not supersede the instruction given in Deuteronomy 6:6-9, which provided for daily reading of the law and speaking of the things of the Lord in Israelite homes. And we do not suppose anyone would suggest that either public or family worship and Bible study are sufficient to satisfy the heart of the believer. There is a refreshment and richness that comes through personal study of the precious Word

of God. May your experience be that His Word is the joy and rejoicing of your heart, as out of its treasure you discover things new and old.

Deuteronomy 31:14-30 Apostasy Foretold

Again Moses was reminded of his approaching death, as God told him to come to the Tent of Meeting with Joshua. God met them there in a pillar of cloud. It was, in a sense, a preparation for promotion—Joshua was commissioned to take over the leadership of Israel, and Moses was to be “promoted” into the presence of God, his Redeemer.

The Lord gave Moses one last task to perform, to warn Israel of the consequences of disobedience. God told him that soon after Moses' death, Israel would forsake God and would fail to keep the covenant they had unanimously agreed to honor. Their prosperity would lead to their apostasy. God predicted, “When I have brought them into the land flowing with milk and honey, the land I promised on oath to their forefathers, and when they eat their fill and thrive, they will turn to other gods and worship them, rejecting me and breaking my covenant” (Deuteronomy 31:20).

In their spiritual decline, Israel would become entangled in the Canaanites' sinful and sensual orgies of idol worship. Israel would go so far astray that they would have little or no remembrance of God. His face would be hidden from them. Therefore God asked Moses to teach a song to the Israelites which was to be a warning and also would witness against them that they had not paid attention to God's warning.

God's words to Joshua were for his encouragement and assurance: “Be strong and courageous, for you will bring the Israelites into the land I promised them on oath, and I myself will be with you” (Deuteronomy 31:23). Joshua was not to be discouraged by the prediction of Israel's apostasy. He knew that God would perform all He had said, and in spite of Israel's waywardness and infidelity, Joshua's confidence was in the sure promises of God's covenant.

Deuteronomy 31 closes with Moses' command to the Levites to keep this completed book of law beside the ark of the covenant. The song was written, and all Israel was summoned to hear and learn it.

Deuteronomy 32:1-14 A Great and Good God

Moses began the song by calling for all creation to listen to what he was about to say to Israel. Heaven and earth were to listen to the rehearsal of God's dealings with His people, to hear of Israel's rebellion and sinful behavior, and to learn of the judgment of God to follow.

All who heard would have understood the metaphor Moses used, “Let my teaching fall like rain and my words descend like dew, like showers on new grass, like abundant rain on tender plants” (Deuteronomy 32:2). In a land that received limited rainfall, Moses chose a verbal picture that everyone would understand. He hoped that his teaching would be as pleasant and beneficial to his hearers as abundant moisture would be to the land.

Moses continued, “I will proclaim the name of the LORD. Oh, praise the greatness of our God! He is the Rock, his works are perfect, and all his ways are just. A faithful God who does no wrong, upright and just is he” (Deuteronomy 32:3-4). Moses reminds the people that God is just, a reliable refuge for them. And God does not change. What a great God He is! It is our privilege to speak to others of God's greatness, His goodness, and His faithfulness. He is still the Rock, a shelter and stronghold. Nothing can move Him; He is the eternal Refuge of all who come to Him by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. All He has done will endure forever (see Ecclesiastes 3:14). His ways are right and just. He has graciously promised to arm us with strength and to make our way perfect (see Psalm 18:32). He will finish the work He has begun in us, for “He who promised is faithful” (Hebrews 10:23).

As Israel looked back to the song Moses wrote and taught them, it would remind them that their rebellion had been predicted. Deuteronomy 32:5-6 contrasts Israel's ways with God's perfect work. The Israelites had every evidence that God, who had made a covenant with their father Abraham (see Genesis 12:1-3; 15:1-21), had brought them to the border of the Promised Land. Yet they were obsessed with a willful desire to do that which was forbidden, which ultimately led to idolatry, dispersion and dissolution of the nation.

Moses' song had begun with praises for God's goodness. Now he expanded upon that subject. “Remember the days of old” (Deuteronomy 32:7). Israel's history provided a wealth of proof of God's dealings with their ancestors, and of God's plans for the nation from the beginning. God set the boundaries of Canaan shortly after the Flood, knowing then just how much land His treasured people would need (see Genesis 10:19). Evidences that the Lord continued His blessings through the years were told them by their parents and elders. In Psalm 78:4 we read, “We will not hide them from their children; we will tell the next generation the praiseworthy deeds of the LORD, his power, and the wonders he has done.”

Notice Deuteronomy 32:9. To read that the people's portion is their God is easily understood. But that “the LORD's portion is his people” is nothing less than grace full and free, for surely He did not need them to complement His majesty. God led them through the desert in a circuitous route to Canaan so He could teach them patience and dependence on Himself. In all their way God kept them and carried them as on eagle's wings. Theirs was the rich yield of the land, a variety and abundance of wholesome food to make every meal a feast.

Deuteronomy 32:15-25 Sin's Consequences

One would suppose that with such an outpouring of God's goodness, Israel would have served Him with unswerving loyalty and obedience. But the song reminds them such was not the case. They indulged themselves, satisfying the flesh with every luxury. Their selfish desires became their god. Their sensitivity to God's grace and goodness was dulled, and they grew proud and insolent until finally they omitted God and committed evil. They chose to bow down to strange and new gods from whom they had received nothing, and to whom they owed nothing.

The Scriptures warn time and again that God in His holiness and perfection cannot tolerate sin. God's law had been spoken and written, and Israel had agreed that all God said, they would do. The Mosaic covenant was conditional. Peace, prosperity and every blessing were theirs *if* they kept their promise. If they failed to keep the agreement, punishment would follow. They could expect famine, disease and wars. They would be scattered and live in foreign lands where fears would grip them so that even the rustle of leaves driven by the wind would frighten them (see Leviticus 26:36).

Deuteronomy 32:26-47 His Mercy Endures

Surely Israel deserved to be totally ruined so that they would no longer be remembered. But God would not permit His name to be dishonored by an enemy nation. They would not recognize their easy victory over Israel as a sign of God's displeasure with His people, nor think God had forsaken His people and His purpose for them. To guard His own glory, God would always preserve a remnant of His people. He would use the nations as His rod to punish Israel. When "their strength is gone" (Deuteronomy 32:36) and they recognize their helplessness, God will intervene. Confronted with their sin of idolatry, they will repent and trust the true Rock of their salvation. All will know that God has dealt justly with His beloved people for their blessing and honor, and for His glory.

When Moses finished speaking the words of the song to the people, he ended with a plea for Israel to give thought and obedience to all they have heard, "Take to heart all the words I have solemnly declared to you this day, so that you may command your children to obey carefully all the words of this law. They are not just idle words for you—they are your life. By them you will live long in the land you are crossing the Jordan to possess" (Deuteronomy 32:46-47).

Deuteronomy 32:48—33:25 Moses' Blessings

In the closing verses of chapter 32, the Lord ordered Moses to go to Mount Nebo, that he might view the magnificent land and then be "gathered to his people" as his brother Aaron was. Before Moses died he had one more task to perform. Just as Jacob had blessed his twelve sons before his death (see Genesis 49:1-12), Moses gathered the twelve tribes to give his blessing. He used the occasion also to foretell something of the future of each of them. The blessings of each tribe will not be detailed; only a few highlights will be considered.

Notice that Reuben is mentioned first, even though he had lost his birthright because of fornication with Bilhah, his father's concubine (see Genesis 35:22; 49:3-4). Moses did not refer to Reuben's sin. It is pure grace that God has promised to cast our sins into the deepest sea and remember them no more (see Micah 7:19; Hebrews 10:17).

Next Moses speaks of Judah, the fourth son born to Jacob and Leah, who had been given the birthright. Jacob's blessing in Genesis 49:10 had prophesied that the Messiah would be a descendant of Judah, "The scepter will not depart from Judah, nor the ruler's staff from between his feet, until he comes to whom it belongs and the obedi-

ence of the nations is his." What an honor to be among the human ancestors of Christ. Yet if you are His child by faith, seeking to do His will, you are nearer to Him than the closest of earthly relationships.

Note that while Jacob spoke of Simeon and Levi together (see Genesis 49:5-7), Moses does not mention Simeon. Jacob's prophecy for Simeon and Levi—"I will scatter them in Jacob and disperse them in Israel" (Genesis 49:7)—was later fulfilled regarding Simeon in Joshua 19:9, "The inheritance of the Simeonites was taken from the share of Judah, because Judah's portion was more than they needed. So the Simeonites received their inheritance within the territory of Judah." The Simeonites never realized a tribal patrimony except for certain cities in Judah (see Joshua 19:1-9).¹ Jacob's prophecy regarding Levi was fulfilled in Joshua 18:7, "The Levites, however, do not get a portion among you, because the priestly service of the LORD is their inheritance." Moses' blessing of the Levites in Deuteronomy 33:8-11 reflected their new responsibilities because their tribe had been set apart to serve the Lord. The very judgment of being scattered was turned into a blessing after the Levites' obedience in slaying those who had sinned (see Exodus 32:26-29). Though God carried out His judgment and the Levites were scattered among towns within the other tribes' territory, the judgment became a blessing. In a similar manner God takes the hard things of our lives and turns them to blessings.

Moses called Benjamin "the beloved of the LORD" (Deuteronomy 33:12). Joseph and Benjamin were the only sons borne by Rachel. Jacob had served her father, Laban, fourteen years to win the hand of this woman he loved so dearly. Rachel died when Benjamin was born. Moses said, "Let the beloved of the LORD rest secure in him, for he shields him all day long, and the one the LORD loves rests between his shoulders" (Deuteronomy 33:12), as a shepherd carries a lamb. As believers, it is our privilege to live day by day in the protection and presence of Jesus Christ, our good shepherd (see John 10:11).

Jacob's blessing of Joseph in Genesis 49:22-26 and Moses' blessing in Deuteronomy 33:13-17 are the most detailed, and both are beautifully stated. Joseph's life in many ways foreshadowed the life of Christ. Joseph was rejected by his brothers, thrown into the pit and separated from them. Joseph's experience in the pit is a picture of the death through which Jesus passed to reach a place of glory. Joseph was taken from a dungeon in Egypt, became a ruler with Pharaoh, and thus preserved and sustained the life of his brothers. The Lord Jesus Christ was likewise rejected, hung upon the cross, laid in the tomb, and now is on the throne, a Ruler with His Father in heaven.

Deuteronomy 33:26-29 A Benediction

These verses contain the last words of Moses, Israel's great leader. He used the opportunity to exalt and to give glory to God. "There is no one like the God of Jeshurun" (Deuteronomy 33:26; "Jeshurun" refers to "Israel the Righteous"²). Nations may boast of their gods, but none could claim the sovereign power and authority exhibited in the acts of God on behalf of His people. All believers may take refuge in

1. *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*. See note on Deuteronomy 33:6.

2. *Ibid.* See note on Deuteronomy 33:5.

the truth of Deuteronomy 33:27: “The eternal God is your refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms.”

Israel would be sustained and would dwell in security when her enemies were subdued. There was no other nation of whom it could be said, “Who is like you, a people saved by the LORD? He is your shield and helper and your glorious sword” (Deuteronomy 33:29). God’s gracious blessings belonged to Israel. God sheltered His people, supported them, led them to battle and assured them of victory, secured them, provided for them. The day is coming when Israel will be restored to blessing, glory and preeminence in their own land. God keeps His promises. His Word cannot fail.

Deuteronomy 34:1-12 From the Mountaintop

This final chapter on the life of Moses may have been written by Eleazer or Joshua. Others suggest that Samuel, the prophet, wrote it by divine authority from the records of Joshua, Moses’ successor.

Moses was strong and vigorous for his years, and climbed to the top of the highest peak in the area, Pisgah, at God’s command, where God met him. Although Moses’ eyes were not weak (see Deuteronomy 34:7), he must have been given miraculous vision that day to see all Canaan from north to south (about 160 miles) and from its eastern border to the Mediterranean, fifty or sixty miles. The Lord showed him that great land of milk and honey.

Centuries later Moses stood with Elijah on the Mount of Transfiguration (identified as Mount Tabor or Mount Hermon) in the Promised Land, talking with Jesus (Matthew 17:3). That would seem even a greater privilege than to have entered as Israel’s leader. God’s grace provides wonderful substitutes for our feeble desires.

So the earthly life of God’s honored servant came to an end, and God buried him. Our study has traced Moses’ life from the tiny basket in the Nile in Egypt, through the wilderness to Canaan, to the heights of Pisgah, from earth to heaven. His was a marvelous life, full of challenge, adventure and rich experience. He was a great man of God, a strong leader, a giant in Israel’s history, and was greatly loved by his people. He is remembered for his faith, his courage and loyalty. Moses’ life was an example of trust, of faithfulness, of prayer. What a grand and blessed testimony to God’s servant: “Since then, no prophet has risen in Israel like Moses, whom the LORD knew face to face” (Deuteronomy 34:10).

How will you be remembered?

Study Questions

Before you begin each day:

- ☞ Pray and ask God to speak to you through His Holy Spirit.
- ☞ Use only the Bible for your answers.
- ☞ Write down your answers and the verses you used.
- ☞ Answer the “Challenge” questions if you have the time and want to do them.
- ☞ Share your answers to the “Personal” questions with the class only if you want to share them.

First Day: Read the Commentary on Deuteronomy 31-34.

1. What meaningful or new thought did you find in the Commentary on Deuteronomy 31-34, or from your teacher's lecture? What personal application did you choose to apply to your life?

2. Look for a verse in the lesson to memorize this week. Write it down and post it in a prominent place. Make a real effort to learn the verse and its “address” (reference of where it is found in the Bible).

Second Day: Read Joshua 1.

1. a. Joshua was to be the new leader of Israel. According to Joshua 1:1, what position had Joshua held prior to this?

b. Challenge: How did God prepare Joshua for leadership according to the following verses? Summarize briefly.
Exodus 17:9-13

Exodus 24:12-13

Exodus 33:7-11

Numbers 14:6-9

2. What was the first test of Joshua's faith in his role as the new leader of Israel? (Joshua 1:1-3)

3. a. What commands did God give Joshua in Joshua 1:6-9?

b. What promises did God give His servant in these same verses?

4. a. What good news did Joshua give the people? (Joshua 1:11)

b. What did Joshua remind the Reubenites, the Gadites and the half-tribe of Manasseh? (Joshua 1:13-15)

5. How did Israel respond to their new leader? (Joshua 1:16-18)

6. Personal: God urged Joshua to “Be strong and courageous. Do not be terrified; do not be discouraged, for the LORD your God will be with you wherever you go” (Joshua 1:9). He gives the same charge and promise to every believer today. Have you learned to depend upon God’s presence for courage and strength? What are you facing today that His presence will help you with?

Third Day: Read Joshua 2.

1. What was Joshua’s first step toward invasion of Jericho? (Joshua 2:1)

2. How did Rahab protect the spies, and what did she tell the soldiers who came looking for them? (Joshua 2:4-6)

3. What reason did Rahab give for protecting the spies? (Joshua 2:8-11)

4. a. How did Rahab bargain for her life and her family? (Joshua 2:12-13)

b. What sign assured the safety of Rahab and her family? (Joshua 2:17-18)

5. a. What do you learn about Rahab in the following New Testament passages?
Hebrews 11:31

James 2:25

b. Challenge: According to the following verses, how was Rahab justified or made righteous? Remember, Old Testament believers were justified in the same way that we are; they looked forward to God’s provision for their righteousness through His Son, Jesus Christ, while we look back to the same event.
Romans 3:22-24

Romans 5:1

Titus 3:5-6

6. Personal: Have you been justified or made righteous by faith in Jesus Christ? There is no other way. (See John 14:6.)

Fourth Day: Read Joshua 3-4.

1. After hearing the spies' favorable report, Israel went and camped by the Jordan River. At what sign were they to go forward? (Joshua 3:3)
2.
 - a. How would Israel be able to cross the Jordan River? (Joshua 3:8,13)
 - b. As Israel crossed the dry riverbed, where was the ark? (Joshua 3:17)
3.
 - a. Describe what the twelve selected men were to do in Joshua 4:1-3.
 - b. What was the purpose of these stones? (Joshua 4:6-7)
 - c. Where did Joshua place this memorial? (Joshua 4:19-20)
4. What happened when the priests carrying the ark came out of the riverbed? (Joshua 4:18)
5. How did the people of Israel respond to this first recorded incident of Joshua's leadership? (Joshua 4:14)
6. Personal: Notice that Joshua was revered because the Lord had exalted him, not because he himself was such a great man. What does this mean for you?

Fifth Day: Read Joshua 5.

1. How did the kings of the Canaanites react to the miracle of the Jordan? (Joshua 5:1)
2.
 - a. Read Genesis 17:8-11. What did circumcision signify?
 - b. Why did God command that the Israelites be circumcised at this time? (Joshua 5:4-7)

3. What feast did Israel observe at this time? (Joshua 5:10)

4. What now changed about Israel's food supply? (Joshua 5:11-12)

5. When Joshua was near Jericho, whom did he encounter, and what did this person say? (Joshua 5:13-15)

6. Personal: The appearance of the "commander of the army of the LORD" (Joshua 5:14) confirmed that Israel was in God's hands. What a blessing for Joshua to see with his eyes the presence of God's protection! While we may not see God's presence with our eyes, as believers we know that He is present with us in the person of the Holy Spirit (see John 14:16,26; Acts 1:8). Do you have the assurance of His presence with you?

Sixth Day: Read Joshua 6.

1. What does Joshua 6:1 tell you about the city and people of Jericho?

2. What was God's plan for Israel to conquer the city of Jericho? (Joshua 6:2-5)

3. a. In Joshua 6:17, the Hebrew word *herem* is translated as "devoted." In Joshua 2:10, the same word was translated as "completely destroyed."¹ Who were the only people in Jericho to be spared destruction? (Joshua 6:17)

b. What were the Israelites to do with anything of value in the city? (Joshua 6:18-19)

4. a. Who was sent to rescue Rahab and her family? (Joshua 6:23)

b. Where did Rahab and her family live after Jericho was destroyed? (Joshua 6:25)

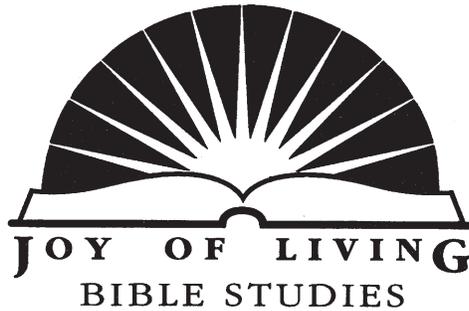
5. Read Matthew 1:1,5. How fully was Rahab assimilated into Israel? Whose ancestor did she have the honor of becoming?

6. Personal: Rahab was saved from the destruction of Jericho because of her faith, and her family was saved because they believed Rahab. If you have been saved by faith in the Lord Jesus, whom do you need to tell about this salvation that is also available to them? Write down here whom the Lord is laying on your heart to speak to, and then write a brief summary of what you will tell them.

1. *The Expositor's Bible Commentary.*

Exodus

Lesson 25



Introduction

Have you ever found yourself resenting change? Perhaps you were happy with the situation you were in and wanted things to stay pretty much as they were. Change, however, is part of life. Children grow up, leave home and the role of parents changes. Friends come and go—we find change all about us.

Israel too experienced change. Moses had died and Joshua was chosen by God to take over the leadership of Israel following Moses' death.

Joshua 1:1-9 A New Leader

In contrast to Moses, who was trained in all the wisdom of the Egyptians (see Acts 7:22), Joshua was a liberated slave. He had been closely associated with Moses since their departure from Egypt forty years before, enduring with him the hardships of the desert and the many moods of the Israelites. He had proved his bravery as a military leader, and had shown courage as a spy by standing with Caleb and giving the positive minority report upon returning from their search of Canaan. Joshua had expressed his faith in God and his loyalty to Him by insisting they should go at once to possess the land.

There could be no doubt as to Joshua's appointment as Israel's new leader, and the Lord's presence and power in his ministry. God promised, "No one will be able to stand up against you all the days of your life. As I was with Moses, so I will be with you; I will never leave you nor forsake you" (Joshua 1:5). God charged Joshua with the responsibility of possessing all the land He had given Abraham and his descendants many centuries before. Joshua was to keep God's Word fresh and alive in his heart. The observance of all God commanded was sure to make Joshua's way prosperous and bring success.

Canaan was a land of city-states. Its inhabitants were known by various names: Hivites, Jebusites, Perizzites, Hittites. There was no central government in Canaan, but many cities, each with its own king. The cities were all well fortified since they often engaged in wars among themselves, as well as with outside foes. To conquer Canaan meant that Israel must defeat the cities one at a time.

The first city in Canaan that was to be taken was Jericho, located about five miles west of the Jordan River. Its strategic site by a ford of the Jordan controlled the ancient trade routes from the East into the hill country of Canaan.

The Israelites were camped at Shittim on the east side of the Jordan River (see Joshua 2:1). Consider that the Jordan was at flood stage, without bridges, and Jericho was virtually impenetrable. Then hear Joshua's words, "Get your supplies ready. Three days from now you will cross the Jordan here to go in and take possession of the land the LORD your God is giving you for your own" (Joshua 1:11). It would have seemed more practical had the command been to prepare rafts! What faith and courage God had given His servant.

Joshua 2 A Woman of Faith

Joshua sent two trusted men on a reconnaissance mission to Jericho. How they crossed the river is not recorded. They were sent secretly, which may indicate a miraculous and perhaps mysterious method of transport. Their experiences in the city were remarkable; proving the Lord had prepared the way before them.

It is possible that the two strangers in Jericho asked directions to an inn and were told about Rahab's house. Joshua 2:1 explicitly identifies Rahab as a prostitute. The first-century Jewish historian Josephus sought to clear the spies of any suspicion of having stayed at the house of a prostitute by calling Rahab an "innkeeper." But in that culture "innkeeper" and "prostitute" were synonymous terms.¹ God had the whole thing planned, both for the spies' safety and for Rahab's rescue. Rahab's sin of prostitution was no worse than the sin of any other person (see Romans 3:23). God knew her, and He knew that she would come to faith in Him. He will direct our paths just as He directed the spies and Rahab.

The king of Jericho immediately sent his men to capture the spies, but Rahab had already hidden them. She deceived the king's soldiers, telling them they could overtake the two men on their way back to the river. When Rahab hid the spies, she sided with Israel against her own people. It was an act of treason and an act of faith!

Rahab then went to the spies, who were hiding under the stalks of flax on the roof of her inn. She told them that the people of the land lived in fear of Israel, that their courage had left them, and that they were totally demoralized. At the same time she declared her personal faith in the God of Israel. She had heard and now believed that God had given Israel the land, and that no army could withstand the power of the One who had delivered them not only from Egypt, but more recently from the two kings of the Amorites. It was Rahab's conviction

1. *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*

that the Lord God is “God in heaven above and on the earth below” (Joshua 2:11).

Rahab’s faith was put to the test, for she had to choose between her country and the one true God. She made the right choice in placing the claims of the King of heaven and earth above the king of Jericho. Because she believed God had given the land to Israel, to stay with those who hindered Israel from possessing the land was to deny her faith. True, she did bargain for her life and the safety of her family, but this too was an evidence of her faith in God. Rahab’s faith was in God; her allegiance was to God’s people.

With the king’s men well on their way, Rahab promised secrecy concerning the visit of the Hebrew spies in return for their commitment to spare all of her household. In the darkness of the night she let the two men down by a rope from her window, telling them of a hiding place in the nearby hills. Then, as agreed, Rahab tied a scarlet cord in her window for identification.

The spies returned to Joshua with a full report of their experiences. They said, “The LORD has surely given the whole land into our hands; all the people are melting in fear because of us” (Joshua 2:24). Long ago God had said the enemy would be filled with terror and confusion as Israel advanced (see Exodus 23:27). And as the news spread rapidly throughout Canaan, the people were frightened and awed.

Joshua 3-4 A River to Cross

The next day Joshua ordered Israel to move from Shittim to a camp closer to the river, where they awaited further instruction. Three days later, officers went through the camp and told the people, “When you see the ark of the covenant of the LORD your God, and the priests, who are Levites, carrying it, you are to move out from your positions and follow it” (Joshua 3:3). They were to stay a thousand yards—over half a mile—away from the ark, because it was very holy. Joshua commanded the people to consecrate themselves for the coming events, that they might be ready physically, mentally and spiritually to discover anew the glory of God, their Savior, and experience personally the wonders of His grace.

At the brink of the Jordan River, the Israelites learned that God would roll back the waters the moment the priests dipped their toes into it. The water stood as a great wall on one side, but continued to flow on the other, making a wide swath of dry land for their crossing. Don’t you wonder what the people downstream thought when the Jordan, then at flood stage, ceased to flow? And it is likely the residents of the cities of Adam and Zarethan to the north viewed the wall of water with amazement.

The priests with the ark stood in the middle of the dry riverbed and waited while the multitude passed by to the west bank. The priests and the ark, signifying God’s presence, encouraged the most timid Israelite to trust the Lord, who said, “When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and when you pass through the rivers, they will not sweep over you” (Isaiah 43:2).

Although the people no doubt hurried, the crossing probably took several hours. A few may have been apprehensive, but others were eager to set foot in the land of promise. First, there were the men from the tribes of Reuben and Gad and the half-tribe of Manasseh in battle array (see Joshua 4:12-13). These were followed by the rest of the Israelite men, women and children with their tents and baggage, and their flocks and herds.

When all the people had crossed safely, Joshua sent twelve men, one from each tribe whom he had chosen earlier (see Joshua 3:12), back to where the priests stood with the ark. Each man was to “take up a stone on his shoulder” (Joshua 4:5) and carry it to Israel’s new campsite. There at Gilgal Joshua set up a memorial so that future generations might never forget God’s mighty hand in dividing the waters. When all of this was done, the priests carrying the ark were commanded to finish crossing the river. Then with a mighty roar the waters of the Jordan filled the channel and flowed over its banks as it had before.

As God revealed His presence and power to Israel, their hearts warmed toward Joshua. From that day until the end of his life, the nation held him in as high esteem as they had Moses (see Joshua 4:14).

Joshua 5:1-12 Two Observances

Several events marked Gilgal as an important milestone in Israel’s history. The first was circumcision of all the men of Israel. The rite had been established as a sign of the covenant God made with Abraham and his descendants, to give them the “whole land of Canaan...as an everlasting possession” (Genesis 17:8). It had been observed in Egypt, but not during the desert journey.

That circumcision was not observed during the desert journey had more serious implications than simply the inconvenience of the desert. Evidently the reason was that the people’s attitude was rebellious much of the time. They ignored the covenant every time they complained to Moses and questioned God’s wisdom in leading them out of Egypt. Finally God suspended the fulfillment of the covenant, decreeing that this generation would never see the land of promise. Joshua 5:6-7 links Israel’s disobedience and unbelief at that time with the cessation of circumcision.

When the rite of circumcision had been completed, the Lord spoke to Joshua and said, “Today I have rolled away the reproach of Egypt from you” (Joshua 5:9). The Israelites, now reestablished as the covenant people in the Land of Promise, had been delivered from their national disgrace of enslavement and homelessness.¹

Similarly God had commanded that Passover, the memorial feast marking their exodus, be kept without fail every year. While Passover had been observed at Sinai before their rebellion (see Numbers 9:1-5), nearly forty years had passed with no mention of it. There probably had been no commemoration of the exodus, during this time. Now their festival of thanks to God for their deliverance from Egypt was restored to its rightful place. What a joy to prepare this memorial feast,

1. *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*

to eat it in the land God had given them. There was no need now to hurry; they could savor the feast while recounting the miracle of their deliverance, giving praise to God, their Redeemer.

Joshua 5:11-12 tells us that the Israelites ate some of the produce of the land, roasted grain and unleavened bread, the day after the Passover. When the country people saw the Israelites approaching from the Jordan, they must have fled to the city for protection, leaving their fields of grain, their storehouses, and all their possessions. The produce of the land furnished food for their tables from that time on. Manna no longer was provided. The miraculous food had been only temporary, and was no longer needed.

Joshua 5:13-15 A Holy Visit

After a time of physical and spiritual refreshment and renewal Joshua still was faced with conquering the city of Jericho. He may have been reconnoitering close to the walls of the city when he saw a man with a drawn sword standing opposite him. He asked the man, "Are you for us or for our enemies?" (Joshua 5:13). Joshua recognized that this was no mere man when he identified himself as "commander of the army of the LORD" (Joshua 5:14).

Joshua had followed God's command in the circumcision and had drawn near to God in the Passover observance. He was prepared in heart and mind when the Lord Himself drew near to him. God always reveals Himself to those who love Him and walk with Him.

In worship and adoration Joshua recognized who the visitor with the sword was, and he asked, "What message does my Lord have for his servant?" The commander of the Lord's army replied, "Take off your sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy" (Joshua 5:15). Any place where God reveals Himself is made holy by that revelation. This reminds us of Jacob at Bethel (see Genesis 28:10-22) and Moses' experience at the burning bush (see Exodus 3:1-6).

The visit of this commander was a signal that the conquest of the Land was to be accomplished by God's power, not by man's. No more preparation was needed—Israel was ready to move out in faith.

Joshua 6 The Fall of Jericho

The Lord told Joshua, "See, I have delivered Jericho into your hands, along with its king and its fighting men" (Joshua 6:2). No matter that a great wall that was thought to be impenetrable surrounded the people of Jericho. The conquest was already complete in the Lord's eyes.

God gave instructions to Joshua concerning His plan for capturing Jericho, which Joshua was to relay to the priests and the people. Although God assured victory, there were still actions to take. This is true in the Christian life today, too. We must trust God, listen to Him, determine His will, and by the Holy Spirit's power follow the Lord's instructions (see Zechariah 4:6).

General Joshua had never prepared for warfare in the manner God had prescribed. Again the ark was the central object, the sign of

God's presence. God had caused the waters of the Jordan to roll back, and now He would make the walls of Jericho collapse.

Israel's armed men were to lead the march. Then came the seven priests with trumpets made of rams' horns. Next were the priests carrying the ark, followed by the rear guard. It is likely only the men of war marched around Jericho, not including the women and children of Israel. They were to walk around the city once every day for six days. Except for the loud blasts of the rams' horns, no one was to make any noise or speak a word, until Joshua gave the command on the seventh day.

For six days the Canaanites watched and waited as the Israelites marched around the city once each day and left. On the seventh day the watchman on the wall counted as the Israelites walked around the city twice, three times, four, five, six times. The seventh time around, when the priests sounded the trumpets, the Israelites responded to Joshua's command with a mighty shout. At the same moment those formidable city walls became rubble, over which the Israelite soldiers moved to take the city. No spoil from Jericho was permitted the Israelites. God's instructions were that everything was to be destroyed and the city burned, except for the silver, gold and bronze that were taken for the Lord's treasury.

Miraculously, the house of Rahab remained intact. At Joshua's command, the two spies returned to her house and brought her and all her family to safety. Following a time of purification outside Israel's camp, Rahab and her family were admitted as proselytes to enjoy all the privileges and blessings of Israel. She lived in Israel many years, married Salmon, prince of Judah, and was the mother of Boaz, named among the ancestors of our Savior (see Matthew 1:1-5). It was Rahab's right choice by faith that set her apart from the other citizens of Jericho. They had the same knowledge Rahab had of Israel's God, and could have renounced their idols and trusted the God of heaven and earth. But they chose not to do so, and their decision spelled death.

Have you chosen to trust the Lord Jesus, God's Son, as your Savior? Will you put your faith in Him and His shed blood to cleanse you from sin? This is the most important choice you must make. "Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, but whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God's wrath remains on him" (John 3:36).

Study Questions

Before you begin each day:

- ☞ Pray and ask God to speak to you through His Holy Spirit.
- ☞ Use only the Bible for your answers.
- ☞ Write down your answers and the verses you used.
- ☞ Answer the “Challenge” questions if you have the time and want to do them.
- ☞ Share your answers to the “Personal” questions with the class only if you want to share them.

First Day: Read the Commentary on Joshua 1-6.

1. What meaningful or new thought did you find in the Commentary on Joshua 1-6, or from your teacher’s lecture? What personal application did you choose to apply to your life?

2. Look for a verse in the lesson to memorize this week. Write it down and post it in a prominent place. Make a real effort to learn the verse and its “address” (reference of where it is found in the Bible).

Second Day: Read Joshua 7.

1. a. According to Joshua 7:1a, who disobeyed the Lord’s command given in Joshua 6:18-19?

b. Did this man’s sin affect only himself? (Joshua 7:1b)

2. a. What city did Joshua next intend to take, and what report did the spies bring to him? (Joshua 7:2-3)

b. Describe the battle at Ai and Joshua’s reaction. (Joshua 7:4-9)

3. a. What did the Lord reveal to Joshua in Joshua 7:11-12?

b. How was the guilty person to be discovered? (Joshua 7:14-15)

4. a. What items had Achan stolen? What were the steps in his disobedience noted in Joshua 7:21?

- b. How did Joshua deal with Achan's sin? (Joshua 7:24-26)
-
5. a. Achan and his family paid a terrible price for his deliberate disobedience of God's command. Read Romans 3:23; 6:23a; and 1 John 1:8. Who has sinned, and what will be the final result of that sin?

b. Read Romans 6:23b and 1 John 1:9. What amazing gift has God given every sinner who will accept it?
 6. Personal: Imagine yourself in Achan's shoes, facing imminent death because of your sin. Achan knew he deserved death, but it must have been terrifying. This is the position each of us is in as we stand before God, unless we accept His gift of forgiveness through His Son, Jesus Christ. Have you accepted this gift? If so, whom do you know that is still facing a death sentence that needs to hear of God's offer?

Third Day: Read Joshua 8-9.

1. a. After Achan's sin had been revealed and dealt with, what did God command Joshua? (Joshua 8:1-2)

b. What was the result of the second battle for Ai? (Joshua 8:26-28)
2. What did Joshua now do in Joshua 8:30-35? This fulfilled the command that Moses gave to the people in Deuteronomy 27.
3. a. How did the Gibeonites deceive the people of Israel? (Joshua 9:3-13)

b. What serious error did the Israelites make? (Joshua 9:14-15)

4. How were the Gibeonites punished for their deceitfulness? (Joshua 9:22-23)

5. Just as Rahab had done, the Gibeonites believed the reports about the God of Israel; and fear drove them, as it had driven her, to seek to come under His protection and to scheme in order to escape annihilation at the hand of the Israelites.¹ Unlike the Gibeonites, we are not forced to serve Him after we are saved, but it is our natural desire to do so. What do you learn about this in the following verses?

Romans 7:6

Ephesians 5:2

Hebrews 9:14

6. Personal: When we are born of God's Spirit our hearts are changed and we desire to serve God. Do you desire to serve Him? Write a prayer to Him here, telling Him how you feel.

Fourth Day: Read Joshua 10.

1. What did the king of Jerusalem propose? (Joshua 10:3-4)

2. a. To whom did the Gibeonites appeal for help, and did they receive it? (Joshua 10:6-7)

b. Did God support Joshua's decision? (Joshua 10:8)

3. Although the Israelites marched to battle and fought the enemy, who deserved the credit for their victory? (Joshua 10:10-11)

4. What additional miraculous help did God provide in answer to Joshua's prayer? (Joshua 10:12-14)

5. a. What was the end result of Israel's campaign against the allied kings of the area? (Joshua 10:41-42a)

b. How was Israel able to prevail against so many foes? (Joshua 10:42b)

1. *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*. See note on Joshua 9:9.

6. Personal: God does not call believers today to conquer physical territory for Him, but He still fights for us in the spiritual realm. Read Romans 8:31-39. What has He conquered for us? What battle are you facing today? Do you face it with the knowledge that God's love will carry you through to victory?

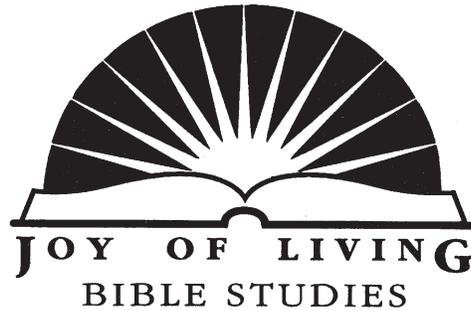
Fifth Day: Scan Joshua 13-21.

1. Joshua 11-12 detailed additional areas that Israel conquered, and gave a list of all the defeated kings. According to Joshua 13:1, did Israel now possess all the land?
2. What instructions did the Lord give to Joshua in Joshua 13:6b-7?
3. We have seen God's great promises to Israel, and her mighty victories that resulted when she obeyed the Lord. Did Israel fully obey the Lord's command to completely drive out the people from the Promised Land? (Joshua 13:13)
4.
 - a. Did the tribe of Levi inherit any of the land? (Joshua 13:14)
 - b. How were the remaining tribes structured so that the land would be allotted to a full twelve tribes? (Joshua 14:1-4)
5. Joshua 15-21 details the distribution of the land to the tribes of Israel. How does Joshua 21:43-45 summarize what took place?
6.
 - a. God faithfully fulfilled His promises to His people to bring them into the land and give it to them as an inheritance. What do you learn about the believer's inheritance in the following verses?

Ephesians 1:13-14

Colossians 1:12-14
 - b. Personal: If you are a believer, have you thanked God for the inheritance He has reserved for you? Why not write a prayer of thanks to Him now?

Exodus Lesson 26



Joshua 7 Achan's Sin

Joshua's first mission of leading the Israelites in conquering a Canaanite city had been successful. The Bible says, "So the LORD was with Joshua, and his fame spread throughout the land" (Joshua 6:27).

But there was trouble in the camp. God had said the people were not to take booty for themselves from Jericho. All valuables were to be brought to God's treasury. But Achan, "who brought trouble on Israel" (1 Chronicles 2:7), disobeyed God's command. He yielded to the sin of covetousness by taking a beautiful robe and some gold and silver, and hiding them in his tent. As long as Achan remained unpunished, guilt was upon all Israel. God had been Israel's ally, but now "the LORD's anger burned against Israel" (Joshua 7:1) because of the sin of one man. Sin had separated them from their God. Israel was soon to experience the reality of separation for they were without God's presence, His power and enlightenment.

The next Canaanite city to be captured was Ai. The spies whom Joshua sent to Ai gave a confident report, inspired by their memory of Israel's great victory over Jericho and of God's intervention. They recommended that only a few thousand warriors were needed to capture Ai. Much to Israel's surprise, they were soundly defeated.

The defeat at Ai caused great consternation and fear in all Israel. They had expected to be the conquerors, not the vanquished. It was disheartening to lose a battle when there was yet much land to be possessed. Joshua was fearful the Canaanites would be encouraged by the defeat; he was certain God had forsaken His people. When Joshua cried out to Him, the Lord told him that sin and disobedience were the reasons for their defeat, and outlined the method for discovering the offender. God could have named Achan in less time than it took to give instructions to Joshua. However, the procedure of casting lots gave Achan opportunity to confess and repent of his sin. Instead he waited, and allowed the finger of guilt to point to him. Joshua showed loving concern for Achan, calling him "son" and gently urging him to make confession. Achan did fully acknowledge his guilt, labeling his sin covetousness and naming the stolen and hidden articles.

By his own admission, Achan's sin was a conscious disobedience of the Lord's command. He may have envisioned himself dressed in the splendor of the Babylonian robe; it would be a shame to leave it to be burned. The gold wedge and the silver pieces were easily concealed, so he took those too. The evidence was produced by unearthing

the stolen goods in Achan's tent. Achan's family was implicated in his crime because he could not have hidden his loot in the ground under his tent without their knowing it. They had stolen what should have been destroyed.

This brings to mind the incident of Ananias and Sapphira recorded in Acts 5. They sold a piece of property so they could give support to the apostles, then kept back part of the money for themselves. When Ananias brought the money to the apostles, he lied, "with his wife's full knowledge" (Acts 5:2), by allowing the apostles to believe he was giving the full amount of the sale to them. Ananias and Sapphira were guilty of lying, not just to the apostles, but to God. Their punishment was instant death by God's hand. In the same way, Achan and his sin came under God's judgment.

The truth is that we all have sinned, and our sin deserves God's judgment. We do not know why God sometimes chooses to judge sin immediately, and delays judgment for others. The apostle Peter wrote, "The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance" (2 Peter 3:9). Sin is a serious matter that must be dealt with as soon as the Lord brings it to our attention. Never let unconfessed sin separate you from the joy of walking with the Lord (see 1 John 1:8-9).

Before God could again bless Israel, the people were to consecrate themselves (see Joshua 7:13). There was sin in the camp, and it had to be dealt with before Israel could again stand against their enemies.

Joshua 8:1-29 Ai Defeated

God was quick to manifest His love and complete pardon. As soon as Achan's sin was dealt with, the Lord spoke reassuringly to Joshua, who was ready to listen to God's plan for capturing Ai. Joshua set up an ambush by sending men by night to a position behind the city. According to *The Wycliffe Bible Commentary*, R. E. D. Clark suggested that the Hebrew word translated "thousand" in certain passages has the meaning of "chief," "officer," a synonym for the mighty men of valor. So rather than sending thirty thousand to wait in ambush, which likely could not have been accomplished secretly, Joshua may have selected thirty chief warriors for this special mission. They were to be ready to rush into the city as soon as Ai's forces came out of the city to fight an attack by Israel's main army. A detachment remained

between Bethel and Ai to cut off help for Ai that might come from that direction.

It was all uphill for Israel's army as they proceeded by night from Gilgal to Ai, a climb of 3,200 feet. Early the next morning, when the king of Ai saw Israel's army, he ordered his men out of the city to attack. All was going as planned. Israel would flee, and when Ai was left defenseless, the ambush from behind was to set fire to the city. Their signal was Joshua's outstretched javelin, which was not drawn back until the battle was over. This recalls the incident of Moses' uplifted hands during Israel's battle with the Amalekites (see Exodus 17:8-12). In both cases, the leaders' actions symbolized that victory came from the Lord. Caught between Israel's army and the burning city, the people of Ai were slain.

The people of Ai, like all the Canaanites, were degenerate, debauched, and idolatrous. Israel was God's redeemed people, His treasured possession. God knew His people well, and their tendency toward idolatry. His purpose was to preserve them and His Word, that ultimately all the nations of the earth would be blessed through the Savior that would come through their line.

Scripture teaches that God is merciful, not wanting any to perish, but for everyone to come to repentance (see 2 Peter 3:9). He said, "I take no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but rather that they turn from their ways and live" (Ezekiel 33:11). Many from heathen nations availed themselves of the opportunity to become Jewish proselytes, and enjoyed God's favor and Israel's blessings. Surely God longed for the people of Ai to turn from their sin, repent and worship Him, but they refused to do this. Thus they came under God's judgment. Those who reject Him and choose false gods will surely come under His judgment.

God's love reaches out to all people everywhere. He loved you so much that He gave His Son to die as your substitute. He has paid the penalty for your sin. Christ's righteousness is a gift to each person who places his faith in the shed blood of Jesus Christ, "the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!" (John 1:29). Scripture assures us, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9). Christ "is able to...present you before his glorious presence without fault and with great joy" (Jude 24).

Joshua 8:30-35 Blessings and Commitments

Some time had passed since the fall of Ai, allowing the Israelites to move from Gilgal near Jericho to a site between Mount Ebal and Mount Gerazim, near Shechem, as the Lord had commanded (see Deuteronomy 11:26-30; 27:2-13). Although Israel was in a vulnerable position in the valley, God protected them as they interrupted their conquest to worship Him. This place of sacrifice and renewal of the covenant was in the center of Canaan, where centuries before Abraham had received the promise of the land and built his first altar (see Genesis 12:6-7).

For this time of worship Joshua ordered an altar to be built at Mount Ebal—"an altar of uncut stones, on which no iron tool had been used. On it they offered to the LORD burnt offerings and sacrificed fellowship offerings" (Joshua 8:31). The law of Moses was written on large stones that had been coated with plaster (see Deuteronomy 27:2-4). The ark of the covenant was placed in the center of the assembly. Six tribes took up their position in front of Mount Ebal and six at Mount Gerizim. Joshua read "all the words of the law—the blessings and the curses—just as it is written in the Book of the Law" (Joshua 8:34) before the entire assembly of Israeli men, women, children and the aliens within the camp.

The altar of the Lord and the Word of the Lord go together. There is no better illustration of this than the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ—the final sacrifice for sin—which is witnessed to by the Scriptures, assuring us that He who died there is the Son of God, the Savior of the world.

Joshua 9 The Gibeonites' Shrewdness

Word of Israel's victories at Jericho and Ai spread throughout the land of Canaan. Nations that were enemies of one another now united to fight against Israel.

At the same time the Gibeonites decided on another course. Although "all its men were good fighters" (Joshua 10:2), they were convinced that bravery meant little when God was fighting on the side of Israel. The inhabitants of Gibeon devised and executed a plan—a plan the Bible calls a ruse (see Joshua 9:4).

Dressed in tattered garments, their sandals and wineskins worn and patched, representatives from Gibeon came to Joshua. They said they were ambassadors from a far country. Having heard of Israel's deliverance from Egypt and their recent conquests, and the fame of the Lord God, they had come to make a treaty with Israel. They were impressed with God because of the achievements of His people.

Without seeking the Lord's counsel, "Joshua made a treaty of peace with them to let them live, and the leaders of the assembly ratified it by oath" (Joshua 9:15). Three days later Israel was stunned to learn they had been deceived, but they could not violate the agreement.

As a penalty for the deception, Joshua decreed that the Gibeonites would henceforth cut wood to be used on the altar and carry all the water needed for the tabernacle. The Gibeonites gladly accepted this decree, which saved their lives.

Joshua 10-12 Campaigns and Conquests

The news of the treaty between Israel and Gibeon caused fear and anger among the other Canaanites, and was a signal for war. Five southern kings banded together to attack Gibeon for "defecting" to Israel.

Gibeon's distress call was answered by Joshua and Israel's men, who hurried to their defense—this time with God's blessing. The Lord

threw the enemy into confusion, and they turned and fled, with Israel in hot pursuit. God then sent a hailstorm, “and more of them died from the hailstones than were killed by the swords of the Israelites” (Joshua 10:11).

As the day wore on, Joshua prayed for a miracle, asking for the sun and the moon to stand still. God granted his request to prolong the day, so that Israel might be victorious in the battle. The Bible sums up the miracle this way: “The sun stopped in the middle of the sky and delayed going down about a full day. There has never been a day like it before or since, a day when the LORD listened to a man. Surely the LORD was fighting for Israel!” (Joshua 10:13b-14).

Gibeon was protected, and Israel gained a great victory over five kingdoms. Gibeon is the only city that made peace with Israel. Joshua 12:7-24 lists all of the kings of Canaan who eventually fell before Israel.

Joshua 13-19 To Each His Inheritance

God reminded Joshua of his advancing years and of the work still to be done. Just like Joshua, we too can remain fruitful in God's service until He takes us home to be with Him. Psalm 92:12-15 says, “The righteous will flourish like a palm tree, they will grow like a cedar of Lebanon; planted in the house of the LORD, they will flourish in the courts of our God. They will still bear fruit in old age, they will stay fresh and green, proclaiming, ‘The LORD is upright; he is my Rock, and there is no wickedness in him.’”

Israel's conquests thus far had made just a dent in the territory that God had promised. There was still much land to be possessed. The Lord defined the borders of Canaan, and reiterated boundaries of the two tribes and the half-tribe east of the Jordan. Even though all the land had not yet been conquered, each tribe was assigned an inheritance. Eleazar the priest, Joshua, and the elders of Israel were responsible for the distribution, which was done by lot. Whatever the exact method of casting the lots, the outcome was determined and directed by the Lord. Proverbs 16:33 says, “The lot is cast into the lap, but its every decision is from the LORD.”

As the lots were cast, Caleb came to Joshua with the other members of his tribe, Judah, to claim the land promised to him long ago. Caleb spoke of the time he and Joshua had spied out the land, and the report they had brought Moses. For forty-five years Caleb had remembered Moses' words, “The land on which your feet have walked will be your inheritance and that of your children for ever, because you have followed the LORD my God wholeheartedly” (Joshua 14:9). The trials of the wilderness, plagues and judgments could not obliterate this gracious promise. Even though all his contemporaries except Joshua had died, the promise lived in Caleb's heart.

God kept Caleb physically strong, even at the age of 85. Caleb asked for the hill country surrounding Hebron, where the fortified cities of the Anakites challenged him to say, “the LORD helping me, I will drive them out” (Joshua 14:12). Courageous as he was, Caleb was wholly

dependent upon God to conquer the Anakites. With Joshua's blessing, Hebron became the inheritance of Caleb.

Caleb cherished the memory of Moses' words that he had followed the Lord fully. His life is an example of personal faithfulness and trust in God's promises. Caleb was not being immodest when he quoted the words to Joshua. He was simply recounting true words of praise. Caleb wanted to glorify God, and certainly it was for Israel's good that he, with Joshua, recommended immediate possession of Canaan. Now, forty-odd years later, he unselfishly chose to fight with “giants” (see Numbers 13:28,32-33), knowing that he could depend upon God, who had made His promise a reality by bringing His trusted servant to his inheritance.

After Judah and the half-tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh received their shares at Gilgal (Manasseh had also received an allotment on the east side of the Jordan, along with Reuben and Gad), the allotments ceased and the camp of Israel was moved to Shiloh (see Joshua 18:1). The Tent of Meeting was set up there, where it remained for more than three hundred years until the time of Samuel.

There were seven tribes yet to be settled in their new homes. They seemed content to live plentifully on the spoil of the cities they had taken, so Joshua prodded them and suggested their representatives walk through the land, bring him a description, and receive their portions. When they returned with an account of what they had seen, Joshua cast lots for them.

All the tribes now knew the borders of their inheritance. It was some time, however, before they moved to drive out the Canaanites and possess their land. Joshua must have been pleased and grateful to the Lord for permitting him to see the completion of the work God had given him. He asked for the city of Timnath Serah in the hill territory of Ephraim, and went there to live the remaining years of his life.

Joshua 20-21 The Levites' Portion

The Lord spoke to Joshua and said, “Speak to the sons of Israel, saying, ‘Tell the Israelites to designate the cities of refuge, as I instructed you through Moses’” (Joshua 20:2). These cities were strategically located so that wherever a person might be, he would have ready access to one of them. The six cities provided refuge for “anyone who kills a person accidentally and unintentionally” (Joshua 20:3). A person who killed another deliberately was put to death. In an accidental killing, the city of refuge assured safety, although the killer was a prisoner in a sense, for he could not return home until after the death of the high priest (see Numbers 35:10-34).

The Levites, which included the priests, were the last to receive their inheritance. There were forty-eight cities with pasture lands given by the various tribes to the Levites and their families. The Levites were scattered throughout the land because they were custodians of Israel's spiritual life.

Long ago, Jacob's “blessing” upon Levi and his brother, Simeon, had been a curse, “Simeon and Levi are brothers—their swords are weapons of violence. Let me not enter their council, let me not join

their assembly, for they have killed men in their anger and hamstring oxen as they pleased. Cursed be their anger, so fierce, and their fury, so cruel! I will scatter them in Jacob and disperse them in Israel” (Genesis 49:5-7). Now God, in His mercy, turned the curse into a true blessing for the Levites.

Joshua 22 Honorable Discharge

Although Israel had not fully obeyed the Lord in that many Canaanites remained among them, the land was peaceful. Joshua called together the men of the two and one-half tribes who had crossed the Jordan to help in the conquests. They were commended for their loyalty and obedience. Joshua charged them to keep the law, to love the Lord God and walk in all His ways, and to serve Him faithfully. With Joshua’s blessing they were permitted to return to their homes, on the other side of the Jordan, taking with them livestock, silver, gold and other valuables accumulated in their conquests.

When they came to the Jordan these tribes built an altar for a memorial and a witness that they were part and parcel of Israel, lest future generations try to convince their children that they were not the Lord’s people. Their motive, however, was misunderstood by their brethren in Shiloh, who thought the altar was for sacrifice to false gods, and they were ready to fight. But first, a delegation headed by Phinehas was sent to the Jordan to investigate. Without asking for an explanation, the delegation began a tirade against the innocent men, accusing them of rebellion and idolatry. But the two-and-a-half tribes explained their motives. Once before, these tribes had been misjudged by Moses when they first asked for the land east of the Jordan (see Numbers 32:6). Once again, the problem was straightened out.

Several practical lessons are obvious in this incident of misjudging. In our relationships we must be sure not to form opinions before knowing all the facts. It is important to know the motive for a person’s actions. Confront situations with an open mind, and with a loving attitude, prayerfully seeking wisdom from the Lord (see Titus 3:2, 1 John 4:7-11, James 1:5; 3:17-18).

Joshua 23-24 Final Counsel and Farewell

About twenty-five years had passed since the end of the conquest of the land, because Joshua was roughly the same age as Caleb. (Joshua died at the age of 110, and Caleb was 85 when he received his allotment.) Israel had settled down to enjoy the peace and beauty of the land to which God had brought them.

Joshua was very old and knew his time on earth would soon end. He called all the people together to remind them of the great things God had done, and to charge them to completely possess the land and to keep His laws, and “to hold fast to” Him (Joshua 23:8). Joshua charged them to continue to obey and to follow the Lord. They were to be courageous and cautious, to have nothing to do with their idolatrous neighbors. The Israelites were warned of the disastrous consequences of associating with the pagan Canaanites, who would then

become a snare and a trap. Ultimately, God’s people would perish from the good land because they had fallen into this trap.

In the same way, sin ensnares and traps us when we allow ourselves to associate with evil. Satan uses any means to divert the Christian’s attention from things of the Lord. It is only a step from walking in the counsel of the wicked, to standing in the way of sinners, and then sitting in fellowship with mockers (see Psalm 1:1). We are warned in 1 Corinthians 15:33, “Do not be misled: ‘Bad company corrupts good character.’”

Joshua once again called the Israelites together, this time at Shechem, for his farewell address. It was appropriate that his farewell was spoken at the place where God first promised the land to Abraham and his descendants (see Genesis 12:6-7). As the Lord directed him, Joshua repeated all the wonderful works of God, from Abram’s call to their present comfortable position in Canaan. Once again the people were challenged to faithfulness to God, and they promised to serve and obey Him. A memorial stone was set up for a witness to the covenant (see Joshua 24:26-27).

The last verses of Joshua 24 record Joshua’s death and burial. There is no mention of a time of mourning as for Moses, but God took note of it, for, “Precious in the sight of the LORD is the death of his saints” (Psalm 116:15). Joshua 24:31 provides a summary: “Israel served the LORD throughout the lifetime of Joshua and of the elders who outlived him and who had experienced everything the LORD had done for Israel.”

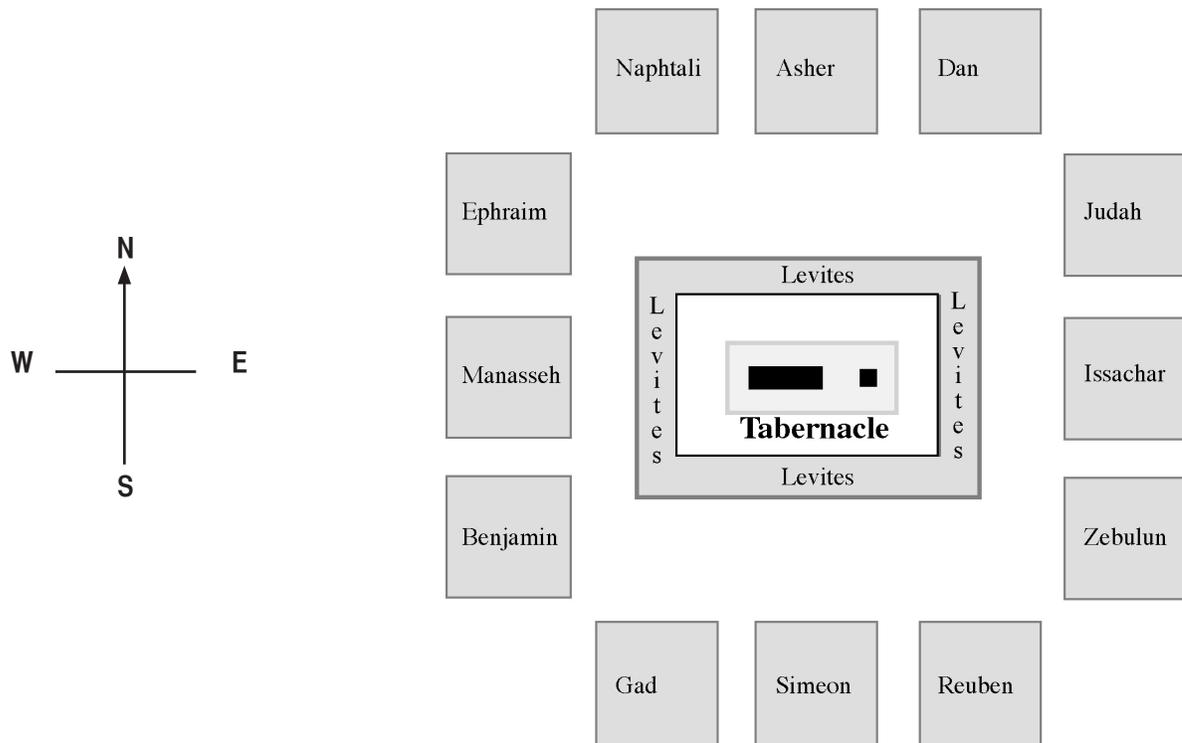
We come to the end of our study of Israel’s journey from Egypt to Canaan with a keen realization of the perfection, the majesty and the holiness of God. Nothing Israel had done deserved God’s favor. Because of His matchless grace and great love He redeemed His people from the bondage of Egypt. With tender care He led His treasured possession through the desert. He endured with patience their grumbling and rebellion. The Lord fed them with bread from heaven. He miraculously kept their clothing and shoes from becoming old and worn. He led them forth by the right way until they came with joy to the place of their inheritance.

It is my prayer that the study of God’s Word may be a source of strength and blessing to you, and that you may be filled “with the knowledge of his will through all spiritual wisdom and understanding” (Colossians 1:9). May you be enriched by a sense of His abiding presence, “that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and may please him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God, being strengthened with all power according to his glorious might so that you may have great endurance and patience, and joyfully giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in the kingdom of light” (Colossians 1:10-12).

This is the end of the study. There are no study questions for lesson 26.

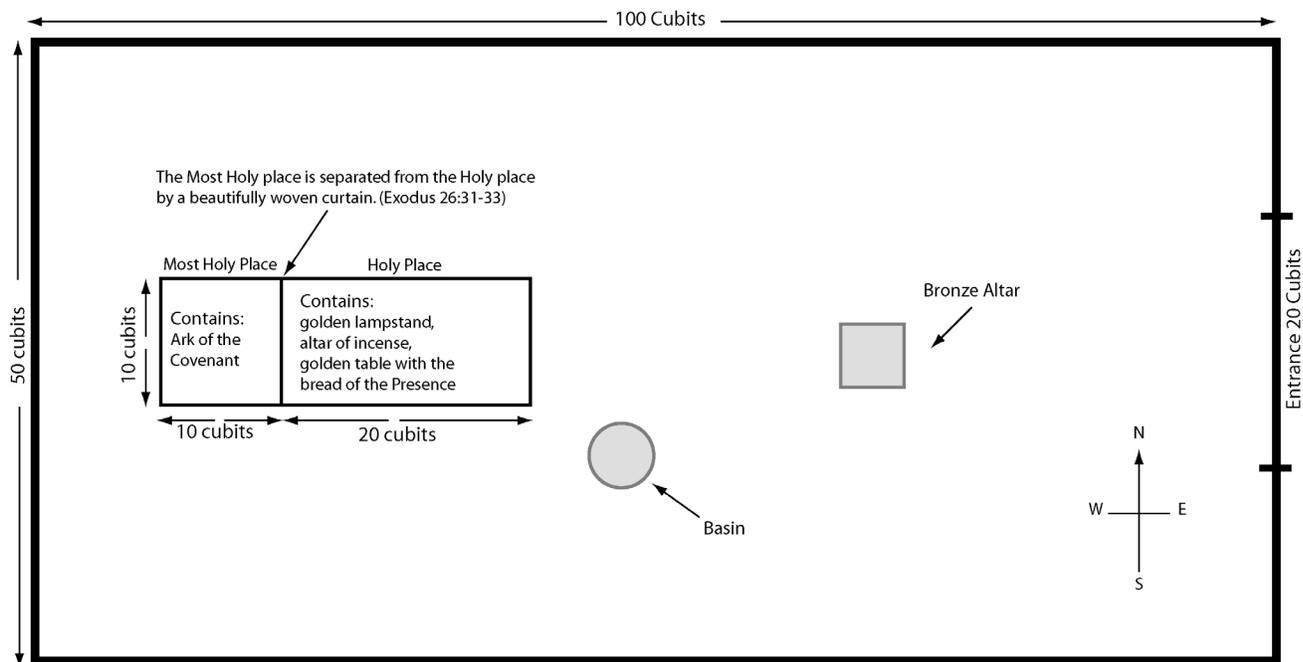
Encampment of the Tribes of Israel in Relation to the Tabernacle

Based on Numbers 2:1-31 and 10:11-33



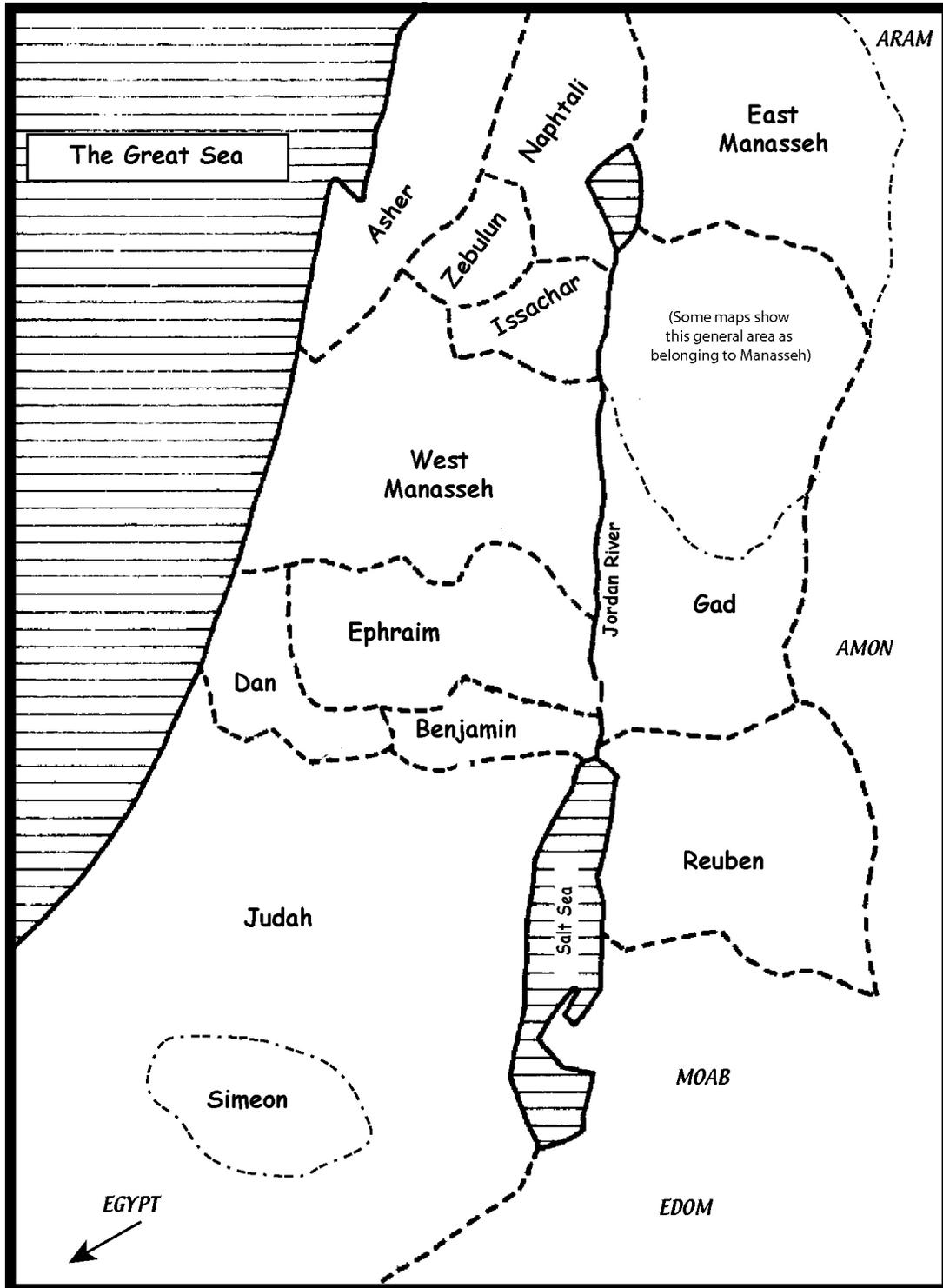
Dimensions of the Tabernacle

Descriptions of the Tabernacle may be found in Exodus chapters 26-27 and 35-40.



Distribution of the Land Among the Twelve Tribes of Israel

The Levites were not given territory of their own, but lived in 48 cities (with surrounding pastureland) scattered among the tribes (see Numbers 35:1-15).



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EXODUS: FROM EGYPT TO THE PROMISED LAND

PART 2: EXODUS 25-40 & PORTIONS OF NUMBERS, DEUTERONOMY & JOSHUA

Commentary by Jean W. Randall

Daily study questions by Kathy Rowland

This is a the second half of a 26-lesson study. The Book of Exodus tells how God redeemed the people of Israel from slavery in Egypt, and how He guided them to the Promised Land. We will meet Moses, Miriam, Aaron, and Joshua. God's purpose in history is revealed through this account of redemption, covenant, and the building of the tabernacle, all of which picture God's plan which would be fulfilled through Jesus Christ. Selections from the Books of Numbers, Deuteronomy and Joshua show how Israel finally settled in the land of promise under Joshua's leadership.

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Jean Randall wrote the commentary portion of *Exodus: From Egypt to the Promised Land*, and of *Hebrews*; and co-wrote *Selected Psalms* (English version discontinued, German translation available). Jean attended Moody Bible Institute. She was a pastor's wife and Christian bookstore owner, and was associated with both Moody Press and Biola College. She went home to be with the Lord in 2001.

Kathy Rowland, daughter of Joy of Living Founder, Doris Greig, was director of Joy of Living from 1980 to 2019. A graduate of Westmont College, Kathy is author of 2 complete Joy of Living courses and the study questions for over 10 Joy of Living courses, and co-author of the *Leadership Training Guide*. Since stepping down as director, she has remained on staff in a part-time capacity as editor and author. She and her husband, Gary, now live in South Dakota. Kathy serves as Chairman of the Board of Joy of Living, and Gary serves as Treasurer. They have 4 children and 4 grandchildren.

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