

Life-Study of Numbers Summaries - Messages 16-20

Journeying

God's people have a guide, God Himself. When God came to be our guidance, He came as the cloud. This guidance in the form of a cloud is God consummated to be the Spirit. In typology the cloud from the heavens signifies God in the sense of God's presence. Today, Christians should always follow the Spirit. How can we know that God is with us? We must go where there is water. In essence the cloud and the rain are the same. The cloud becomes rain, and when the rain comes, we have water. Therefore, we may say that the cloud, the rain, and the water are three-in-one. Today we cannot see the Spirit, but we can see what issues from the Spirit. This issue is the sense within us that we are being watered. In Numbers 9:16, the cloud signifies the Spirit, and the fire, for enlightening signifies the Word. When we have a clear sky in our spiritual life, we feel the presence of the Spirit. However, often we are in the night, and then the Spirit become the Word to us.

Setting Out

The children of Israel set out according to the guidance of the cloud. The ark (Christ) of the covenant of Jehovah went before them to seek out a resting place. The ark with all the contents of the tabernacle came to the front to take the lead. There is a difference between guidance and leading. There is a difference between guidance and leading. Guidance is general; leading is particular. The cloud and the trumpet guided the children of Israel in a general way. However, the ark did not render a general guidance but a particular leading to the people.

Failures

The behaviour of the people in chapter sixteen was an insult both to Moses and to Jehovah. The insult was so severe that Jehovah, who is full of mercy and patience, could not tolerate the situation any longer and became very angry. In Taberah, which means "a burning", the children of Israel were murmuring evil. This murmuring kindled the anger of Jehovah, and He sent fire to consume some at the extremities of the camp. After the murmuring, the mixed multitude among the people began to lust. At this time when the people were lusting for meat, God came in to do a great miracle. He fed the people with quail. In feeding the people with quail, God was angry, and in His anger, He struck them with a severe plague.

After this, Miriam and Aaron followed the tide of murmuring and rebellion to stand up against Moses and slander him. Being older than Moses, in their heart they regarded themselves higher than Moses and were jealous of the greater respect that Moses received. At Moses' time the oracle of God was with Moses. In speaking against Moses, Miriam and Aaron were speaking against the deputy authority of God. God took the slander of Miriam and Aaron seriously because this matter touched God's authority. God vindicated Moses as His servant and rebuked Aaron and Miriam.

Another failure among the children of Israel was their not believing in God. God commanded Moses to send twelve men to spy out the land of Canaan. From a human standpoint, it was necessary to spy out the land. But spiritually speaking, in anything we do, it is better not to spy out the situation. To spy out the situation is to test God, and the result is usually negative. We should simply believe in God without knowing anything. The twelve men brought in news that the land of Canaan flowed with milk and honey. However, most of the men went on to say, as an evil report, that the people who dwelt in the land were great and strong, that the cities were fortified and very large, and that the children of Anak (the Nephilim—the giants) were there; only Joshua and Caleb spoke against this evil report.

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