

2018 BIBLE TALKS—UNVEILING NUMBERS

Session 4

The Failures during the Journey of the Children of Israel and the Lessons That We Should Learn

Hymns, #1050

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| 1 Out of my bondage, sorrow, and night,
Jesus, I come! Jesus, I come!
Into Thy freedom, gladness, and light,
Jesus, I come to Thee!
Out of my sickness into Thy health,
Out of my want and into Thy wealth,
Out of my sin and into Thyself,
Jesus, I come to Thee! | 3 Out of unrest and arrogant pride,
Jesus, I come! Jesus, I come!
Into Thy blessed will to abide,
Jesus, I come to Thee!
Out of myself to dwell in Thy love,
Out of despair into raptures above,
Upward for aye on wings like a dove,
Jesus, I come to Thee! |
| 2 Out of my shameful failure and loss,
Jesus, I come! Jesus, I come!
Into the glorious gain of Thy cross,
Jesus, I come to Thee!
Out of earth's sorrows into Thy balm,
Out of life's storm and into Thy calm,
Out of distress to jubilant psalm,
Jesus, I come to Thee! | 4 Out of the fear and dread of the tomb,
Jesus, I come! Jesus, I come!
Into the joy and pleasure, Thine own,
Jesus, I come to Thee!
Out of the depths of ruin untold,
Into the flock Thy love doth enfold,
Ever Thy glorious face to behold,
Jesus, I come to Thee! |

Scripture Reading: Num. 11:4-35; 12:1-15; 14:1-4; 16:1-40, 41-50; 20:2-13; 1 Cor. 10:6, 11

1 Cor. 10:6 Now these things occurred as examples to us, that we should not be ones who lust after evil things, even as they also lusted.

10:11 Now these things happened to them as an example, and they were written for our admonition, unto whom the ends of the ages have come.

- I. Speaking of the things that happened to the children of Israel in the wilderness, Paul says in 1 Corinthians 10:6, "These things occurred as types of us"; in verse 11 he goes on to say, "These things happened to them as types, and were written for our admonition"; this clearly indicates that there are lessons for us to learn from the journeying of the children of Israel.**

II. In Exodus 16 the people were disciplined by God; this discipline trained them not to desire the Egyptian diet; but according to Numbers 11, a year later the people once again lusted for the food of Egypt—Exo. 16; Num. 11:4-35:

- A. When the children of Israel were murmuring in the wilderness, their murmuring was according to their flesh; the flesh here does not signify only the lustful part of our being; it signifies the totality of our fallen being, the whole of our old person—11:1; Col. 3:9.
- B. We need to apply the record in Numbers 11 to our experience; if we continue to lust for worldly things after we are saved, God may give them to us; He will give you what you lust after in order to show you His glory, His anger, and His sufficiency—Num. 10:31-33.
- C. I would encourage all the saints not to love the world and not to lust according to the flesh after worldly things; the Lord wants to be everything to us and to do everything for us; it is His desire to give us heavenly food, to rain manna upon us—1 John 2:15; Psa. 78:24; Rev. 2:17.

III. Numbers 12 is a record of a failure of the children of Israel: Miriam and Aaron spoke against Moses; therefore, Miriam had leprosy—Num. 12:1-15:

- A. In God's calling and work, He set Moses as His deputy authority; thus, Aaron and Miriam should have submitted to Moses' authority.
- B. Miriam's example gave us a serious warning that slandering and rebelling against God's deputy authority is a serious sin in God's eyes—v. 10.

IV. The children of Israel believed in the ten spies and murmured against God out of the evil hearts of unbelief; thus, they lost the enjoyment of the good land—vv. 14:1-4:

- A. A heart of unbelief produces disobedience, stubbornness, rebellion, and evil speaking toward God, which became contagious and spread death among God's people—vv. 29, 32-35; 2 Tim. 2:16-17.
- B. Caleb and Joshua believed in God's word and thus received the reward of entering into the good land—Num. 14:24, 30.
- C. While we still have today, we should hear His voice and enter into the rest that remains for God's people—Heb. 3:7—4:13.

V. In Numbers 16 there are two rebellions: in verses 1 through 40 we have the rebellion of the leaders, whereas in verses 41 through 50 we have the rebellion of the whole assembly:

- A. In the beginning it was the rebellion of Korah's company and of the two hundred fifty leaders; but the next day the whole assembly rose to rebel; this shows that a spirit of rebellion is contagious.
- B. The three examples of rebellion show us the importance of submission to the authority; God can bear many sins and can even pardon them; however, God cannot tolerate the sin of rebellion, for rebellion is according to the principle of death; it is according to the principle of Satan; for this reason, the sin of rebellion is more serious than any other kind of sin—Jude 11.

- VI. Although Moses was a faithful servant of God, in Numbers 20 he made a mistake which caused him to lose his right to enter into the promised good land—20:2-13:**
- A. By speaking to the people in this way, Moses wrongly represented God; His mistaken speaking made God common; that is, it did not sanctify God, did not make Him separate from all other gods—vv. 10, 11.
 - B. The blunder committed by Moses in Numbers 20 consisted in not having a positive and pleasant feeling regarding God's people; this caused him to make a serious mistake in representing God—vv. 2-13.
 - C. The experience of Moses in Numbers 20 is an important lesson for us in the church life today; we need to learn that, especially when we have been offended by the saints in the church, we should not go to God for the purpose of accusing His people—Matt. 18:1-35.
- VII. We need to read the history of Israel as our history; without God's mercy and grace, we would be the same as they; thus, we must be very much on the alert; we need to kneel down and humble ourselves before the Lord and pray, “Lord, have mercy on me. Only Your mercy can preserve me and keep me in Your grace”—1 Cor. 10:6, 11.**

SUPPLEMENTARY READING

GOD’S DEALING

The food in Egypt suited the flesh of God’s people. The more they ate of Egyptian food, the more fleshly they became, for the Egyptian diet corresponded to the people’s flesh and nourished it. Manna, however, was food of another category. It came from heaven and it caused those who ate it to become heavenly. When the children of Israel were murmuring in the wilderness, their murmuring was according to their flesh. This means that they were murmuring according to the old self, according to the old person. In their murmuring they were not living as God’s redeemed people, but as natural people.

The flesh here does not signify only the lustful part of our being; it signifies the totality of our fallen being, the whole of our old person. Although God’s people had been redeemed, they were still living like Egyptians, like those who had not been

redeemed by God. For this reason, God sent quails to satisfy their fleshly lusts. The first time He sent quails was in Exodus 16. Although He disciplined the people, His discipline on this occasion was not severe. The second time “the wrath of Jehovah was kindled against the people, and Jehovah smote the people with a very great plague” (Num. 11:33, Heb.). Numbers 11:34 goes on to say, “And he called the name of that place Kibroth-hattaavah: because there they buried the people that lusted.” Kibroth-hattaavah means the graves of lust.

Before God smote the people with a great plague, He sent quails in abundance. In a miraculous way, the Lord fed the people with quails for thirty days (Num. 11:19-20). In Numbers 11:31 we have a description of the vast number of quails: “And there went forth a wind from Jehovah, and brought quails from the sea, and let them fall by the camp, as it were a day’s journey on this side, and as

it were a day's journey on the other side, round about the camp, and as it were two cubits high upon the face of the earth" (Heb.). What an abundance of quails! At first, the people were pleased. But eventually the quails became loathsome to them, for the people had to eat them until the flesh came out of their nostrils (Num. 11:20). In Numbers 11:33 we are told, "And while the flesh was yet between their teeth, ere it was chewed, the wrath of Jehovah was kindled against the people" (Heb.).

We need to apply the record in Numbers 11 to our experience. If we continue to lust for worldly things after we are saved, God may give them to us. For example, suppose you lust after a new car. God may give it to you in order to fulfill your lust, but He will not be happy in doing so. Rather, He will give you what you lust after in order to show you His glory, His anger, and His sufficiency. Just as God sent an abundance of quails to the children of Israel, He may give you so many cars that they become loathsome to you. God will give you what you lust after, but you may experience His displeasure. Sooner or later, the very cars you lust after will become loathsome to you.

I have known some believers who had a great love for money when they were young Christians. But after they became rich, the money they loved became loathsome to them. Furthermore, they suffered spiritual death. All Christians today need to hear the teaching of the Word concerning this.

I would encourage all the saints not to love the world and not to lust according to the flesh after worldly things. But this is the very thing many Christians are doing today. In order to satisfy their lusts, they are pursuing the things of Egypt. God may allow them to have what they desire. This, however, is not a positive sign. Do not think that if God gives you what you lust after, He agrees with you, He is happy with you, or He intends to edify you. On the contrary, this is a sign of His anger and displeasure. Most of today's Christians have been smitten by God in His anger. For this reason, with them there is no life, only spiritual death.

I hope that all the saints in the Lord's recovery, especially the young people, will learn to forget the world and not to lust after Egyptian things. The God who has saved us is real, living, faithful, and purposeful, and He will take care of our needs. There is no need for us to lust after worldly things. We are no longer worldly people. We are God's chosen people, and He wants us to live a heavenly life. I can testify that the Lord is faithful and worthy of our trust. Through my experience I have learned not to act on my own. Anything I do in myself will displease the Lord. I repeat, the Lord wants to be everything to us and to do everything for us. It is His desire to give us heavenly food, to rain manna upon us. By partaking of this heavenly food, we shall be a heavenly people living a heavenly life. This will make us altogether different from worldly people. (*Life-study of Exodus*, msg. 33)

Questions:

1. The Israelites lusted after Egyptian food. Today what is our "Egyptian food" in our daily life? How can we apply the experience of the Israelites to ourselves?
2. How can we learn the lesson from Moses' experience in our attitude toward God's people?