

Sabbath School Lesson #2 – Restless and Rebellious – 3-9 July 2021

Christ would have us learn the object for which the historical records of the Bible were written. It was not simply to gratify curiosity concerning things that have taken place in the past, but for our guidance in the present. Thus the apostle Paul says, “Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come” (1 Corinthians 10:11). “Whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope” (Romans 15:4). Whenever the Bible is read, let the reader note the frequent occurrence in the Bible of the expressions, “And the Lord said;” “The word of the Lord came unto me;” etc. Let him learn to receive the entire Bible as the word of God, and then remember that it is written that “man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God” (see Deuteronomy 8:3; and Matthew 4:4).

Sunday: Restless in a Wilderness – “And when the people complained, it displeased the Lord: and the Lord heard it; and His anger was kindled; and the fire of the Lord burnt among them, and consumed them that were in the uttermost parts of the camp. And the people cried unto Moses; and when Moses prayed unto the Lord, the fire was quenched” (Numbers 11:1-2). Sadly, the people who survived did not learn their lesson; we are told:

“But the evil was soon worse than before. Instead of leading the survivors to humiliation and repentance, this fearful judgment seemed only to increase their murmurings. In all directions the people were gathered at the door of their tents, weeping and lamenting. ‘The mixed multitude that was among them fell a lusting: and the children of Israel also wept again, and said, Who shall give us flesh to eat? We remember the fish, which we did eat in Egypt freely; the cucumbers, and the melons, and the leeks, and the onions, and the garlic: but now our soul is dried away: there is nothing at all, beside this manna, before our eyes.’ Thus they manifested their discontent with the food provided for them by their Creator. Yet they had constant evidence that it was adapted to their wants; for notwithstanding the hardships they endured, there was not a feeble one in all their tribes” {PP 379.3}.

“The heart of Moses sank. He had pleaded that Israel should not be destroyed, even though his own posterity might then become a great nation. In his love for them he had prayed that his name might be blotted from the book of life rather than that they should be left to perish. He had imperiled all for them, and this was their response. All their hardships, even their imaginary sufferings, they charged upon him; and their wicked murmurings made doubly heavy the burden of care and responsibility under which he staggered. In his distress he was tempted even to distrust God. His prayer was almost a complaint. ‘Wherefore hast Thou afflicted Thy servant? and wherefore have I not found favor in Thy sight, that Thou layest the burden of all this people upon me? . . . Whence should I have flesh to give unto all this people? for they weep unto me, saying, Give us flesh, that we may eat. I am not able to bear all this people alone, because it is too heavy for me.’” {PP 379.4}.

Monday: It’s Contagious – “And Miriam and Aaron spake against Moses because of the Ethiopian woman whom he had married: for he had married an Ethiopian woman. And they said, Hath the Lord indeed spoken only by Moses? hath he not spoken also by us? And the Lord heard it” (Numbers 12:1-2). The sin of the people was contagious that it affected Miriam (sister to Moses) and Aaron (brother to Moses). Here is what we are told of them:

“God had chosen Moses, and had put His Spirit upon him; and Miriam and Aaron, by their murmurings, were guilty of disloyalty, not only to their appointed leader, but to God Himself. The seditious whisperers were summoned to the tabernacle, and brought face to face with Moses. ‘And Jehovah came down in the pillar of the cloud, and stood in the door of the tabernacle, and called Aaron and Miriam.’ Their claim to the prophetic gift was not denied; God might have spoken to them in visions and dreams. But to Moses, whom the Lord Himself declared ‘faithful in all Mine house,’ a nearer communion had been granted. With *him* God spake mouth to mouth. ‘Wherefore then were ye not afraid to speak against My servant Moses? And the anger of the Lord was kindled against them; and He departed.’ The cloud disappeared from the tabernacle in token of God’s displeasure, and Miriam was smitten. She ‘became leprous, white as snow.’ Aaron was spared, but he was severely

rebuked in Miriam's punishment. Now, their pride humbled in the dust, Aaron confessed their sin, and entreated that his sister might not be left to perish by that loathsome and deadly scourge. In answer to the prayers of Moses the leprosy was cleansed. Miriam was, however, shut out of the camp for seven days. Not until she was banished from the encampment did the symbol of God's favor again rest upon the tabernacle. In respect for her high position, and in grief at the blow that had fallen upon her, the whole company abode in Hazeroth, awaiting her return" {PP 384.3}. "This manifestation of the Lord's displeasure was designed to be a warning to all Israel, to check the growing spirit of discontent and insubordination. If Miriam's envy and dissatisfaction had not been signally rebuked, it would have resulted in great evil. Envy is one of the most satanic traits that can exist in the human heart, and it is one of the most baleful in its effects. Says the wise man, 'Wrath is cruel, and anger is outrageous; but who is able to stand before envy?' Proverbs 27:4. It was envy that first caused discord in heaven, and its indulgence has wrought untold evil among men. 'Where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work.' James 3:16." {PP 385.1}.

Tuesday: Restlessness Leads to Rebellion – "And they brought up an evil report of the land which they had searched unto the children of Israel" (Numbers 13:32). We are told:

"The Lord commanded Moses to send men to search the land of Canaan, which He would give unto the children of Israel. . . . After they had spoken of the fertility of the land, all but two spoke very discouragingly of their ability to possess it. . . . As the people listened to this report, they gave vent to their disappointment in bitter reproaches and wailing. They did not wait to reflect and reason that God, who had brought them out thus far, would certainly give them the land. . . ." {CC 106.2}. "Caleb urged his way to the front, and his clear, ringing voice was heard above all the clamor of the multitude. He opposed the cowardly views of his fellow spies, which had weakened the faith and courage of all Israel. He commanded the attention of the people, and they hushed their complaints for a moment to listen to him. . . . But as he spoke, the unfaithful spies interrupted him, crying: 'We be not able to go up against the people; for they are stronger than we.'" {CC 106.3}. "These men, starting upon a wrong course, set their hearts against God, against Moses and Aaron, and against Caleb and Joshua. Every step they advanced in this wrong direction made them firmer in their design to discourage every attempt to possess the land of Canaan. They distorted the truth in order to carry their baneful purpose. They represented the climate as being unhealthy and all the people of giant stature. . . ." {CC 106.4}. "This was not only an evil report, but a lying one also. It was contradictory; for if the land was unhealthy, and had eaten up the inhabitants, how was it that they had attained to such massive proportions? When men in responsible positions yield their hearts to unbelief, there are no bounds to the advance they will make in evil. . . . If only the two men had brought the evil report, and all the ten had encouraged them to possess the land in the name of the Lord, they would still have taken the advice of the two in preference to the ten, because of their wicked unbelief" {CC 106.5}.

Wednesday: An Intercessor – "And the Lord said unto Moses, How long will this people provoke Me? and how long will it be ere they believe Me, for all the signs which I have shewed among them? I will smite them with the pestilence, and disinherit them, and will make of thee a greater nation and mightier than they" (Numbers 14:11-12). Interceding for the people, we are told of what Moses did: "Moses again refuses to have Israel destroyed and himself made a mightier nation than was Israel. This favored servant of God manifests his love for Israel and shows his zeal for the glory of his Maker and the honor of his people: As Thou hast forgiven this people from Egypt even until now, Thou hast been long-suffering and merciful hitherto toward this ungrateful people; however unworthy they may be, Thy mercy is the same. He pleads, Wilt Thou not, therefore, spare them this once, and add this one more instance of divine patience to the many Thou hast already given?" {SR 161.2}.

Thursday: Faith Versus Presumption – We are told: "The calling and character of God's people are peculiar, their prospects are peculiar, and these peculiarities distinguish them from all other people. . . . The same injunctions that rested upon ancient Israel, rest upon God's people now, to be separate from the world. The great Head of the church has not changed. The experience of Christians in these days is much like the travels of ancient Israel. Please read 1 Corinthians 10, especially from the 6th to the 15th verse" {1T 283.4}.