

NUMBERS

INTRODUCTION

Wilderness is the first Hebrew word in the book of Numbers, and it aptly expresses the spiritual teachings which underlie that strange history. It unfolds the wilderness life of the Christian, as does no other book of the Bible. It is the story of wandering and failure. Its counterpart is the book of Joshua, which is the story of victory, inheritance and rest.

The history of the book of Numbers comprises a period of about 38 years, but the close of those years finds the people of Israel at nearly the same point at which they were in the beginning of that period. They had spent almost half a century in traveling the futile circles of the trackless desert, which only had served to furnish a grave for the generation that had crossed the Red Sea and to teach their children the lessons which were to save them from their fathers' unbelief and bring them into the inheritance which their fathers had refused to claim.

This book has always been regarded as typical of Christian experience in its lower and more defective forms, and so it is full of instruction, spiritual warning and quickening for our own time, which affords, we fear, a true and faithful counterpart, in many respects, of the unbelief, disobedience and disappointment so vividly set forth in the story of the wilderness.

(The Christ in the Bible Commentary, A. B. Simpson)

THE ARMY

The book of Numbers opens with the picture of an army of more than 600,000 men, marshaled for victorious warfare, and organized and equipped in perfect form with all the accompaniments necessary for their successful advance.

We find in this great host all the elements which constitute the army of the Lord in the Church of the New Testament.

SECTION 1—Sons

Numbers 1:1-54

The first thing required in the marshaling of the host was that everyone should declare his pedigree and should be enrolled according to the house of his fathers. It is thus in our spiritual life, and it teaches us that before we can be true soldiers, we must know that we are sons of God. The reason why many Christians fail in their tests and their service is because they do not know their place in the divine household, and have not entered fully into the blessed assurance of a full divine sonship. Therefore God required of His ancient people that they should know and declare their pedigree, before they could put on their armor. We also may know that we have eternal life and are the sons of God, and so be able to bear an unequivocal testimony to the world and stand with unflinching front before the Adversary.

Our Lord received in like manner the witness to His Sonship, before He went forth into the wilderness to meet Satan, and then afterwards into the world to overcome him in others. This was what the devil tried his best to unsettle: "*If you are the Son of God*" (Matthew 4:3). But Christ overcame him in the confidence of His Father's love and His high calling. So let us, as we read these ancient records, make sure of our pedigree and fully claim our sonship. "Yet to all who received him ... he gave the right to become children of God" (John 1:12). "Because you are sons, God sent the Spirit of his *Son* into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, 'Abba, Father' " (Galatians 4:6). "The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children" (Romans 8:16).

SECTION 2—Soldiers

Numbers 2:1-34

The next picture of the ancient host is the picture of the soldiers. Having declared their pedigree they were next required to pitch by their own standard, with the ensign of their fathers' house. Only the men of war were counted.

So God expects all His people to be soldiers. We are not registered in the heavenly roll according to our place on earthly church rolls, but according to our enlistment in the army of the living God. The order of the standards was divinely arranged according to a perfect system. There were four great divisions around the tabernacle. On the east there were three tribes, numbering 186,400 men, led by the tribe of Judah. On the south there were three tribes numbering 151,450 men, with Reuben in the front. On the west there were three tribes around the camp of Ephraim, numbering in all 108,100 men; and on the north the remaining three tribes, numbering 157,600, with Dan in the center. This was the arrangement of the tabernacle when it rested. When in motion, the tribe of Judah always led the caravan, followed by Reuben. Then came the tabernacle with the ministering priests and Levites, followed by Ephraim, Dan and the other tribes.

We may learn from this order that the Church of Christ is not a promiscuous mass of heterogeneous elements, but a divinely organized body. Christ is the living Head, and the Holy Spirit the ever-present guide, and all the divine provisions for mutual service, fellowship and cooperation we find wisely and completely defined in the New Testament and illustrated in the primitive Church.

In the center of the camp no standard was permitted; but the tabernacle and the ark were the types (things that symbolize another) of Jesus Christ Himself, around whom all the ranks of God's people should ever be gathered in unity. The leadership of Judah, whose name means praise, is at least suggestive of the spirit of Christian life and warfare, which should always march out like Jehoshaphat's army with the singers and the players in the front. We shall ever find the spirit of praise to be the keynote of triumph.

Military figures occupy a very prominent place in the pictures of Christian life in the New Testament. Our life is a very real conflict, and our adversaries are not going to be set aside by our ignoring them. God's ancient people, we are told, went forth armed for battle, out of the land of Egypt; and we shall wretchedly fall amid the perils and enemies on the way if we forget that "our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms" (Ephesians 6:12). They who fear the conflict will never have rest from it, but will be harassed by assault and defeat to the close. It is only by courageous resistance and victory that we can ever have real peace. Israel had ceaseless war during the time of the Judges, but a few brief campaigns on the part of Joshua and David brought lasting peace. After the bitterest conflicts, we always read that "the land had rest from war" (Joshua 14:15).

Let us, therefore, put on the whole armor of God, fight the good fight of faith and endure hardness as good soldiers of Jesus Christ. While we glory in our pedigree, let us also lift up our standard and write upon it—Jehovah-nissi, the LORD is my banner.

SECTION 3—Servants

Numbers 3:5-51; 8:5-26

The next picture in the Hebrew host is the Levites, whose calling and functions are described in minute detail in the third and fourth chapters of Numbers. They represent the idea of service in our Christian life, as the priests did of worship, and the soldiers of conflict.

Substituted and Separated

They were separated unto God as an entire tribe instead of the firstborn of Israel, who were all dedicated to the Lord, and claimed as His peculiar property. As a commutation, He accepted the entire tribe of Levi instead of the firstborn of all their tribes, and set them apart to His own peculiar ministry. The dedication of the firstborn was connected with the slaying of Egypt's firstborn, and was recognized as the result of the sprinkled blood of the Paschal Lamb. It conveyed, therefore, the idea of redemption. This was confirmed by the fact that the surplus of Israel's firstborn over and above the tribe of Levi, which amounted to about 5,000 males, were redeemed by the payment of five shekels each. This was still further typical of our redemption, not with perishable things such as silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Christ.

The Levites thus took the place of the redeemed men who had been bought back from death and judgment by the blood of the Lamb, and so they express for us the great spiritual truth, that all our service must have its root in redemption, and its inspiration in the blessed consciousness of a Savior's love. A slave girl bought from the block in New Orleans, when about to fall into the hands of cruel and lustful men, was set free by her benevolent purchaser; but with every instinct of gratitude overwhelming her, she threw herself at his feet and refused to accept her freedom, begging him to take her as his servant as long as she should live, and exclaimed whenever she was asked why she was willing to endure the privations and toils of her life, "He redeemed me, he redeemed me." This is the spirit of the apostle when he says, "You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your body" (1 Corinthians 6:19-20).

God Their Inheritance

The Levites were not only redeemed men, but they took the place of firstborn men, that is, the place of sons and heirs. The nature of their inheritance is very beautifully described in many places in the Levitical code. It consisted simply in this, that God Himself was their inheritance. They had no share in the land of Canaan except the tabernacle and its immediate precincts. To them came no worldly possessions, but it was added, "The LORD is their inheritance" (Deuteronomy 18:2). This is an expressive type, not only of the Christian's high calling and glorious prospects as an heir of God and a joint heir with Christ of all the glory of His kingdom and of His throne, but of a deeper truth, namely, that the true servant of the Lord, like an ancient Levite, must take the Lord Himself for the supply of his spiritual needs, and the strength for all his service. In this respect the Lord Jesus was a true Levite. He constantly claimed: "By myself, I can do nothing; I judge only as I hear" (John 5:30). "Just as the living Father sent me and I live because of the Father, so the one who feeds on me will live because of me" (6:57). He was constantly depending upon His Father and His resources for all His earthly ministry. And like Him the great apostle could say: "Not that we are competent in ourselves to claim anything for ourselves, but our competence comes from God. He has made us competent as ministers of a new covenant" (2 Corinthians 3:5-6a). So Peter adds: "If anyone speaks, he should do it as one speaking the very words of God. If anyone serves, he should do it with the strength God provides, so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ. To him be the glory and the power for ever and ever" (1 Peter 4:11). None are so rich as they that are absolutely poor. When we have nothing else, then we have God for our inheritance, and can say: "God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work" (2 Corinthians 9:8).

Subordinate to the Priests

The Levites were subordinate to and under the direction of the priests. So Christian work must ever be subordinate to Christian worship, and our service must be under the control and inspiration of our deeper life and fellowship with the Lord Jesus Christ. Our highest service is our ministry unto Him as priests in His presence, and all our service for others should be impelled by the spirit of higher devotion.

These two classes, the priests and the Levites, beautifully represent the two sides of Christian life, the devotional and the practical. They do not refer to two classes of men or women, some of whom shall be Marthas and the others Marys, but to the two aspects which ought to be combined in all the services of the Lord—the one looking inward and heavenward, the other looking outward and around to the needs of our fellow men and the work given us to do. Both are beautifully combined in the ancient promise: "You will be called priests of the LORD, you will be named ministers of our God" (Isaiah 61:6).

Three Classes

The Levites were classified into three sections; namely, the Kohathites, the Gershonites and the Merarites. The Kohathites had charge of the sacred vessels, the Gershonites the curtains and coverings, and the Merarites the bars and boards of the tabernacle. These classes represent the various orders and spheres of Christian ministry which Christ has appointed in the Church. There are diversities of gifts, but the one Spirit; there are diversities of works, but the one God who works all in all. Some are called to be teachers, and some to be helpers; but the helpers are placed above the governments, and the least are often the greatest. The rule of preferment and honor in the kingdom of Christ is self-

abasement. No ministry for Him is menial; and yet to every man His work is given, and faithfulness consists in standing in our lot.

There were some things in the tabernacle which could not be committed to careless hands. The oxen could draw the heavy boards, but the golden vessels might not be touched by any but the consecrated Kohathites. For each of us there is a work to do, which no man can be paid to do in our stead, and for which no proxy will ever be accepted. There are vessels of the Lord which our hands must bear, and cups of water which we must carry ourselves. The bearing of the tabernacle by the ministering hands of the Levites is a lovely picture of the support of the Church of Christ by the united hands of God's faithful people, each in his place and all together bearing the precious burden, in which the Lord Himself condescends to dwell.

The principle of mutual service is constantly recognized in God's Word: "One sows and another reaps" (John 4:37); and it is a heavenly and happy gift to know our places, and be able also to appreciate our brother's work. It is said about some of David's ancient warriors, in high commendation, that they could keep rank. And one of the sweetest expressions in the New Testament in commendation of the disciple is, "You, loyal yokefellow" (Philippians 4:3).

A traveler describes two laborers in Africa, working together in the sowing of their fields. The one was without legs and the other was without arms. The armless one carried his neighbor on his shoulders, while the other scattered the seed with his hands, the two together constituting one working man. So let the sons of Kohath and Gershon work together in the mutual ministry of the heavenly tabernacle.

Their Dedication

The account of the Levites is closed with the beautiful picture of their solemn and public dedication on the altar of the tabernacle: "Bring the Levites to the front of the Tent of Meeting and assemble the whole Israelite community. You are to bring the Levites before the LORD, and the Israelites are to lay their hands on them. Aaron is to present the Levites before the LORD as a wave offering from the Israelites, so that they may be ready to do the work of the LORD" (Numbers 8:9-11).

What a beautiful picture of living sacrifice. This was the highest of all the Levitical offerings. It was not a bullock or a lamb, but a company of living men, solemnly dedicated by the imposition of hands, and laid as a sacrifice on the altar of the Lord. What a vividness it gives to the apostle's injunction, "Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship" (Romans 12:1).

SECTION 4—Saints

Still another class appears in this great procession of the army of the Lord: the Nazirites, who are described at length in the sixth chapter of Numbers, and who stand as special types of saintship and separation in the Church of God. The ordinance of the Nazirites, however, is preceded by two or three other important regulations in regard to the subject of purity, culminating in the special class separated to represent this distinct idea. Their success depended upon their perfect purity, and so God made full provision for their separation from all evil.

Separation

Every leper, every one with an unclean issue and every one defiled by the touch of the dead, had to be separated from the camp.

"The LORD said to Moses, 'Command the Israelites to send away from the camp anyone who has an infectious skin disease or a discharge of any kind, or who is ceremonially unclean because of a dead body' " (Numbers 5:1-2).

So we must cleanse ourselves from "everything that contaminates body and spirit" (2 Corinthians 7:1), and come out from all evil, before we can be used by God in consecrated service and enter into the land of our inheritance. "Therefore come out from them and be separate, says the Lord. Touch no unclean thing, and I will receive you. I will be a Father to you, and you will be my sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty (6:17-18). And again, "I will not be with you anymore unless you destroy whatever among you is devoted to destruction" (Joshua 7:12b).

Restitution

Trespasses must be confessed, restitution must be made and the sacrifice of atonement offered.

He "must confess the sin he has committed. He must make full restitution for his wrong, add one fifth to it and give it all to the person he has wronged" (Numbers 5:7).

And so our mutual or relative injuries must be met fully, that we may be victorious in our Christian warfare, and effectual in our work for God. "If a man cleanses himself from the latter, he will be an instrument for noble purposes, made holy, useful to the Master and prepared to do any good work" (2 Timothy 2:21).

So the Lord bids us to put away from our midst all causes of mutual misunderstanding, and even if a brother have aught against us to go to him in the spirit of forgiveness and love, and remove the misunderstanding if possible. "If you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to your brother; then come and offer your gift" (Matthew 5:23-24).

Suspicion Satisfied

The very suspicion of evil must be removed and prevented (Numbers 5:11-15, 24-28), and so provision is made for the trial of the suspected person by what is called "the waters of jealousy," which were to become accursed to the guilty person, but to be harmless to the innocent.

The Nazirate

Numbers 6:1-8; 22-27

The highest conception of purity and separation was expressed by the law of the Nazirite.

Here we observe: (1) He was entirely separated unto God, recognizing himself, and being recognized as a dedicated life. (2) The sacrifice was voluntary and not constrained, and therefore had the sweet savor of perfect joy and love. (3) It was accompanied by a vow of special form and most sacred consecration. (4) He was to abstain from wine and all strong drink, suggesting that his life was to be free from the heat of earthly passion and excitement, and that the calm and heavenly freedom of the divine possession was ever to characterize him. (5) He must not touch the dead, not even his own immediate family. This implies that if we would be true Nazirites, we must be separated from our old fleshly nature; we must be crucified with Christ, and so risen with Him that we shall not touch even in consciousness or memory the sinful self which we have renounced and crucified. (6) No razor must touch his head or body, but he must be wholly yielded to the Lord in perfect simplicity. The hair of the human body seems in some way to be the divine symbol of power, and the design of this feature of the Nazirite's life was to suggest, as in the case of Samson, the idea of power in all the fullness of the divine endowment and indwelling of the Holy Spirit. A Nazirite thus expresses the idea of purity and power as inseparably combined. So we find that Samson was a Nazirite; and while faithful to his consecration he was possessed of the superhuman strength which God gave as the seal of that consecration. When he abandoned that he lost his strength.

Surely the lesson is not hard to find in our spiritual life. We shall be weak and sinful men as oft as we allow the world to defile us. But in holy separation we shall find boundless possibilities of God's power and fullness.

SECTION 5—Stewards

Numbers 7:1-6, 11, 18, 24, 30, 36, 42, 48, 54, 60, 66, 72, 78, 84-89

The closing picture of the Hebrew camp is the presentation by the princes of Israel of their voluntary gifts in the service of the tabernacle and the consecration of the altar. This is intended to suggest and prefigure the duty of Christian stewardship, and the consecration of our means as one of the most important departments of entire dedication to God and practical Christian service. These offerings were made spontaneously and do not seem to have been even suggested by Moses, but were brought by the princes of their own accord under the pressure of their respective tribes, who seem to have contributed along with them the means for these several gifts. Moses had to hesitate and inquire of the Lord before accepting them, showing their entire spontaneity (Numbers 7:3-5).

Christian Giving

This is ever the true spirit of Christian beneficence. The consecration of their substance to God was one of the very first results of the pouring out of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost (Acts 4:34) and has ever marked the measure of the Church's life and consecration. The Apostle Paul unfolded its principles and emphasized its obligations with peculiar fullness in almost all his epistles. We find him classing it in his letters to the Corinthians among the very highest graces of the Christian life, and especially urging this spirit of heartiness and spontaneity, as its true mode of inspiration. "But just as you excel in everything—in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in complete earnestness and in your love for us—see that you also excel in this grace of giving" (2 Corinthians 8:7). "For if the willingness is there, the gift is acceptable according to what one has, not according to what he does not have" (8:12).

The gifts of the princes occupied 12 entire days, each prince and tribe taking an entire day in succession and the services being signalized as a feast day by universal rejoicing. The services and gifts of each day are chronicled with minutest detail, embracing not only the names of the givers but also the specifications of their various gifts, and even where from day to day the gifts were the same, yet the account is repeated with equal minuteness over and over again, as if the Holy Spirit were never weary of recording in everlasting remembrance the smallest gifts of His people's gratitude and love. This is intended to teach us that God recognizes in detail our every gift and service, and has, in His book of eternal memorial, an enduring record of each.

This chapter of Numbers is the second longest chapter in the Bible, and it is not a little significant that the Holy Spirit has devoted such a chapter to the subject of Christian giving. It is but a specimen page from the larger volume which God is keeping amid the archives of the Judgment, for the day when He shall come and "his reward is with him" (Isaiah 40:10).

It is also significant that all the gifts were of equal value, teaching us that our giving should be proportionate, and that none should be unequally burdened, but together share in common the claims of Christ's kingdom (2 Corinthians 8:13, etc).

The Names

Some of the names of the princes of Israel who gave these offerings seem to possess a peculiar significance. Nahshon, the first, representing the tribe of Judah, signified an oracle, implying that very often our best way of speaking and testifying to God is through our gifts. Nethanel, the second, means God's gifts, implying that all our gifts are to be smaller recognitions of His larger bounties. Eliab, the third, signifies God his Father. Elizur, the fourth, signifies God his Rock. Shelumiel, the fifth, means God his Peace. The three together suggest that they who have learned to know Jehovah as their Father, their Strength and their Peace will count it a privilege to serve with the very best their life can offer, and that their richest gifts are little, compared with the value which they place on His inestimable grace. Eliasaph, the sixth, means God his Gatherer and implies that He will take care of the seed that lovingly give to Him. Ahiezer, the 10th, means the Helping Brother, suggesting the mutual blessings of cooperation and help in Christian work and giving. Pagiël, the 11th, signifies God meets, suggesting the favor and acceptance with which God recognizes the gifts and sacrifices of His people's love. This is beautifully expressed in the closing verses of the chapter, where we are told that after the offerings were all presented Moses entered into the tabernacle of the congregation and "heard the voice speaking to him from between the two cherubim above the atonement cover on the ark of the Testimony" (Numbers 7:89).

God's Approval

It would seem as though God was so pleased with the willing gifts of His faithful people, that He came down immediately to recognize them and speak to them in the tender voice of His approval and blessing. What He said to Moses we are not told, unless it be that the next verses in the commencement of the eighth chapter (verses 1-4), commending the lighting of the lamps in the tabernacle, was the message given. If this were so, it may well teach us that the gifts of God's people, when lovingly and faithfully bestowed, will ever bring the blessing of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit in the Church of Christ, and the kindling of a light and fire in God's sanctuary and altar, which will spread its brightness afar on a dark and sin-cursed world.

In a later prophet we know that He has told us explicitly the blessing which our consecrated gifts will ever bring. "Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. Test me in this,' says the LORD Almighty, 'and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that you will not have room enough for it. I will prevent pests from devouring your crops, and the vines in your field will not cast their fruit,' says the LORD Almighty. 'Then all the nations will call you blessed, for yours will be a delightful land,' says the LORD Almighty" (Malachi 3:10-12).

(The Christ in the Bible Commentary, A. B. Simpson)

Numbers chapter 1 deals with the formation of an army for conquering the people living in the Promised Land. The people of God are about to claim their inheritance.

The Army

Section 1 – Sons – Numbers 1:1-54

If we are called "sons of God" is it not imperative that we learn all the ways in which we are to carry out that high title in God as we walk on earth in this life?

Section 2 – Soldiers – Numbers 2:1-34

The following are found in the above reading by A. B. Simpson, and we ask that you make your own statements following each one, as to the Bible meaning:

God expects all His people to be soldiers, in the army of the living God.

The Church of Christ is a divinely organized body. Christ is the living Head, and the Holy Spirit the ever-present guide.

In the center of the camp was the tabernacle and the ark, and these were types of Jesus Christ Himself.

Our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.

Section 3 – Servants – Numbers 3:5-51; 8:5-26

Substituted and Separated

Now read carefully the second paragraph in A. B. Simpson's teachings under "Substituted and Separated" for clarification regarding God's choosing the tribe of Levi for the ministry of His holy tabernacle. **Can you now recognize why A. B. Simpson teaches us "that *all our service* must have its root in *redemption*, and its inspiration in the blessed consciousness of a *Savior's love*"?**

God Their Inheritance

Can you see a great lesson in this teaching for all of us who would be Christ's followers today? God chose the Levites to serve Him faithfully and forever, and they were to have no earthly inheritance whatsoever. They had to learn to "take the Lord Himself for the supply of their spiritual needs, and the strength for all his service," quoting our lesson here. **Does this daily apply to us as well, and especially so when we see none of the earthly, human conditions around us meeting our deep heart needs? Explain.**

Subordinate to the Priests

Speak to the dual duties of our Christian life, as the priests and the Levites represent here.

Three Classes

"One sows and another reaps" (John 4:37) **Is the part of the water carrier any lower than the part of one who reads the Scriptures? Give us your thoughts on God's way regarding the work and His workers. (1 Cor. 3:7-9)**

Their Dedication

Here we ask that you read, and memorize Romans 12:1, 2.

Section 4 – Saints

Separation

This was a strong order given by God to the Israelite people concerning the contamination shown here. **But are people of today correct, according to God and His ways, when they take a newly converted person, say, recently delivered from drugs and crime, and offer them the pulpit for preaching, etc. in telling their story, before they have been spiritually trained?**

Restitution

Once again, in today's church, do most of us consider this rather obsolete, and thereby neglect the obedience of it? Are Jesus' instructions in the Sermon on the Mount valuable today (Matthew chapters 5 and 6)?

The Nazirite – Numbers 6:1-8; 22-27

For the true Christian today does the study of Romans 6:3-14 and Romans 8 teach us the same truths that Pastor A. B. Simpson related here?

Section 5 – Stewards

Numbers 7:1-6, 11, 18, 24, 30, 36, 42, 48, 54, 60, 66, 72, 78, 84-89

Christian Giving

Whether you are a fairly new Christian, or one of a number of years, what is your personal understanding as to the Christian's need for giving, freely, unto the Lord and His church? Use the wisdom given in the following verses for your answer: 1 Chr. 29:3-9; 1 Cor. 16:1, 2; 2 Cor. 9:6-15

God's Approval

Would you say that God has always displayed His approval when man has given with right motives, from his heart, in thankfulness? Conversely, what happened to Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5:1-11)? Why?

Numbers 9:1-10:36

THE ADVANCE

Hitherto we have seen the camp at rest, but now preparations are made for their great march. They were not to dwell forever under the shadows of Sinai or in the howling wilderness. It was but 11 days' journey from Mt. Sinai to the borders of the promised land, and within a very little while they might have been in the inheritance of their fathers. Everything was now ready; an army of 600,000 men, organized and thoroughly disciplined, had grown out of the rabble that escaped from Egypt, and the majestic presence of God was ready to lead them into glorious victory and complete possession of their national heritage. And so the signals for their advance began.

The Passover

Numbers 9:1-14

The first of these preparations was the observance of the Passover.

This was observed at the usual time, on the 14th day of the first month, just one year after their departure from Egypt. Thus they began their advance into their final inheritance, at the same place and in the same spirit, as they had their escape from the bondage of Egypt. So we must begin every new departure of our Christian life at the cross of Jesus,

whether it be, as this movement typified, our entering into the fullness of Jesus or our consecration to any special service for the Lord. We shall never get away from the necessity of that precious blood, which grows more dear to the Christian heart the more we learn of the fullness of its power, not only to pardon, but also to cleanse, to consecrate and to overcome.

There was, however, a special provision connected with this Passover, which was singular and exceptional. Certain persons came to Moses and explained that they had not been able to keep it, on account of defilements at the time through the touch of the dead. God, therefore, provided that they might keep the Passover for themselves, at a special time, on the 14th day of the second month, and it would be accepted out of season on account of special circumstances of the case. How beautifully we are thus instructed that while we are not to dispense needlessly with God's ordinary stated ordinances of blessing, yet His grace overruns all conventional boundaries and meets us under the most unusual circumstances and unseasonable times and places, when it is really necessary that He should depart from His normal methods of working.

This significant Passover was provided for members of the congregation who had become defiled, and were not prepared to participate at the usual season. So the cross of Christ meets the weakest and the most unworthy of God's children and gives them with infinite tenderness and patience, time and opportunity to recover from their failures, to be cleansed from their defilements and ultimately to take their place abreast of their brethren in full acceptance and equal blessing in the common advance.

The Pillar Of Cloud and Fire Numbers 9:15-23

The pillar of cloud and fire next appears as the visible guide of the march which was about to begin; and with great beauty and spiritual significance its appearance and manifestation, both in movement and repose, are described in the closing verses of the ninth chapter of Numbers.

This glorious manifestation of the divine presence finds its spiritual fulfillment in our lives in the guidance of the Holy Spirit. It is important for us to learn not only to follow the Spirit when He leads us forward, but also to wait when He holds us in silence. "At the LORD's command the Israelites set out, and at his command they encamped. As long as the cloud stayed over the tabernacle, they remained in camp. When the cloud remained over the tabernacle a long time, the Israelites obeyed the LORD's order and did not set out" (Numbers 9:18-19).

True obedience requires the spirit of great quietness, self-restraint and the suppression of all the impulsive, passionate, eager voices of the fleshly mind, as well as the prompt and courageous energy which is ready to go forward at His immediate call. Those who have best learned to wait will be most ready to run when truly called, and those who are most hasty will usually be most timorous in real danger. So we find that Joshua and Caleb, the two brave men who were not afraid to enter the land in the face of all the formidable adversaries, were also the two that could wait 40 years for their inheritance; while on the other hand the people who were afraid to go forward at God's call and occupy their promised inheritance, the very next day were rash enough to rush forward without God's command and perished miserably at Hormah (chapter 14).

Moses himself had been deeply taught this lesson of waiting by his own early experience. At 40 years of age, he, too, was ready to rush forward at his own impulse. But God sent him into Midian for another 40 years, and when he came forth he had learned to be still and let God lead (Isaiah 30:15; Acts 16:6-7). Thus we see the great apostle of the Gentiles in the commencement of his missionary work, held again and again by the Spirit from fields that he would have entered, and finally, as he tarried and obeyed, better openings for his work in other fields presented themselves, and he found the first places, at a later period, prepared for him with a fullness of blessing which would not have come if he had hastily entered them.

Led of the Spirit

This blessed presence is the privilege of every consecrated believer. "Because those who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God" (Romans 8:14). This is the only light that can lead us into the fullness of Christ, which was the special lesson of the march of Israel. He who would know the fullness of the land of promise must follow the pillar guide. It is the Spirit who "will take from what is [Christ's] and make it known to you" (John 16:15b). It is the Spirit who makes us know the things which are freely given us of God, "'No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love him'— but God has revealed it to us by his Spirit. The Spirit searches all things, even the deep things of God. For who among men knows the thoughts of a man except the man's spirit within him? In the same way no one knows the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God" (1 Corinthians 2:9-11).

The Silver Trumpets Numbers 10:1-10

The two silver trumpets are next described.

These were both made of the same material and were precisely alike. They were used to summon the people to the great assemblies, public feasts, religious services, the commencement of journeys or the alarm of war. They were also used to herald the dawn of the Year of Jubilee.

God's Word and Spirit

These two silver trumpets are beautiful types of the voice of God speaking to His people through the Word and the Holy Spirit. Both made of the same material, they denote that the mind of the Spirit is always in harmony with the teaching of the Word, and that these twin voices never contradict each other. The uses of the trumpets sweetly express the precious value and the various messages of God's Word and Spirit. They are ever leading our steps in the pilgrimage of life: warning us of danger and of enemies; calling us to work and summoning us to the battles of the Lord; wooing us to His sanctuary and speaking to us there His divine messages; bringing to us the joy and gladness of His gracious words; bringing to us the blessedness of the people that know the joyful sound and walk in the light of His countenance; and finally proclaiming to us the words of hope and promise that foretell the glad coming of our Lord, and the jubilee of millennial ages.

The Ark

Numbers 10:15-36

Finally, we have the ark of God represented as also leading the hosts of Israel in their first advance through the wilderness.

A Gentle Reproof

Just prior to the account of this, however, we have an interesting account of the beginning of that march, and the request of Moses to Hobab, his brother-in-law, to become their guide through the desert. It is not stated whether this was authorized by the Lord, but it seems to have been an impulse of Moses' natural reason. Knowing as he did from years of experience the dangers of the wilderness and the tried experience of Hobab, it was natural that he should desire his presence and direction and think it necessary that they should have all the wisdom that could be legitimately commanded. God does not directly reprove this act of human dependence, but significantly changes the position of the ark from the center of the camp to the front, and we read that

The ark of the covenant of the LORD went before them during those three days to find them a place to rest. The cloud of the LORD was over them by day when they set out from the camp. Whenever the ark set out, Moses said,

"Rise up, O LORD!
May your enemies be scattered;
may your foes flee before you."
Whenever it came to rest, he said,

"Return, O LORD,
to the countless thousands of Israel." (Numbers 10:33b-36)

This second act must have made it plain to Moses, that God Himself was to be their personal Guide, and that even the wisdom of Hobab was not needed in their supernatural journey.

Christ's Presence

The ark was the special type of the presence of the Lord Jesus Christ, and His direct guidance is one of the privileges of His disciples, and one of His sweetest personal promises. He is the loving Shepherd, who, "When he has brought out all his own, he goes on ahead of them, and his sheep follow him because they know his voice. But they will never follow a stranger; in fact, they will run away from him because they do not recognize a stranger's voice" (John 10:4-5).

Ordinarily the ark was in the center of the camp, as Jesus Christ is central in the hearts of His people, but in this instance it moved in front, out of its usual place; and so there are times in the Christian's experience, when the way is dark and uncertain, that our blessed Master becomes strangely manifest as the Guide of our perplexing pathway, the Leader of our timid steps, and the Captain of salvation for His struggling hosts. Sometimes He is riding before us on the white horse of victory, while His enemies flee before Him as smoke is driven, and then again resting in our midst in all the tenderness of His gracious presence.

The special form of invocation which was used when the ark set forth has become crystallized in the exquisite poetry of the 68th Psalm, which is also one of the Messianic prophecies, and finds its highest fulfillment in the triumph and ascension of the Lord Jesus Christ. It opens with the same words of Moses: "May God arise, may his enemies be scattered; may his foes flee before him" (68:1). And then it moves on in stately procession, like the camp of Israel in the wilderness.

When you went out before your people, O God,
when you marched through the wasteland, *Selah*,
the earth shook,

the heavens poured down rain,
before God, the One of Sinai,
before God, the God of Israel.
You gave abundant showers, O God;
you refreshed your weary inheritance.
Your people settled in it,
and from your bounty, O God, you provided for the poor.

The LORD announced the word,
and great was the company of those who proclaimed it:
Kings and armies flee in haste;
in the camps men divide the plunder.
Even while you sleep among the campfires,
the wings of my dove are sheathed with silver,
its feathers with shining gold." (Ps. 68:7-13)

And then it rises to the grandeur of His ascension and His presence with His people in the grace and glory of the gospel.

When you ascended on high,
you led captives in your train;
you received gifts from men,
even from the rebellious—
that you, O LORD God, might dwell there.

Praise be to the Lord, to God our Savior,
who daily bears our burdens. *Selah* (Ps. 68:18-19)

Later History

The subsequent history of the ark of the covenant throws a beautiful light on the personal guidance of the Lord Jesus with respect to His people. It does not always seem to have gone visibly before the people but ordinarily to have been carried in the center of the camp. But in times of special perplexity and crisis, it always went immediately before. So again, when they came to the waters of the Jordan, it was the ark which first touched the angry billows and before whose presence they melted away and left the pathway clear for the following hosts; even as our blessed Savior leads for us the way through the floods of death and opens the pathway of safety, victory and glory (Joshua 3:13-17).

Thus prepared and preceded, the camp of Israel begins its forward march.

(The Christ in the Bible Commentary, A. B. Simpson)

The Advance

The Passover – Numbers 9:1-14

We've studied about the Passover in Leviticus 23, but here we see that God even provides "over and above" for those who had been defiled by touching the dead, and had not been able to partake with the others. **How does this wondrous grace and mercy speak to your heart?**

Led of the Spirit

Here we have no questions, but ask that you give full attention to that which the Spirit does for us, in order to retain it, and rejoice in this "continuous bounty" from the Lord!

The Silver Trumpets – Numbers 10:1-10

Again, keep strongly in mind all the various usages of these two silver trumpets.

God's Word and Spirit

The more one rejoices in the Scriptures, ever learning more of that higher Life in our Lord, the more that person will hear the tender, compassionate, all-encompassing guidance, hope and comfort from the Holy Spirit daily, and always in times of need. **Where, dear Friend, are you on this journey?**

THE FAILURE AND RETREAT

Their journey might have been, and should have been, a career of glorious conquest. It would have been just as easy to enter Canaan now, as half a century later; but 40 years of disaster and disappointment intervened, and at last the skeletons and skulls of all the men and women of adult age who came out of the land of Egypt were left as monuments of awful warning on the burning sands.

The stages of the unbelief and disobedience which at length culminated in their refusal to enter the land were very gradual, and are traced by the fingers of the Holy Spirit with strictest detail.

Now these things occurred as examples to keep us from setting our hearts on evil things as they did. Do not be idolaters, as some of them were; as it is written: "The people sat down to eat and drink and got up to indulge in pagan revelry." We should not commit sexual immorality, as some of them did—and in one day twenty-three thousand of them died. We should not test the Lord, as some of them did—and were killed by snakes. And do not grumble, as some of them did—and were killed by the destroying angel. (1 Corinthians 10:6-10)

This solemn failure of ancient Israel has become the portentous warning of all the subsequent dispensations. We find the psalmist in his day recalling it to the minds of God's people with the imposing admonitions:

Today, if you hear his voice,
do not harden your hearts as you did at Meribah,
as you did that day at Massah in the desert,
where your fathers tested and tried me,
though they had seen what I did.
For forty years I was angry with that generation;
I said, "They are a people whose hearts go astray,
and they have not known my ways."
So I declared on oath in my anger,
"They shall never enter my rest." (Ps. 95:7b-11)

And again in the Epistle to the Hebrews, just in the midst of the last 40 years of opportunity given to Israel before the destruction of Jerusalem, the Holy Spirit again recalls the example of ancient Israel, not only as a lesson to the nation, but also as an admonition to each individual Christian, bidding him to take heed, lest by unbelief and disobedience he should miss the higher rest of which Canaan was but the type.

As has just been said:

"Today, if you hear his voice,
do not harden your hearts
as you did in the rebellion."

Who were they who heard and rebelled? Were they not all those Moses led out of Egypt? And with whom was he angry for forty years? Was it not with those who sinned, whose bodies fell in the desert? And to whom did God swear that they would never enter his rest if not to those who disobeyed? So we see that they were not able to enter, because of their unbelief.

Therefore, since the promise of entering his rest still stands, let us be careful that none of you be found to have fallen short of it. . . . Now we who have believed enter that rest, just as God has said,

"So I declared on oath in my anger,
'They shall never enter my rest.' "

And yet his work has been finished since the creation of the world. . . . For if Joshua had given them rest, God would not have spoken later about another day. There remains, then, a Sabbath-rest for the people of God; for anyone who enters God's rest also rests from his own work, just as God did from his. Let us, therefore, make every effort to enter that rest, so that no one will fall by following their example of disobedience. (Hebrews 3:15-19; 4:1, 3, 8-11)

Murmuring

The failure of ancient Israel began in their murmuring at Taberah.

"Now the people complained about their hardships in the hearing of the LORD, and when he 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).

The marginal reading here is very striking. "And when the people as *it were*, complained, it displeased the Lord; and his anger was kindled and the fire of the Lord burned among them and consumed them that were in the uttermost parts of the camp. And he called the name of the place 'Taberah,' because the fire of the LORD burnt among them" (11:1, 3).

The spirit of discontent and ingratitude is generally the beginning of deeper and bolder unbelief and sin. Here we see that even before it had become fully manifest, God saw it and manifested His burning displeasure against it. For the people "as it were, murmured." This implies that kind of discontent which does not dare openly to reproach God with our troubles and misfortunes, but scolds Him through other people, and finds fault with circumstances and things, scarcely imagining that God is really blamed, or regards our murmurings as against Him. When we find fault with circumstances, we are really finding fault with God, with whose permission, at least, all things come to us. God wants us to learn that the bitterness that we tolerate in our spirit is as really sin as that which is expressed in open murder or defiant blasphemies against God, though not as aggravated. "Anyone who hates his brother is a murderer" (1 John 3:15). And unthankfulness and ingratitude toward God are the real roots of rebellion. For we read in Romans, "although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened" (1:21), and God gave them up to a reprobate mind, and all the aggravations and issues of sin.

Lusting

Numbers 11:4-10, 18-20, 31, 33

The lusting of the people and the mixed multitude at Kibroth Hattaavah.

"The rabble with them began to crave other food, and again the Israelites started wailing and said, 'If only we had meat to eat!' " (Numbers 11:4).

This spirit of earthly desire began with the mixed multitude who had accompanied them out of Egypt, and who seem to have been a sort of loose rabble of mere camp followers, having no part with God's covenant people except to be a point of contact and temptation between them and the world. Unhappily, the professing Church of God in the Christian age has been largely made up of just such camp followers. People who do not belong to the true Israel, but simply follow the camp of the Lord because of earthly attachments and advantages; and when trials or temptations come they are always channels or instruments of evil. On this occasion they began to lust after the luxuries of their Egyptian life. "We remember the fish we ate in Egypt at no cost—also the cucumbers, melons, leeks, onions and garlic. But now we have lost our appetite; we never see anything but this manna!" (11:5-6).

This would seem very disgusting if it were not so much like ourselves. It is the spirit of the flesh, and it is usually the occasion of most of our murmuring. Our Lord has given us the same sad picture of a restless and discontented world in every age. " 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' For the pagans run after all these things" (Matthew 6:31-32a). It is the spirit of the animal in man, and it is the same in the most refined form of self-indulgence as it is in the coarse and brutal slave. The apostle calls it "the desires of the sinful nature" (Galatians 5:16). The Lord has given us physical needs and appetites, but He never designed them to be predominant in our nature; and whenever they become ends of life and objects of gratification, they drag us down into the depths of corruption.

God becomes indignant with the unholy tears and murmurings of the camp, and even Moses for a little loses his self-control and speaks with impatient haste. But the patience of God does not fail even in the hour of His displeasure. The sensual cry of the multitude was answered by the sending of a great swarm of quails, which covered the entire ground and fell to a depth of three feet for miles around. They kept the whole people a day and a night in gathering them as they fell, and they were surfeited for a whole month with the supply, until it became repulsive to them.

The judgment of God fell upon them in the midst of their gluttonous indulgence, and a plague broke out which destroyed many lives.

God has warned us very solemnly in the New Testament against the spirit of earthly indulgence, in the beautiful language which refers so graphically to our Christian pilgrimage. The Apostle Peter says: "Dear friends, I urge you, as aliens and strangers in the world, to abstain from sinful desires, which war against your soul" (1 Peter 2:11). And the Apostle John declares, "For everything in the world—the cravings of sinful man, the lust of his eyes and the boasting of what he has and does—comes not from the Father but from the world" (1 John 2:16). "Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him" (2:15).

If we would avoid the love of the world, we must avoid the mixed multitude and maintain our separation from evil men; so we are commanded:

Do not be yoked together with unbelievers. For what do righteousness and wickedness have in common? Or what fellowship can light have with darkness? What harmony is there between Christ and Belial? What does a believer have in common with an unbeliever? What agreement is there between the temple of God and idols? For we are the temple of the living God. As God has said: "I will live with them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they will be my people."

"Therefore come out from them
and be separate,
says the Lord.

Touch no unclean thing,
and I will receive you."
"I will be a Father to you,
and you will be my sons and daughters,
says the Lord Almighty."

Since we have these promises, dear friends, let us purify ourselves from everything that contaminates body and spirit, perfecting holiness out of reverence for God. (2 Corinthians 6:14-7:1)

Moses' Failure

Numbers 11:11-17, 21-30

The next indication of declension and danger is seen in the wavering of even Moses himself in this hour of testing, when God announces to him the miracles which He is about to perform in feeding the people with flesh. It had already begun in Moses' impatience with the people's complaints, and even with the Lord for placing such a burden upon him. "He asked the LORD, 'Why have you brought this trouble on your servant? What have I done to displease you that you put the burden of all these people on me?... 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—if I have found favor in your eyes—and do not let me face my own ruin' " (Numbers 11:11, 14-15).

This was a fit of downright petulance, and Moses lost much by it. God took him instantly at his word, and relieved him of much of his honor and care, by taking some of the Spirit which was upon him and dividing it with the elders, who henceforth were to share the cares of the congregation with him (11:17, 25). There was more of the divine Spirit given than Moses himself had possessed, only it was shared with a large number. We are not sure that this was ultimately a real blessing. Moses might still have retained the sufficiency of God Himself, and that was all the elders had after they had received the blessing. They simply had some of the Spirit that he had had before. Moreover, this was the origin of the Hebrew eldership, and the end of it was the condemnation and crucifixion of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The spirit of impatience in Moses led to a spirit of unbelief. God's great promise of deliverance is met by him with the question, " 'Would they have enough if flocks and herds were slaughtered for them? Would they have enough if all the fish in the sea were caught for them?' The LORD answered Moses, 'Is the LORD's arm too short? You will now see whether or not what I say will come true for you' " (Numbers 11:22-23). This was the first indication of wavering in the spirit of the great lawgiver. It is not marked as severely as his later fault which excluded him from the land of Canaan, but it was probably the root even of that great and fatal error, and therefore the Lord reproved it somewhat sharply that his servant might be guarded and forewarned. "See to it, brothers, that none of you has a sinful, unbelieving heart" (Hebrews 3:12), so that we never limit the Infinite and Almighty One.

Miriam and Aaron

Numbers 12:1-16

The spirit of discontent next breaks out in Miriam and Aaron.

The sister of Moses had been preeminently used of God in this marvelous history as the chosen instrument in his early childhood of bringing him under his mother's nurturing care, when discovered by the daughter of Pharaoh. Afterwards she had been called by the special anointing of the Spirit. She had been selected to lead the choral songs of the triumphant people after they had crossed the Red Sea, and probably, also, afterwards in seasons of public worship and rejoicing. Being the older sister of Moses, she probably assumed a degree of authority which would be quite natural, and in this case it was carried by her to the extreme of interference in his personal matters, as good people often do. The immediate subject of her dislike and annoyance at this time was the wife of Moses. She was joined in her prejudices and evil speaking by her brother Aaron, and their combined influence threatened serious disaffection in the camp.

The description of Moses' wife has opened an unsettled controversy as to whether this was the daughter of Jethro, the wife whom he had married in Midian, or some other and second wife of whom we have no detailed account. Certainly it seems a little strange that a daughter of Midian should be called an Ethiopian. Many have found in this incident a type of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the jealousy of the Jewish people, represented by Miriam, against the Gentile bride whom He has called to share His love and honors. Certainly it is at least a solemn lesson that comes even to the best Christians when they interfere unduly in matters which are personal to others, and which the Lord alone can judge and regulate. Many have lost their peace and become separated from God by putting their hands on Jehovah's ark when they thought it needed steadying.

Miriam and Aaron seem to have carried their interference a great deal further than the mere question of Moses' domestic relations, for they even challenged his special authority, saying: "Has the LORD spoken only through Moses? . . . Hasn't he also spoken through us?" (Numbers 12:2). Perhaps they thought they had a perfect right to pass judgment upon his actions, because God had been pleased to use them in His work. In this severe trial Moses seems to have stood in the attitude of dignified and exemplary silence and meekness, for it is added immediately afterwards: "Now Moses was a very humble man, more humble than anyone else on the face of the earth" (12:3). Such an attitude will ever bring the protection and vindication of God. So we read that the Lord heard it, and spoke suddenly unto Moses and unto

Aaron and unto Miriam, and came down in the pillar of cloud and stood in the door of the tabernacle, and called them forth and said: "Listen to my words: When a prophet of the LORD is among you, I reveal myself to him in visions, I speak to him in dreams. But this is not true of my servant Moses; he is faithful in all my house. With him I speak face to face" (12:6-8a). That is not merely visions and dreams, but directly, "clearly and not in riddles; he sees the form of the LORD. Why then were you not afraid to speak against my servant Moses?" (12:8b).

The awful reproof was followed by the second withdrawal of the divine presence, and the stroke of leprosy upon the person of Miriam. Aaron falls in entreaty at the feet of Moses, and intercedes for his stricken sister, acknowledging his own equal sin; and Moses instantly intercedes for her restoration. The Lord graciously answers his prayer, but requires that she shall dwell apart for seven days outside the camp, as a token of the separation which sin ever makes between the soul and God's fellowship. It is not very long before we read of the death both of Miriam and of Aaron (Numbers 20:1-28).

In this instance we see the still lurking life of self which ever shows itself in our Christian experience in similar ways, preeminently in the spirit of judging and uncharitableness. He who has truly seen and sacrificed himself will always think very patiently and tenderly of others. Therefore we find in Christ's Beatitudes that the poor in spirit come before the merciful. And in the Epistles of Paul the great lesson of death and resurrection is fully taught before the spirit of love is unfolded.

The Spies

Numbers 13:1-31

The next development of the spirit of evil and the cause of subsequent failure which we trace in this book was the sending out of the spies to survey the land and bring a report before the whole people attempted to force an entrance. The full account of this is given in the first chapter of Deuteronomy, with the immediate causes which led to it; and from this statement we see that it originated not in the first thought either of the Lord or of Moses, but in the timidity and human reasonings of the people. When they came to Kadesh Barnea, which was the entrance to the land of promise, Moses had said to them: " 'You have reached the hill country of the Amorites, which the LORD our God is giving us. 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.' Then all of you came to me and said, '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 1:20-22).

It was in consequence of this that the Lord permitted the sending out of the spies; but it only led to temptation, cowardice, unbelief and ignominious and fatal failure. The true pathway of faith is to go forward implicitly at God's bidding, and if we wait for reason to take counsel of flesh or blood after God Himself has spoken, we are almost sure to be involved in confusion and failure. Paul says: "But when God, who set me apart from birth and called me by his grace, was pleased to reveal his Son in me so that I might preach him among the Gentiles, I did not consult any man" (Galatians 1:15-16). Here we see the spirit of promptness and implicit obedience to God, irrespective of the counsels of human wisdom. When our way is not clear and our duty is not plain, it is becoming that we should take counsel of those to whom the Lord may direct us. But when God has spoken it is always dangerous to listen to the voice of man and always safe to "trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding" (Proverbs 3:5). The spirit of human reasoning is the natural enemy of faith; and the command of God will often lead us in the face of improbabilities and seeming impossibilities. Dr. Jamieson wisely remarks concerning this: "God granted their request at once as a trial and a punishment of their distrust."

Their Suggestive Names

The names of the spies are all suggestive of human strength and wisdom. Shammua, the first, means renown. So men today are going by the advice of the great and famous names of the Church and the world; but alas, they are not going into Canaan. Shaphat means the judge, and represents the very preeminence of human wisdom. The names of Caleb and Joshua, the two faithful ones, signify boldness and divine help. The one expresses the spirit of courageous faith, and the other the fact of almighty power which this always brings.

Rebellion of the Congregation

Numbers 14:1-45

The culmination of all this series of failures came at last in the shameful refusal of the whole congregation to enter the land, and their disgraceful surrender of all their hopes and privileges through cowardly unbelief and disobedience. The immediate occasion of this was the report of the spies, from which no good could have been expected and certainly none came. They could not deny the excellence of the land, the wonderful richness of the products and the soil and climate, but overtopping all these glorious prospects they could see nothing but gigantic figures of the Canaanites, the mighty Anakims and the warlike Amalekites, Hittites, Jebusites and Amorites. "We went into the land to which you sent us, and it does flow with milk and honey! Here is its fruit. But the people who live there are powerful, and the cities are fortified and very large. ... We can't attack those people; they are stronger than we are. . . . We seemed like grasshoppers in our own eyes, and we looked the same to them" (Numbers 13:27-28, 31b, 33b).

It was in vain that the noble Caleb and Joshua stood up against their brethren and said: "We should go up and take possession of the land, for we can certainly do it" (13:30). "If the LORD is pleased with us, he will lead us into that land, . . . and will give it to us. 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" (14:8-9).

These heroic words were only met by a wail of disappointment and vexation, and a shower of stones. All that night the angry, mutinous cries of the congregation went up to heaven and soon the old and awful refrain was heard like the angry billows of the sea, "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. Wouldn't it be better for us to go back to Egypt?" And they said to each other, "We should choose a leader and go back to Egypt" (14:2-4).

The Crisis

It was indeed an awful hour and a crisis such as had never come before, and Moses and Aaron fell on their faces in the silence of a great fear, and of their utter helplessness.

The Judgment

Suddenly the glory of God, like a lightning flash, appeared in the tabernacle in the sight of all the people, and their murmurings were hushed in terror before that fiery flame. Then, upon their leader's ear, there fell this terrific message: "How long will these people treat me with contempt? How long will they refuse to believe in me, in spite of all the miraculous signs I have performed among them? I will strike them down with a plague and destroy them, but I will make you into a nation greater and stronger than they" (14:11-12).

The Mediator

It was then that the true spirit of this noble hero was fully revealed. He rose in this terrible hour nearer to the very height of his divine Master's self-sacrifice and priestly intercession than mortal ever approached. Utterly forgetting himself and lost only in the glory of Jehovah, he cried to God for His own name's sake to spare and pardon once more His offending and rebellious children.

Then the Egyptians will hear about it! By your power you brought these people up from among them. And they will tell the inhabitants of this land about it. They have already heard that you, O LORD, are with these people and that you, O LORD, have been seen face to face, that your cloud stays over them, and that you go before them in a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night. If you put these people to death all at one time, the nations who have heard this report about you will say, "The LORD was not able to bring these people into the land he promised them on oath; so he slaughtered them in the desert."

Now may the Lord's strength be displayed, just as you have declared: "The LORD is slow to anger, abounding in love and forgiving sin and rebellion. Yet he does not leave the guilty unpunished; he punishes the children for the sin of the fathers to the third and fourth generation." In accordance with your great love, forgive the sin of these people, just as you have pardoned them from the time they left Egypt until now. (14:13-19)

God's Gracious Answer

After 3,000 years we can almost hear the loving tones of that cry, and feel the warmth of that glowing heart, and the power of those burning tears. It was almost worth all the sorrow to have such a spectacle of love. We cannot wonder that He who had prompted that prayer quickly answered: "I have forgiven them, as you asked" (14:20). But in that hour there arose the vision and the purpose of a blessing, wider than Israel should ever know, even the calling of the Gentiles and the fulfilling of His mighty purpose by those who should prove more faithful than the chosen race. "As surely as I live and as surely as the glory of the LORD fills the whole earth" (14:21).

The failure of any man or any people cannot hinder the fulfillment of God's purposes. He has other instruments ready; and it is an awful thing when any man, or any church or race are excused by the Lord, or when they let another take their crown.

Israel's terrible sin has become an awful type and warning of the danger against which the Church and the Christian are so solemnly guarded in the New Testament: the danger of coming short of the fullness of their inheritance. For each of us there is a land of promise, a heritage of rest and a career of triumph and blessing, which nothing can prevent our entering but our own unbelief or disobedience. Like theirs, it is challenged by mighty enemies, and confronted by almost insuperable obstacles. But if the Lord our God delights in us, then He will bring us into this land and give it to us. "We should go up and take possession of the land, for we can certainly do it" (13:30).

In every great work and in every Christian life there comes such a crisis. God forbid that any who read these lines should fail to meet it through fear of difficulties. This is the secret of thousands of unsanctified souls today, and of hundreds of withered churches. "So, as the Holy Spirit says: 'Today if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts' " (Hebrews 3:7). Unbelief and disobedience always go together, and have been partners since they met at the gate of

Eden. The last procession of lost humanity described in the closing verses of Revelation is led down to the dark abyss by the fearful and unbelieving, and the rear is brought up by the disobedient and unholy (Revelation 21:8).

And yet, it is strange that these very sins are associated closely with their seeming opposites, and men who are afraid to follow the Lord will follow the devil in the face of certain destruction and frightful risk. The men who will not obey God can be led as very captives by Satan at his will, and by wicked men as credulous tools and subservient dupes. So we see in this very passage that the next day the people who would not go up against the land at the word of God were determined to go up when He forbade them — as rash now as they had been timid before, and as willful now as they had been cowardly and disobedient.

Early the next morning they went up toward the high hill country. "We have sinned," they said. "We will go up to the place the LORD has promised."

But Moses said, "Why are you disobeying the LORD's command? This will not succeed! . . ."

Nevertheless, in their presumption they went up toward the high hill *country*, though neither Moses *nor* the ark of the LORD's covenant moved from the camp. Then the Amalekites and Canaanites who lived in the hill country came down and attacked them and beat them down all the way to Hormah. (Numbers 14:40-41, 44-45)

The Faithful Two

But God was not without His faithful ones, even in this time of national defection. The two brave spies who had stood alone in that night of rebellion were not permitted to lose their inheritance on account of the failure of even the whole camp. But in that hour God pledged to them their sure inheritance when the little ones at their feet should have taken the places of the men before them. Forty years later that pledge was gloriously redeemed in the cities of Hebron and Timnath Serah, where these heroes were permitted to crown their services and close their lives amid the complete fulfillment of all the promises of God.

So it has ever been through the Christian centuries. Amid the unbelief and declension of the many, there have been a few names "who have not soiled their clothes" (Revelation 3:4), and a little flock who have dared fully to trust and wholly to follow their Shepherd Master, and to whom the inheritance has been ever given in its spiritual foretaste, and shall yet be completed in the glorious day of His appearing and His kingdom.

Rebellion of the Nobles

Numbers 16:1-54

The failure of the entire congregation is followed two chapters later by an account of the more desperate and defiant rebellion of the nobles of Israel, under the leadership of Korah, Dathan and Abiram.

Rebellion

Their special offense was an act of open rebellion against the authority of Moses and Aaron, and a presumptuous claim of equal right to come into the presence of God, both for themselves and for all the congregation. "You have gone too far! The whole community is holy, everyone of them, and the LORD is with them. Why then do you set yourselves above the LORD's assembly?" (Numbers 16:3). It was really an outbreak of socialism and lawlessness, a sort of typical democracy strangely prophetic of the last awful development of human wickedness and license which is to close the present dispensation in the coming of the Lawless One. More generally it represents, however, the spirit of disobedience and self-will, refusing the authority of God's Word, denying and defying all the claims of veneration, age, and the sacred times and ordinances of divine religion, or human order and government. Our own land and time are fast sweeping to the vortex of license which was opened for the fearful descent of these daring rebels against divine and human authority.

This question was soon settled by an appeal to God, and the manifestation of His terrific judgment in the entombing of these bold and wicked men, with their censers of unholy fire and their families and possessions, in the bowels of the engulfing earth, while the swiftly descending fire of God fell upon them as they went down, and its awful flame was mingled with the hideous cry of horror and anguish which arose from their midst as the earth closed over them in a living hell. Never could the people forget the sight which they then witnessed, and henceforth the authority of God and His servants was unchallenged. So will He consume with the breath of His mouth and destroy with the brightness of His coming all that oppose themselves to the name and authority of the Lord Jesus Christ, against whom, already,

The kings of the earth take their stand
and the rulers gather together
against the LORD
and against his Anointed One.
"Let us break their chains," they say,
"and throw off their fetters."

The One enthroned in heaven laughs;
the Lord scoffs at them. . . .

"You will rule them with an iron scepter;
you will dash them to pieces like pottery."

Therefore, you kings, be wise;
be warned, you rulers of the earth.
Serve the LORD with fear
and rejoice with trembling.
Kiss the Son, lest he be angry
and you be destroyed in your way,
for his wrath can flare up in a moment. (Psalm 2:2-4, 9-12)

Moses' Unbelief Numbers 20:9-13

This series of mournful failures closes, alas, with the failure of Moses himself. The account of this fatal error on the part of God's faithful servant is given in Numbers 20:11-13. The immediate occasion of it was the murmuring of the people at the fountain of Meribah, where the waters had failed, and the people again broke out, as they had innumerable times before, in bitter complaints and vehement reproaches.

For a moment Moses lost his meekness and yielded to the temptation, against which he had been warned before in a similar outbreak at Kibroth Hattaavah (Numbers 11:11). His fault on this occasion consisted in a good deal more than his angry retort to the people: "Listen, you rebels, must we bring you water out of this rock?" (20:10).

There seems to be a deeper offence implied in the fact that Moses struck the rock, whereas he was commanded only to speak to it. There was no need that the rock should be struck again, for this had been done at Rephidim in the beginning of their march, and it had been open ever since. The striking of the rock was typical of the opening of the fountains of salvation and grace through the death of the Lord Jesus Christ, once for all. Then He was stricken by the rod of the Lawgiver and from His riven side there flowed the water and the blood, which have never since ceased to be "of sin the double cure." All that was necessary now was to speak to the rock already open and ready to flow at the call of believing prayer. The rod that he used now was not the Lawgiver's rod, but Aaron's rod, the rod of the priesthood, and so a type of prayer. The purpose of this rod was not to smite, but to claim that which was already purchased and provided. Its tender buds and blossoms were not prepared for such rude blows, nor was it necessary that the willing fountain should be compelled by force to yield its flowing treasures.

Beautiful type of that gentle Spirit in His boundless fullness, opened to us by the death of Jesus, and ready to meet our need and cry at the gentlest touch of faith and prayer, but grieved when we doubt His love and try to wrest His blessings from His willing hands, as though they had to be taken by storm! It was thus that the priests of Baal prayed, cutting themselves with knives and shouting as though their god were deaf. But it was not thus that Elijah prayed. It was not thus that Jesus prayed, even at the grave of Lazarus, but with calm assurance he cried as one standing there within the holy of holies: "Father, I thank you that you have heard me. I knew that you always hear me" (John 11:41b-42a). It is not required that we shall suppress the intense emotion of the heart overflowing with the impulse of the Holy Spirit, but there is a danger that we shall still strike the rock, when we need only to speak to it in the words of simple trust which will never fail to bring the overflowing blessing that God is more willing to give than we will ever be to receive.

Let us speak to the Living Rock again and again. He has bidden us, "Whoever wishes, let him take the free gift of the water of life" (Revelation 22:17). "Receive the Holy Spirit" (John 20:22). The sin of Moses, therefore, involved the element of unbelief, as well as disobedience, haste, and even petulance and anger. It lost him the land of promise. Tenderly he pleaded with his God that it might be overlooked, and he be permitted to lead His people into their inheritance; but in vain. Even the lawgiver himself must be an example of the stern inexorable justice of the law which he had given. It is the most awful commentary upon its inflexible severity and righteousness, that it slew even the one who gave it the moment he transgressed it. "Who then can be saved?" (Mark 10:26).

Of all men, Moses cries most loudly to us from his lonely grave on this side of Jordan: "Cursed is everyone who does not continue to do everything written in the Book of the Law" (Galatians 3:10), and points us to Jesus Christ as "the end of the law so that there may be righteousness for everyone who believes" (Romans 10:4). Alas, the law made nothing perfect; not even Moses himself. But, thank God, "a better hope is introduced, by which we draw near to God" (Hebrews 7:19).

(The Christ in the Bible Commentary, A. B. Simpson)

The Failure and Retreat

Murmuring - Complaining – spirit of discontent and ingratitude – finding fault with circumstances and things. **Do we see these around us in Christians of today?** God calls them "roots of rebellion;" He had to give the Israelites up to a reprobate mind, and all the aggravations and issues of sin — so our lesson indelibly teaches. **What should we watch for as the first signs of these sinful characteristics in ourselves, our church, our community? Where should we start to halt these, and by what activities?**

Lusting – Numbers 11:4-10, 18-20, 31, 33

For this lesson, memorize all of 1 John 2:15, 16, and let these verses be a light to guide your way.

Moses' Failure – Numbers 11:11-17, 21-30

Sometimes during trying circumstances we lose patience and trust in God, and especially so if no one else is helping to carry the burden. **Is the Lord and His power for deliverance to be trusted in *everything*? If you have been in this type of hard situation, tell us what you have learned to depend upon that brings you back to sacred trust.**

Ps. 23

Miriam and Aaron – Numbers 12:1-16

What practical lessons are found in this study that should also apply to our daily lives? An example is: The discrediting and criticizing one of higher authority (especially one chosen by God). **Did both Miriam and Aaron occupy high places in this new nation of Israel, and if so, what were they?**

The Spies – Numbers 13:1-31

Was it God's intention for these men to spy out the land? (Deut. 1:20-22) If God has clearly spoken, how much need is there to listen to the voice of man? A. B. Simpson has said: "The spirit of human reasoning is the natural enemy of faith; and the command of God will often lead us in the face of improbabilities." Give the meaning of this in your own words, and what we should learn from it.

Rebellion of the Congregation – Numbers 14:1-45

Rebellion is active opposition to authority. **Look up and carefully note in the following Scriptures some of its results:**

Keeps from blessings	Num. 20:24
Increases sin	Job 34:37
Characterizes a people	Is. 65:2-7
Needs to be confessed	Dan. 9:4-12

The Crisis and The Judgment

Meditate on the utter seriousness of this mighty statement of impending judgment by God.

The Mediator

In whose life later in the Bible will all the fullness of God's mercy, grace and love be displayed? How?

God's Gracious Answer

Oh, the blessedness of God's faithfulness—when His child repents! **Read Psalm 89:30-33 and express in your words the greatness of His faithfulness to us.**

The Faithful Two

Who were the two who remained faithful to God's commands, and how were they rewarded? (Num. 13:2-30; Num. 14:5-38). Ten of the twelve who went to spy out the land committed the Sin of Presumption. **Explain what is meant by this, and also give an example of how we could commit a similar sin today. What happened to these ten? Is it your personal desire to fully obey God's commands, even when the path ahead may appear to be fearful and uncertain?**

Rebellion of the Nobles – Numbers 16:1-50

What are the various complaints of the people described in this 16th chapter? Were they valid rights—or were they rebelling against God and His chosen leaders? What teaching is strongly laid out for us who live in this day?

Moses' Unbelief – Numbers 20:9-13

All of these comments are a truly powerful teaching of the ways of our God. Following your diligent study of these, in order to apply this lesson to situations of today, think of leaders in a military service, or those in a church, or in a business, think also of homes and the leadership of parents with children and others in the home, etc. **Can you visualize how continued, aggravating complaints by those under that authority, can become a "hot button" for the leader, causing him/her to lose control, thereby angrily "spitting" out the invectives and fleshly commands that are in opposition to God? Should all such leaders make sure they remain under the constant daily guidance of the Holy Spirit—and by what means do they do this?**

Numbers 15:1-21:9

GOD'S PROVISION FOR THEIR WILDERNESS LIFE, NOTWITHSTANDING THEIR FAILURE

God did not immediately reject them because of their fearful disobedience, but, at the intercession of Moses, He forgave their sin and renewed His covenant for the next generation, and even continued still to manifest His presence with the disobedient through all the period of their wilderness life. He did not permit them to enter the land of promise, for He knew that their spirit could not be trusted, and that their children must be taught by their example the fearful guilt and peril of unbelief and disobedience. So He condemned this entire generation to wander, and at length to die in the wilderness; and promised that their children who they feared would become a prey to their enemies, should be triumphantly led into the land which they had refused to enter (Numbers 14:31).

Yet even during these dreary years of fruitless journeying, His long-suffering presence still continued with them. "Neither the pillar of cloud by day nor the pillar of fire by night left its place in front of the people" (Exodus 13:22). He led them daily like a patient mother, still forgiving their continued provocations and manifesting to them, with every occasion, fresh unfoldings of His marvelous love and foreshadowings of the gospel of salvation which was afterward to be revealed.

SECTION 1— The Sacrifices Renewed

Numbers 15:1-41

The first of these gracious manifestations is recorded at length in the chapter immediately succeeding the account of their rebellion (Numbers 15:1-41). This chapter consists of a series of directions for sacrificial ordinances which were to be offered "after you enter the land I am giving you as a home" (15:2). These directions included the ordinance of the burnt offering and sin offering, the drink offering, the grain offering and various oblations of thanksgiving as well as special sacrifices for disobedience and error.

God's Confidence in Their Future

The most striking thing connected with these renewed ordinances is the form in which they are introduced in the very first sentence of the chapter, immediately after the terrible story of their sin and exclusion from the land. The Lord begins to address them quietly as though nothing had occurred, and as if taking it for granted that they were to enter the land and that indeed it was already given to them. The LORD said to Moses, "Speak to the Israelites and say to them: 'After you enter the land I am giving you as a home' " (15:1-2).

Of course He is now addressing the new generation. But when we remember that the nation was one in all its generations, the language affords an incomparably beautiful type of that transcendent mercy in which He deals with the sinner under the gospel, recognizing the sin which has been confessed and put away as something not only blotted out, but wholly ignored, and treating him in the language and reckoning of faith as a new creature, and as though, indeed, the promises of Christ were already fulfilled. God, therefore, speaks of us in the new testament (new covenant) as already seated with Christ in heavenly places, and living with Him in our eternal inheritance, and He bids us thus "Count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Jesus Christ" (Romans 6:11).

SECTION 2— The Priesthood Renewed

Numbers 16:46-50

The priesthood of Aaron and his sons is established anew, and the rebellion of Korah, Dathan and Abiram is met not only by their judgment, but by the most emphatic and glorious vindication of the true priesthood. This was done first by that stirring incident through which the awful plague, that had spread in the congregation after judgment of Korah, was immediately stayed by Aaron's intercession. Standing between the living and the dead with his golden censer in his hands, and the smoking incense rising from it, God recognized his typical intercession as He still recognizes the pleadings of His risen Son, our Great High Priest. The hand of judgment was arrested and the work of death instantly ceased in the terrified camp after 14,700 people had fallen under the avenging stroke (Numbers 16:49).

The Blooming and Budding Rod

Numbers 17:1-13

Next the authority of Aaron's priesthood was forcibly and vividly set forth by the public test in which each of the tribes of Israel was called to bring a rod and lay it in the tabernacle of the congregation before the Lord, that He might choose from among them in the sight of all the people the one that was to represent the true priesthood. This was accordingly done, and as the rods were laid before the Lord, lo, the rod of Aaron burst into buds and blossoms, and even as he gazed, the blossoms had ripened into almond fruits. And as Moses brought out the rods and handed them to the men who had brought them, they saw, with awe and submission, the seal which Jehovah Himself had placed on the ministry of the chosen tribe and the priesthood of Aaron and his house.

This memorable sign was also designed to be for us a type (a person or thing that symbolizes another) of the priesthood of Jesus, and hence the blooming rod of Aaron was ordered to be laid up and kept in the ark as the memorial for future generations. How beautifully this expresses to the believing heart the living priesthood of our Great Advocate. It

is not a dry and withered rod, but one which is full of life and vital energy and fruitfulness. "He always lives to intercede for them" (Hebrews 7:25).

Again, Christ's priesthood, like that budding and blossoming rod, is ever fresh in its blessings. Day by day and moment by moment it brings to us new blessings as we need them. He is ever presenting us before the throne, and His mercies are new every morning as the fresh blossoms of the spring. We have not to live on stale experiences, but His unlimited resources are continually calling forth for us the fresh supply of every need from the fullness of His Father's love and power.

What is so fragrant as the sweet breath of summer flowers? And so His prayers are ever ascending in contrast with our unworthiness and sinfulness, the odor of a sweet-smelling savor, bringing us acceptance and making us unto God a sweet savor of Christ; so that even our very prayers, when mingled with His incense, are treasured in the heavenly chambers in vases of sweet perfume before the throne.

There are, however, not only blossoms, but fruits, and so our Savior's priesthood is intensely practical, bringing us real help which is reproduced in the fruits of our holy life. "I have prayed for you, . . . that your faith may not fail" (Luke 22:32), He said to Peter. And because we have a great High Priest, we are likewise invited to "Approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need" (Hebrews 4:16).

The fruit on Aaron's rod seems to have appeared almost instantly after the buds and blossoms. In a moment the promise was turned into maturity, reminding us how quickly the intercession of our blessed Master ripens into realization. The prayer is turned to praise and blessed fulfillment (Numbers 17:1-13).

The Support of the Priesthood

Numbers 18:1-15

This beautiful symbol of the priesthood was followed in the 18th chapter by a series of important ordinances respecting the priestly office, which refer to both the offerings and the provision which was to be made for their support. We have already referred to these provisions in connection with chapter 1. The Lord was to be their inheritance, and they were to have no definite part in the allotment of the land, but a recognition of their right in the tithes of the people and the sacrificial gifts, especially the wave offerings which were to be their portion.

You, your sons, and your father's family are to bear the responsibility for offenses against the sanctuary, and you and your sons alone are to bear the responsibility for offenses against the priesthood. Bring your fellow Levites from your ancestral tribe to join you and assist you when you and your sons minister before the Tent of the Testimony. (Numbers 18:1-2)

I myself have put you in charge of the offerings presented to me; all the holy offerings the Israelites give me I give to you and your sons as your portion and regular share. (18:8)

I am giving you the service of the priesthood as a gift. (18:7)

You will have no inheritance in their land, nor will you have any share among them; I am your share and your inheritance among the Israelites.

I give to the Levites all the tithes in Israel as their inheritance in return for the work they do while serving at the Tent of Meeting. (18:20-21)

This also is yours: whatever is set aside from the gifts of all the wave offerings of the Israelites. I give this to you and your sons and daughters as a regular share....

I give you all the finest olive oil and all the finest new wine and grain they give the LORD as the firstfruits of their harvest. All the land's firstfruits that they bring to the LORD will be yours....

Everything in Israel that is devoted to the LORD is yours. (18:11-14)

Thus the true priesthood was permanently established, and through all the wanderings of the wilderness their access to God was uninterrupted. So even the imperfect lives of God's people do not prevent the blessings which flow to us from our Gracious Advocate and our access to God through Jesus Christ.

SECTION 3—The Red Heifer

Numbers 19:1-22

The most impressive of all the ordinances provided for the wilderness life of Israel was that which is known as the ordinance of the red heifer, described in Numbers 19, and referred to explicitly in Hebrews 9:13, as the special type of the provision which Christ has made for our continual cleansing and keeping amid the defilements of our earthly journey.

For the Wilderness

1. The place where this is introduced in the book of Numbers, rather than in Leviticus or Exodus, shows that it was designed to prefigure God's provision for our wilderness life. It is not a type of our justification, but of the daily cleansing which the believer may continually claim through the constant intercession and sprinkled blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. It represents to some extent the same idea as the washing of the disciples' feet by the Master just before the passover (John 13). He there taught His disciples distinctly that this did not mean the same as their original cleansing, which had already been fully accomplished and is expressed by the word "washed," in the Greek *Louo*, which literally means to bathe the entire person; but rather that partial cleansing of the hands and feet rendered necessary by the defilement of a single day, and expressed by the Greek work *Nipto*. The language of the Apostle John, "The blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin" (1 John 1:7), or rather, keeps cleansing us from all sin, describes this daily cleansing prefigured in the ordinance of the red heifer.

The Type (foreshadow) of Christ

2. The selection of the heifer was expressive of the person and sacrifice of Christ. She was to be red, and the rabbis tell us that there must be no single hair of any other color. She must also be without blemish of any kind, and must never have come under the yoke (Numbers 19:2). This was fulfilled in the spotless purity of the Lord Jesus, and in the fact that He was under no obligation on His own account to suffer for sin, or to take the place of the criminal; but was purely voluntary in His sacrifice, and able through His perfect righteousness to make atonement for the guilty.

The unmixed color of the living victim vividly portrays the sufferings of Christ, and the emphatic truth that His one business was to be the sacrifice for sins. His mission was all pure crimson. He had not two aims—to please Himself, and save men. He only came to redeem a lost world.

3. The heifer was next taken outside the camp and slain, so Christ was crucified outside the gate as an outcast and a criminal (Numbers 19:3; Hebrews 13:12).

4. The blood was then sprinkled seven times before the Tent of Meetings, implying the offering of Christ's life is a perfect satisfaction for the guilt of man and a complete ransom for the soul and its forfeited inheritance (Numbers 19:4; 1 Peter 1:19).

The Burning

5. The heifer was then burned to ashes—every part of her body, including the skin, the flesh, the blood, the intestines. And along with her flesh were consumed cedar wood, hyssop and scarlet wool, which the priest was commanded to take and cast amid the burning of the heifer. This is an extremely beautiful part of the type and demands our close attention (Numbers 19:6).

The scarlet wool which was burned with the heifer evidently implies the sin—the sinful nature of the believer which it is our privilege to crucify with Christ and cast in the committal of faith into the flames of His burning, and know that it is reckoned dead and consumed through the power of His grace. Not only are our past transgressions put away, but our old self is thus crucified with Christ (Romans 6:6; 8:4).

But still further, the cedar wood and hyssop which were also cast into the burning represent, not the sinful part, but that which may be called the natural life in every one of us, and which the apostle expresses in First Corinthians 2:14 as the "man without the Spirit," or as it is in the Greek, "the psychical man." This is not the scarlet wool. It is not the gross and coarse flesh of lust, and yet it is human nature, which has all passed under the curse, and must all be crucified and restored as a resurrection life. The cedar represents the strongest side of nature, and the hyssop the least. The latter was the most insignificant of the plants of Palestine. So these two extremes of the natural world are introduced in the account of Solomon's writings as describing the whole extent of the natural world. We are told that he wrote of everything "from the cedar of Lebanon to the hyssop that grows out of walls" (1 Kings 4:33).

It is a lesson that we are very slow to learn that there is much more than sin to be crucified in the entire sanctification of the soul; the whole self must go, from the strength of the cedar to the frailest fiber of the climbing hyssop. The great hindrance to the consecration of many is their strong intellect and will; and the snare of others is the little clinging hyssop of their affections, or sentimental weaknesses; all must be cast into the fire on the altar, and the life come forth anew, in Christ alone, if we would walk in consistent holiness.

The Ashes

6. The ashes of the heifer were then carefully collected and preserved, to be laid without the camp in a clean place and mixed from time to time with water for the purifying rite, known as the water of cleansing during their entire wilderness journeys. This represents that which the death of Christ continues to mean for us in our daily experience, in addition to its complete atonement, once for all. There is something in the cross which throughout all the ages is an abiding power in the sanctification of Christ's people. The sacrifice cannot be offered anew; but the essence of that sacrifice, like the ashes of the heifer, may be continually applied for our perpetual cleansing. It is of this that the apostle says, "The blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a heifer sprinkled on those who are ceremonially unclean sanctify them so that they are outwardly clean. How much more, then, will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself unblemished to God, cleanse our consciences from acts that lead to death, so that we may serve the living God" (Hebrews 9:13-14).

So again the Apostle Peter speaks of us as those "who have been chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through the sanctifying work of the Spirit, for obedience to Jesus Christ and sprinkling by his blood" (1 Peter 1:2). This is something that continually accompanies our obedience. The clean place where the ashes of Christ have been preserved outside the camp is the right hand of God (1 Peter 1:2), whence the Holy Spirit continually brings us the fresh cleansing of His sprinkling blood, and we appropriate it by living faith.

The Water of Cleansing

7. The water of cleansing which was sprinkled with the ashes implies this very truth in connection with the Spirit's ministry. Water is always the symbol of the Holy Spirit, and the mingling of the ashes and the water teaches us that the divine Spirit must bring to us the efficacy of Christ's death. There is a hidden and pungent truth lying back of the figure of water and ashes which will be quickly understood by those that have ever noticed the effect of their combination. There is no substance in the world more intensely consuming and bitter to the taste than lye, which is just a combination of water and ashes, and indeed, the material out of which commerce manufactures the very substances for cleansing. All this implies that the cleansing of the soul is not painless, but often involves the keenest conviction of sin and crucifixion of self, under the searching touch of the Great "High Priest."

He will be like a refiner's fire or a launderer's soap. He will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver; he will purify the Levites and refine them like gold and silver. Then the LORD will have men who will bring offerings in righteousness, and the offerings of Judah and Jerusalem will be acceptable to the LORD, as in the days gone by, as in former years. (Malachi 3:2-4)

We Need a Sinless Savior

8. The water of cleansing was to be applied by a clean person. This certainly cannot mean any human priest or even the worshiper himself, but teaches us that our High Priest with His holy hands is ever ready to sprinkle us as often as we come in contrite faith, with His cleansing blood, and His Spirit's purifying power. And so this experience of abiding holiness and continual cleansing is connected by the Apostle John with the priesthood of Christ Himself. "My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin. But if anybody does sin, we have one who speaks to the Father in our defense—Jesus Christ, the Righteous One" (1 John 2:1). "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).

Defilement

9. The causes of defilement for which this ordinance was to be applied were extremely suggestive. They were chiefly for persons who became defiled by touching the dead (Numbers 19:2, etc.). This represents the presence and influence of the carnal nature which the apostle describes as the "body of death" (Romans 7:24) hanging about the soul, unless it is wholly laid off. The corpse of the victim, as in ancient times, was chained to the body of the murderer.

A poor criminal in St. Louis told the chaplain of his prison one day, that every night in his dreams he saw the body of the man whom he had slain fastened to him by ropes and dragging him down into a horrible vortex, and that he could not shake it off. So many souls are carrying themselves as weights of corruption and death, and there are no sources of defilement so terrible as those that come to us from our sinful nature.

Sometimes the touch of the dead is our taking back, in recollection and reflection, our former and our forgiven sins. This always contaminates the conscience. Sometimes from not wholly leaving off the old man and reckoning ourselves dead indeed, by the habit of faith. It is only as we refuse to count him our true self that we can be free from his contagion (pollution or poison). It is the believer's privilege to hand him (former sin) over to Christ, to be by Him held and slain. But if for a moment he forgets this in the wild assaults of natural impulse, and allows a fear to assert itself and intimidate him from his new vantage ground, he will become defiled and unable to hold his victory.

More frequently the touch of the dead arises from yielding to the instigations and desires of the flesh, either willfully, or under sudden or hasty temptation. Of course, such yielding is always sin, and brings contamination and condemnation; and there must be instant cleansing, or there will be a complete loss of communion and peace.

These two considerations are the most important elements in a life of victory over the flesh, and they are both emphasized again and again in the sixth chapter of Romans, which is the very manual of this teaching. "Do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its evil desires" (6:12), is the apostle's statement of the one; and, "count yourselves dead to sin" (6:11), is the equally important direction in respect to the other. If, for a moment, either of these is disobeyed, the soul will be swept by the breath of evil, and must instantly repair to the water of separation before its purity and communion can be restored. Happy indeed are they who have learned this secret of continual cleansing.

It is further implied, however, that defilement may come unconsciously from the elements of evil that are around us constantly in a sinful world. Every open vessel which had no covering bound upon it was unclean. The air was so full of contagion that in order to avoid it even the vessels had to be closed. This is intensely true in Christian life. The soul must keep its doors locked, or it shall be continually defiled. Some natures are so open to everything that comes, that they just absorb the floating particles of evil that are in the air, even as in some manufacturing cities the purest linen absorbs the coal soot from the atmosphere. Walking as we ever do through such an atmosphere, we must just live in the blood and

Spirit of Christ as the very elements of our spiritual existence, even as the pebble in the running brook is kept ever shining with the freshness of the crystal stream. This was what Jesus meant when He said to His disciples: "You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you" (John 15:3); and then added with solemn emphasis, "Remain in me, and I will remain in you" (15:4).

SECTION 4— The Waters of Meribah Numbers 20:1-11

There was yet one more provision for the wilderness life, shadowing forth the fullness of the Spirit's grace for our Christian pilgrimage. It comes in due order, in the 20th chapter of Numbers. At first it seems to be a repetition of the miracle recorded and explained in the former passage, in connection with the smiting of the rock in Horeb (Exodus 17). On careful inspection it will be found that this is essentially different, both in the facts and in the spiritual significance. There the rock was opened for the first time by the rod of the lawgiver; here, the command was, not to strike or open the rock, but simply to speak to it, and the water would instantly flow forth from the cleft already made, once for all. As we have already seen in the previous chapter, the error of Moses consisted in disobeying this simple command, and striking instead of speaking to the rock.

The Spirit's Fullness

The lesson pertaining to our present theme is the significance of this water as a type of the Holy Spirit, for the deeper and fuller supply of our spiritual need in our wilderness life. We are beautifully reminded that the fountain is still open, and that the influence of the Spirit is at the call of faith whenever the exigencies of life require His special manifestation. Instead of murmuring as they did, and as we still often do in our hours of testing, it is our privilege to come to the open fountain and simply speak the word of believing prayer and trusting confidence, and the abundant grace of the unwearied and unlimited Comforter will be poured out in all its fullness whether for cleansing, for refreshing, for enduing power, for warfare or for work.

We must also bring with us the rod of the Great High Priest, claiming blessing in the name of Jesus and in reliance upon His intercession. The Holy Spirit expects us to trust Him just as fully as we trust the Lord Jesus, and to take His gifts in the spirit of confidence, praise and rejoicing. They who do will always find Him ready to "open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that you will not have room enough for it" (Malachi 3:10).

The abundance of the Spirit's grace is implied by the overflowing waters, which came even in answer to their complaints. The Church has never proved the fullness of divine grace and blessing as God longs to manifest it and does wherever He can find a heart large enough to trust Him for His immeasurable resources.

The Desert Song

In the following chapter another incident is added in connection with the water of Meribah, which throws a good deal of light on a subject which otherwise would be obscure.

Then Israel sang this song:

"Spring up, O well!
Sing about it,
about the well that the princes dug,
that the nobles of the people sank—
with scepters and staffs."

Then they went from the desert to Mattanah.
(Numbers 21:17-18)

When they came to Beer on the border of Moab, the people gathered around in a circle upon the sand, while the nobles of Israel with their staves dug a cavity in the sand and began to sing around it these words in responsive chorus, "Spring up, O well! Sing about it, about the well that the princes dug, that the nobles of the people sank—the nobles with scepters and staffs." Venturing to connect this isolated passage with the previous accounts of their supply of water and the suggestive references to this subject in the Psalms and elsewhere, it seems reasonable to assume, and indeed is almost implied by the references to this water, that the stream which flowed from the original rock never ceased to follow them through the desert. It ran beneath the sands, a subterranean river, even when its course could not be traced upon the surface; and that here, having lost the visible channel, they just tapped it through the dry sand with their staves and found it still flowing beneath their feet and springing forth at the touch of their staves and the voice of their songs, with its former exuberance and abundance. If this is true, what heavenly instruction and consolation does it administer for the life of faith!

Traveling like them over the sands of life, we often lose the sensible converse and manifest presence of the Divine Spirit. But faith may ever know that our life is still hid with Christ in God, and the hidden streams are flowing unobstructed

beneath our feet. All that is necessary is for us to take the pilgrim's staff which is just the promise of God, and then sing the song of faith, "Spring up, O well," and lo, the fountains shall answer to our songs, and the desert shall blossom as the rose and we shall have the new song of answered prayer to add to the praise notes of faith.

SECTION 5— The Bronze Snake

Numbers 21:4-9

This remarkable type completes the symbolical figures under which God represents to them the provisions of His grace for our spiritual needs and trials in the Christian life. Our Lord Himself has recognized it in the third chapter of John as the type of Himself. It represented to them the idea of divine deliverance from the stroke of disease and death through the sting of Satan and the malignant poison of sin. Their murmuring was visited by the attacks of fiery serpents, and death again filled the camp with horror and real cause for complaints. But the sin and need of the people only furnish, as ever before, a new occasion for the resources of grace and power.

Their sufferings were typical of the trials that come to us from the stings of Satan both in the soul and the body, and the remedy unfolds the most precious principles of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Christ Our Deliverer

1. The serpent of bronze was in the likeness of the fiery serpent that had stung them. So the Lord Jesus, our Deliverer, has come to us in the likeness of sinful flesh.

2. The serpent of bronze was the figure of the fiery serpent robbed of its sting. And so the Lord Jesus Christ has despoiled the tempter of his power to harm us, and nailed him to His cross as a sort of scarecrow, merely the figure of the serpent, without life or venom or power to harm. "Having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross" (Colossians 2:15).

3. The lifting up of the serpent of bronze was a type of Christ's crucifixion on the cross and His uplifting as the object of faith for the tempted and suffering soul.

Look and Live

4. The look by which the sufferer was brought into healing contact with the symbol is naturally fitted to be the type of living faith, and is constantly referred to as a figure of that vital contact by which we receive the efficacy of Christ's life and death. Intrinsically, the laws of vision are fitted to bring the object on which we gaze as an actual image into the eye which looks upon it. While I look at the sun, the sun is in my eye. And so, while I look at Christ, Christ is in my heart by direct reflection. Looking at Medusa's head turned the gazer into stone. Looking all night on the skeletons of the dead, the greatest of modern painters came forth to transcribe the vivid vision on his imperishable canvas. Looking on the glory of God, the face of Moses shone with its reflection. Looking constantly at a scene upon the street, it becomes so fixed upon the eye, that, if we look upon the sky, we shall see it written there. Looking at the lives of the lovely or the beloved, we grow unconsciously like them. And so, looking unto Jesus, we absorb His very life and we grow into His likeness.

The bronze snake was the type of Christ as a Savior for the guilty sinner, as a Deliverer for the tempted, as a Healer for the sick. The poor lost sinner can look up to Him and find the poison withdrawn and the serpent powerless to sting. So, also, the sick and suffering body can draw from His resurrection body, by the steadfast gaze of living trust, His resurrection and renewing life. Let us take this, as well as the fountains of Meribah and the flowing streams of Beer, as a lesson for the wilderness. And, "Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith" (Hebrews 12:2), so we too shall endure the cross, scorn its shame, and sit down at the right hand of the throne of God (12:2).

(The Christ in the Bible Commentary, A. B. Simpson)

The Sacrifices Renewed —Numbers 15:1-41

Name the various offerings for which directions were given. Although these offerings are not commanded to us in the New Covenant of today, much in them looks toward to our services of faith, trust and obedience toward God. See if you can detect these.

The Priesthood Renewed — Numbers 16:46-50

How did Aaron's intercession in this passage foretell in many ways what Christ would do for His people in order to save them?

The Blooming and Budding Rod — Numbers 17:1-13

First, tell the story of Aaron being chosen to represent the priesthood under God's guidance. Then tell us how Christ's priesthood is also set forth and described in essence by this choice among the rods. Speak especially to the fact of life within the rod, its budding and then quickly springing into flower and bearing fruit.

The Support of the Priesthood — Numbers 18:1-15

Sum up first the duties of the priests, and then the gifts they would receive from the body of people. Was this ever interrupted during their travels?

For the Wilderness

The law of cleansing and purification by means of the red heifer is entirely strange to us of the church age, but diligently keep pursuing the understanding of God's requirement for it, and you will soon see how it does represent the blood of Christ and its special purification for our daily walk here in our "wilderness." God indeed is so thorough in all His specifications for our learning and growth in Christ!

The Type of Christ

Write out two columns depicting the procedure done to the red heifer, and across from it how Christ's life fulfilled, e.g.,

Red color	Sufferings of Christ
Without blemish	Spotless purity of Jesus

The Burning

A. B. Simpson says: "... there is much more than sin to be crucified in the entire sanctification of the soul; the whole self must go, from the strength of the cedar to the frailest fiber of the climbing hyssop." **Explain the in-depth meaning of the above in your own words; also examine where you are personally in this process.**

The Ashes

Have you experienced this holy cleansing in some situation that you can relate here? Has it kept you from some unholy alliances (or agreements) with those whose hearts are far from Christ? The blood of our Lord Jesus Christ lives forever, and through the power of the Holy Spirit, it continually cleanses us as we appropriate it by faith.

The Water of Cleansing

A. B. Simpson's teaching is absolutely clear as to the meaning of the "water of cleansing", especially in the Christian's life. In your own words, sum it up clearly.

We Need a Sinless Savior

Read Hebrews 13:12-15 to accompany this passage.

Defilement

Is there anything that must be done in order to stay clean from past remembered sins that have been forgiven, and also to stay clean from sudden impulses of the flesh that would lead astray? What does Romans 6 and John 15 teach us? Think of the Word as the Fountain of Life, and how that pure water is the finest means we have for cleansing daily. Do you have a favorite verse that teaches this?

The Spirit's Fullness

What great encouragement this passage offers to the Christian in today's uncertain world, which can be called a "wilderness life" indeed. **Has He proved to be an open fountain to you in your hours of testing? As is taught here, have you found the Holy Spirit to be poured out for you – for cleansing, for refreshing, for enduing power, for warfare and for work?**

The Desert Song

Following our need for air to breathe, water is probably our most important need throughout life. **By meditating on Jeremiah 1:13, which was spoken to Israel, this verse can also attest to our God supplying our living water wherever we are: "For my people have committed two evils: they have forsaken Me, the Fountain of Living Waters, and hewn themselves cisterns—broken cisterns that can hold no water."** Please comment as you feel led on this passage.

Christ Our Deliverer

Speak in your own words of the comfort that "Christ, being our deliverer" teaches since we are all guilty sinners.

Look and Live

Strange, indeed, that a bronze serpent (now robbed of its sting) can bring so much vital, uplifting truth and joy of forgiveness to the ones needing forgiveness and comfort! The fact that it was made of bronze speaks of God's judgment upon sin, and gives us absolute assurance that God is in control! **We request that you memorize Hebrews 12:1, 2.**

Numbers 20:1-25:18

THE TRIALS OF THE WILDERNESS

All these provisions of grace were soon needed. As they entered upon their weary round on the trackless wastes of the wilderness, they soon found the folly and misery of their wretched choice, and repented too late, that for fear of a brave and desperate conflict, they had actually brought upon themselves a life of misery unspeakably more painful and trying, and having only the prospect of deliverance in a desert grave.

Hunger and Thirst

Numbers 20:2-25

The first of these trials was the hunger and thirst of the wilderness (Deuteronomy 8:3).

There was no water for the congregation. "It has no grain or figs, grapevines or pomegranates. And there is no water to drink" (Numbers 20:5), was their cry. "He humbled you, causing you to hunger" (Deuteronomy 8:3).

So, for us, the life prefigured by their failure is a sad one. The emptiness and unsatisfied longing of the worldly Christian involves more real suffering than all the sacrifices of a consecrated life. O, the hearts that are just pining for real joy, and feeding on the husks of the prodigal, and starving on the manna, even of the Lord, for lack of power to appreciate and digest it.

Bereavement and Death

This came soon. Miriam dies in the desert of Zin, and Aaron at length ascends Mt. Hor, is disrobed of his garments and dies in the presence of his brother and his son.

These were but the most illustrious examples of that universal doom, which one by one passed over all their millions and made the camp of Israel one long, sad funeral procession for 40 years. Moses himself, at length, became so saturated with the spirit of this constant dying, that his sorrow grew into an immortal dirge, which has become the precious heritage of the Church in her most ancient Psalter. The 90th Psalm is the wail of Moses over the spectacle of his people as they fell one by one by his side, and were left as bleached and mournful monuments of mortality and sin upon the sands of the desert. "You turn men back to dust," was his cry,

saying, "Return to dust, O sons of men." ...
You sweep men away in the sleep of death;
they are like the new grass of the morning—
though in the morning it springs up new,
by evening it is dry and withered.

We are consumed by your anger
and terrified by your indignation.
You have set our iniquities before you,
our secret sins in the light of your presence.
All our days pass away under your wrath;
we finish our years with a moan. (90:3, 5-9)

And all this is typical, too, of our experience. True, all men, both the consecrated and the unconsecrated Christian, must share the common lot of death. But sickness and death are very different things to the soul that is wholly following the Lord, and to the man or woman whose life is afflicted and often cut off in the midst of his years because of disobedience and unfaithfulness. There is such a thing, and it is a very real and solemn thing, as suffering disease and even premature death, because we have disobeyed the law of God, or refused His call to service or consecration. There is nothing more bitter or sad than to stand by the deathbed of one who knows that his years have been cut off because he has not wholly followed the Lord, even though his soul may yet be saved. This is very clearly taught in the Scriptures. "That is why many among you are weak and sick, and a number of you have fallen asleep. But if we judged ourselves, we would not come under judgment. When we are judged by the Lord, we are being disciplined so that we will not be condemned with the world" (1 Corinthians 11:30-32). "There is a sin that leads to death. I am not saying that he should pray about that" (1 John 5:16).

The death of Miriam and Aaron did not occur until the last year of their wanderings in the wilderness, and just before their entrance to the land of promise. Aaron's death on the heights of Hor, which he ascended with Moses and Eleazar in the sight of all the congregation, was in some sense a type (a shadow of what was to come) of the death of the great Anti-type (that which was foreshadowed). He was disrobed of his priestly garments and lay down to die beneath the hand of God, while his son put on his robes and came forth to complete his ministry; even as the Lord Jesus in His human life laid down His humanity on Mt. Calvary in sight of all the world, and in His risen life came forth to wear the garments of His eternal priesthood. The essential difference, of course, was that Aaron died for his own sin, and Christ for ours.

The New High Priest

The name of Eleazar, who succeeded to Aaron's priesthood, suggests the power and glory of Christ's ascended life and intercession. It means, "God my Helper." So God has laid help on One who is mighty—our exalted Advocate with the Father, to whom all power is given in heaven and in the earth, and who is Head over all things for His Church.

Adversaries

Numbers 20:14-21; 21:1

The hostility of the tribes on the borders of the desert, especially Arad the Canaanite, and Edom, who refused permission to Israel to pass through his territory.

They are typical of the hostility of the world to the people of God—not only the Canaanite world represented by Arad, but the religious world represented by Edom, who was the kinsman of Israel. They represent what we may expect from those that stand near to us by natural, and even by ecclesiastical ties (see also Judges 11:19; Deuteronomy 2:27).

Discouragement

The discouragements of the long and circuitous way through which they were compelled to go in consequence of the refusal of the Edomites (Deuteronomy 2:4). "They traveled from Mount Hor along the route to the Red Sea, to go around Edom. But the people grew impatient on the way" (Numbers 21:4).

So our hearts often sink under the long and seemingly endless trials of our pilgrimage. We should remember, however, that the way was not the one that God chose for them. It was their own way, and therefore it was very hard. God had called them to go by a far more direct and glorious way, and it was their refusal and disobedience that had brought upon them all these trials. The difficulties that beset our Christian life, when we are in the will of God, are always accompanied by grace sufficient not only to overcome them, but even to rejoice in them; but the trials which we bring upon ourselves by not walking in God's way crush us, simply because God has not promised us the same grace to bear them; indeed He often makes it hard, that we may understand the blessedness of obedience, and always choose His better will. We are told that He allowed Israel to suffer from the oppressions of their enemies that they might know the difference between the service of God and the kingdoms of those countries (2 Chronicles 12:8). "'Your wickedness will punish you; your backsliding will rebuke you. Consider then and realize how evil and bitter it is for you when you forsake the LORD your God and have no awe of me,' declares the Lord, the LORD Almighty" (Jeremiah 2:19).

Venomous Snakes

The venomous snakes, which were permitted to torment them on account of their murmurings, represent the Satanic visitations of spiritual or physical evil which come as the result of disobedience and unbelief. "The LORD sent venomous snakes among them; they bit the people and many Israelites died" (Numbers 21:6).

No path is so beset with temptation as the path of cowardice and disobedience. And no souls walk in such a victory over the power of the enemy as those that dare to go forward in full obedience to all the law of God and trample on the power of serpents and scorpions. The only place where we can have power over Satan, is beneath our feet. Our attitude must be constant victory and defiance, or it will be constant harassment and torment.

This terrible visitation, however, led ultimately to a more glorious manifestation of the grace of God. And so, often, the temptations of life can be overruled for spiritual discipline and final victory. So Christ refers especially to the temptations in the wilderness, as the result of sin (1 Corinthians 10:9-10), and uses their example for our warning against all evil. But at the same time He encourages us with the most gracious promises of deliverance and protection, if we abide in humble, vigilant faith and obedience (1 Cor. 10:12-13). "We should not test the Lord, as some of them did—and were killed by snakes" (1 Cor. 10:9). "You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons too" (1 Cor. 10:21). "So, if you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don't fall! No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it" (1 Cor. 10:12-13). Not to fight the enemy in our own strength, but to look to the uplifted Christ as set forth in the bronze snake, is the instant and unailing remedy for temptation. The secret of uniform victory is ever to look immediately to Jesus, and leave the battle in His hands. It is not the way to fight, but it is the "way to escape," which mercy opens.

Balaam

The wiles of Balaam represent the next form of their wilderness trials. They are described in very full detail, from the 22nd to the 25th chapters of Numbers.

The space given to them implies the importance of the lessons intended to be conveyed for our spiritual life. While the serpents in the wilderness represent the hostility of Satan, the divinations and enchantments of Balaam on the other hand represent the wiles of Satan. When he cannot sting us to death, he will endeavor to destroy us by guile. In order to do this he frequently employs religious instrumentalities. In this case he sent for the prophet of God. Balaam seems to have represented the traditional element of ancient piety which had lingered from the patriarchal times in all eastern lands, and yet, without a continuous revelation of God, had degenerated into superstition and become mingled with the rites of heathen divination. Balaam seems to have known the true God, but to have worshiped Him by many heathen rites, and practiced the incantations which afterwards became the symbols of devil worship.

The Religious Devil

The devil always prefers to use a religious agency if he can. He knew that he had control of Balaam's heart, and it was his purpose, if possible, to turn to evil account his spiritual gifts. This purpose was completely thwarted by the marvelous interposition of God, as He suffered Balaam to go far enough to show his true spirit, and then controlled him and restrained him from all power to harm His chosen people or even utter a whisper against them. And, indeed, God compelled him against his will to pronounce upon them the most signal blessings, in order that He might show to us for all time that all the hate and subtlety of hell are harmless against those who walk in obedience to the will of God and enjoy the protection of His approving and overshadowing presence. Even the oppositions of the adversary will be turned into benedictions, and the things intended against us will serve "to advance the gospel" (Philippians 1:12) and the interest of our souls. God will not only defend us Himself, but will even compel the devil to vindicate us. His word to His faithful people is: "I will make those who are of the synagogue of Satan . . . come and fall down at your feet and acknowledge that I have loved you" (Revelation 3:9).

His First Prophecy

The first of Balaam's prophetic utterances was pronounced from the high places of Baal, and contained a prediction of the multiplication of Israel and their isolation from other nations (Numbers 23:8-10). "I see a people who live apart and do not consider themselves one of the nations. Who can count the dust of Jacob or number the fourth part of Israel? Let me die the death of the righteous, and may my last end be like theirs" (Numbers 23:9-10).

Second Prophecy

His second message was proclaimed from the top of Pisgah and predicted the triumphs of Israel, not only over all the assaults of their spiritual enemies, but over all their national adversaries. It described in glowing language the presence among them of their covenant God, and His gracious vindication of them even from their own errors and sins.

God is not a man, that he should lie,
nor a son of man, that he should change his mind.
Does he speak and then not act?
Does he promise and not fulfill?
I have received a command to bless;
he has blessed, and I cannot change it.

No misfortune is seen in Jacob,
no misery observed in Israel.
The LORD their God is with them;
the shout of the King is among them.
God brought them out of Egypt;
they have the strength of a wild ox.
There is no sorcery against Jacob,
no divination against Israel.
It will now be said of Jacob
and of Israel, "See what God has done!"
The people rise like a lioness;
they rouse themselves like a lion
that does not rest till he devours his prey
and drinks the blood of his victims.
(Num. 23:19-24)

Third Attempt

Once more the king of Moab led him up to the heights of Moab, and from the top of Peor he looked out upon the camps of Israel, lying at his feet, and cried:

How beautiful are your tents, O Jacob,
your dwelling places, O Israel!

Like valleys they spread out,
like gardens beside a river,
like aloes planted by the LORD,
like cedars beside the waters.
Water will flow from their buckets;

their seed will have abundant water.

Their king will be greater than Agag;
their kingdom will be exalted.

God brought them out of Egypt;
they have the strength of a wild ox.
They devour hostile nations
and break their bones in pieces;
with their arrows they pierce them.
Like a lion they crouch and lie down,
like a lioness—who dares to rouse them?

May those who bless you be blessed
and those who curse you be cursed! (Num. 24:5-9).

Disappointed and indignant, Balak dismissed him in furious displeasure.

Last Message

But Balaam was to deliver yet one more parting message, which looked out upon the more distant future, until there rose on his vision a greater than Israel, even the Star of Bethlehem and the Mighty Seed of Jacob, and the vision faded away in broken fragments of prophecies which are even yet being fulfilled in the triumph of the European nations, the sufferings of Israel, and the national convulsions of the latter days.

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,
the skulls of all the sons of Sheth. (Num. 24:17)

A ruler will come out of Jacob
and destroy the survivors of the city. (Num. 24:19)

Yet you Kenites will be destroyed
when Asshur takes you captive. (Num. 24:22)

Ships will come from the shores of Kittim;
they will subdue Asshur and Eber,
but they too will come to ruin. (Num. 24:24)

Ah, who can live when God does this? (Num. 24:23b)

The Daughters Of Midian

The crowning test and most fatal of all the trials and temptations of the wilderness is set forth in the account of the seduction of the Israelites, through the allurements of the daughters of Midian in the chapter immediately succeeding the story of Balaam (Numbers 25).

"While Israel was staying in Shittim, the men began to indulge in sexual immorality with Moabite women" (Numbers 25:1).

We know that this was brought about through the counsel and influence of Balaam himself. What he could not do through divine maledictions, he at length succeeded in doing through the fascinations of the world and the flesh. He induced his master to persuade his people to invite their neighbors to some of their idolatrous festivals. And there, through the seductions of unprincipled women and the attraction of an impure idolatry, many of the Israelites were drawn into open sin and brought upon themselves the judgments of heaven, which all the wiles of the devil or hostility of their enemies could not have caused. "They were the ones who followed Balaam's advice and were the means of turning the Israelites away from the LORD in what happened at Peor, so that a plague struck the LORD's people" (Num. 31:16).

So again we read in Revelation 2:14, that "Balaam, who taught Balak to entice the Israelites to sin by eating food sacrificed to idols and by committing sexual immorality." It would seem that this double-hearted man, finding that he had lost the bribes of Balak through refusing to curse the children of God, and bitterly disappointed at losing the splendid prize, conceived the idea of securing it yet and still keeping from any open and ostensible act of disobedience. His conscience

was so distracted by avarice, that he did not see he was an accessory in the crime of the Midianites and Moabites, and therefore guilty as if he had committed it himself. The Apostle Peter gives us the key to his whole character in the words, "Who loved the wages of wickedness" (2 Peter 2:15).

The Flesh

The character of Balaam represents the spirit of the world, as the temptation of the Midianites stands for the lusts of the flesh. So that we have here the great trinity of evil, which still opposes and seeks to destroy the people of God—the world, the flesh and the devil. The wiles of Balak in the first instance to get Balaam to curse Israel represents the Satanic element in our spiritual temptations. The spirit of Balaam prefigures the world, and the daughters of Moab and Midian are types of the flesh in its ungodly and idolatrous tendencies in every age. Against these three which constitute the very anti-God, the counterfeit of the Divine Trinity, we must ever guard, especially as we come to the most solemn crisis of life and the borders of our promised inheritance. It was just at the gates of Canaan that they confronted Israel, and for a little almost wrecked for the second time the hopes and triumphs of the chosen people.

Balaam's Spiritual Significance

The spirit of Balaam is so remarkable, that we may well pause for a moment and gather the pointed lessons of his character for the admonition of others.

(1) We see in him a man possessing spiritual light, without moral principle.

(2) We see in him a man whose besetting sin was the love of the world, especially avarice (inordinate desire of gaining and possessing wealth), which the Scriptures declare to be incompatible with practical Christianity, and to be actual idolatry.

(3) We see in him a man trying to get God's permission to do wrong, after he knows the divine will; at least, trying to have God allow him to go as near the edge of evil as possible, in order to secure the coveted prize. He stands for those who desire to obtain the world without offending God, if possible, but who want the world anyhow, and are certain in the end to sacrifice everything for it.

(4) We see in him a man whom God suffered to have his own way to a certain extent even in a forbidden path, when He saw that he wanted to take this path after he knew that it was contrary to the divine will. Pressing forward in a dangerous path in the face of the drawn sword of God's displeasure, God permitted him to go and yet met him as he went with a fiery token of His displeasure, as a solemn warning to him of the dangers that he was confronting.

(5) We see in him a man permitted and even used by God to do much good, and yet getting none of the comfort or reward of true service, but simply knowing that he was an instrument used in spite of himself for the glory of God.

(6) We see in him a man trying to hold in check a dangerous passion and thinking that he could play with it or restrain it at his will, but finding at last that it was too strong for him, and that it became his master and destroyer.

(7) We see in him a man who had many good wishes and intentions and even longed to die the death of the righteous, and yet without any purpose or power to do right, and finally perishing, both for time and eternity in the most fearful disaster enhanced by the consciousness that he had known better all the time.

(8) We see in him a man serving the devil and yet cheated of his wages because he was afraid to go as far as his master wanted him to, and yet in the end doing all the harm that the devil meant he should.

(9) We see in him a solemn warning proclaiming to all ages that we cannot "serve God and Money" (Matthew 6:24), and that sin must not be tolerated but must be wholly crucified or it shall drown us at last in destruction and perdition.

(The Christ in the Bible Commentary, A. B. Simpson)

Hunger and Thirst - Numbers 20:2-25

The sin of the children of Israel was indeed most grievous to the Lord. Note carefully the trials that God would impose upon them. **Why, do you think, the lack of water was the first one?**

Bereavement and Death

Here the lesson describes the deaths taking place among them, especially Miriam and Aaron (sister and brother of Moses). Go back to Numbers 12:1-16, and revisit their rebellion against Moses, the leader of Israel. Some Bible scholars teach that their deaths prior to the promised land, came about due to their rebellion. Also, that Aaron's life was not taken until his priestly garments were removed, showing that he had the anointing of the Lord. Indeed God always carefully followed the rules (law) of righteousness.

The New High Priest

Note carefully the meaning of Eleazar's name. Incidentally, Aaron's name meant *bright*, and Miriam's name meant *obstinate, stubborn!* **If you have a Biblical index, try looking up other Bible names, such as Saul in the New Testament, whose name was changed to Paul. Note the difference.**

Adversaries – Numbers 20:14-21; 21:1

These adversaries make up some of the trials in the wilderness that God allowed them to go through! **From this lesson, when these trials come to us, what is intended for us to learn, and apply?**

Discouragement

Discouragement and depression are Satan's finest tools! Psychiatrists today are earning high wages indeed, in dealing with these. Yet if they do not teach God's way to be free of these, they are merely being "crutches" to help them through—perhaps—no guarantees. **How is God's way different, and can true healing be had, if they do it His way?**

Venomous Snakes

The rebellion and lack of trust in God brings a dreadful judgment placed upon the sin of the people of Israel, and the Scripture tells us that many died. **Here tell the vast difference between the live snakes, and the bronze serpent that God told Moses to make. (John 3:14, 15) Whom did the bronze serpent represent? What did the bronze serpent give when a repentant sinner looked upon it?**

Balaam

Read chapters 22 through 25 carefully to properly understand this unusual story, for it gives us great insight into the wiles and temptations of Satan. Although it appears that the prophet Balaam knew the true God, what other things were mixed in with his so-called worship?

The Religious Devil

This paragraph contains excellent and valuable teaching to keep us from fearing Satan's tactics. **Did Balaam have any powers of his own to prophesy? Could you possibly see God "enjoying" this little session by permitting Balaam certain leverage (opportunity) in his acquiescing to Balak's request, but at the right time "turning tables" and blessing Israel instead? How does this whole story give us courage during onslaughts from Satan?**

Second Prophecy

Read chapter 23 of Numbers carefully and make your own comment on how solid and sure God's Word is while His enemies are hoping for just the opposite news! May we also, as His people, trust His promises to us *never* to fail?

Third Attempt

Would you say that God is *most thorough* in His upholding of His people Israel, and *very clear* about His denunciation of their enemies?

Last Message

To whom does this prophecy point—star out of Jacob, a scepter out of Israel, etc. who will crush His enemies? Do you believe that time is now near?

The Daughters of Midian

Carefully study Num. 24:10 through Num. 25:3; Num. 31:16; 2 Peter 2:15 and Rev. 2:14. Then answer the following:

Why was it that Balaam could not curse Israel as Balak desired him to do?

Would you consider Balaam a follower after God, to do His will—for he had the gift of prophecy?

How much did the bribes of Balak mean to him?

Was his final sin of tempting the Israelites by causing them to indulge in the lustful doings of the Moabites, their neighbors, so vile that he had passed the place of any return to his true God?

Although Phinehas, Aaron's grandson, murdered two people (one Israelite and one Moabite), were his actions justified in God's sight? Why?

Read Jude 10, 11 to understand God's judgment upon Balaam.

The Flesh

What did the character of Balaam represented?

What did the temptation of the Midianites stands for?

Name the great trinity of evil.

Balaam's Spiritual Significance

Study these all carefully. Give a few lines regarding how the astounding meaning of Balaam's kind of sinning has "hit" you—does a thought of vile sin such as his, though subtle in its way, strike you as utterly opposite to the nature of God? Has it also shown you how completely evil and deceitful are Satan's ways? Do you now see a very important reason for the following phrase to be in the Lord's prayer for us: "Lead me not into temptation"?

Numbers 26:1-36:13

THE NEW DEPARTURE

SECTION 1— New Race

The first preparation for the entering of the promised land was the death of the generation that came out of Egypt, and the coming of their children as an entirely new race who had had no part in the former rebellion. This implies a deep spiritual truth, namely: there must be a crucifixion of the natural life and we must reckon ourselves dead to sin and alive unto God through Jesus Christ with a new life just as completely as if we were not the same persons who lived the former life of sin.

This deep experience of death of self is something more than the turning from a life of sin with which our conversion begins, but involves a complete repudiation, not only of the sin, but of the nature that sinned. It is afterwards more fully set forth in the crossing of the Jordan and the rite of circumcision, when they entered the land, which were all further types of the same great fact of spiritual death and resurrection.

SECTION 2 — A New Enrollment

Numbers 26:1-4, 63-65

Just as explicitly as 38 years before, the whole people were again numbered, and required to declare their pedigree as in the beginning of the book. The old enumeration would not suffice. It was found that some of the tribes had decreased and some had increased. There was a total number of 601,730 men of war compared with 603,550 men of war at the former enumeration: a decrease in all of nearly 2,000.

This foreshadows in our spiritual life a new confession of Christ which we must make as we go forward to further advance in the fullness of Christ. We cannot act on our old professions or take our former estimate of ourselves. Many Christians are really living upon their youthful memories and their early professions. God blots this out altogether unless our lives have continued in victory.

If an enrollment were made of the Church of God in its present living membership, it might show a greater reduction than the second enrollment of ancient Israel. When we press forward to a higher Christian life it is a good thing to be enrolled in some way, so that we may know, and all may know, that we are committed and fully committed as men of war, ready to stand for all that we believe or claim, and to contend earnestly for our faith against all our spiritual enemies. The secret of many a failure is a lack of full and open committal; let us get our names on the roll of honor.

Bunyan describes a scene which he saw at the gates of the Palace Beautiful, where hosts of armed men were driving back all that tried to force an entrance; but the brave soldiers of the cross were putting on their panoply and marching through the fierce hosts of hell, giving and receiving terrific blows. At length, covered with blood, they forced their way through the open gates, while harps within were heard resounding with the glorious shout, "Come in! Come in! Eternal glory thou shalt win." One brave man looking on stepped up to the man with the ink horn and roll, and said: "Sir, put down my name," and then joined the brave victors in the fearful strife. Are our names down on the roll of battle at the threshold of the promised land?

In this enrollment a special provision was made for the daughters of Zelophehad to take their place along with their brethren in sharing the common inheritance, in the absence of any male representatives of their father's house. This was referred to the Lord, and the answer was promptly given that they should have an equal share in such cases. There seems to be a deep spiritual meaning in this, the more emphatic from the fact that the men of war enrolled in the ranks of Israel included only of course the males of Israel, and the women were not numbered. The provision for the daughters of Zelophehad in this direction, however, was intended to show that woman, too, has her inheritance of faith in the conquest of Canaan, and that if she cannot be a man of war she can be at least a woman of faith. Indeed, in all subsequent ages, she has been the champion of the battles of faith and the foremost in the roll of witnesses for God and truth. Christianity has owed as much to her faith and love as it has given to her in exalting her liberty and honor.

SECTION 3—A New Leader

Numbers 27:12-23

The solemn message comes at last to Moses that even he must die. The spirit of his law is inexorable and since he broke it he must become a victim of its penalty. To the very borders of the Land of Promise he brings the people, but another must lead them in. There was a deep spiritual reason for this. The law made nothing perfect, but "a better hope

is introduced" (Hebrews 7:19). Moses could lead no soul into sanctification or victory; He (Jesus) only, of whom Joshua was the type (foreshadow), could do this.

Therefore, in the order of the revelation of truth and grace, Moses must leave us before we possess the full inheritance. He could show it to us; he could see it himself, in the distance; from the heights of Pisgah, the law could survey the whole extent of the life of holiness, but it could not give it to us. This is not through any inherent fault of the law, for it is holy, and just, and good (Romans 7:12). "For what the law was powerless to do in that it was weakened by the sinful nature, God did by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful man to be a sin offering. And so he condemned sin in sinful man, in order that the righteous requirements of the law might be fully met in us, who do not live according to the sinful nature but according to the Spirit" (8:3-4).

SECTION 4—A New Covenant

Numbers 28:1-8

In these chapters we have the renewal of all the ordinances respecting the sacrifices, feasts and consecrations. It would seem that even the old enactment of these would not suffice for the new life just before them, and the new race about to go forward on their great national campaign.

So as we enter on fresh advances, and especially upon the life of entire consecration which their Canaan experiences symbolize, we must enter into a new covenant; we must receive even the old gospel with new freshness, and we must take Christ anew and in all His fullness.

The first sacrifice, in this new enactment of the covenant, is the burnt offering. This seems to imply that our deeper experience must begin with that which the burnt offering so grandly expressed, our entire consecration to God.

Then we have the feasts of the Lord very fully referred to in this enumeration, implying that we must enter into the most intimate fellowship with God in the enjoyment of His love and grace if we would be strengthened and enabled to war a good warfare, and stand amid the conflicts and tests of such a life and experience.

The entire book of Deuteronomy is literally an amplification of this thought, being, as its name implies, a repetition and rehearsal of the national history and covenant in the ears of the new generation as it had been delivered 40 years before to their fathers.

The Holy Spirit has given us with great sweetness and fullness the new covenant into which He brings us when we pass from the dispensation of the law to that of grace, and from the life of the wilderness to the life hid with Christ in God in rest and victory.

"The time is coming," declares the LORD,
"when I will make a new covenant
with the house of Israel
and with the house of Judah.
It will not be like the covenant
I made with their forefathers
when I took them by the hand
to lead them out of Egypt,
because they broke my covenant,
though I was a husband to them,"
declares the LORD.

"This is the covenant I will make with the house of Israel
after that time," declares the LORD.

"I will put my law in their minds
and write it on their hearts.

I will be their God,

and they will be my people.

No longer will a man teach his neighbor,

or a man his brother, saying, 'Know the LORD,'

because they will all know me,

from the least of them to the greatest,"

declares the LORD.

"For I will forgive their wickedness

and will remember their sins no more."

(Jeremiah 31:31-34)

Twice in the New Testament is this quoted and applied to believers under this dispensation to meet the possible objection that it is something purely Jewish and future. It is the new covenant into which the Holy Spirit desires to bring every Christian under the present dispensation, and under this covenant alone can we have victory over sin and the fullness of our spiritual inheritance (Hebrews 8:7-13; 10:14-17).

SECTION 5—A New Campaign

They do not wait until they are across the Jordan to begin hostilities against their enemies and prove their faith and courage or the power of Jehovah's promise of victory over all their enemies, but they begin at once to meet the adversaries immediately around them, and long before they cross the Jordan they have a splendid record of glorious triumphs.

Sihon and the Amorites

Numbers 21:21-35

The first of these was their victory over Sihon the king of the Amorites, who forced the battle upon them himself by refusing to allow them to pass through his territory as the Edomites had already done, and even by openly attacking them.

The result was a decisive and glorious victory, followed soon after by the conquest of Og, king of Bashan, and the whole territory on the east side of the Jordan. Other references to this most important campaign will be found in Judges 11:19-21; Deuteronomy 2:32-33; Psalm 135:10-11; Amos 2:9.

These were no mere desert tribes, but mighty sovereigns of numerous and wealthy nations established in fortified cities of great variety and extent and almost impregnable defenses. The region over which they ruled covered the whole country east and southeast of the Jordan known as Bashan, Gilead and the country of the Amorites. Even in the present day it is a land of almost unequaled beauty, fertility and luxuriance. Modern travelers have discovered the ruins of hundreds of mighty cities, evidently as old as the time of Moses, and bearing abundant evidence to the truth of all the allusions to the strength of these fastnesses (secure fortifications) which we find in the inspired record (see Dr. Porter's *Ruined Cities of Bashan*, etc.).

This victory at once placed Israel in possession of a vast and fruitful region second only in importance to Palestine itself, and at the same time it gave them a prestige in the eyes of the surrounding nations and the Canaanites themselves, which is well described in the fears of the king of Moab in his message to Balaam: "A people has come out of Egypt; they cover the face of the land and have settled next to me" (Numbers 22:5b). And so fear had fallen upon the people because of the children of Israel.

This first campaign of Israel represents the conflicts and victories upon which we may enter the moment we consecrate ourselves fully to the Lord and even before we have passed through the deeper spiritual experiences that await us farther on. It is not necessary that we should wait for any future inheritance, but there are adversaries before us that we may rise up and immediately challenge and in the strength of God overcome at once, and subsequent victories will chiefly depend upon our spirit of prompt obedience and courage in matters that confront us now.

It need not intimidate us that these adversaries are giants like Og and Sihon. The battle is not ours, but the Lord's, and the message is the same that they received: "Do not be afraid of him, for I have handed him over to you" (21:34).

The Midianites

Numbers 31:1-8

The conquest of Og and Sihon was followed a little later by the destruction of the Midianites, who had seduced the people through the counsel of Balaam and who were doomed in consequence to extermination.

It is specially added that in the destruction which followed, Balaam was also slain and met the retribution of the crime of which he was the chief instigator. The destruction of the Midianites has its spiritual parallel in every true and permanent Christian life. The things which have overcome us must be met and overcome by us. There is such a thing as the spirit of revenge, in a true and holy spiritual sense. Speaking to the Corinthians about the sincerity of their repentance the apostle says: "Your sorrow led you to repentance" (2 Corinthians 7:9). "See what this godly sorrow has produced in you: what earnestness, what eagerness to clear yourselves, what indignation, what alarm, what longing, what concern, what readiness to see justice done. At every point you have proved yourselves to be innocent in this matter" (2 Cor. 7:11).

It was thus that Peter took revenge upon his headlong and impulsive nature by hanging upon his Master's cross with downward head, and laying in the dust the self-life that had once denied his Savior and Lord. And it is thus that we may be revenged upon the things in ourselves and in the world which have betrayed us in the past, but which God will permit us to meet again and slay in holy avenging.

All these enemies on the borders of Canaan were special types (forshadows) of our spiritual foes. The Amorites were the descendants of Lot, and thus, in a very special sense, they represented the flesh. The Midianites belonged to the same race, and were well affiliated with the daughters of Lot from whom they had descended, and the horrid lusts of Sodom and Gomorrah out of which they were born. These gigantic passions, tall of stature as Sihon and Og, and seductive as the beauty of the daughters of Midian, must be slain without mercy while we stand in victory above the ashes of our accomplished sacrifice and shout: "May I never boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world" (Galatians 6:14).

SECTION 6—The Division of the Inheritance

Numbers 32:1-33:6

This passage discusses the beginning of their inheritance, and directions for the division of the land among the tribes. Even before they cross the Jordan they enjoy the foretaste of their future inheritance in some measure, and three of the tribes receive their portion on certain conditions. The tribes of Reuben and Gad, and the half tribe of Manasseh came to Moses to ask to be assigned the fertile regions that had already been subjugated on the east of the Jordan. Their request was granted somewhat reluctantly, on account of the selfish spirit which it displayed, and the danger it seemed to intimate of their withholding from their brethren their cooperation in the conflicts that still awaited them. However, on their promising to stand by the tribes until the land of Canaan should be all subdued, and simply leaving their families in the cities of their inheritance, consent was given and the conquered territory was allotted to them.

Their act is a true picture of the spirit of many Christians in becoming contented with a mere attempt at consecration and spiritual warfare and a half accomplished victory. They are willing to subdue some of the enemies on this side of Jordan, but they are content to accept an inheritance that is only on the borders of the promised land, and lies hard by the surrounding world. They do not care to go through the waters of death and enter the resurrection life, or at least, if they do, they are willing to leave their wives and little ones in the world and cross for a season of Christian work, and then come back again and enjoy the fair pastures of Bashan. God let them have their way and gave them a measure of blessing in it, but when the great conflicts of succeeding ages came the Syrian and Assyrian armies came sweeping over the eastern plains and they were the first to be overrun by the invasion and led away into captivity.

The Other Tribes Numbers 33:50-56

In connection with the inheritance of Reuben, Gad and Manasseh, explicit directions are given for the division of the land among the other tribes, as soon as it should be subdued (chapter 33:50 to chapter 36).

They were particularly enjoined to see that the Canaanites were wholly exterminated, with the solemn warning that if they failed to do this they would themselves be enslaved by the former inhabitants of the land whom they might leave in their hiding places. Then the boundaries of the land were given and the arrangements prescribed for allotting it to the remaining eight and a half tribes. The tribe of Levi was to receive no inheritance, the Lord Himself being their portion.

Explicit provision was made against the intermarriage of the tribes, so that the inheritance of no family should be lost, but the title in each inheritance was made inalienable. Forty-eight cities were set apart for the use of the Levites in all the various tribes, and six cities of refuge were appointed, three on each side of the Jordan, where the fugitive manslayer could repair when pursued by the avenger.

All this will be more fully explained and applied in the book of Joshua. Meanwhile, it is sufficient generally to observe that it was all typical of the unfolding of our fuller inheritance, as the Holy Spirit opens it to our hearts and calls us to go forth to its enjoyment and possession. The apostle declares that "We have . . . received . . . the Spirit who is from God, that we may understand what God has freely given us" (1 Corinthians 2:12). "The Spirit searches all things, even the deep things of God" (2:10). And He shall take of the things of Christ and shall show them to us. Thus He is trying to unfold to the faith and hope of the longing believer the riches and glory of his unoccupied possessions and press him onward to apprehend all that for which he is apprehended of Christ.

The inheritance to which He calls us has not only its allotments adapted to each of us, but it has also its Levitical cities, with provision for consecrated service, and the divine arrangements for our love and care for a lost and sinful world, for whose rescue we are to provide and to labor as earnestly as for our spiritual enjoyment and privileges.

SECTION 7—Itinerary of the Journey Numbers 33:1-49

A little before the close of the book of Numbers, a brief itinerary of all their journeyings in the wilderness is recorded, commencing with their departure in Egypt from Rameses and closing with their camp in Moab on the east side of Jordan.

So God is keeping a record of every human life, and these records are but sample pages from the great volume which will yet be opened as an eternal memorial of the past. It is very solemn and significant, however, that the record of those seasons of Israel's history which were spent out of communion with God is very brief, and that, as in Exodus, the centuries of their bondage are covered by a single sentence, so in Numbers the whole 38 years of their wandering in the wilderness are passed over in complete silence, coming in somewhere between the 13th and 14th verses of the 20th chapter of Numbers, and having no record elsewhere except this simple itinerary in Numbers 33.

O, what long blanks will cover whole lifetimes in the eternal annals, and what crowded pages will spread over brief hours of faithful service and suffering, when the books shall be opened.

He liveth long who liveth well,
All other life is short and vain;
He liveth longest who can tell,
Of living most for heavenly gain.

(The Christ in the Bible Commentary, A. B. Simpson)

Section 2—A New Enrollment – Numbers 26:1-4, 63-65

A new race now begins. The older people could not enter the promised land due to their unbelief and this required a new enrollment spiritually in order to continue on to victory. **Speak to this in your own words, and how it applies to us today.**

Section 3—A New Leader – Numbers 27:12-23

What a splendid teaching! Moses was a type (foreshadow) of the Law which, though entirely holy, could not bring new Life and put an end to the power of sin. **Carefully consider Romans 7:12, Romans 8:3-4 and Hebrews 7:19. Are you truly glad—if you possess the freedom in Christ that His salvation brings? Does this amazing plan of God free us from the slavery of sin?**

Section 4—A New Covenant – Numbers 28:1-8

From Jeremiah 31:31-34 and Hebrews 8:7-13; 10:14-17, give the ways in which the New Covenant is more free, more joyful and more abundant. Is not this a special time to praise the Lord?

Sihon and the Amorites – Numbers 21:21-35

Here we see that God has wondrously provided this second generation of Israelites with tremendous victories over two great and powerful kings, Sihon and Og, even as they begin their journey into the Promised Land, by faith and obedience. Our spiritual lives are journeys also. **In what way/ways does this teach us we can have confidence in our warfare with Satan and his hosts? Do you think God had a special reason for giving them victories over two of the very strongest foes at the beginning?**

The Midianites – Numbers 31:1-8

Have you taken “spiritual revenge” upon an enemy (or enemies) in your life, that you could share briefly with us? How did you gain the victory?

Section 6—The Division of the Inheritance – Numbers 32:1-33:6

What happens today to so-called Christians who decide to take the lighter, easier road, not going all the way with the Lord in His plan for them?

The Other Tribes – Numbers 33:50-56

Can you see and grasp that though this was God’s planning for the people He had chosen many hundreds of years ago, it can be applied to our situations today, and give us wisdom in how we can appropriate these directions, profit by them, and be obedient to our Lord? **God’s Word does not have to be updated to today’s situations, problems and needs; His Word stands strong and true for *all* times—do you agree?**

Section 7—Itinerary of the Journey – Numbers 33:1-49

What a God we serve! — Wouldn’t you strongly agree? To think that He knows our every moment—what we are and do—and yet He passes quickly over our many stumblings and concentrates only on our walk that is fully with and in Him! He surely has a BIG eraser, wouldn’t you say, and this divine knowledge causes us to have great peace, joy and praise! Would you like to join us with a word of your own about your thankfulness?