

Lesson 1: Israel's Desert Experiences – Part 1

Central Point: Complaining and Grumbling – not a good idea

The teaching on the “Wilderness” experience of the children of Israel covered just over a 40 year period- we will hit a few of the highlights. 1 Corinthians 10:6, *“Now these things occurred as examples to keep us from setting our hearts on evil things as they did.”* God records these events for our benefit as warnings and illustrations for us not to make the mistakes they made.

Philippians 2:14-16

Do everything without complaining or arguing, so that you may become blameless and pure, children of God without fault in a crooked and depraved generation, in which you shine like stars in the universe as you hold out the word of life.

- **Question:** “When we complain, what kind of a message does that send to our God?”
- The Hebrews set a precedent that God does not look kindly upon ungratefulness
- When we complain it reveals a lack of faith and trust in God’s ability to provide
- Luke 18:8- *“However, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on the earth?”*
 - o Faith pleases God as we see in Hebrews 11:6; unbelief does not please the Lord

Note that half the murmuring was for food and water. Other times it was out of jealousy, or they were prompted by bitterness and cowardice.

- Christians refer to “Desert” experiences as hard/difficult times of tests and trials
- No doubt they are not enjoyable seasons in our life, but they do build character
- **Question:** “How should we respond to trials, tests and temptations in life?”
- **Please Read: James 1:2-8**

The Water of Marah

Their first test in the desert came after three days of being in the desert they came to a place called Marah (which means bitter) and found the water was bitter.

- **Please Read: Exodus 15:22-26**
- The piece of wood that Moses threw into the bitter water is a type of the cross
- Jesus removes the bitterness of sin from our lives through the work of redemption
- Galatians 3:13 states that Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law
- We have been redeemed from the hand of the enemy to kill, steal and destroy us
- Let’s not open to door to the devil from what comes out of our mouths

Manna and Quail

For the 40 years the people of Israel were in the desert, God provided for their every need. God was revealing to them that He was their source; the provider, the supplier, their all in all. Just think, every day God was faithful to give them their daily bread until in Joshua 5:11, the manna stopped the day after they first ate the produce of the Promised Land.

- **Please Read: Deuteronomy chapter 8**
- In Exodus chapter 16, we see that God provided them with manna and quail to eat
- Moses made important point about grumbling against your leaders
- Ex 16:8, *“Who are we? You are not grumbling against us, but against the Lord.”*

Hebrews 13:17, “Obey your leaders and submit to their authority. They keep watch over you as men who must give an account. Obey them so that their work will be a joy, not a burden, for that would be of no advantage to you.”

Another Quail Incident

Later during the desert travels of the Israelites we see a second incident of wide scale disgust for manna. In Numbers 11:4, the Bible refers to the complainers as “The rabble among them” began to crave other food.

- **Please Read: Numbers 11:1-6**
- **Question:** “What is the danger of dwelling in the past, ‘as the good ole days’?”
- For one thing we miss out on the “New Things” the Lord is doing today
- The Bible in Philippians 3:12-15 admonishes us to keep pressing forward in Jesus

Isaiah 43:18-19

Forget the former things; do not dwell on the past. See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it? I am making a way in the desert and streams in the wasteland.

- Notice God’s response this time to the Hebrews about their incessant complaining
- **Please Read: Numbers 11:18-23**
- Israel’s grumbling against the Lord, was putting Him to the test- **Numbers 14:20-25**

There is something to be said about being grateful and thankful. It’s a character trait we training our children in since they were small. People and God Himself are more inclined to bless us when we have an attitude of gratitude. So let’s give thanks for our food **1 Tim. 4:3-5**.

1 Thessalonians 5:16-18, “Be joyful always; pray continually; give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.”