

MOSES AND AARON EXCLUDED FROM CANAAN

BIBLE TEXT : Numbers 20:1-29

LESSON 107 Junior Course

MEMORY VERSE: "The LORD of hosts shall be exalted in judgment" (Isaiah 5:16).

BIBLE TEXT in King James Version

Numbers 20:1-29 (KJV)

¹ Then came the children of Israel, *even* the whole congregation, into the desert of Zin in the first month: and the people abode in Kadesh; and Miriam died there, and was buried there.

² And there was no water for the congregation: and they gathered themselves together against Moses and against Aaron.

³ And the people chode with Moses, and spake, saying, Would God that we had died when our brethren died before the LORD!

⁴ And why have ye brought up the congregation of the LORD into this wilderness, that we and our cattle should die there?

⁵ And wherefore have ye made us to come up out of Egypt, to bring us in unto this evil place? it *is* no place of seed, or of figs, or of vines, or of pomegranates; neither *is* there any water to drink.

⁶ And Moses and Aaron went from the presence of the assembly unto the door of the tabernacle of the congregation, and they fell upon their faces: and the glory of the LORD appeared unto them.

⁷ And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying,

⁸ Take the rod, and gather thou the assembly together, thou, and Aaron thy brother, and speak ye unto the rock before their eyes; and it shall give forth his water, and thou shalt bring forth to them water out of the rock: so thou shalt give the congregation and their beasts drink.

⁹ And Moses took the rod from before the LORD, as he

BIBLE REFERENCES:

NOTES:

Israel's Founding as a Nation

The land of Canaan lay at the other end of their journey when the Children of Israel started from Egypt. If they had been in a fit condition to go into the Promised Land, they could have reached it in a very short time because it was only an eleven-days' journey from Mount Sinai to the border of Canaan.

The nation of Israel was founded at Mount Sinai when God gave Moses the Ten Commandments. Here they camped for a year, and the Lord gave all the instructions the people would need for their government under His supervision. If they had obeyed all the laws God gave them they would have been a supremely happy people, with a perfect government. The only perfect form of government is a theocracy, a government with God at the head.

Israel's Cowardice

After God had completed the giving of His instructions to Moses, the Children of Israel were ready to move into Canaan. But trouble lay before them. One disobedience after another hindered their progress; and when they finally did get to the borders of the Promised Land, and learned there were giants there, they turned and ran. They did not believe that God had the power to defeat their enemies before them. "So we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief" (Hebrews 3:19).

Through all those many years that the Children of Israel were forced to wander in the wilderness Moses had stood true to them. When God wanted to destroy them because of disobedience, Moses prayed for mercy. He said he would rather die himself than to have those people taken from the earth by judgment. Moses wanted God to be glorified; and if the people should die for their sins, the nations who were watching the march of the Israelites would say that God had not been able to finish the work He had begun in leading the Hebrew slaves to the Land of Canaan.

Discouragement

But the Israelites tried the patience of Moses once too often. After God had provided food and drink for them and their cattle through thirty- nine years of wandering, a shortage of water in the last year shook their faith, and they murmured again. They told Moses they wished they had died when judgment had hit some of their brothers and had killed them for disobedience. When something goes wrong, it seems that some people are so quick to say they wish they could die. It is only the mercy of God that they do not, and they should be grateful. To the sinner such sudden death would bring terrible damnation. And the Christian would surely not want to die in a moment of discouragement, and meet the Lord in that condition.

Here the Children of Israel were, again almost to the border of the land that flowed with milk and honey where they would "long enjoy the work of their hands." God let one more trial come to them — and they failed. Even Moses and Aaron, weary with the many years of complaints from the murmuring Israelites, failed to honor God in one command, and were disqualified for entering

commanded him.

¹⁰ And Moses and Aaron gathered the congregation together before the rock, and he said unto them, Hear now, ye rebels; must we fetch you water out of this rock?

¹¹ And Moses lifted up his hand, and with his rod he smote the rock twice: and the water came out abundantly, and the congregation drank, and their beasts *also*.

¹² And the LORD spake unto Moses and Aaron, Because ye believed me not, to sanctify me in the eyes of the children of Israel, therefore ye shall not bring this congregation into the land which I have given them.

¹³ This *is* the water of Meribah; because the children of Israel strove with the LORD, and he was sanctified in them.

¹⁴ And Moses sent messengers from Kadesh unto the king of Edom, Thus saith thy brother Israel, Thou knowest all the travail that hath befallen us:

¹⁵ How our fathers went down into Egypt, and we have dwelt in Egypt a long time; and the Egyptians vexed us, and our fathers:

¹⁶ And when we cried unto the LORD, he heard our voice, and sent an angel, and hath brought us forth out of Egypt: and, behold, we *are* in Kadesh, a city in the uttermost of thy border:

¹⁷ Let us pass, I pray thee, through thy country: we will not pass through the fields, or through the vineyards, neither will we drink *of* the water of the wells: we will go by the king's *high* way, we will not turn to the right hand nor to the left, until we have passed thy borders.

¹⁸ And Edom said unto him, Thou shalt not pass by me, lest I come out against thee with the sword.

¹⁹ And the children of Israel said unto him, We will go by the high

their long-sought goal.

When the Israelites murmured for water, Moses and Aaron, as usual, went to the Tabernacle to pray and ask God to help them once more. God heard their prayer and came near in a cloud to speak with Moses. He told Moses to take his rod — the rod through which he had performed many miracles in Egypt, and by which the Red Sea had parted so that the Children of Israel could march through on dry land — and go with Aaron to a rock which He would show him.

Water from a Rock

Water had come from a rock once before when Moses had obeyed the commands of God, so there was no doubt in his mind but that God would send water again. That time God had told him to strike the rock, but this time His instructions were merely to speak to the rock, and water would come to bring life to the thirsty Israelites.

But Moses and Aaron had become impatient with the murmurings of the Israelites. When Moses had come to the rock in the sight of all the people, instead of obeying God and speaking to it, he struck it twice with his rod, and said to the Israelites: "Hear now, ye rebels; must we fetch you water out of this rock?" Moses knew that he and Aaron could not cause water to come from that rock if God did not send it. But in that moment of impatience he ignored the Lord, failed to honor Him from whom all blessings flow, and spoke to the people as though he could satisfy their needs. Those few careless words cost him the prize he had worked forty years to obtain.

Moses Rebuked

Water came from the rock at the command of Moses, all right, but God was very much displeased with him. Why had Moses not glorified the Lord in this? How grieved Moses must have been when he realized what he had done! When a person is living close to the Lord and trying hard to please Him, that person is tender to the rebuke of his leader if he has done something wrong, and he feels very bad. Moses was not only rebuked but God told him he and Aaron could not enter Canaan. "Because ye believed me not, to sanctify me in the eyes of the children of Israel, therefore ye shall not bring this congregation into the land which I have given them."

Oh, how Moses suffered! All his years of worrying with the Israelites had been with the hope before him of a home in Canaan. Now that hope was gone. Moses begged God to reconsider, and let him cross Jordan; but he told the Israelites later, "The LORD was wroth with me for your sakes, and would not hear me." In fact, God told him not even to speak of it again (Deuteronomy 3:23-26).

Faithfulness of Moses not Forgotten

We know that Moses was not barred from eternal life, however, because that day on the mountain when Jesus was transfigured before Peter, James, and John, "there appeared unto them Moses and Elias talking with him" (Matthew 17:3). God had taken Moses into Heaven and honored him as the lawgiver because it was through *Moses* that the Ten Commandments were given to Israel. And his faithfulness was not forgotten, because many hundreds of years later the Apostle Paul compared Moses with Christ and said he had been faithful in all his house (Hebrews 3:5).

Moses is spoken of as the meekest man in all the earth, but we see that even the meek must be careful lest they take the glory to themselves which belongs to God. We rejoice when we see souls saved, and are happy to have a little part in

way: and if I and my cattle drink of thy water, then I will pay for it: I will only, without *doing* any thing *else*, go through on my feet.

²⁰ And he said, Thou shalt not go through. And Edom came out against him with much people, and with a strong hand.

²¹ Thus Edom refused to give Israel passage through his border: wherefore Israel turned away from him.

²² And the children of Israel, *even* the whole congregation, journeyed from Kadesh, and came unto mount Hor.

²³ And the LORD spake unto Moses and Aaron in mount Hor, by the coast of the land of Edom, saying,

²⁴ Aaron shall be gathered unto his people: for he shall not enter into the land which I have given unto the children of Israel, because ye rebelled against my word at the water of Meribah.

²⁵ Take Aaron and Eleazar his son, and bring them up unto mount Hor:

²⁶ And strip Aaron of his garments, and put them upon Eleazar his son: and Aaron shall be gathered *unto his people*, and shall die there.

²⁷ And Moses did as the LORD commanded: and they went up into mount Hor in the sight of all the congregation.

²⁸ And Moses stripped Aaron of his garments, and put them upon Eleazar his son; and Aaron died there in the top of the mount: and Moses and Eleazar came down from the mount.

²⁹ And when all the congregation saw that Aaron was dead, they mourned for Aaron thirty days, *even* all the house of Israel.

leading the sinner to Jesus. But we must remember it is the Spirit of God in us that touches their hearts, and nothing we can do.

One time when some of Christ's disciples returned from a missionary trip where many people had been saved and healed, He said to them, "In this rejoice not, that the spirits are subject unto you; but rather rejoice, because your names are written in heaven" (Luke 10:20). The Spirit of God had done the work through them, and they had no right to glory in what they had done. We may think we are humbly serving the Lord, and yet we must be careful not to become proud when the Lord answers our prayers. God's children must ever be careful to keep humble before Him if they want a reward in Heaven, and want Him to be pleased with the work they do.

If the Children of Israel had loved and honored their leader as they should have, they would have done all they could to help him win the reward. But they continued to murmur and complain against him and God until they caused Moses to lose the earthly blessing.

Death of Israel's Leaders

Moses, Aaron, and Miriam had a part in the leadership of the Israelites (Micah 6:4), but they all died before they reached Canaan. Miriam had murmured against Moses and had become a leper. Although Moses prayed for her and she received God's forgiveness and healing at that time, she died in the desert of Zin, before crossing Jordan.

Not long afterward, at Mount Hor, came Aaron's time to die. Aaron was the high priest, and his eldest son was to take his place in serving the Lord in the Tabernacle. God instructed Moses to take Aaron and his son up the mountain, take the gorgeous holy robes of his office from Aaron, and put them upon Eleazar. And there Aaron died. When Moses and Eleazar came down from the mountain alone, the people knew Aaron was dead, and they mourned for thirty days.

Moses only was left of Israel's leaders. The time was soon to come when God would call him to the top of Mount Nebo from where he could see the Promised Land, and there he would die and be buried by the hand of God.

QUESTIONS

- 1 Why did the Children of Israel murmur?
- 2 Why did they have no right to murmur?
- 3 What did Moses and Aaron do when they heard the murmuring?
- 4 What did God tell them to do when He came down in the cloud?
- 5 How did Moses disobey God?
- 6 What was the result?
- 7 How did Moses feel about God's judgment?
- 8 Of what does this lesson teach us to be careful?
- 9 Explain why we know God did remember the faithfulness of Moses.