

God's Journey, Presence And Rest

Introduction. It is hard to study the history of the Israelites and not be admonished in some way. There are many resemblances between their condition and ours. When the Israelites turned toward God in true repentance, He turned away from His anger and blessed them. Moses had been fervently interceding for God to show him His way and to be gracious to His people. It is in this context that a statement is made which serves as the basis for our lesson (Exodus 33:14). Let's look at God's journey, presence and rest.

I. *The Journey*

A. They had come from Egypt.

1. Egypt was a land of toil, oppression and misery (Exodus 1:8-14). God had called them out of this land (Exodus 3:7-10; Hosea 11:1). He had destined something better for them.
2. This characteristic fits the original state of God's people perfectly. God has called us out of a state of sin (2 Timothy 1:8-9; 2 Thessalonians 2:14). He has extended His arm of mercy to us (Isaiah 59:1-2).

B. They journeyed in the wilderness.

1. This was a land of drought and danger (Numbers 33:1-49). They had many difficulties which they had to overcome.
2. This is an amazingly accurate picture of our lives in the world. The life of a Christian is a life of conflict, trial and heartache (Acts 14:22; 2 Timothy 3:12).

C. They were traveling to Canaan.

1. This was a land which was promised by God to Abraham long ago (Genesis 15:17-21). He had journeyed from Ur of the Chaldees to Haran and then to Canaan (Genesis 12:1-5; Acts 7:2-4).
2. Christians are also journeying to a distant land. This is not a land of our fathers, but a land of our Father. It was the same country for which Abraham sought (Hebrews 11:13-16). In Christ, we move from bondage to freedom (Romans 6:15-20).

II. *The Presence*

A. It was divine.

1. God gave the Israelites Moses, Aaron, Joshua, the judges, Saul, David and Solomon. Although they had their faults, they were good leaders. However, there was something more desirable.
2. The divine presence was one of great power, infinite wisdom, exhaustless goodness and the unchanging promise that God would

always be with them (Genesis 26:24; Isaiah 43:2). That promise still stands for us (Matthew 28:20; Hebrews 13:6).

B. It was visible.

1. God's presence with the Israelites was one they could behold (Exodus 13:21; Numbers 10:11-12). The pillar of cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night was God's visible sign of His presence. This was extended when God dwelt in the tabernacle (Exodus 40:34-38).
2. Although we do not have a literal sign of divine presence, God is yet with us and we have evidence of that presence. We see God's influences exerted, His comforts help us and His blessings dwell with us. All of this is proof that God is with us (Genesis 28:15; Matthew 1:23; 2 Timothy 4:16-18).

C. It was efficient.

1. God took care of the Israelites, even down to their daily food by manna and quail in the wilderness and by water to drink (Deuteronomy 20:1; Exodus 16:14-15; Numbers 11:31-35; Exodus 17:1-7). While in such a hostile environment, they required direction, provision and preservation. He guided and delivered them from their enemies.
2. God will take care of us also (Romans 8:26-39). His presence will be with us in health and sickness, in youth and old age and in life and death (Psalm 48:14; 73:26).

III. ***The Rest***

A. It was a rest from the hardships of wilderness wanderings.

1. There were so many problems that the Israelites faced in the wilderness, many of them being brought on by their own sin.
 - a) The complaining of the people (Numbers 11:1-3).
 - b) The longing for flesh (Numbers 11:4-6).
 - c) The ambition of Miriam and Aaron (Numbers 12:1-15).
 - d) The revolt of the spies (Numbers 13:31-33).
 - e) The rebellion of the people (Numbers 14:1-10).
 - f) The defeat of the Amalekites (Numbers 14:40-45).
 - g) The Sabbath-breaker was stoned (Numbers 15:32-36).
 - h) The rebellion of Korah, Dathan and Abiram (Numbers 16:1-40).
 - i) The rebellion of the people (Numbers 16:41-50).
 - j) The death of Miriam (Numbers 20:1).
 - k) The murmuring of the people (Numbers 20:2-6).
 - l) The sin of Moses (Numbers 20:7-13).
 - m) The obstinacy of Edom (Numbers 20:14-22).
 - n) The death of Aaron (Numbers 20:23-29).
 - o) The fiery serpents (Numbers 21:5-9).

- p) The scheming of Balak and Balaam (Numbers 22:1-24:25).
- q) The death of Moses (Deuteronomy 34:1-6).
- 2. The Lord pleaded with the Israelites to return to Him and be at rest (Isaiah 30:15). In the New Testament, the rest that awaits us is spiritual in Christ and eternal in duration (Isaiah 14:3; Matthew 11:29; Hebrews 4:1-11; Revelation 14:13).
- B. It was a rest of multiple blessings.
 - 1. It was a land of freedom, plenty, rest and happiness. It was described as a land of milk and honey 15 times in the first five books of the Bible. Surely the words of David held true concerning this land (Psalm 23:2).
 - 2. The wonderful blessings that we receive now include salvation, inheritance and eternal life (Matthew 19:29; Romans 6:22; 1 John 2:25; 5:11).
- C. It was a rest conditioned upon obedience.
 - 1. As long as the people did the will of God, they would be blessed (Deuteronomy 28:1-14). Israel's failure to obey would bring a host of curses (Deuteronomy 28:15-68).
 - 2. Obedience is crucial today to obtaining these wonderful blessings of which we have previously spoken (Matthew 7:21-23; Acts 26:19; Hebrews 5:8-9; 1 Peter 1:2).

Conclusion. Perhaps God's goodness and mercy towards them is calculated to inspire us with love and confidence (1 John 4:9-10, 19). While we feel very highminded sometimes to judge their murmurings and unbelief, but we need to take heed (Hebrews 3:12).