

May 26

Scriptures: Read Numbers 10 & 11

Key Verse: “Has the Lord’s arm been shortened? Now you shall see whether My word will befall you or not.” (Numbers 11:23)

Overview

Before the Israelites could begin their journey, God gave the final necessary details for their orderly march. Various distinguishing trumpet blasts served to summon the people, indicate certain feasts, give a warning, sound an alarm of war, unite the people and indicate times to advance. In obeying the sounds of trumpet, they were obeying God, for Moses would order the blasts only after hearing from the Lord. One day there will come a heavenly trumpet sound signaling the meeting of the believers in the air with the Lord (1 Thess. 4:16).

After the Israelites were camped in the desert of Sinai for about a year, and after everything was put in order as the Lord commanded, He lifted the cloud from over the sanctuary and their journey to the Promised Land began. The twelve tribes, priests and Levites all took their proper places according to the instructions of the Lord. It was only by divine leading and the people’s obedience that an orderly march of so vast a multitude was possible. We read that the Lord led them to a resting place (10:33), for the journey through that rough terrain was not easy, but with God’s guidance it was made possible.

After only three days of the journey, the children of Israel began to complain. They took their eyes off God and looked at their situation in the bleak wilderness. God’s anger was aroused and His judgment fell upon them by a fire until Moses interceded. Many of those who were farthest from God’s sanctuary were consumed (11:1). They were probably the mixed multitude, most of whom had no desire to draw near to God and had stirred up discontentment, having a bad influence upon the Israelites, causing them to become dissatisfied with the manna God had given and to long for the foods they had eaten in Egypt. People who are not interested in spiritual things and always complain about their situation are not good company for one seeking to follow the Lord.

Moses was greatly disturbed and cried out to God, showing how very human he was and how great a burden it was for him to lead such a people. God did not want Moses to bear this burden alone, nor does He want us to be heavy-laden with burdens. He would gladly release stress from His people, if they would but ask and give it over to Him (Matt.11:28). God was merciful to Moses and understood His discouragement. Likewise, He understands us when we are in the midst of trials. He will take us through them, lifting us up and giving us comfort.

God made Moses’ load lighter by the appointment of the seventy men to be of assistance. Upon these He placed the same Spirit as He had given Moses. Moses, being humble and not seeking self-glory, was pleased with this, wishing that all the people had God’s Spirit upon them (11:29). The work of the Holy Spirit is clearly evident throughout the whole Bible. Just as His Spirit was necessary upon the leaders then, so it is needful for spiritual leaders today.

God's second answer to Moses' dilemma concerning the people's lustful request for meat was to miraculously send the quail around their camp that they might be easily caught (11:31-32). However, it proved to show the foolishness of their desire, for they ended up being sick of it after one month of nothing but quail. Those who gluttonously gorged themselves, eating to satisfy their greedy, sinful lusts (without thanks to God for His provision), were struck by a fatal plague, killing many; so the meaning of the place is "graves of lust (craving)" (11:34).

The Lord proved to everyone that He was able to do what He had told Moses (11:23; cf. Isa.59:1-2). He did oblige them and gave them their request—a request, which was not in His will. So the result was "leanness into their soul" (Ps.106:15; cf.78:26-31). Let us desire only those things which are pure and in keeping with the Lord's desires, that our souls may be nourished (Phil.4:8; Col.3:2), for "godliness with contentment Is great gain" (1 Tim.6:6).

Prayer

Lord, You said that if we would delight ourselves in You, You would give us the desires of our hearts, and because we do delight in You, we want only what you want. Please continue to reveal Your will to us in Your Word and by Your Spirit.