

LESSON 15 – GOD’S PEOPLE IN THE WILDERNESS

PURPOSE

The history of Israel is very important to us today. One reason is that human nature remains much the same today . . . their problems, challenges, attitudes, and responses are not unlike our own. Therefore, we have much to learn from them and their experience. Also, in them, we see the continuity of God’s covenant purpose. As we look at their history, we see what God is like, what He has done, and the way He expects us to respond to Him.

Psalm 103:7
1 Corinthians 10:1–11

PROVISION IN THE WILDERNESS

Before the people of Israel had ever reached Mount Sinai, they began to show their basic mistrust of God, and his appointed leaders, Moses and Aaron. Their behavior also revealed their own double-mindedness.

Despite their behavior and doubt, the Lord blessed and upheld them. When they grumbled about food, God supernaturally supplied them with quail and manna – and a test of their obedience. When they complained about the lack of water, God gave them water from a rock. The first time they encountered an enemy, God gave them the victory. He even gave Moses a practical system for governing and caring for the people.

Exodus 16–18
James 1:1–8
Exodus 16
Exodus 17:1–7
Exodus 17:8–16
Exodus 18
Deuteronomy 1:9–18

NO PATIENCE FOR THE PROMISES

In spite of these amazing lessons, Israel still could not endure patiently in order to see God’s promises fulfilled. While Moses was still on Mount Sinai with God, the people made a golden idol to worship . . . and credited it with their deliverance!

Even after God’s righteous and awesome judgement for that folly, the people continued to murmur and complain . . . even refusing to obey on occasion. Most significantly, when they reached the Promised Land, they refused to enter in, choosing to believe the word of ten frightened spies, rather than the covenant Word of the Lord.

Because of this disobedience, a whole generation was condemned to die in the wilderness, wandering and unable to inherit the promise. Only two men from that generation, Joshua and Caleb, were allowed to eventually enter into the land because of their outspoken faith in God’s promise.

A two-year journey tragically became forty years of wandering in the wilderness of death. Yet, even in the midst of their rebellion and judgement, God provided them with care, leadership, provision, food, and protection.

Hebrews 6:12
Exodus 32
Numbers 11–25
Numbers 13–14
Numbers 14:28–38
Nehemiah 9

But because of their rebellion and their impatience, an entire generation missed out on the blessings of the Promised Land.

APPLICATION

Read 1 Corinthians 10:1–13 . . . compare the experiences of Israel with our experience in Christ. What lessons should we learn from Israel's wilderness experience?

CONCLUSION

In Israel's deliverance, we see that God's salvation is based on His Sovereign grace and not upon human merit. Receiving the full inheritance, however, depends upon our obedient response to His grace. Seeing the failure of this generation in Israel should motivate us to follow the Lord more closely.

Deuteronomy 4:32–40
Deuteronomy 7:6–8
Exodus 19:5–6
Deuteronomy 28:1–2
Deuteronomy 28:15