

2018 BIBLE TALKS—UNVEILING NUMBERS

Session 2

The Journeying of God's People

Hymns, #1205

- 1 Press on, press on toward the goal—
The all-inclusive Christ.
To gain the prize of God's high call,
Press on, press on to Christ!

Pressing on! Pressing on!
Pressing on! Hallelujah for the prize
We're pressing on! On and on!
To gain the Christ of God!
- 2 Press on, press on, count all things loss.
All that is gain to us,
To win the prize, the Christ of God,
Is far more glorious!
- 3 Press on, press on to know the Lord
And resurrection power—
Oh, this is our supreme reward,
E'en in the suffering hour!
- 4 Press on, press on, this one thing do,
Forget the things behind;
Press onward to the Christ before,
Press onward with this mind!

Hymns, #1206

- 1 There's a race for us to run—Hallelujah,
And a way for us the race to win.
To all those who have begun—Hallelujah,
God has spoken, "Look away to Him!"

Look away! O look away!
Look to Jesus now today!
Look away from everything unto Jesus,
Look away from everything to Him!
- 2 Look away from all around—Hallelujah,
Look away from all the strife and din;
Look away where peace is found—Hallelujah,
Look away from everything to Him.
- 3 Look away from fickle soul—Hallelujah,
Look away from failing self within;
Look away toward the goal—Hallelujah,
Look away from everything to Him.
- 4 Look away from all the past—Hallelujah,
Look away from both the good and sin;
To the living One hold fast—Hallelujah,
Look away from everything to Him.
- 5 Look away into His face—Hallelujah,
He who'll finish what He did begin.
O what grace to run the race—Hallelujah—
We obtain by looking off to Him!

Scripture Reading: Num. 9:15—20:29; 21:4-20; 33:1-49

Num. 10:35-36 And when the Ark set out, Moses said, Rise up, O Jehovah, and let Your enemies be scattered; And let those who hate You flee before You. And when it came to rest, he said, Return, O Jehovah, to the ten thousands of the thousands of Israel.

I. After the children of Israel had been formed into an army, they were ready to journey to fight for God so that He could gain the ground on earth to build up His kingdom with His house; their moving was not up to them; it was altogether according to God's guidance—Num. 9:17:

- A. God's guidance to His people in a general way was by the cloud and the trumpets—9:15—10:10:
 - 1. The guidance in the form of a cloud signifies God in the sense of God's presence, i.e., God Himself consummated to be the Spirit.
 - 2. The sound of the trumpet was called an alarm because, in God's thought, the children of Israel were continually at war; they needed to gather, move, and fight according to the sound of the trumpet; today we have the Spirit and the Word, and quite often the Word becomes an alarm to us.
- B. God's leading of His people in a particular way was through the Ark—10:33-36:
 - 1. The Ark is a type of the crucified and resurrected Christ in His resurrection.
 - 2. The unique leader of God's people is not any man (cf. vv. 29-32) but is the crucified and resurrected Christ (Matt. 23:10); He is the Leader, and He leads us to the proper place of rest on the long and rugged journey of the Christian life (Heb. 4:8-9).
 - 3. The leading of the Ark of the Covenant indicates that the leading of Christ is faithful, according to a covenant—Gen. 17:1-8, Exo. 23:20.

II. The entire history of the children of Israel, including the failures recorded in chapters 11 through 14, was written for the admonition of the New Testament believers—1 Cor. 10:1-13:

- A. Murmuring evil—Num. 11:1-3
- B. Lusting—11:4-35
- C. Slandering—12:1-16
- D. Not believing in God—13:1—14:38
- E. Transgressing the Word of God—14:39-45
- F. Rebellion—a more serious failure—16:1—17:13

III. The stations and the goal of the journey of the Israelites—33:1-49 :

- A. The journey of the Israelites from the land of slavery to the land of rest had forty-two stations, typifying the forty-two generations from Abraham to Christ—Matt. 1:17.
- B. The goal of the journey of the Israelites was the good land, which typifies the all-inclusive Christ; God's intention is to bring all His people into the good land, which typifies Christ, as the goal—Deut. 8:7.

IV. Our God is the living God and energizing God—1 Tim. 3:15; Heb. 3:12:

- A. God's move today is to produce overcomers, who have a vital living and service and shepherd according to God for the building-up of the Body of Christ.

- B. In order to participate in God's move, we need to thoroughly deal with: (1) sin, (2) the world, (3) the lust of the flesh, (4) murmuring, (5) slandering words, (6) the evil heart of unbelief, and (7) rebellion.
- C. We need to be one with the interceding Christ in His heavenly ministry to carry out God's divine administration for the fulfillment of His economy.
- D. We as the redeemed and sanctified people need to be formed into God's holy army, moving and fighting in the energizing God to gain the earth.
- E. We need to move in God's move, going forth to disciple all the nations and teach them the divine truths; we need to preach the gospel of the kingdom in the whole inhabited earth for the light of the golden lampstands to shine on the whole earth, thus hastening the Lord's return!

SUPPLEMENTARY READING

"They set out from the mount of Jehovah three days' journey; and the ark of the covenant of Jehovah went before them three days' journey, to seek out a resting place for them" (v. 33). Here we see that the sons of Israel went three days' journey. The way was not paved, the oxen were slow, and travel for the wagons was difficult. However, the ark (Christ) of the covenant of Jehovah went before them to seek out a resting place. The ark, with all the contents of the tabernacle, including the altar, showbread table, lampstand, and incense altar, was the responsibility of the Kohathites and was borne by them. The Kohathites should have set out after the camp of Reuben; nevertheless, the ark came to the front to take the lead.

There is a difference between guidance and leading. The term guidance is used with respect to the cloud and the blowing of the trumpets, but concerning the ark we have used the term leading. Guidance is general; leading is particular. The cloud and the trumpet guided the children of Israel in a general way. However, the ark did not render a general guidance but a particular leading to

the people. Thus, the ark became the leader, taking the lead to find a resting place.

During the forty years the children of Israel traveled in the wilderness, it was difficult to find a resting place for two million people. Today our Christian life is a long journey on a rugged, unpaved way. As we are journeying on this rugged way, it is not easy for us to rest. The Lord Jesus, the Forerunner, has cut the way (Heb. 6:20), but He did not pave the way. He passed through the rugged way, and now we are following His footsteps on this way. We have need of a resting place. Here no one, not even the older and more experienced ones, can help us. Concerning this, we should not put our trust in man. The unique One in whom we can trust is Christ as the ark. He is the Leader, and He leads us to the proper place of rest. He not only guides us in a general way but leads us in a particular way.

In Numbers 10 the real leader was not Moses. At that time, even Moses was inadequate. The ark led the children of Israel in a particular way, much like a small boat leads a large ship through a narrow strait and a swift current into the harbor.

Not only was the ark a living ark, but the rock that followed the Israelites was also living (Exo. 17:6; 1 Cor. 10:4). In the wilderness Christ followed the children of Israel as a rock to supply them with living water. As the ark, He was their Leader, taking the lead to find a resting place for them and to lead them through the hard part of their journey.

The children of Israel were led not by man (Moses' father-in-law) but by the ark (Christ) of God's covenant. This indicates that the leadership of Christ is faithful. This leadership is not according to emotion or affection but according to a covenant. God made a covenant with Abraham and his descendants to bring them into the good land (Gen. 12). Eventually, God's covenant was placed in the ark, and thus the ark was called the ark of the covenant (Num. 10:33). Hence, Christ is the Christ of the covenant, the Christ of God's faithfulness. Christ must lead us into a resting place because He is the Christ of God's covenant. (*Life-study of Numbers*, msg. 17)

Today, thirty-five hundred years later, we can realize from reading the biblical record that although God's bringing of the people into the good land was apparently for the people, it was actually to accomplish, to carry out, God's eternal plan, which is altogether centered on the all-inclusive Christ. This is on the positive side.

On the negative side, God still has an enemy, Satan. Apparently, it is man who occupies and usurps the earth; actually, the usurper is not man but Satan. This is the reason that in Matthew 6:10 the Lord Jesus told us to pray that the Father's will would be done on earth as it is in heaven. This indicates that God's will has not yet been accomplished on earth. Concerning God's will being done, there is no problem in the heavens, but there

is a problem on earth. Therefore, we need to pray for God's will to be done on earth as it is done in heaven.

At the time of Exodus, the entire earth was occupied by the Gentiles, who were under the hand of Satan. Not even a small part of the earth created by God was under His control. The children of Israel were in Egypt, but Egypt was not their land. They had to find a land, and God had prepared a land for them. Hundreds of years before, God had told their forefather Abraham that He would give the land of Canaan to his descendants (Gen. 13:14-17). Actually, God's desire was that Abraham's descendants would take that good land for His purpose.

When the men spied out the land, they found that the descendants of Anak, a particular people whom the Bible calls the Nephilim, or giants, were dwelling there (Num. 13:33). The origin of the Nephilim is seen in Genesis 6. In brief, Genesis 6 tells us that when man fell to such an extent that he became flesh (v. 3), the fallen angels came down to earth to marry the daughters of men (vv. 1-2, 4). This mixed marriage produced the giants, the Nephilim. God could not tolerate this mixture. It was because of this mixing of the human race with the fallen angels that God destroyed the whole human race by the flood. Later, the same mixed race, the Nephilim, a mixture of fallen angels and fallen man, dwelt in the land of Canaan. Hence, God commanded the children of Israel to take over this land and to destroy every living being there so that the human race could be cleared up (Deut. 7:1-2).

However, the children of Israel did not know this. Their consideration was not for God but for their own interest. They did not care for God in the least, but cared only for their safety, their peace, and their existence. They did not confess their weakness or

humble themselves before God. Eventually, they offended God to such an extent that they became abhorrent to Him. What they did was altogether abhorrent in His sight.

As human beings we need to be concerned for our daily life, our jobs, our safety, and our security. But we should not forget that God's enemy, Satan, is hidden behind the scene and that the real issue on earth today is a matter not between God and man but between God and Satan. Thus, if we care only for our existence, security, safety, peace, and future, we may become an abhorrence in the eyes of God.

Today some believers are very much for themselves, caring for their security and for blessings in material things but not caring for God's purpose. Such Christians believe in Jesus Christ only for their own benefit; they do not have the slightest thought concerning God's interest on earth and in the universe.

Surely we are God's children, and God is for us. But for whom are we? Some Christians give no thought to God's interest, God's gain, or God's suffering. They think and speak only about themselves and their security. Among worldly people today, security is a big idol. Everything they do is for their security. For their security they study diligently and work hard. Some even fear God and believe in Christ for their own security.

Why did the children of Israel become abhorrent to God in Numbers 13 and 14?

They became abhorrent because they were so much for themselves. In everything and in every way they were for themselves, not for God's interests. If they had thought even a little about God's interests, they would have said, "God, as You have been so good to us, we just love You. We would like to sacrifice our future, our safety, our security, our existence, and everything for Your purpose. We forget about our benefit. We care only that You accomplish Your purpose. For Your purpose, let us go and possess the land."

Caring for God and His interests produces faith. When we are so much for ourselves, it is difficult for us to have faith in God. But if we take the standing that we are for God and that for His interests we are willing to risk everything—our future, our family, even our life—faith will spontaneously be produced in us.

We all need to be impressed with the fact that in ourselves we are weak and do not have any faith. Who among us can boast that he has faith? Faith is of God, faith is in God, and faith comes from God. If we would have faith, we must learn to care for God's interests and not for our benefit. The worldly people are concerned daily for their own security and benefit, but we should care for God and His interests. History tells us that those who cared for God and did not consider their own benefit became people of faith, and some even became giants of faith. (*Life-study of Numbers*, msg. 21)

Questions:

1. What did the Israelites follow in their journey in the wilderness? What does this guidance typify?
2. What failures did the Israelites have in the wilderness? What is the spiritual significance of these failures and how do they apply to us?
3. What do the stations and goal of the Israelites' journey signify?