

Plan and Purpose Bible Lesson #III-21—Review of Heb. 3-4—Num. 17-27

Before we continue with our look at the history of Israel through their 40 years in the wilderness and their ultimate entering into the land of Canaan, the author of the book of Hebrews draws an analogy between the refusal of the Israelites to enter into the land of Canaan and the refusal of most Christians to strive to be a part of the first resurrection. As I thought about this, this last week, I felt it might be well for us to review what the author of Hebrews had to say about this as I believe this is the most important thing that a Christian can do. I would like to quote from a Bible lesson we did on this subject a few years back that we also included in the “Kingdom Spirit” in our August, 2011 issue.

The following came after a discussion in our lesson of the three steps to sonship, justification, sanctification and glorification, that we have discussed in the past. We noted that these steps are analogous to the three main feasts that the men of Israel were commanded to keep, Passover, Pentecost and Tabernacles. [(Read Heb. 3:7-11) This is taken from the 95th Psalm. The provocation started immediately after God had spoken the 10 commandments to the people and the people refused to hear God Himself anymore. (Read Ex. 20:18-21) Because they did not have the faith to experience Pentecost, i.e. God speaking the law into their hearts, it was not until after Christ’s resurrection that the fulfillment of Pentecost was achieved. The entering into God’s rest is analogous to entering the Promised Land. By not learning the lessons of Pentecost, most of the Israelites did not have the faith they needed to enter the Promised Land after the 12 spies gave their report.

There are three “rests” in Scripture portrayed by the Sabbaths, the Sabbath day, the Sabbath year, and the Jubilee. The first is man’s rest, the second is the land’s rest, and the third is God’s Rest. Had the Israelites entered the Promised Land when God told them to, they would have entered in the 50th Jubilee from Adam, i.e. in God’s Rest. Instead, because of their disobedience, God made them wait another 38 ½ years in the wilderness, so when they finally entered, it was not in a Jubilee year. As a result, their calendar had Sabbath years and Jubilees that were not in alignment with God’s Creation Jubilee calendar.

(Read Heb. 3:12-13) Considering all that we have looked at thus far, the author of Hebrews gives us this admonition. “Today” with the Israelites could have been a single day, such as the day they refused to hear God’s voice at Mt. Sinai, or the day the spies gave their report, or it could have been 40 years. “Today” is an indefinite period of time for us. Usually, to us as individuals, I believe, it is a person’s lifetime. A person has that length of time to be justified by faith, then having been justified by faith, to learn to obey God’s Word, unless the resurrection occurs during one’s lifetime. In the big picture, it is until the first resurrection.

(Read Heb. 3:14-16) In verse 14 we’re told, **“For we are made partakers of Christ, IF we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end.”** Note the condition, the “if.” But referring to the analogy that the author has used of the Exodus to explain our relation to Christ, we know that this is not talking about justification, or salvation, as most people express it. As we have already stated, the fact that the people had faith to believe the blood of the lamb would protect them from the death angel is equivalent to one having the faith to accept the blood of the true Lamb, Christ Jesus, to protect one from the second death, i.e. one is justified by faith. What this verse is talking about is Sonship. Not

only did the people have to have the faith to leave Egypt, but they had to go to Mt. Sinai and then on to the Promised Land. Endurance to the end is required to attain to Sonship, or the first resurrection.

The word “beginning” in verse 14 is from the Greek word *arche* which means first, or primary, or beginning. It also means “chief.” The word “confidence” is the Greek *hupostasis*, the same word we looked at in Hebrews 1:3 last lesson which means “substratum, what lies under,” or foundation. It is also used to refer to title deeds, the proof of ownership, so to speak. We could look at verse 14 then as saying that we are made partakers of Christ, IF “we hold the chief ruler of our foundation, or our title deeds, steadfast unto the end. Heb. 11:1 says, **“Now faith is the substance (*hupostasis*) of things hoped for, the evidence (*elenchus*, “proof”) of things not seen.”** In Hebrews 1:3, we saw that Christ is the imprinted seal of heaven that certifies the validity of God’s title deed to the kingdom. So we could say here that we will inherit Sonship if we hold fast to the Chief Ruler of our title deed.

(Read Heb. 3:16-19) Unfortunately, the example, or analogy that the author of Hebrews is using is a negative example. The people of Israel did not have the faith they needed to enter into God’s Rest, i.e. the Promised Land at the appointed time. Verse 16 indicates that not all that came out of Egypt provoked God. We know that Joshua and Caleb, and their families, who had come out of Egypt with Moses, were able to go into the Promised Land. But the vast majority died in the wilderness. Joshua and Caleb would compare to the overcomers that will attain to the first resurrection, thus immortality, while the vast majority will remain mortal, i.e. they will be subject to death until the second resurrection.

(Read Hebrews 4:1) Because “salvation” has become the overriding theme of most Christian churches today, there is a failure to understand the symbolism that the author of Hebrews is allegorically using here from Psa. 95. This is not talking about salvation, it is something beyond justification that we have to strive for. The Promised Land is not heaven. Rather it is the promises of God that we have had from the beginning. As individuals, it is the promise of life in the Age, i.e. participation in the first resurrection and living and reigning with Christ a thousand years. (Rev. 20:4) Not all Christians believe in 2 resurrections, though I believe the Scripture to be quite clear on the subject, but I realize that most Christians that do believe in the two resurrections, believe that all Christians will be in the first resurrection and the non-Christians will be in the second resurrection. To understand that this is not so, let’s compare Rev. 20:4-6 with John 5:28,29. (Read Rev. 20:4-6) I think it is obvious that only Christians are included in this group that are in the first resurrection. (Read John 5:28,29) In this resurrection we’re told that all that are in the grave will be resurrected. However, some will be resurrected to life and some will be resurrected to judgment. Obviously, we are not speaking of the same resurrection in both Scriptures. In Revelation, only Christians will be resurrected, a partial resurrection, whereas in John he is speaking of a resurrection in which all that are in the grave will be resurrected, some to life and some to judgment. So it was with Israel, the vast majority were judged in the wilderness with only a few of those who left Egypt with Moses, Joshua and Caleb and their families specifically, ultimately entering the Promised Land. As we said above, the Promised Land is not heaven, as opposed to hell. The Promised Land is the fulfillment of God’s planned kingdom on earth. This is what Heb. 4:1 exhorts us to attain to.

(Read Heb. 4:2) While we have, for the most part, limited the term “gospel” to only the news of Jesus Christ, in reality, the “gospel” is God’s Word, whether spoken by God or man. This verse tells us that the “gospel” was not new, as it was preached to the Israelites in the wilderness. This does not

necessarily mean that it was as understandable as it is to us today, after the fact. However, the gospel of the cross was preached to Israel by means of the Passover Lamb and the attendant ceremonies. While it would appear that the majority of the people did not understand the prophetic significance, still for them to obey killing the lamb, putting its blood on their doorpost and then packing up and leaving Egypt required more faith than some of us have or have had in the past. Verse 2 does not mean that they had no faith at all as they certainly had faith enough to leave Egypt. But they did not have enough faith to hear God at Mt. Sinai nor to go into the land at the appointed time. The focus was not on their leaving Egypt, but upon hearing God's voice at Mt. Sinai. Rom. 10:17 tells us, **"So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God."** The people refused to hear God, saying they would rather hear from Moses than from God. Because they preferred to hear a man rather than God, though Moses told them what God told him, it did not produce faith in them. This refusal to hear God carried over to them not really hearing Moses, though he told them what God told him.

It is unfortunate that many people are discouraged from hearing God's voice, i.e. His Word, by their pastors and teachers as these pastors and teachers don't want them to hear anything that might not agree with their opinion. When I was in the service, I was attending a church one Sunday evening and the preacher told the congregation that they did not need to read the Bible as he would tell them what they needed to know. Needless to say, I never went back.

Getting back to Heb. 4:2, since the people refused to hear God, and since faith cometh by hearing, they did not have the faith to enter the Promised Land at the appointed time.

(Read Heb. 4:3-5) The Ferrar Fenton translation translates the first part of verse 3, **"But we, the believers, may enter that rest (although He said..."** i.e. though God had said of the Israelites that refused to go into the Promised Land, **"They shall not enter into my rest."** The author is saying that the believers now would go in. He and the other writers of the New Testament assumed that everyone would hear God's word and that instead of being limited to just justification by faith, they would all advance through sanctification and would be in that first resurrection. This turned out not to necessarily be so, the same as it is today. However, entering God's rest for the Israelites meant going into the Promised Land. The question then comes up, How was going into the Promised Land, God's rest? The last part of verse 3 plus verses 4, 5 helps answer this question, though we may need some extra explanation. The idea of resting comes from the law of the Sabbaths. Referring back to what we have already said about the 3 Sabbaths, the Sabbaths are based on the pattern established by God on the seventh day of creation. Each Sabbath was a different level of rest. In the final Sabbath, the Jubilee, God's rest, all debt was cancelled. Had the Israelites gone in at the appointed time, it would have been at the 50th Jubilee from Adam, i.e. 2450 years from Adam. Since all sin incurs a debt, it is interesting to speculate on what God's rest would have meant. Because they refused to go in at that time, they had to wait 38 ½ years to go in at which time their calendar started the jubilee count but it was not in alignment with God's original Jubilee count. At any rate, the Israelites were not allowed to enter God's rest at that time.

(Read Hebrews 4:6-9) The Sabbath rest that remains is the Jubilee. It is a time of cancellation of debt, i.e. the liability of sin. Historically Israel never kept the land Sabbaths until the time of Ezra. By the time of David, they had accumulated 62 land Sabbaths and 8 Jubilees that they had not kept, i.e. 70 rest years. These were owed to God. God foreclosed in a strange way. He caused David to number the people without collecting the half shekel atonement money that God commanded Moses to collect in

the first census. (Ex. 30:11-13) This removed their protection and God slew 70,000 men of David's army, 1000 men for each rest year. This story is in II Sam. 24. The people still didn't learn their lesson as their time debt again grew to 70 years again at the time of the Babylonian captivity. II Chronicles 36 tells us that the Judahites spent 70 years in captivity to the Babylonians and verse 21 then says, **"To fulfil the word of the LORD by the mouth of Jeremiah, until the land had enjoyed her Sabbaths for as long as she lay desolate she kept Sabbath, to fulfil threescore and ten years."** When the people returned from the Babylonian captivity, they began to keep the land Sabbaths, but refused to keep the Jubilee. Thus verse 9 of Hebrews 4 tells us **"there remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God."**

(Read Heb. 4:10) This refers to Christ and helps explain what God's rest is. (Read Isa. 58:13-14) We consider the weekly Sabbath, the first level of rest, to be a time of physical rest and study of God's Word. The second level of rest, we begin to learn to cease from our own works even as Jesus Christ did nothing of Himself, but only what He saw His Father do. (Read John 8:28, 29) also (Read John 12:49, 50) also (Read John 14:10) Jesus had entered into the "rest" which Heb. 4:9 tells us still remains. This is the highest Sabbath that God has intended for man from the beginning. It is to cease from one's own works, and desist from speaking one's own words and do only what the Father does and to speak only the Father's words.

We begin to learn this in the second level of rest, Pentecost, through the leading of the Holy Spirit. Keep in mind that the Pentecost offering was 2 loaves baked with leaven. The leaven has to be killed by baking, i.e. by fire or the law as it is written on our hearts. It is a time of training, of maturing.

(Read Heb. 4:11) The example of disobedience he is referring to was the refusal to enter the Promised Land at the appointed time. As a result, God would not allow them to enter His "rest" at that time.

(Read Heb. 4:12, 13) The word "quick" in the King James means "living." It is not just the Word of God, but as Heb. 1:2 says, it is spoken by the Son, One who has entered the "rest" of God. As Heb. 2:1 tells us, **"Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard."** When this twoedged sword is spoken, it truly is sharper than any man's sword. In I Cor. 14:24, 25, Paul says that if Christians were in agreement in preaching God's Word, **"But if all prophesy, and there come in one that believeth not, or one unlearned, he is convinced of all, he is judged of all: And thus are the secrets of his heart made manifest; and so falling down on his face he will worship God, and report that God is in you of a truth."** There is nothing hid from God and His Word lays bare who and what we are before Him.]

Getting back to the book of Numbers, recall in chapt. 16 that Korah, a Levite conspired with a couple men of the tribe of Reuben and gathered some 250 men to them and then approached Moses and Aaron challenging Aaron's authority as High Priest in particular. They were all destroyed as a result, but so that there was no question as to Aaron's authority coming from God, chapter 17 relates the story of God having Moses go to each tribe and having their leader, including Aaron as leader of the Levites, give him a rod after writing their names on their rod.. Moses was to then take the rods and set them in the tabernacle overnight. God told Moses that He would give as a sign to the children of Israel that the man's rod that would bud and bloom overnight would be the one He had chosen. The next morning, not only had Aaron's rod budded and bloomed, but it was already producing almonds. The children of Israel saw and understood their sin in questioning God as to whom He gave authority to and who He did not.

Chapter 20 tells us that the people had traveled to the desert of Zin and that the people dwelt in Kadesh, which was on the border of Edom. Miriam, Moses' sister died there and was buried there. There was a shortage of water which again brought the people grumbling to Moses. God instructed Moses to take his rod and gather all the people together and then to speak to the rock and water would come out of it abundantly for all the people. We're not told where this rock was, the fact that it is "the rock" speculation is that it could have been the rock that Jacob anointed with oil after using it as his pillow at Bethel and continued to carry with him. At any rate, Moses had lost patience with the people and instead of just speaking to the rock, he took his rod and struck the rock. (Read Num. 20:10-11) Because Moses did not sanctify God before the people in doing this, God told Moses that he would not be the one to lead the children of Israel into the promised land.

Chapter 20 also tells us that though Moses requested permission from the Edomites to cross their land and promised that they would not harm the land in any way, the Edomites refused to let them cross through their land. While they were near the border of Edom as they traveled around Edom, they came to Mt. Hor. While there, Aaron died and Eleazar, his son, became the High Priest.

The king of the Canaanites engaged the Israelites in battle and at first seemed to succeed, but when the Israelites turned to God, they were able to overcome the Canaanites and totally destroyed their cities. However, because they had to go around the land of Edom, the people became quite discouraged and complained to Moses about not having enough to eat and enough water. God sent fiery serpents among the people and those that were bitten by them died. The people repented and asked Moses to intercede to God for them to deliver them from the serpents. God instructed Moses to make a serpent of brass and set it on a pole. When someone was bitten, they could look at the serpent on the pole, an indication of their trust in God for healing, and they would live. Later on in King Hezekiah's time, the people began to worship the brass serpent, so Hezekiah destroyed it.

Numbers 21 lists a number of places that the Israelites traveled to in their wanderings eventually working their way to the north and east of the land of Canaan. When they came to the land of the Amorites, they requested permission to pass through the land from Sihon, their king. He refused permission and came out against the Israelites. The Israelites defeated Sihon and his army and took possession of the land of the Amorites and lived in their cities. The king of Bashan also came against the Israelites and suffered the same fate as Sihon.

As the Israelites came to the land of Moab, we find a rather interesting story beginning in Numbers 22. (Read Num. 22-24) At first this appears that Balaam did what was right. In spite of the reward that was offered him, he blessed Israel instead of cursing them. However, we see he made a major mistake that tells us of his true character. In Num. 22:20-21, note the instructions that God gave to Balaam, and then how he ignored the instructions and went before the men Balak had sent came to him. This tells us, I believe, of his desire for treasure. The apostle Peter, in II Peter 2:15-16, compares false teachers to Balaam. (Read) Also the apostle Jude condemns those who have **"ran greedily after the error of Balaam for reward."** Apparently, what Balaam did after God made him bless the Israelites is not recorded in Numbers, but is found in Rev. 2:14. (Read) It appears that when Balak's request to Balaam to curse the Israelites failed when Balaam blessed them, Balaam then taught Balak to have his young women to seduce the Israelite men and cause them to take up the religious practices of the Moabites. Because of what Balak, king of Moab, did here in resisting the Israelites instead of helping them, God forbade any Moabite from ever being accepted into the congregation of Israel. For an

Israelite to marry a Moabite would then have been considered fornication. God is warning the church at Pergamos, or the people of the Pergamos church age against allowing these false teachers to exist in the church, or congregation.

If we go on in Numbers 25, we see the result of what Balaam did. (Read Num. 25:1-13)

The Israelites have now moved into the lands of Moab and Ammon on the east side of the Jordan River and are about ready to move into the land of Canaan from the east. Numbers 26 records the command of God to Moses to number all the men of Israel, with the exception of the Levites, from 20 years old and upward. When they were to move into the land of Canaan, the land was to first be divided by lot to the different tribes. Then the land was to be further divided based on the numbers of men in the various families within the tribes. The total number of men 20 years old and upward was 601,730. Then Moses numbered the Levite men from one month old and upward. This number was 23,000. The Levites were not numbered with the rest of Israel because they were not to receive a land inheritance. When this census was taken, there was not a man in all of Israel that was numbered in the first numbering at Mt. Sinai with the exception of Moses, Caleb, the son of Jephunneh, and Joshua, the son of Num. Remember that Moses has been forbidden from going into the land so Caleb and Joshua are the only men of the original numbering that will enter the land.

A problem develops however. A man named Zelophehad, of the tribe of Manasseh, had five daughters and no sons. When this numbering took place, these daughters came to Moses and told him that they felt it not fair that their father's family would not have an inheritance because he had no sons and since he had died in the wilderness leaving only his daughters. Moses brought the matter before God. God's solution to the problem was to give the daughters a possession among their father's brethren, i.e. their father's inheritance would pass to the daughters. This was then to be a law in the future that if a man died having only daughters, his inheritance would pass to the daughter or daughters. If he had no daughters, then the inheritance would pass to his brethren, and if he had no brethren, then it was to go to his father's brethren. If his father had no brethren, it would then go to the nearest next of kin. The one stipulation that God put on the daughters of Zelophehad was that they were to marry within their own tribe, as we will see later in our study.

God then told Moses what was to happen to him. He was to go up into the mountain range called Abarim from which he could view the land of Canaan and then he would be gathered to his people as Aaron had. There were still some things that Moses had to do however. The first was the selection of someone to take his place. (Read Num. 27:15-23)

We'll continue our look at the history of Israel as they prepare to move into the land of Canaan in our next lesson. JRL