

People on the Move: The Book of Numbers Trumpets, Blood, Cloud, and Fire

Lesson #4 for October 24, 2009

Scriptures: Exodus 12:1-29; Numbers 9; 10; Matthew 26:36-43; Luke 22:15,19,20; 1 Corinthians 15:52.

1. This lesson discusses the first Passover to be celebrated in the wilderness—the first anniversary of their exodus from Egypt—and the final preparations before they began what they thought would be a journey of a few short weeks to enter the land of Canaan.
2. Read Exodus 12:15-29; Numbers 9:9-13. Do the statements about yeast and about people who chose not to participate in celebrating the Passover seem a little bit arbitrary? Do we want to worship an arbitrary God? Don't the Passover rules themselves seem a little arbitrary? Considering how other nations were “worshiping”—drunk and naked around fertility-cult symbols—isn't it obvious why God wanted to make certain that His worship was as distinct from those ceremonies as possible?
3. The Passover was a very solemn ceremony at the beginning of the Jewish year to remind the children of Israel where they had come from. It reminded them that strict obedience to God's directions was an essential part of their welfare.
4. Did the children of Israel always follow the advice in Numbers 9:14 to treat foreigners the same as Israelites? How should we treat relatives or close friends who are not Adventists but who come to stay with us on the Sabbath?
5. At the Last Supper, Jesus celebrated the Jewish Passover but at the same time initiated the Lord's Supper as the new ceremony to be celebrated by Christians. Why don't Jews today celebrate the Passover using animal sacrifices? Some modern Jews will tell you that if they pray the prayers that were used at that time, it is sufficient. Other more conservative Jews will tell you that they were instructed to offer sacrifices only at the one place that God designated—namely, the temple in Jerusalem. (Deuteronomy 12:5,14) That location is now occupied by a Muslim mosque and no Jew is allowed to go there. What would you do if you were asked to celebrate the Passover in the original way today?
6. The children of Israel had been camped at the foot of Mount Sinai for nearly one full year. They had “experienced” God on the mountain, the giving of the Ten Commandments, many additional instructions—including how to camp and how to march—and had spent a fairly lengthy period of time constructing the tabernacle and then going through its dedication. The time had finally come for them to begin their march. Under normal circumstances, it would take about 11 days for such a group to reach the borders of the land of Canaan.
7. What should we as Christians living in the 21st century learn about God from the Passover experience of the Jews? It was on the night of the very first Passover that all the firstborn of the Egyptians were killed. Why was that necessary? (Exodus 12:12) It was a contest to see who was the real God! Every “god” to which the Egyptians turned to protect them from the God of Israel was turned into a plague! Why do you think God told the children of Israel that they must not even go outside their houses during that first Passover night? Did any Jewish firstborn male leave his home temporarily to go to the bathroom and get killed?
8. The Passover was clearly to commemorate their deliverance from slavery in Egypt. What is

the Lord's Supper to commemorate for Christians? Have we not experienced a great deliverance? Are we as happy to be delivered from sin as the Israelites were to be delivered from Egypt?

9. It is obvious in reading the early chapters in Numbers that God gave the children of Israel many very concrete reminders of His instructions and guidance. Do we need more concrete reminders in our day? Would we be better Christians if we had a "fiery cloud" to guide us and direct us in our daily activities? Wouldn't that be impressive? What kind of clear evidence do we have as Christians that God is leading us? Now that we have the Bible, is that all the guidance and direction that we need? Have you experienced direct guidance from the Holy Spirit in your life? Have you "heard" God's voice? Have you "seen" His hand moving in your life? There are many stories told, especially from more primitive areas, about God doing some fairly miraculous things even in our day. Why doesn't He do that for us?
10. Human beings have always longed for tangible evidence of God's presence and His guidance. Think of all the ancient religions that established idols or icons of various types to represent "god." Of course, if you represent your "god" by an idol or an icon, then you can manipulate that idol or icon in whatever way you want. That is exactly the opposite of what God wants. He always knows what is best for us, and He wants us to follow His guidance. Consider how many times we have seen in the news about someone claiming they have seen a likeness of the "Virgin Mary" in the snow or on a window pane or in some food or in some other unusual location. Would we be better off if God gave more direct and clear tangible guidance today? Who else would immediately use such methods also?
11. Do we really need more tangible evidence than all the promises God has given us in the Bible? Don't we have enough clear guidance there? Are we making full use of the evidence that we already have?
12. Remember Ellen White's words, "We have nothing to fear for the future, except as we shall forget the way the Lord has led us, and His teaching in our past history."—*General Conference Bulletin*, 1893, p. 24; *Life Sketches*, p. 196; *Testimonies to Ministers*, p. 31; *3SM* 162.3.
13. How important is it for us to remember all the details of all the stories and all the teachings that we have in Scripture? We all have had numerous experiences when we forgot something like the keys, an anniversary, someone's birthday, etc. But what about forgetting God? Is it important for us to study the Bible enough so that we clearly understand the basic principles taught there?
14. The ancient peoples—including the tribes of Israel—often used horns of various kinds as signals. A common horn/trumpet consisted of a Shofar, an Addax horn with the tip cut off so that it could be blown into to make noise. But God asked Moses to make two silver trumpets. They were long straight bugle-type instruments flared at one end. Everyone in the camp was taught that only the priests were allowed to blow those trumpets. (Numbers 10:8) They were also taught what the different signals from the trumpets meant. One of the main uses for those silver trumpets was to notify everyone that it was time to march and to move camp. The cloud would lift from the tabernacle and "move out," the priests would blow the trumpets, people would prepare themselves, and the ark of the covenant borne by the Kohathites would lead the way. (Numbers 10:33,35; Joshua 3:3,4) Later, the trumpets were used when the children of Israel went to war. When blown by the priests, they were an indication that God would be

with them in their battle. (Numbers 10:9,10) Why do you think God thought that the children of Israel needed clouds, fiery signals, and trumpets to direct them? Do you wish that we had more tangible guidance from God in our day?

15. Someday soon, we will hear the unmistakable sound of a very different trumpet! What do you suppose that will sound like? (1 Corinthians 15:52; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18; John 5:28,29; Matthew 24:31)
16. Which would you rather have in a very difficult time, a silver trumpet, a cloud and a column of fire, or the clear guidance of God's Word? What will Satan do at the end? (Revelation 13)
17. Read Numbers 10:29-32. Why do you suppose that brief conversation between Moses and his brother-in-law is recorded in Scripture? Did Hobab go with them or not? (Judges 4:11) Does it reveal a lack of faith in God on the part of Moses? Or did he just enjoy the company of his brother-in-law? Did Moses believe that his wife needed some moral support? (Numbers 12:1) Remember that Hobab was also a descendant of Abraham. (Genesis 25:1-6; Exodus 2:18; 18:1,12)
18. Even Jesus longed for human companionship and support at critical times in His ministry. (Luke 9:28-31; Matthew 26:36-43) Can you think of times when you really felt the need for human companionship, comfort, even guidance?
19. Do we need tangible evidence of God's guidance in our day? Does God have clear ways of guiding us even on a personal basis without using something tangible? Are impressions a reliable guide?

Impressions alone are not a safe guide to duty. The enemy often persuades men to believe that it is God who is guiding them, when in reality they are following only human impulse. *Acts of the Apostles* 279 (1911); *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, August 24, 1911

Do you know of examples in modern times when beings have appeared and guided humans and then suddenly disappeared? Are those examples of the work of angels? Remember that we believe that any new evidence that comes from God must be consistent with the evidence that we already have from God. God will never lead us in a direction in contradiction to how He has led us in the past.

20. When the children of Israel set off from Mount Sinai toward the land of Canaan, what was on their minds? Under normal circumstances that would have been a journey of about 11 days. In light of this, why do you suppose the children of Israel were willing to camp on the border of Canaan for 40 days awaiting the return of the spies? Why do you think God led them to the north and east through difficult mountain passes (*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 377) instead of directly north along the coastal route through the land of the Philistines? (Exodus 13:17) Why does God allow us to suffer difficulties in our day?
21. God could easily have led the children of Israel in any direction and kept them safe even marching through the land of the Philistines.
22. Read Numbers 10:35,36. When Moses gave the signal to the priests and the sound of the trumpets was heard, the tribes of Israel would set off. The cloud and the ark carried by the Kohathites led the way, followed by the tribes of Judah, Issachar, and Zebulun. Then went the tent structures from the tabernacle with the clans of Gershon and Merari taking charge. The tribes of Reuben, Simeon, and Gad marched next followed by the holy furnishings from the

tabernacle carried by the Kohathites. Finally, the tribes of Ephraim, Manasseh, and Benjamin were followed by Dan, Asher, and Naphtali who brought up the rear. Does this order of march and this sequence teach us anything about God? How were all the herds of animals included in the lines of march? Did that sequence have some military significance? Did the tribes at the back complain about always being the last?

23. We believe that we are living at the end of this earth's history. We are hoping soon to enter the heavenly Canaan. There are frightening descriptions in Scripture and the writings of Ellen White about what is going to happen during those final days. Are we prepared? Why is it necessary for us to face those very difficult times? Couldn't Jesus just come and take us home without going through the seven last plagues, the shaking, etc.? Do we need to prepare ourselves for a very difficult time that we will experience in heaven? Is God allowing those difficulties to weed out the "riff-raff"? Do we need it to refine our characters? Will it force people to make up their minds? Do we need to see what it would be like if Satan were in charge? Satan has always claimed that he could do a better job of running the universe than God does! So, apparently God will allow Satan to have almost complete control for a short time to see what it would be like if he were in charge. That is an important answer that the universe needs to see in the great controversy. Military experience has demonstrated that people who have to stand together under difficult circumstances tend to bond together. Do God's people need that? The Devil will do everything he can to destroy God's people. But, he will not be allowed to do so. So, he will destroy almost everything else on planet Earth in his anger.
24. If God is planning to take us to a perfect land where there will be no troubles, no trials, and living will be easy, why do we have to go through all of those difficulties in preparation? Is God the one responsible for all those difficulties? If Satan is the one responsible, why does God allow it? Are we as a human family in any way responsible for what will happen during the seven last plagues, etc.?

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