

09 We Walk By Faith and Not By Sight

In the Book of B'Midbar (means desert, which we call Numbers), the children of Egypt have left Egypt and escaped through the Red Sea and they've ended up at Sinai, the very place where God had appeared to Moses in a burning bush when Moses was called to his life's mission. And Sunday we read as God called Moses, and we saw that Moses felt inadequate to do what God had called him to do. When God called him, Moses answered and said, "Who am I that I should go before Pharaoh". God answered him by saying that He would be with Him and that His name was I AM. We talked about how God calls each of us to a task in our lives, and we too might answer, "Who am I God that I am able to do this thing that you've called me to do?" And God tells each of us that He will be there with us in the calling and that He is the "I AM". Curiously, God reveals His name in the form of a verb. This is unique "among the gods". I also told you all that "I AM" is a very expandable verbal form that can be translated in a multitude of ways including, "I was all that you needed. I am all that you need. And, I will always be what you need when you will need it." Our God truly is an awesome God, and His awesomeness is reflected in a name like no other name.

In the Book of Exodus, we read of Moses' fulfillment of God's mission for his life. It begins with an interchange with Pharaoh. Time and again, Moses goes to see Pharaoh and he relates that God is telling Pharaoh, "Let my people go." Pharaoh refuses again and again. In that glorious story, God brings a total of 10 plagues against the Egyptians, and finally with the tenth plague, Pharaoh sends the Israelites out into the desert to worship their God. Back in November we learned lessons from their escape at the Red Sea as I preached a mini-series entitled the "Red Sea Rules". This evening, we read that God has brought them back to Sinai where he first spoke to Moses in the burning bush.

In that short 48-50 day journey to Sinai, the Israelites already had begun to complain. They quickly forgot the misery of their slavery in Egypt, and instead focused on the "leeks and the garlics" (the pleasures) that they enjoyed back in Egypt. Over the years, things grew easy in Egypt and fish were plentiful. It is sort of a picture of our own spiritual bondage. Metaphorically, Egypt is a picture of the sin and bondage in our own lives. Egypt is where we were stuck before we knew the Lord. When we came to know the Lord, we were set free. But sometimes we forget the misery of our bondage and we only remember the pleasure. In this approximate 50 day journey, the Israelites complained at every little hardship they experienced. When they were thirsty, they

blamed Moses for bringing them out into the desert “to die”. When they were hungry, they blamed Moses for bringing them out in the desert to die. We too are so quick to forget all that God has done in our lives to deliver us time and again. We are so stuck in the right now of our own hardships, that we refuse to believe that God can once more come to our rescue. It has always stunned me that this people that who had walked through the Red Sea miracle could so quickly be consumed in disbelief. But, aren’t we the same? I know I sort of am. We see God work in one way or another and we rationalize it away and figure either God doesn’t hear us, He isn’t there, or He is unable to do what we need done in our lives.

The text also tells us that when God called Moses up to the top of Mount Sinai to receive the Torah, the people grew fearful and thought God had forgotten them. They took the treasure of gold that God had given them, and they made a golden calf and began to worship it. Their lack of faith seems to have no end. We too can be so fickle in our faith and devotion to the Lord. We are fickle in our attendance to worship services. We are wishy-washy in our giving. We are laxadasical in our service. This reminds us that God is looking for people who are consecrated in their walk with Him. We don’t do these things to earn any brownie points with God. We do these things because He loved us and saved us by grace. (Ephesians 2:8,9,10)

Once we are saved, God gives us each a plan, a purpose, and a place. That’s sort of what I talked about there in Ephesians 2:10 *“For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them.”* (Ephesians 2:10 NASB). Now at the base of Sinai, God gives His people a purpose, a plan, and a place.

In Numbers chapter 2 we read, *“2 Now the LORD spoke to Moses and to Aaron, saying, 2 “The sons of Israel shall camp, each by his own standard, with the banners of their fathers’ households; they shall camp around the tent of meeting at a distance. 3 Now those who camp on the east side toward the sunrise shall be of the standard of the camp of Judah, by their armies, and the leader of the sons of Judah:*

And in this passage of Exodus 2, God lays out a plan for what each tribe is to do, and He gives them a specific place around the Tabernacle to camp. This all has a purpose. It reminds me that God also gives each of us a place to serve, a plan to follow, and a purpose for our lives. At the end of Numbers chapter 2 in verse 32 we read the summation of how the whole host of Israel was in its place.

³² These are the numbered men of the sons of Israel by their fathers’ households; the total of the numbered men of the camps by their armies, 603,550. ³³ The Levites,

however, were not numbered among the sons of Israel, just as the LORD had commanded Moses.³⁴ Thus the sons of Israel did; according to all that the LORD commanded Moses, so they camped by their standards, and so they set out, every one by his family according to his father's household.

This idea of a plan and a purpose is specifically seen in Numbers 3 (and following), when God gives the Levites a function, and He tells them how to do what He wants done with respect to worship and tabernacle duties, etc. It is in these chapters as well that we see the institution of the Passover Feast in Israel and their first year of freedom is celebrated. The Passover celebration is to be a permanent reminder of God's deliverance from Egypt. It is to be a feast forever to the Jewish people, and it miraculously is until this day!

Anyway, many scholars believe that about 14 months after leaving Egypt, Moses finally sent spies in to take a closer look at the promised land. Let's turn to Numbers 12 and let's begin to read the account.

13 Then the LORD spoke to Moses saying,² "Send out for yourself men so that they may spy out the land of Canaan, which I am going to give to the sons of Israel; you shall send a man from each of their fathers' tribes, every one a leader among them."

This passage is a little confusing because it sounds here like it was all God's idea, but if you go forward into the Book of Deuteronomy (Deut 1:19-25) you get a closer look at the incident. Remember that in the Book of Deuteronomy Moses is near death and he is writing a summary of all that had happened. Rabbi Daniel used to tell us that by tradition this was all written in the last thirty days of Moses' life. In Deuteronomy chapter 1 Moses tells us that THEY, the "people suggested that he send spies." So did God do it or did Moses do it and why does Moses seem to be complaining about it? I think God wanted them to check out the land and Moses devised a plan. I'm not really sure what all God wanted looked at, but maybe the people insisted on analyzing and looking at the odds to the point where they filled themselves with doubt. I'm really not exactly sure. Perhaps it was God wanting them to see the obstacles in taking the land to test their faith. As we will soon find, other than Joshua and Caleb, they responded in fear instead of faith.

³ So Moses sent them from the wilderness of Paran at the command of the LORD, all of them men who were heads of the sons of Israel.⁴ These then were their names:

So I'm going to skip these names and let's go on down to verse 16 and let's read,

¹⁶ These are the names of the men whom Moses sent to spy out the land; but Moses called Hoshea the son of Nun, Joshua.

This is one of those verses that's easy to skip right over, but it actually is really kind of interesting. We read here that Moses gave Joshua a name upgrade. This is interesting but Hoshea means "salvation" but he upgraded him to "Yah Hoshea" (Yahweh saves). This is the same name that is translated as "Jesus" when we give it a European pronunciation of things. Joshua will be God's instrument to take the physical inheritance that He promised His people.

¹⁷ When Moses sent them to spy out the land of Canaan, he said to them, "Go up there into the Negev; then go up into the hill country. ¹⁸ See what the land is like, and whether the people who live in it are strong or weak, whether they are few or many. ¹⁹ How is the land in which they live, is it good or bad? And how are the cities in which they live, are they like open camps or with fortifications? ²⁰ How is the land, is it fat or lean? Are there trees in it or not? Make an effort then to get some of the fruit of the land." Now the time was the time of the first ripe grapes.

I think what we're seeing is Moses and the people in a slow drift into walking by sight and not by faith. God never asked them to go figure everything out. He said to spy out the land, but not to assess it all in human terms. Moses is telling them to go look at all of these details relating to relative strength (their strength versus the strength of those in the land). We are told over and over to trust God for direction and not to depend on our own knowledge. Maybe their failure was perhaps not in the looking, but in the disbelief.

*⁵ Trust in the LORD with all your heart
And do not lean on your own understanding.
⁶ In all your ways acknowledge Him,
And He will make your paths straight. (Proverbs 3:5-6 NASB)*

⁶ Therefore, being always of good courage, and knowing that while we are at home in the body we are absent from the Lord— ⁷ for we walk by faith, not by sight— (2 Corinthians 5:7 NASB)

God promised Israel a physical land. We saw the promise these past few weeks as we've studied Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph. Now they are at the point of taking that land and doubt and fear has crept in. We learned back in Ephesians that God also gives us as believers a spiritual inheritance. We don't get a land, but we receive an inheritance. We left our lost condition like the Israelites left Egypt. We were promised an inheritance as sons and daughters of Almighty God. We are SO prone to then walk

by sight and not by faith. Tonight, let's confess our unbelief and say God I'm going to trust you. I want to receive all of the spiritual inheritance that you have for me.

As we've learned over and over again, our salvation is a gift of grace. We have only to receive that gift in faith. But claiming that inheritance that goes with our salvation is hard work. It is the daily laying aside of self and the putting on of the New Man. It is yielding to the Holy Spirit, and letting our flesh be crucified with Christ. Paul said it so well, *"I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me."* (Galatians 2:20 NASB)

My flesh over and over wants to take over and figure it all out. My flesh demands to know the details. As you and I walk forward today, let us know His presence, and let us realize that He is RIGHT HERE WITH US. He is watching us and just wants us to move forward loving Him and loving one another. Oh what a wonderful spiritual inheritance He has given His people, His church, and we need only to go into the "Promised Land" and claim it.

Let us pray.