

JOSHUA - A MAN CALLED JOSHUA
EXODUS (Numbers - Joshua)
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INTRODUCTION. You may have heard someone sing the Gospel song about Joshua and the Battle of Jericho. There was a time when children sang it in Vacation Bible School. It went like this:

Joshua fit the battle of Jericho
Jericho, Jericho
Joshua fit the battle of Jericho
And the walls come tumblin' down, Hallelujah

Joshua fit the battle of Jericho
Jericho, Jericho
Joshua fit the battle of Jericho...
And the walls come tumblin' down, Hallelujah...

Little Jennilee Hayes did her own take on that in Vacation Bible School back when she was a little girl. Jim and Karen Hayes, and their four children, were like members of our family when I was their pastor, and they often visited in our home. My son Mark often sat with them during worship services and it was not unusual to see one of the younger Hayes children sitting in his lap. Neither her family nor our family has ever forgotten Jennilee's version of The Battle of Jericho. In Bible School she was heard singing:

Cherry Coke, Cherry Coke
Joshua fit the battle of Cherry Coke
And the walls came tumblin' down.

I could remember when Coca-Cola came out with the Cherry Coke, and even I knew those were not the original words to that song. However, children do not always hear words the way we do. Jennilee's brother Jonathan was about four years old when he asked my wife Rebecca, "Do you have any snacks at your house?" She assured him she had a snack for him, but his mother Karen whispered to her that Jonathan was confusing "snack" with "snake." He had slipped out of his upstairs window, caught hold of the antenna pole and slid down to the ground, with no one knowing he was outside. When he looked down there was a snake between him and the nearest door, so Jonathan climbed back up the antenna pole and crawled back into his room. It was only when he told his family about the "snack" that they knew he had escaped and climbed down the pole and then back up it. But, knowing my wife, I am sure Jonathan got his snack.

What Jennilee said was amusing. What Jonathan did was remarkable. But if you think

that was remarkable, let me tell you the story of one of the most remarkable people who ever walked on this earth. He is the one who, in the power of the Lord, actually 'fit the battle of Jericho,' and he saw the walls come tumblin' down.

I. JOSHUA IS GIVEN COMMAND OF ISRAEL'S ARMY.

A. A Young Man Named Joshua Became Commander in Chief.

1. Joshua had no prior military training. He had been a slave in Egypt, but he commanded an army in the wilderness: "The Israelites traveled from Rameses to Succoth, about 600,000 soldiers on foot, besides their families." (Ex 12:37, HCSB) That really is amazing, especially when you consider the size of a division in the United States Army. The late General Dutch Shoffner was a brilliant man and after he retired he served as Vice President for Lockheed Martin for ten years. High ranking military offices often visited him at his home to consult with him. During the Cold War, General Shoffner (a three star) commanded the Third Infantry Division, which consisted of 20,000 men. I have always been interested in the military, so I had an expert to whom I would turn when I had a question about the military. Sometimes I would ask General Shoffner a question and he would give me a detailed answer. At other times Dutch simply volunteered information.

I kept a file of information so that I could read it again if I needed that information. I found a note in my Bible from Dutch in which he told me that one of his jobs was to evaluate 50 - 51 Lieutenant Colonels. He stressed that you cannot do that unless you get to know them and their work. It was important for him to get to know them. General Shoffner's wife Beverly died in December, 2013 and Dutch died early in January, 2014, leaving two sons, General Al Shoffner and COL. Andy Shoffner, who provided valuable information for me when I was working on the Exodus Experience, which is posted under Articles on SermonCity.Com.

The point here is that LTG Dutch Shoffner commanded a division, made up of 20,000 men and Joshua commanded 600,000 men - with no prior military training. Of course, the Supreme Commander was the Lord. That number of men had been reason enough for Pharaoh to impose an especially harsh form of slavery on all the Israelites, and a birth control program that demanded that all male babies be killed at birth or thrown into the Nile. God delivered Moses, whom He would call and sent back to Egypt to ask Pharaoh to let the people go. After ten plagues sent upon the Egyptians, He let the people go and Moses placed Joshua over that untrained army.

2. Moses must have had some reason for naming Joshua to head the army. How many slaves in the entire history of the world have learned to command an army of 600,000 newly released slaves? They had spent their lives working with stone, gems, wood, and other materials, but they had no military training at all. They had seen a lot of

Egyptians commanding small units, but this was something totally different. How would a novice train, and deploy such a large army? All we can be sure of is that he had a Commander in Chief in Moses, and a Supreme Commander who could provide miraculous victories.

If it were essential for us to know why Joshua was chosen by Moses to command the troops that information would have been provided. However, this question still intrigues me. Why Joshua?

- 1) Was it his physical appearance? Remember Saul, who stood head and shoulders above other men in Israel?
- 2) It could not have been because he was a freed slave. There were about two million of them.
- 3) We can be sure Egypt did not train him to command an army. They trained men for certain crafts in the school of artisans down in the Valley of Kings. The Israelites had a lot of men and women who had been trained by the Egyptians to work with various fabrics, gold, silver, brass, wood, and animal skins. The men they had trained plundered Egypt of all the materials they would need in the wilderness, even though they had no idea what the Lord planned to do with those materials.
- 4) Joshua may have caught Moses' attention because of his appearance. Was he strong, attentive, and alert? But were there not many like that?
- 5) Was it because of the way he handled himself during the escape? Did he help others? Did he position himself between the charging Egyptians and the terrified Israelites? Did he go out of the way to help widows, orphans, mothers with babies or small children?
- 6) Was he recommended to Moses by those who knew him? Neighbors often knew those with genuine leadership ability. Popularity would not be the issue in facing the challenges of the journey to Sinai, and the march through enemy territory as they marched to the Promised Land.
- 7) Is it possible that Moses observed his strength, courage, and leadership during the Exodus. Maybe he helped others in crossing the Red Sea.
- 8) Or, is it possible that the Lord called Moses' attention to Joshua? Of course, there may have been a number of factors in Moses' choice of Joshua as the military leader of the Israelites during the Exodus. They were going to need a very special person. He would have to be intelligent, intuitive, alert, committed to the Lord and His mission. Joshua seems to have been just the right person, especially when we consider the fact that the choice was the Lord's and not just that of Moses. The Lord had some long range plans

for Joshua no one else would know at the time.

B. Joshua Led of Israel's Army During the Attack by Amalek, Ex. 17:8-16.

1. The Israelites were attacked by Amalek, Ex. 17:8. When the Israelites were attacked Joshua was ready to lead the former slaves in battle. We read about the battle in Exodus 17:8-16.

“At Rephidim, Amalek came and fought against Israel. (9) Moses said to Joshua, “Select some men for us and go fight against Amalek. Tomorrow I will stand on the hilltop with God’s staff in my hand.” (10) Joshua did as Moses had told him.” (Ex 17:8-10, HCSB)

Pay close attention to verse 10: “Joshua did as Moses had told him.” His obedience to the Lord and to Moses must have been a key to his skill in warfare. Joshua suddenly appears on the scene as far as the written record is concerned. However, knowing Yahweh, and knowing Moses, there must have been more to it than that. God obviously chose Joshua to command His army and Moses would have helped prepare him for any attack by an enemy.

Many popular Bible characters revealed blemished or flawed characteristics. Samson and David are prime examples, but there is something special about Joshua. Moses sent him on a mission and there is no indication anywhere that he argued, compromised, or tried to shirk his duties. Joshua knew what Moses commanded under these circumstances was from the Lord, and in any command he was given there is no indication that he ever tried to get out of an assignment. Joshua was not only a man of courage, he was a man of obedience. He seems to have had an instinct for desert warfare, but there is one thing we must never lose sight of here: Joshua and the Israelites did not win this war. God defeated the Amalekites, Israel didn't. There are many battles in life that you and I cannot win in our own strength, wisdom, or cunning. Only God can give us the victory.

The Jamison-Fausset-Brown Bible Commentary carries a note here that is worth noting, whether we agree with it or not.

“Some time probably elapsed before they were exposed to this new evil; and the presumption of there being such an interval affords the only ground on which we can satisfactorily account for the altered, the better, and former spirit that animated the people in this sudden contest. The miracles of the manna and the water from the rock had produced a deep impression and permanent conviction that God was indeed among them; and with feelings elevated by the conscious experience of the Divine Presence and aid, they remained calm, resolute, and courageous under the attack of their unexpected foe.” [– Jamieson-Fausset-Brown Bible Commentary - after this, JFB-

BC]

This statement may well be right, but I have my doubts on two points. I agree that the people seemed to make a deep commitment to the Lord after He met their need during each crisis. However, they continued to rebel each time there was a new crisis. How much worse could things have gotten than when they prevailed upon Aaron to make the golden calf at Sinai?

[For more on the battle with Amalek, see Bible study, "Then Came Amalek" (No. 06 in the Exodus Series) by this writer posted under Articles on SermonCity.Com.]

It would seem logical to credit Joshua and the Israelites with the victory over the Amalekites, but regardless of their excitement after being given manna to eat and water to drink, the next time they were faced with a crisis, they did not look to the Lord to see how He would deliver them this time, they complained, fussed, and threatened Moses.

2. The Amalekites knew about the Israelites. When they heard they had left Egypt they knew where they were going and why. In fact, they were related to the Israelites. The Amalekites were descendants of the grandson of Esau (Gen. 36:12), so the old hatred had never abated, nor been forgotten. However, some commentaries will not agree with me.

"The reason for the fight is quite evident. The water and vegetation in the area were insufficient to support two large tribes with their herds (Beetle; Cole). The problem of sustaining two large herds of different owners is well reflected in the story of Abraham and Lot (Gen. 13:5-7) and in the dispute over water rights between Isaac and Abimelech the Philistine (Gen. 26:12-22). The Amalekites' aggression is recalled in 1 Samuel 15:2 when Saul fought the Amalekites, then located in the area of northern Sinai (1 Sam. 15:7)." [New Commentary on the Whole Bible - Old Testament - after this, NCWB]

The statement that the attack on Israel by the Amalekites had something to do with water and vegetation may well miss the point. What if the key factor is the Land of Canaan? But how could that be? Let us take a closer look at the situation. This excellent commentary accepts the world of other OT students (Beetle and Cole) on this point and their claim might make more sense if we accepted the traditional placement of Mt. Sinai at the northern part of the Sinai Peninsula. However, as I have pointed out in other studies, adventurers Bob Cornuke and Larry Williams and a very interesting family, the Caldwells, Jim, Penny, and their son and daughter spent a lot of time at a different site, which is supported by a statement by Paul in Galatians 4:25: "Mount Sinai in Arabia." It is the opinion of this writer that the Amalekites were not motivated as much by grass for sheep, as by the destination of the Israelites. These Amalekites knew they were headed for the Land of Canaan. After all, had the Lord not promised that land to Abraham over five hundred years earlier? The land would belong to his descendants,

but only after they had lived in a strange land for 400 years. They had been there 430 years. If a prostitute (Rahab) in Jericho knew God had given the descendants of Jacob that land, surely the Amalekites may have known it.

Word of the drowning of the Egyptian cavalry and the destruction of their chariots would have spread like wild fire throughout the region. However, after singing praises to Yahweh, when they became hungry and did not see food, and when they were thirsty and did not see water, they rebelled and threatened Moses. What better time to destroy their ancient enemies than at that point? The people were discouraged, complaining against Moses, and even desiring to return to Egypt where, in spite of the persecution and the death of the male babies, had food to eat.

Many things fit the site visited by Cornuke and Williams and by the Caldwells who visited Mt. Sinai 14 times over 8 years. The mother of Constantine had designated the site at the tip of the traditional Sinai Peninsula as the site for Mt. Sinai. Would you have argued with her? I didn't think so. Bob Cornuke took his Bible and calculated the distance from one stop to another: from the Red Sea to the bitter springs of Marah, and then to Elim: "They departed from Marah and came to Elim. There were 12 springs of water and 70 date palms at Elim, so they camped there." (Num 33:9) Cornuke said that if you can find Mt. Sinai in Arabia you can find the crossing place where they came out of the Red Sea, and if you can find the crossing place you can find Mt. Sinai (in Arabia).

The Lord was providing everything His Chosen People needed, when they needed it. Why not just have all the food packaged and waiting at a series of springs along the way? If pagan gods could do something like that I am sure they would attempt it. However, Yahweh, the Creator, Redeemer, Sustainer, is not like the so-called gods of the pagan nations. He is not trying to con the people into following Him, He is testing them to see whether or not their faith is genuine, and to help them grow in faith and commitment to Him. He tests us every day. Do we recognize those tests? Often, even with more information, and a under a New Covenant, we fail Him over and over. Now, the Chosen People are about to face a new challenge to their faith. "Then came Amalek" (KJV).

(8) "At Rephidim, Amalek came and fought against Israel. (9) Moses said to Joshua, "Select some men for us and go fight against Amalek. Tomorrow I will stand on the hilltop with God's staff in my hand."

(10) "Joshua did as Moses had told him, and fought against Amalek, while Moses, Aaron, and Hur went up to the top of the hill. (11) While Moses held up his hand, Israel prevailed, but whenever he put his hand down, Amalek prevailed. (12) When Moses' hands grew heavy, they took a stone and put [it] under him, and he sat down on it. Then Aaron and Hur supported his hands, one on one side and one on the other so that his hands remained steady until the sun went down. (13) So Joshua defeated Amalek

and his army with the sword.” (Exodus 17:8-13)

When Joshua and the Israelites were fighting the Amalekites on their own they were losing, but when Moses raised the rod they began winning. In time, Moses had to have help to hold the rod up, so “Aaron and Hur supported his hands.” (17:12)

A VALUABLE LESSON: The believer will face many tests or challenges in this life and if he tried to fight those battles on his own he will find that he is no match for the forces of Satan. It is only in the power and spirit of the Lord that he will experience the victory. This is a lesson all true believer need to learn early in their walk with the Lord.

On their own, the Israelites were no match for the Amalekites, but in the Lord they were assured of victory. The Amalekites were kinsmen of the Israelites and no doubt hated them, as had other descendants Esau down through the years. They probably had not worried about the Hebrews as long as they stayed in Egypt, but when they began marching away from Egypt they, knowing the prophecy, made a serious effort to stop them from going back to Canaan. This is not about grass and sheep as much as it is a conflict between ancient enemies, the descendants of Jacob (Israel) and the descendants of Esau (Amalekites, Edomites, etc). In reality this was a battle between the forces of God and the forces of the devil, just as he had tempted Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden.

With spies all over the region, and with caravans moving from country to country, it would not have taken very long for all the people of the region to know that two million Israelites were leaving Egypt, and they may have known that among those two million people there were 600,000 men who could bear arms against an enemy. Those nations would have followed their progress as they moved from place to place.

The Amalekites were the descendants Amalek, the grandson of Esau, the twin brother of Jacob, whose name was changed to Israel. The Amalekites sent an army out to destroy the Israelites. We can be sure the Amalekites had known of the Exodus, if Rahab, the harlot in Jericho, knew about it. Of course, forty years had passed before the Battle of Jericho, but if Rahab knew that the God of the Israelites had given Jericho to them, you can be sure the Amalekites, who lived much closer than Jericho, would have know about the Exodus and deliverance of the Israelites across the Red Sea by their God. We can also be sure Satan had fanned the flames of hatred that otherwise may have died out many generation earlier.

The Amalekites were the bitter enemies of the Israelites, and if they conquered the land of Canaan they would be a threat to other nations of the region. There is more, however: they simply hated them and wanted to destroy them while they had the advantage. We will understand this a little better when we read the next verses:

(14) “The Lord then said to Moses, “Write this down on a scroll as a reminder and recite it to Joshua: I will completely blot out the memory of Amalek under heaven.” (15) And Moses built an altar and named it, “The Lord Is My Banner.” (16) He said, “Indeed, [my] hand is [lifted up] toward the Lord’s throne. The Lord will be at war with Amalek from generation to generation.” (Ex 17:8-16, bold added by this writer)

There would come a time when the Lord would enable his people to destroy the Amalekites, but that would be a long time in the future. In the interim, the Amalekites would continue to wage war against the Israelites from generation to generation. The Lord sent King Saul out to destroy the Amalekites, who had been a thorn in the side of Israel for 400 years, but Saul sinned against the Lord and was rejected as king over the Chosen People. Now, three thousand years later, other descendants of Esau (and Ishmael) constantly cry out they will “kill all Jews and drive them into the sea.” However, David would be used by Yahweh to defeat the Amalekites (1. Sam. 30)

I believe it was Major Ian Thomas who compared the continued attacks by the Amalekites on the Israelites to the world (the flesh) which is continually at war with the true believer. We can see why Major Thomas compared the statement, “The Lord will be at war with Amalek from generation to generation” (Ex. 17:16), to the battle that rages between the spirit and the flesh. Victory over the Amalekites was God’s victory, not Joshua’s, just as a victory over the flesh is accomplished by the mighty hand of God. Saul might have destroyed the Amalekites if he had obeyed the Lord completely, but he did not do that, and because of his disobedience to the Lord, he was rejected as king over Israel. David then defeated them because he was completely obedient to the Lord.

We do not defeat either the devil or the flesh by compromise, by fighting the battle for our own glory, or fighting the battle in the flesh and not in the Spirit. The battle against the flesh is a battle each believer must fight every day. The more we deal with the issues of the flesh the more we realize that we cannot win the battle against Satan in the flesh, nor can we win it in our own power. When Joshua and the Israelites were fighting in their own power, they were losing, but when Moses held up his staff Yahweh gave them the advantage, and ultimately the victory. So it is with us today. Satan welcomes us to fight him in our own power, but flees from the presence of or Redeemer.

II. JOSHUA WAS MOSES’ ASSISTANT.

A. Moses Received the Ten Commandments at Sinai. (Ex. 20).

[For comments on the Ten Commandments, see the Exodus Series, written by this writer, posted under Articles on the SermonCity.Com web site, Dr. J. Mike Minnix, Creator and Editor]

Immediately after Israelites came near Mt. Sinai God revealed His glory to them. The

word Glory is used 344 times in the HCSB, so it is not a word we should dismiss too quickly. But, what does it mean? "The weighty importance and shining majesty which accompany God's presence. The basic meaning of the Hebrew word kabod is heavy in weight." [Holman Bible Dictionary] The Hebrew word (kabob) translated glory denotes something heavy

"All the people witnessed the thunder and lightning and the sound of the trumpet, and saw the mountain surrounded by smoke, and they trembled and maintained their distance from it. They even said, "Don't let God speak to us, or we will die." (Ex. 20: 19)

"Moses spoke to the people and assured them that God was testing them "so that you will fear Him and will not sin." "And the people remained standing at a distance as Moses approached the thick darkness where God was." (Ex. 20:21)

B. Joshua Receives a New Title.

Joshua is named Moses' assistant (24:13). Those who followed Jesus during His ministry on earth were called disciples. The word translated disciples had a dual meaning: (1) a follower; and (2) a learner. So, a disciple was one who followed after to learn from another. That is exactly what the twelve disciples did: they followed Jesus and learned from Him. Disciples should grow in His grace and knowledge and obey His Great Commission. In much the same way, Joshua followed Moses and learned from him. He learned both by Moses' example and from his instructions. That is not to equate following Moses with following Jesus, but the concept and the benefits are very similar, especially since Moses was following Yahweh through one of them most amazing times in the history of the world. Who else has ever been called to come up to the top of a mountain to meet with God? And what assistant has ever been assigned the task of following God's servant half way up the mountain, staying with him six days, and ten waiting for 40 days for him to return? No man had ever walked with Yahweh as did Moses, and Joshua was with him almost all the time.

Young Joshua is becoming a very important person among the Israelites at Sinai. He has seen the Lord provide both manna for food and an abundance of water from a rock. He has seen His power released against the Amalekites. He had seen the glory of the Lord manifested as He came down on the mountain in smoke and fire. Explorers Larry Williams and Bob Cornuke, to whom I have alluded in other studies, climbed on top of the mountain and found that the top was black while the rest of the mountain below that was a sandy color. The Caldwells, a family of explorers who visited the site 14 times over a period of eight years, confirmed that. What does that mean? It is evidence of an intense fire on the mountain. They broke open some of those black rocks and found that on the inside those black rocks a sandy color with a hint of red. The black peak on Mt Sinai was a testimony to presence of Yahweh and His glory, as were the

altar and stone columns around the base of the mountain.

Now we come to the next step at Sinai (Ex. 24:13ff).

(13) "So Moses arose with his assistant Joshua and went up the mountain of God. (14) He told the elders, "Wait here for us until we return to you. Aaron and Hur are here with you. Whoever has a dispute should go to them." (15) When Moses went up the mountain, the cloud covered it."

According to The New Commentary on the Whole Bible, "There is a circular valley or hollow a good way up on the brow of Jebel Musa, which may have been their halting place, while Moses alone was privileged to ascend the highest peak. The people stood below, as in the "outer court," the elders in the "holy place," Moses, as a type of Christ, in "the holy of holies." [NCWB]

Moses left Aaron and Hur with the people and took Joshua with him as they ascended the mountain. Does this mean that the people below could not see Moses and Joshua because of the cloud? Apparently so. Why would Moses have needed an assistant halfway up the mountain and covered by a cloud? Each one, no doubt, benefitted from the presence of the other, but beyond that we are not given any information.

(16) The glory of the Lord settled on Mount Sinai, and the cloud covered it for six days. On the seventh day He called to Moses from the cloud. (17) The appearance of the Lord's glory to the Israelites was like a consuming fire on the mountaintop. (18) Moses entered the cloud as he went up the mountain, and he remained on the mountain 40 days and 40 nights." (Ex 24:13-18)

Joshua is simply referred to as Moses' assistant at this point, but when did he become his assistant? We are not given this information, but the command of the army of Israel was an honor, so maybe he has been named Moses' assistant before the attack by this enemy. The Lord was certainly the One behind Moses' choice of Joshua as his assistant. Why, however, would Yahweh want Joshua to spend those six days with Moses on the side of the mountain, well above the great crowd of the Israelites? We are not given that information, but neither are we told that we cannot hypothesize just a little. So, does it not seem reasonable that the Lord would so honor the man who would someday take Moses' place as the leader of His Chosen People? Joshua would lead in the conquest of Canaan, the training of the people, and in establishing a place of worship once they were in control of the land. Joshua would depend upon what Moses had written both for worship and daily interaction within the tribes and communities.

There is yet another thought that may have some merit, and that is another aspect of Joshua's training for the great challenge that was still ahead for him. We see in the Scripture dealing with the Exodus and the Wilderness experience a general rebellion

against Yahweh, involving both the leaders and the people. Who would have believed that Aaron and Miriam would have rebelled against Moses and against the Lord? Who was the one leader who never rebelled against the Lord, or against Moses, as far as the written record reveals? Joshua! Of course, Caleb was found faithful, too. Who was chosen and trained to be the commander in chief of Israel's Army? Who was it who never bowed before pagan gods? Joshua! Who was it who established both the strategy and tactics for the Conquest of Canaan? Well, we could give Joshua credit for that, but let us be perfectly honest here - God provided both. At the same time, it was Joshua who would act for Him during the Conquest.

There is another matter to consider. While Moses was at the top of Mt. Sinai, what were the people doing? They were rebelling against the Lord, pressuring Aaron to make them a golden calf which they could worship as they had done in Egypt. Not only did the masses sin, the leaders sinned against the Lord, and the sin they committed was detestable. Joshua was protected from all of that. Not only was Moses on top of the mountain, Joshua had both the six days he spent with Moses and then the forty days Moses spent alone with the Lord on top of Mt. Sinai. In his own way, Joshua, while he did not have the same mountain peak experience Moses had, still had time alone with Yahweh. If there is one thing of which we can be sure it is that Joshua would never forget this experience.

“Moses went up into the mount of God – He was called to receive the divine transcript. Joshua was taken a little higher, and it would be a great comfort for the leader to have his company during the six days he was in patient waiting for the call on the seventh or Sabbath day.” [NCWB]

In verse 16, we are told that when Yahweh called Moses he went into the midst of the cloud. He had apparently been in the cloud for six days (vs. 15), but now, the cloud either moves higher up the mountain, or it becomes more dense. We are told that Moses was on the mount forty days and forty nights. He returned to the mountain primarily to receive the tablets of stone (24:12) and perhaps to obtain the instructions for Israel's sanctuary (25:1ff.).

C. Joshua Was Exposed to Trials Along with Moses.

1. His faith was tested on the side of the mountain. For forty days and nights Joshua waited on the side of Mt. Sinai for Moses to come back down the mountain. We are not told a number of things: (1) Did Joshua have any idea what was happening to Moses on top of the mountain? (2) Did Joshua see or hear any of what Moses heard? (3) What did he eat, or did he eat during the 40 days Moses was on top of the mountain? (4) How did he spend his time on the side of the mountain? We might ask other questions, but perhaps it would better to try to draw some conclusions from what we do know. We know that Joshua was unwavering in his commitment to the Lord. We know that Moses

rejoined him when he came down from the top of the mountain where God revealed His glory to Moses. We know that this was a time of testing for Joshua, and that he seemed to have passed the test. We also know that Joshua stood with Moses and not with the people in their rebellion.

2. Joshua stood with Moses and with the Lord when the people rebelled. We also know that God was not taken by surprise by the rebellion on the part of those Jews whom He had delivered from bondage in Egypt. Is it possible that Yahweh, who was not taken by surprise by the rebellion of the people, was protecting Joshua from their influence? Why would He do that - if He did that? First, Joshua had already commanded the entire army of the Israelites and won the battle with the Amalekites. However, they prevailed only when Moses's staff was raised, but when his staff was lowered the Amalekites prevailed. That is a lesson every Christian should learn and the way he or she should learn in the battles we face in life. There are spiritual battles which we cannot win in our own strength. We can sing Victory in Jesus all we want to, but if we do not enter that battle in the power of the Holy Spirit we will have lost before the battle begins.

3. Joshua saw how quickly those who had been blessed by the Lord may turn against Him. He had seen his people delivered from bondage by Yahweh, only to doubt Him, complain against Him and His appointed leader. Now, after being delivered from a bitter, vile form of slavery, from hunger and thirst in the wilderness, and from the Amalekites, they openly rebel against the One who had delivered them, the only one who could grant them the victory. Joshua was there with Moses and observed everything. We read of this in Exodus 32:

(17) "When Joshua heard the sound of the people as they shouted, he said to Moses, "There is a sound of war in the camp." (18) But Moses replied: It's not the sound of a victory cry and not the sound of a cry of defeat; I hear the sound of singing!" (Ex. 32:17-18)

When Moses saw the vile idolatrous celebration among the people who had been delivered by the Lord to serve Him, his response was immediate, animated, and violent. He slammed down the stone tablets on which Yahweh had inscribed the Ten Commandments, and then destroyed the idol, and chastised Aaron. Joshua was there, and he is learning.

(19) "As he approached the camp and saw the calf and the dancing, Moses became enraged and threw the tablets out of his hands, smashing them at the base of the mountain. (20) Then he took the calf they had made, burned [it] up, and ground [it] to powder. He scattered [the powder] over the surface of the water and forced the Israelites to drink [the water]." (Ex. 32:19-20)

Moses chastised his older brother and Aaron offered a feeble and absurd explanation:

(22) "Don't be enraged, my lord," Aaron replied. "You yourself know that the people are [intent] on evil. (23) They said to me, 'Make us a god who will go before us because this Moses, the man who brought us up from the land of Egypt – we don't know what has happened to him!' (24) So I said to them, 'Whoever has gold, take it off,' and they gave [it] to me. When I threw it into the fire, out came this calf!" (Ex. 32:22-24)

If Aaron's explanation seems so weak it is almost ludicrous, just read what Moses did:

(25) Moses saw that the people were out of control, for Aaron had let them get out of control, resulting in weakness before their enemies. (26) And Moses stood at the camp's entrance and said, "Whoever is for the Lord, [come] to me." And all the Levites gathered around him. (27) He told them, "This is what the Lord, the God of Israel, says, 'Every man fasten his sword to his side; go back and forth through the camp from entrance to entrance, and each of you kill his brother, his friend, and his neighbor.'" (28) The Levites did as Moses commanded, and about 3,000 men fell dead that day among the people. (29) Afterward Moses said, "Today you have been dedicated to the Lord, since each man went against his son and his brother. Therefore you have brought a blessing on yourselves today." (Ex. 32:25-29)

This was a day that would live in the minds of these people for many years to come, and in the story of the Exodus for centuries to come. Moses charged the people with a "grave sin": "The following day Moses said to the people, "You have committed a grave sin. Now I will go up to the Lord; perhaps I will be able to atone for your sin." (Ex. 32:30, bold added for emphasis)

This story would be told, taught, and preached until the end of time. And Joshua was there. He saw it all. He heard it all, and he saw how Moses handled it. He was also learning what it meant to be an intercessor between the people and the Lord. As a matter of fact, Joshua lived out these years in the presence of one of the great intercessors in the history of the world. In the Book of Jeremiah, the Lord reveals that Moses and Samuel were two of the greatest intercessors in the history of Israel: "Then the Lord said to me: "Even if Moses and Samuel should stand before Me, My compassions would not [reach out] to these people." (Jer 15:1, (HCSB) In this passage we see an example of Moses interceding for Israel:

(31) So Moses returned to the Lord and said, "Oh, these people have committed a grave sin; they have made a god of gold for themselves. (32) Now if You would only forgive their sin. But if not, please erase me from the book You have written." (Ex 32:17-35)

D. Moses Set Up the Tent of Meeting, 33:1-11.

1. The sins of these people were very serious. If you and I can learn from the rebellion of

the Israelites at Sinai, including their incredible turn to idolatry, we can be sure Moses and Joshua learned a lot from the way the Lord responded to it.

“The Lord spoke to Moses: “Go, leave here, you and the people you brought up from the land of Egypt, to the land I promised to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, saying: I will give it to your offspring. (2) I will send an angel ahead of you and will drive out the Canaanites, Amorites, Hittites, Perizzites, Hivites, and Jebusites. (3) [Go up] to a land flowing with milk and honey. But I will not go with you because you are a stiff-necked people; otherwise, I might destroy you on the way.” (4) When the people heard this bad news, they mourned and didn’t put on their jewelry.” (Ex 33:1-4)

Centuries earlier, God promised Abraham He would give the land of Canaan to his descendants, but only after they had lived in a foreign country for 400 years. They had actually lived in Egypt 430 years, but who is counting? The Lord had proved Himself through the ten plagues, He had proved Himself at the Red Sea, and He had proved Himself in the wilderness by providing food and water, and by His victory over the Amalekites. He had proved Himself at Sinai by revealing His glory. And still, when Moses was on the mountain forty days they wanted to return to the worship of gods which could do absolutely nothing for them.

The response of Yahweh must have been shocking. He said, I am going to send you into Canaan and give you the land - but I will not go with you. He was even more blunt than that: “otherwise, I might destroy you on the way.”

This paragraph elaborates on the previous statement (32:34). The sin of Israel had created a separation (Isa. 59:2); therefore, “I will not go up in the midst of thee; lest I consume you on the way . . .” (33:3). We have already been told that the glory of God at the mountain was a “consuming fire” (24:17). He could not tolerate sin and thus had to distance himself from his people so that they would not be destroyed. [New Commentary on the Whole Bible, OT]

2. Moses set up a tent outside the camp. Joshua, his assistant, was there all the time, and he would not forget this experience.

(7) Now Moses took a tent and set it up outside the camp, far away from the camp; he called it the tent of meeting. Anyone who wanted to consult the Lord would go to the tent of meeting that was outside the camp. (8) Whenever Moses went out to the tent, all the people would stand up, each one at the door of his tent, and they would watch Moses until he entered the tent. (9) When Moses entered the tent, the pillar of cloud would come down and remain at the entrance to the tent, and [the Lord] would speak with Moses. (10) As all the people saw the pillar of cloud remaining at the entrance to the tent, they would stand up, then bow in worship, each one at the door of his tent. (11) The Lord spoke with Moses face to face, just as a man speaks with his friend. Then

Moses would return to the camp, but his assistant, the young man Joshua son of Nun, would not leave the inside of the tent." (Ex 33:7-11)

We do not have to wonder or speculate: Joshua was there! He was not waiting on the side of the mountain, he stayed in the tent! The young assistant to Moses was learning, growing, and being motivated.

"This was not the tabernacle, which was yet to be constructed. Rather, it was a tent belonging to Moses, which he set up for the special purpose of communicating with God. God showed His approval of this arrangement by the "cloud" (v. 9). Verses 7-11 are parenthetical, explaining the manner of Moses' communicating with God."
[Believer's Study Bible Notes - after this, BSB Notes]

If I may take the liberty, I would like to stress one of the Ten Commandments: "Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain" (Ex.20:7). The HCSB has, "Do not misuse the name of Yahweh your God, because Yahweh will not leave anyone unpunished who misuses His name." Literally, the commandment forbids us from using God's holy name casually. For years, I have heard people exclaim, "Oh, my God!" over anything from a trivial situation to a serious accident. The social media has reduced that to OMG. What is wrong with that? It seems that when I hear those words the speaker is not in a prayer mode. Recently, my son told me he read a posting on someone's face book page that the previous Sunday the "Holy Ghost showed up and He showed out!" In the first place, the appropriate word from the Greek NT is Spirit, not ghost. In the second place, I would never think of saying of the Third Person of the Trinity, "He showed out." It seems to me that it is an even worse offense against the Holy Spirit to say He doesn't even exist. And what about my former New Testament professor who, in a pastor's conference, announced that he wished people would stop using the word Trinity because "that word is not found in the New Testament." The word may not be found in the Bible, but the Three Persons of the Trinity, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, are found over and over.

It is especially interesting that Moses set up his tent outside the camp of the Israelites for the purpose of communicating directly with the Lord. While we are looking at this tent we must not confuse it with the Tabernacle which would soon be built and set up in the midst of the Twelve Tribes. It was at the Tabernacle that the high priest would offer up offerings and enter the Most Holy Place once each year to make atonement for himself and for the people of Israel. It is both interesting and informative that before the Lord made Scripture available to the people,

"God used Moses to be the mediator of His word. Unlike the later prophets, who would receive that word in dreams and visions, Moses spoke with God "face to face," i.e., directly or immediately. The expression does not mean that Moses saw God's face or pure essence (cf. vv. 20, 23; Num 12:6-8)." [BSB Notes]

We may still be reaping the benefit of God's blessings on America because of a time when a much higher percentage of Americans actually believed in Him, and understood the importance of obeying Him. In a recent Letter to the Editor of a well-known daily newspaper, someone seemed to be taking Christians to task for believing in one God. He claimed that Americans worship three gods, a Christian God, a Jewish God, and a Muslim god. Americans worship many gods, but the Founders believed in the God of the Bible, Who is worshiped through His Son Jesus Christ. Sadly, many who claim to believe in the God of the Bible do not live for Him, and if we do not obey Him we cannot expect Him to bless us.

A well-known Christian told me he had read that America began turning away from the Lord in 1950 and that he had seen predictions that we might have only another 35 years to repent and get right with the Lord. Neither he nor I are making definite predictions, but if we cannot see the need for revival there may be something seriously wrong with our appraisal of our situation and our relationship with the Lord. A recent article on the attitude of Millennials shows a serious falling away from God and His Word in the current generation. We should be reminded that, even though God has blessed us as no other nation in history, He will not walk in sin with us.

Along with Carl F. H. Henry and C. S. Lewis, the late Francis Schaeffer were recognized by many as the greatest theologians of the Twentieth Century. Dr. Henry, who spoke to my Systematic Theology Class may have been the deepest in a narrow theological range, but Francis Schaeffer seemed to go deeper in a much wider range of disciplines, from theology in the classroom to music, art, and a variety of other subjects. Dr. Schaeffer once said that England entered the post-Christian era in its history in 1895, America in 1935. In either case, acceptance of evolution may well have been a key factor - or liberalism opened the door to evolution. It is interesting that Dr. Schaeffer's date for America follows the Scopes Trial (Monkey Trial) in Dayton, TN in 1925 by ten years. In those eighty years since that trial, there has been a falling away from the Lord in America. Even though many Christians anticipated a revival in America during the fifties and sixties, we soon discovered that there was a falling away from the Lord going on in some quarters. In 1962 -63 the Supreme Court removed prayer and Bible reading from public schools, and William Bennet pointed out in his Moral Index that morals had suffered drastically from those decisions.

3. Joshua was a witness to the most amazing events since Noah's Flood. He walked beside the greatest leader since Abraham, witnessed the greatest miracles since Noah, learned the most incredible laws, rules, and ordinances in history, and participated in the first complete sacrificial system Yahweh had ever given anyone at any time. He was there when they built the Tabernacle. He was there on the first ever Day of Atonement. He saw the Lord provide for His chosen people, protect them, and even punish them when they rebelled against Him.

In an earlier Bible Character study I made the statement that Joseph reminds me more of a New Testament believer than most people in the Old Testament, with the possible exception of Samuel, Enoch, and Elijah, and certain other prophets. The more I study the life of Joshua, the more I wonder if he should not be listed with those godly men. He was a close and loyal associate of the man with whom God spoke as he had not spoken with anyone since Adam and Eve. He may not have even considered the task for which Yahweh was preparing him, but he remained focused on the Lord and he continued to follow his servant Moses.

III. THE TIME HAD COME FOR THE CONQUEST OF CANAAN, Num. 10ff.

A. It Was Time to Leave Mt. Sinai, Num. 10:1-10.

1. God told them to make two trumpets of hammered silver. These two trumpets would sound to command their march as they left Sinai and headed for Canaan and the Conquest. The order and length of time of the trumpets' blast would assemble the leaders, determine everything from the moving of the Tabernacle and the sacred vessels, to the order of the tribes in the march, to the control of battle in the Conquest.

(9) "When you enter into battle in your land against an adversary who is attacking you, sound short blasts on the trumpets, and you will be remembered before the Lord your God and be delivered from your enemies. (10) You are to sound the trumpets over your burnt offerings and your fellowship sacrifices and on your joyous occasions, your appointed festivals, and the beginning of each of your months. They will serve as a reminder for you before your God: I am the Lord your God." (Num 10:9-10)

The sound of the trumpet would be a reminder of the presence of the Lord as well as over offerings and sacrifices. Yahweh stressed that, "The trumpets would serve as a reminder that "I am your Lord." Wouldn't it be wonderful if we still had trumpets to remind us of the presence of the Lord? Absolutely! But, we have something far greater today. We have, not a thing, but a Person, as we are reminded in the farewell discourse of Jesus. The earliest disciples has the distinct honor of walking with Jesus along the sea shore and mountain paths, the joy of hearing Him teach and preach. Many saw Him on the cross and many others saw the risen Lord from the time of His Resurrection to His Ascension. Could anything be better than that? Yes it can. On the Day of Pentecost, Jesus asked the Father and He sent the Third Person of the Trinity to indwell each born again believer. Can anything be better than that? Not until Jesus comes for His church. Yahweh never left His Chosen People alone in the wilderness, any more than He leaves the saints alone in the world today.

2. We have the historical record of the departure from Mt. Sinai. The stop at Sinai was for a purpose and they would not be ready for the Conquest until after they received

the directions for worship, the Sacrificial system, ordinances, and laws by which they were to live. Everything happened as the Lord commanded Moses. Moses then gave the information to the leaders from each tribe. The amazing thing is the historical recorded that have been preserved for 3400 or so years.

“During the second year, in the second month on the twentieth [day] of the month, the cloud was lifted up above the tabernacle of the testimony. (12) The Israelites traveled on from the Wilderness of Sinai, moving from one place to the next until the cloud stopped in the Wilderness of Paran. (13) They set out for the first time according to the Lord’s command through Moses.” (Num 10:11-13)

The Lord was very specific in ordering each step the Israelites were supposed to take. At times, the detail in the orders and instructions of the Lord amaze us. Today, we not only have the Word of God to guide us every day, each believer has the divine Author, the Holy Spirit, dwelling in his or her heart to guide them each step along the way. Today, many professing Christians acknowledge the reality of the Holy Spirit, yet do not sense His presence in every day issues.

Sadly, the behavior of the Israelites in the wilderness mirrors the life of the modern day Christian who lives out his or her life in the flesh. They walk among the saints, profess faith in Jesus Christ, attend church services - unless something more important that God comes along (hunting, fishing, a rodeo, shopping at the mall, the latest movie). They may sing in the choir, read their “daily Bible reading,” and say their prayers. Some may also gripe about the pastor, take pot shots at the pianist, or gossip about Deacon Jones or the choir director. Others may sit quietly on Sunday and withhold their thoughts about fellow church members, and avoid any behavior that would bring attention to the fact that they are not as excited about the ministry of the church as are certain other members.

Mary Jane was always in church - when the doors were open, Mary Jane was going to be there! She not only attended worship services, she was there for Sunday School and prayer meeting. She also gossiped about her neighbors, cut down fellow members with the sharpest tongue in the community, and commented on everyone in her neighborhood. She would help gather food and clothes for a “needy family” but only after she has spoken against it. Some neighbors insisted that Mary Jane not only talked about men in her community, she also talked with one or two of them often enough to catch the speculative eye and “wondering” mind of some close neighbors. However, once each year Mary Jane manifested the life of a godly young woman who prayed for revival, attended all the services, sang hymns with enthusiasm, invited neighbors, and convince the pastor and evangelist that the ministry of the church revolved around her. One summer, Mary Jane walked out into the yard where two boys were throwing a baseball and walked right up to young Jimmy and asked, “When are you going to accept Jesus as your Savior?” He was shocked to think that he might be lost. During the

revival service that evening he could hardly wait for the evangelist to finish his sermon so he could “walk the aisle.”

Once in a while, especially during a revival or Vacation Bible School, Mary Jane would become so enthusiastic she seemingly could not contain herself. She was never emotional during a service - just excited as she talked with others after the service - especially the visiting evangelist, her pastor, and church leaders. To this day “Jimmy” remembers that it was the question Mary Jane asked him that the Holy Spirit used to bring him under the conviction of sin, to an awareness that he was lost, to the moment he professed Jesus as his Savior and Lord. After he made his profession of faith he could not understand why all his friends were laughing and joking - just like he had done the night before - when something of such magnitude had happened to him!

Mary Jane may remind us of those wilderness believers who would enthusiastically profess their faith in Yahweh, and pledge their commitment to Him, only to turn on Moses and Aaron “at the drop of a hat” (if they had only had a hat!). How could they promise to follow the Lord one moment, only to rebel against Him and Moses the next? Explain how the Mary Janes of this world can live in what we may consider to be hypocrisy for most of the year, but get so excited about following the Lord once or twice a year. The fickle commitment of those Israelites mirrors the professing Christian who lives out his life in the flesh. This was just the beginning. During the next forty years they would walk in the wilderness when they might have flourished in the land flowing with milk and honey, better known as the Land of Promise.

3. The youthful Joshua was there. He had already demonstrated that he was no ordinary young man when he led the war against Amalek. He, Moses, and others realized that the victory over the Amalekites was not the result of his leadership or the military art and prowess of the Israelites. Moses had told Joshua to select some men to go up and fight against the Amalekites. We are not told that he took the full army of Israel into battle that day. He took a select group and as the battle raged, the Amalekites prevailed until Moses held up the staff he had used to part the water of the Red Sea so the Israelites could cross on dry land. Neither Moses nor the people of Israel could boast that they had defeated the Amalekites. They prevailed when Moses held up his staff, but when he lowered it the Amalekites prevailed. There is no way Joshua could have known what the Lord had in store for him in the future, but he would soon be involved in planning for the conquest of Canaan.

4. God was in command. In the Scripture we read just a moment ago, we find a statement that characterized the marches of the Israelites from Mount Sinai: “They set out for the first time according to the Lord’s command through Moses.” (Num 10:13) This is the pattern: (1) they marched according to the Lord’s command, and (2) There was His command, which was given through Moses. So it was on the first march, from Mt. Sinai to Paran, and so it was on future marches. So it is with us today. Every day.

God had given us commands, the commands are recorded in His Word under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, who illuminates our hearts and minds to understand and obey His commands.

B. Twelve Spies Were Sent to Scout Out the Land of Canaan.

1. Each of the twelve spies represented a different tribe. Their names are given in 13:4-15. "These were the names of the men Moses sent to scout out the land, and Moses renamed Hoshea son of Nun, Joshua" (Num. 13:16). "For reasons not entirely clear, Moses changed the name of Hoshea (ho[^]s[?]e⁻a?, "salvation") to Joshua (yeho[^]s[?]u⁻a?, "Yahweh is salvation")." [BIBLE KNOWLEDGE COMMENTARY - after this, BKC]

The amazing thing here is that we have such detailed records of such amazing happenings that transpired in those ancient time, and in such a remote area. In the first place, the Lord had determined hundreds of years earlier that there would be twelve tribes. When Jacob blessed his twelve sons, there as something very unusual about that the blessings. Joseph was one of the twelve sons of Jacob (Israel), but even after all he had done to protect and provide for his father and his brothers, Joseph did not get an inheritance. There is no tribe of Joseph. But there was a greater blessing for Joseph. He had two sons (Ephraim and Manasseh) and each received an inheritance with the sons of Israel. In other words, he had a double blessing in that both of his sons received an inheritance. Furthermore, those two tribes would one day be dominant tribes in the Northern Kingdom. They are at times referred to as the tribes of Joseph. These tribes were named for the sons of Jacob, or Israel, and for the sons of Joseph, but that had been some 430 years earlier. At Sinai, each tribe was given its place around the Tabernacle when they camped. As they marched away from Sinai, the parched according to the Lord's commands. They were commissioned to march by military divisions to Paran. They set out for a three day march:

"Whenever the ark set out, Moses would say: Arise, Lord! Let Your enemies be scattered, and those who hate You flee from Your presence.

(36) When it came to rest, he would say: Return, Lord, to the countless thousands of Israel." (Num 10:35-36)

Yahweh was in charge of every march and Moses acknowledged His sovereign control. Even after all the signs the Israelites had seen, they continued to complain and rebel against the Lord. See Numbers 11:4-15. Moses even complained to the Lord, asking what he had don't to cause the people to rebel as they had. The interesting thing is that the Lord did not reject these people and start over, just as He on one occasion told Moses He would do. At that time, Moses interceded for his fellow Israelites and Yahweh heard him. To help Moses deal with these people he anointed 70 elders to help him to work with these people.

2. Miriam and Aaron rebelled against Moses (Numbers 12). Miriam, most commentaries seem to agree, was the instigator in criticizing Moses, and the main object of the criticism was that Moses had married a Cushite woman (older translations have Ethiopian woman). One source has "a Cushite woman (so all recent translations). This woman is thought to be a different wife, other than Zipporah. But this is unlikely since no mention is made of a second marriage. It is more likely that Cushite is a synonym for Midian as in Habakkuk 3:7" [New Commentary on the Whole Bible - NCHB]. Miriam's main argument seems to have been that the Lord had given Moses increasing power, but that which motivated her seems to have been whether or not God spoke only to Moses, and not to others, but the fact that Moses was married to a Cushite woman.

Some have suggested that Moses may have married a second woman, but it is possible that Miriam resented Moses' increasing leadership role, but focused on his marriage to the Cushite woman. We are told here that, "Moses was a very humble man, more so than any man on the face of the earth. (Num 12:3)

(4) "Suddenly the Lord said to Moses, Aaron, and Miriam, "You three come out to the tent of meeting." So the three of them went out. (5) Then the Lord descended in a pillar of cloud, stood at the entrance to the tent, and summoned Aaron and Miriam. When the two of them came forward, (6) He said:

"Listen to what I say: If there is a prophet among you from the Lord, I make Myself known to him in a vision; I speak with him in a dream. (7) Not so with My servant Moses; he is faithful in all My household. (8) I speak with him directly, openly, and not in riddles; he sees the form of the Lord. So why were you not afraid to speak against My servant Moses?" (9) The Lord's anger burned against them, and He left." (Num 12:3-9, bold added for emphasis)

We are told that the Lord's wrath was focused on Miriam, the obvious instigator of the attack on Moses. It seems that there may well have been two issues for Miriam. First, she may simply have been jealousy of the Cushite woman, and second, she may have been jealous of Moses' increasing authority.

This, while it had nothing to do with the sending out of the 12 spies, it deals with the leadership role to which God had called Moses. It is a sad fact of history that, even after the ten plagues, the crossing of the Red Sea, the defeat of the Amalekites, and all they had seen at Mt. Sinai, his own sister and brother still questioned his authority.

One may well wonder what all of this has to do with Joshua. In the first place, Joshua spent some forty years serving a man like no other the Lord has placed on this earth. The Scripture tells us that, "Moses was a very humble man, more so than any man on the face of the earth." (Num 12:3)

A young man, especially one who does not know the Lord, may be more impressed with a big, arrogant, macho type of man. Such a young man may need to be around a genuinely humble man for a number of years before he really appreciates the value of his humility. Read the Sermon on the Mount and you will see the kind of person Jesus approves.

Here, the Lord makes known His methods of communicating with certain prophets. He said that He speaks to them in dreams and visions. We may recall His communications with Abraham, Jacob, and Joseph, to whom He spoke in various ways. Here, Yahweh states clearly: "Not so with My servant Moses; he is faithful in all My household. I speak with him directly, openly, and not in riddles; he sees the form of the Lord." (Num. 12:8-9) Joshua spend years at the right hand of the most humble of men, and the one man to whom God spoke more directly than anyone else since the Garden of Eden. The Lord had plans for Joshua and He made sure he was trained for the task.

3. Next, the spies are commissioned. A leader from each of the twelve tribes was chosen to scout out the land of Canaan and their names are given in Numbers 13:4-15. All twelve men are listed and identified with the tribe they represented. Our focus, however, will be upon two of those spies: Joshua, with whom we are already acquainted, and Caleb. Joshua represented the Tribe of Ephraim, the younger son of Joseph (who received the blessing instead of his older brother Manasseh) and Caleb of the tribe of Judah, the leading tribe, the tribe of King David. It was also the tribe from which the Messiah would come. Moses chose them as the Lord instructed him, and there can be no doubt that he communicated the Lord's plan to the spies.

4. The twelve spies are instructed. They were commissioned to go into the land of Canaan, Now, they receive instructions as to what they should observe and report on when they returned:

"When Moses sent them to scout out the land of Canaan, he told them, "Go up this way to the Negev, then go up into the hill country. (18) See what the land is like, and whether the people who live there are strong or weak, few or many. (19) Is the land they live in good or bad? Are the cities they live in encampments or fortifications? (20) Is the land fertile or unproductive? Are there trees in it or not? Be courageous. Bring back some fruit from the land." It was the season for the first ripe grapes." (Num 13:17-20)

This information was critical for their purpose. They were to scout out the land, not only for the military might, but also for proof that Canaan was indeed a land "flowing with milk and honey."

5. The spies scout out the land. They traveled from the Negev, the southern most regions of the land, to the extreme north of what might be considered the Land of Canaan. They

traveled along the backbone of the land and then returned by the same, or very similar route. The entire report on the direction they took is brief:

“So they went up and scouted out the land from the Wilderness of Zin as far as Rehob near the entrance to Hamath. (22) They went up through the Negev and came to Hebron, where Ahiman, Sheshai, and Talmai, the descendants of Anak, were living. Hebron was built seven years before Zoan in Egypt. (23) When they came to the Valley of Eshcol, they cut down a branch with a single cluster of grapes, which was carried on a pole by two men. [They] also [took] some pomegranates and figs. (24) That place was called the Valley of Eshcol because of the cluster [of grapes] the Israelites cut there. (25) At the end of 40 days they returned from scouting out the land.” (Num 13:21-25, HCSB)

They traveled the full distance from the southernmost area to the extreme north and then returned by basically the same route. A logical question is how they traveled. Did they travel in pairs, or did the twelve spies travel together? The people of the various nations would have paid attention to strangers, unless it was a trade caravan. One or two people traveling alone may have invited trouble from lawless man who preyed on strangers. What we do know is that they were all back in the Valley of Eshcol at the same time, and they returned to Moses at the end of 40 days.

Here is one problem: if they had traveled together all that distance would they not have attracted attention from army groups in various countries? That would have placed their mission in danger. Also, if they had traveled together, would they not have expressed the doubts and fears to each other that they expressed to Moses and the multitude? Did the spies express their fears to each other while on their mission? They feared the armies and they feared the descendants of Anak.

If they traveled in pairs, is it not reasonable to assume that Caleb and Joshua traveled together. Their report would suggest that. Otherwise, would they have expected the other ten spies to give such a negative report that the masses would panic? Of course, from the time they cut the huge grape cluster until they arrived back at the encampment, the ten spies may have expressed their fear, but their initial fear may not have hinted at the ultimate panic.

6. The spies report, Num. 13:26-29. The spies all agreed that the land of Canaan was indeed a land flowing with milk and honey. They brought back some of the fruit of the land. Reports are that the region still produces large, sweet grapes. There was just one problem, according to ten of the twelve spies. The land was occupied by the Anak. The spies reported:

“there we saw the giants, the sons of Anak — The name in Hebrew means “neck,” and is apparently an expression to note their height. The epithet “giant” evidently refers here to stature. (See comments on Gen. 6:4.) And it is probable the Anakim were a

distinguished family, or perhaps a select body of warriors, chosen for their extraordinary size. We were in our own sight as grasshoppers – hyperbole by which the spies gave an exaggerated report of the physical strength of the people of Canaan.”
[NCWB]

The Israelites were frightened by the report of the ten spies who were convinced that they could not conquer the land of Canaan. How could these people do that? They had:

- a. Seen the ten plagues in Egypt
- b. Walked across the Red Sea on dry ground
- c. Seen the bitter springs of Marah become sweet
- d. Seen God’s gift of manna every morning
- e. Seen the rock split and drunk the fresh water
- f. Seen the glory of God at Sinai
- g. Received the Ten Commandments and the Law
- h. And promised to obey the Lord

And still, they rebelled against Yahweh! How could they panic and rebel against Yahweh now that everything was set for the conquest of Canaan? Did they not know that while they could not defeat the people of Canaan, they followed a God who could? The God whose Tabernacle they had built, whose altar they had built, and whose Ark of the Covenant they had built was not intimidated by the pagans who occupied the land.

C. Caleb and Joshua Stand Firm.

Caleb and Joshua never wavered. They had seen the hand of God from the beginning, and they trusted Him. Let me stress here that trust in the Lord does not mean that an individual has a special perceptivity as to the workings of God, nor does it mean that the believer is wiser than all others. Sadly, America witnessed the confusion caused by certain tele-evangelists back when television was in its early stages. First, there were those sadly untrained people who were manipulated by the same shallow, emotional evangelists who had once traveled around the country warning people that the television was a “one eyed demon” and they should avoid it like the plague. I remember the reports that large numbers of people attended a well-known camp an hour or so from Memphis, where the main “evangelist” at the camp insisted that everyone bring their television sets and turn them over to the evangelistic team. Not too many years later, a few of those evangelists became televangelists and whatever they said on TV became the gospel to their faithful viewers.

I was about thirteen years old when a lot of people from my home community went to Memphis to see if one particular tent evangelist could heal a lady from our community who was both deaf and mute from birth. Virginia stood in line and gradually made her way to the stage where she stood in front of the man whose fame was growing in the

mid-south. I saw the man slap her on the forehead and proclaim, "HEALED!"

She was not healed. They explained later that the lady may have gotten out of her place in line. That makes me wonder what happened to the person who got her place in line! After that evangelist became a televangelist, money came pouring in, and as the man's fame grew he started a college. Years later, returning from a Bible study in Nebraska, I drove my family through that university and enjoyed seeing some remarkable buildings. A service station attendant heard a man from my area talk about the campus and said, "If you think that is something you ought to see his mansion." The young man replied, "His mansion? Where is his mansion?" The service station attendant told him where to drive to look through the gate at the mansion. The neighbor said, "I have sent them my last dime!"

Sadly, that was not the end of the story. The day I drove through the campus that evangelist reportedly claimed that he had seen someone die in a service while he was preaching, "and I raised him from the dead." At least, that was what he was reported to have said.

Sometime before that trip I received a phone call from a lady who attended our services from time to time. She said her health would not let her come every Sunday. When I arrived at her home she announced that she had been to a doctor who told her she had cancer and needed surgery. She wanted me to pray with her, and assured me she had already sent her prayer cloth to this same evangelist and to another one. She refused surgery, and months later I was on vacation when I received the call that she was in a hospital. I arrived at her bedside around midnight. She had waited too late, and she had trusted the wrong people to call on the Lord to heal her.

Caleb and Joshua were not televangelists. They stood before the people and urged them to trust the Lord and obey Him.

(30) "Then Caleb quieted the people in the presence of Moses and said, "We must go up and take possession of the land because we can certainly conquer it!"

(31) But the men who had gone up with him responded, "We can't go up against the people because they are stronger than we are!" (32) So they gave a negative report to the Israelites about the land they had scouted: "The land we passed through to explore is one that devours its inhabitants, and all the people we saw in it are men of great size. (33) We even saw the Nephilim there – the descendants of Anak [come] from the Nephilim! To ourselves we seemed like grasshoppers, and we must have seemed the same to them." (Num 13:16-33, HCSB)

Young Joshua joined the seasoned Caleb in pleading with the people to trust the Lord and obey Him.

(5) Then Moses and Aaron fell down with their faces [to the ground] in front of the whole assembly of the Israelite community. (6) Joshua son of Nun and Caleb son of Jephunneh, who were among those who scouted out the land, tore their clothes (7) and said to the entire Israelite community: "The land we passed through and explored is an extremely good land. (8) If the Lord is pleased with us, He will bring us into this land, a land flowing with milk and honey, and give it to us. (9) Only don't rebel against the Lord, and don't be afraid of the people of the land, for we will devour them." (Num 14:5-9)

D. Yahweh Might Have Destroyed the Nation Because of their Rebellion.

1. He would have been within His rights to destroy such a rebellious people.

(11) The Lord said to Moses, "How long will these people despise Me? How long will they not trust in Me despite all the signs I have performed among them? (12) I will strike them with a plague and destroy them. Then I will make you into a greater and mightier nation than they are." (Num 14:11-12, bold added by this writer)

2. Moses interceded for the people (Num. 14:13-19). While the Lord would have been justified in destroying this faithless nation, Moses did that for which he is often remembered. He interceded for his people and the Lord heard him. Jeremiah, as we remember, was inspired to reveal the depth of the commitment to intercessory prayer demonstrated by Moses and Samuel: "Then the Lord said to me: "Even if Moses and Samuel should stand before Me, My compassions would not [reach out] to these people." (Jer 15:1).

3. The Lord answered Moses.

"Then the Lord spoke to Moses and Aaron: (27) "How long [must I endure] this evil community that keeps complaining about Me? I have heard the Israelites' complaints that they make against Me. (28) Tell them: As surely as I live," [this is] the Lord's declaration, "I will do to you exactly as I heard you say. (29) Your corpses will fall in this wilderness – all of you who were registered [in the census], the entire number of you 20 years old or more – because you have complained about Me." (Num. 14:26-29)

Yahweh swore emphatically: (14:30) "I swear that none of you will enter the land I promised to settle you in, except Caleb son of Jephunneh and Joshua son of Nun."

E. The Wilderness Experience Began Immediately.

1. Israel paid a price for disobeying God. And what a price it was! But wait a minute - had these same people not disobeyed the Lord before this? Had they not complained

against the Lord and against Moses immediately after they crossed the Red Sea, or after they had sung a song of praise to Him? Had they not complained bitterly about not having water? Had they not tested the Lord at Massah? They did indeed, and got away with it. However, in Deuteronomy 6:16, the Lord ordered the Israelites, "Do not test the Lord your God as you tested [Him] at Massah." (Deut 6:16). This, by the way was the command Jesus quoted to Satan when He was being tested by him (Matthew 4). Why was it that the Lord did not condemn the Israelites when they tested Him at Massah, but then warned them not to do it again? They had not been to Mt. Sinai when they rebelled at Massah, but once they had entered a covenant with Him, they were forbidden from ever doing that again.

He had delivered them from bondage, provided food and water, delivered them from the Amalekites, and provided them with light at night and a cloud during the day. Whatever they needed He provided. And when He was ready to give them their marching orders to conquer the Land of Canaan, they rebelled strongly and angrily against Him.

The Lord spoke to Moses:

(31) "I will bring your children whom you said would become plunder into the land you rejected, and they will enjoy it. (32) But as for you, your corpses will fall in this wilderness. (33) Your children will be shepherds in the wilderness for 40 years and bear the penalty for your acts of unfaithfulness until all your corpses lie [scattered] in the wilderness. (34) You will bear the consequences of your sins 40 years based on the number of the 40 days that you scouted the land, a year for each day. You will know My displeasure. (35) I, the Lord, have spoken. I swear that I will do this to the entire evil community that has conspired against Me. They will come to an end in the wilderness, and there they will die." (Num. 14:31-35)

There can be no misunderstanding of what the Lord would do. Moses quotes Him: (65) "For the Lord had said to them that they would all die in the wilderness. None of them was left except Caleb son of Jephunneh and Joshua son of Nun." (Num 26:63-65)

IV. THE WILDERNESS EXPERIENCE BEGAN IMMEDIATELY.

A. They Paid a Price for Their Rebellion.

1. The price they paid must have been beyond their belief. I recently heard of a man who adamantly claimed that he would not go to church because he had prayed that God would heal a family member and he didn't do it. He wouldn't go to church, and he criticized God at every opportunity. Those of us who know even a little about God know that he does not submit Himself to human reason, whims, or responses. There are people who will make a statement against God and get the kind of response from others

that stimulates either his ego or emotions enough to make him want to expand on his conclusions about God.

I was a young man, serving as pastor of a church in Bastrop, Louisiana when I drove to my home seven miles west of Sledge, Mississippi to visit with my family. My wife and John, my only child at the time, split our time between my parent's home and hers. I was sitting in my mother's kitchen where she was visiting with her older sister and a man who lived on our farm. They were trying to persuade Ted to place his faith in Jesus Christ. He already had his god, a god he found in liquid form which he poured from a bottle. If he ran short he would go down into the woods and produce a "new batch." I watched the discussion from the side and realized that the man was enjoying the attention. At one point, he declared, "I am going to die and go to hell like my daddy did." My mother immediately began assuring him that his father had not gone to hell, he had been saved while in prison. The man was wearing a smirk as he spoke. I never said a word, but I had the strong desire to tell them they might as well leave him alone: "He has just told you the truth." Whether that was a gift of discernment or simply my conclusion I did not know, but I have wondered about it from time to time.

Years later, my brother and I drove about hours to attend his funeral, only to hear two local pastors tell the family that they had talked to Ted and he told them he believed in God. Little did they realize that Ted would lie to them to be rid of them. His family, no doubt, held onto the hope that Ted had meant it when he told those pastors he knew the Lord. He had been found in an old log house deep within the forest of that reason, where he had apparently died in a drunken stupor.

Those ancient Israelites spent forty years in the wilderness as their sentence for thinking they were smarter than God. At the beginning, they may well have been convinced that Moses would go to God for them and He would once again relent from the punishment He had announced for them. Perhaps Moses would persuade Him to give them yet another chance. How, they may have reasoned, could a merciful God let them waste away in that miserable wilderness? And yet, they saw neighbors and friends all around them dying in that miserable place. Only Joshua and Caleb, of all those twenty years of age and older survived that judgment.

Those people made the same mistake the masses make today. According to the conclusions they have drawn, man's life is so precious that God could not possibly allow them to suffer such judgment as the death of all those twenty years of age and older. Such conclusions are based on a false premise: an underlying assumption that (1) a God of love could not condemn the people He had so miraculously delivered from Egypt to such a cruel judgment, and (2) that their lives were too valuable for God to eliminate them. Sadly, some human beings have a very shallow understanding of the difference between the Creator and the created. We are right to conclude that God is love, but no one should conclude that the creature is somehow on the same level with

the Creator. God is Holy, man is fallen: "All have sinned and come short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23). If one rejects God's salvation he is going to have his wish granted. Forever.

2. They were not wandering, strictly speaking. One often hears the expression, "wandering in the wilderness," but a careful study of the Scripture reveals that they were not wandering aimlessly around the wilderness. One commentary states that they spent 38 years in or around Kadesh-Barnea. To be perfectly blunt, hygiene and space for graves would have required a little - shall we say, breathing room? They were not wandering aimlessly around the wilderness, crossing deserts claimed by countries that would have attacked them if they had crossed onto their land.

Life in the wilderness was not a pleasant experience. There were times when the people wondered if they had not been better off in Egypt. Had they forgotten the especially cruel form of slavery they had experienced in Egypt? How could they have forgotten the order to the mid-wives to drown all male Hebrew babies? How could they not remember the cruelty of the Egyptians slave drivers? Slavery in Egypt was worse, but the wilderness was not a pleasant experience:

- a) They were miserable.
- b) They were dying.
- c) They would live in the wilderness for 40 years.
- d) They only moved when the Lord told them to move.
- e) They only moved according to His plan.
- f) They had to deal with hygiene problems.
- g) They were miserable in the wilderness.
- h) The wilderness was a place of death.

3. The wilderness represented suffering and death. The late Major Ian Thomas allegorized this experience to show the parallel in such a way as to let Egypt represent death (and slavery); the wilderness represents the life lived in the flesh. Those who rebelled in the wilderness had to continue to live under the burden of the wilderness; but Canaan represented the spirit-filled life. Once the Israelites were delivered from Egypt they never had there, but they did have to live with the miseries of the wilderness when they might have been delivered into Canaan. Observe that the move from the wilderness required a mighty act of God, whereas a move from spiritual Canaan back into the wilderness only required negligence, or a rejection of Yahweh and His purpose for them. Today, there are a lot of professing Christians who are living in the flesh. They cannot move themselves back into the spirit-filled life, but if they repent and obey the Lord He will restore them.

4. Compare the Wilderness to the life lived in the flesh. Those who lived out their years in the wilderness had been delivered from slavery and death. They were never forced to

go back into Egypt - to suffering, shame, slavery, and death (of their children). Slavery in Egypt was brutal, mostly because the Egyptians were trying to reduce the number of male Israelite slaves. Orders were given for all male babies to be killed. Moses was hidden in a basket and placed in the river to be found by the daughter of Pharaoh. Treatment of the male slaves was especially cruel and barbarous, for the simple reason that they wanted to train them to do certain jobs, and they, we may assume, worked them as long as they were able bodied men, and they may have killed some, whereas others were simply worked to death.

Yahweh had placed the Israelites in Egypt according to His plan, as announced to Abraham. They had lived in Egypt 430 years, during which time they grew from 70 in number to an estimated 2 million people. They flourished for most of that time, but a new Pharaoh came to power who saw them as a threat to Egypt, should they rebel, or join an enemy who was attacking Egypt.

God delivered them from Egypt and they never had to return, even during a time of sin and rebellion. They lived in the wilderness, but while they did not have to go back to Egypt, the place of death, they could not go forward to the Promised Land. As we look at the experience of the Israelites in the wilderness we see the same principle. They could not deliver themselves from the wilderness than they could deliver themselves from Egypt. We cannot deliver ourselves from spiritual death, or from life in the flesh.

B. Rebellion Against God Comes with a High Price.

1. For their rebellion the Israelites were not allowed to go on to Canaan. They were forced to stay in the wilderness until all who were 20 years of age and older were dead. So, the wilderness was a place of sickness, sorrow, pain, suffering, and death. However, we must remember that this is not what the Lord intended for them. He wanted them in the Promises Land, but they wasted away in that miserable wilderness because of their sin. They did not have to go back to Egypt, and they could not go on to Canaan, the land flowing with milk and honey.

Thomas allegorized this whole experience. This means that he treated it as a symbolic representation of something else. In this case, it meant that their not being permitted to go on to the Promised Land, was like the Christian who, because he is living in the flesh, cannot enter Canaan (the Spirit filled life).

In a very real sense, those Christians, that is, born again believers in Jesus Christ, who refuse to live the spirit-filled life, come under the judgment of God because they refuse to live for Him. They are not forced to return to spiritual death, but neither are they permitted to go on to the Promised Land. No one can occupy two very different places, the wilderness and Canaan, or the flesh and the spirit.

There is a significant different between life in the spirit and life in the flesh. I preached at church years ago and someone asked a man there to "give his testimony." I do not

remember what he said, but I do remember that I was very impressed with this man's testimony, especially since I had heard friends mention his name a number of times. After the service that night I commented to a man I knew fairly well about how impressed I was with Mr. Farmer's testimony. The man looked me in the eye and said, "Yeah, and if you had been standing on those steps out front you probably would have heard some profanity or a dirty joke." He gave all the appearances of a man who lived a spirit-filled life (Canaan), when in reality, was either still in Egypt (dead in sin) or in the wilderness (living in the flesh).

2. This principle is still in effect today. Let us compare their lives with the person who is genuinely saved, but refuses to follow the Lord on to the fruitful and productive Land of Promise, which is the Spirit Filled Life. I once listened to a family try to convince themselves that the man whose funeral service had brought them together was indeed a Christian. During that funeral service, I (as tactfully as I could) encouraged those present to be sure they never left their loved-ones in doubt: "If you know you are a Christian, be sure you tell your family you are. Please don't leave your family wondering whether or not you meant it when you made a profession of faith fifty years ago."

A person who is living in the flesh may give all the appearances of one who lives in the spirit, but his tongue or his decisions will eventually betray him. One does not move into the spirit-filled life on his own. Only the Lord may know for sure. How does one know for sure whether or not he is living in the flesh or in the spirit? Have you ever gone over your prayer list late at night and then been convicted of the fact that you were just saying a prayer, not actually praying for all those whose names you just mentioned? If you are genuinely convicted about your prayer list it may be because you were convicted of the fact that you were just rushing through your prayer list, not actually praying for all on your list. That conviction might come to a spirit-filled believer who will then repent and ask forgiveness and help with his prayer life. Or, it may not bother him at all, and he may even make a point of saying to others, "I am praying" when in reality you are just calling names. The person living in the flesh may be living so close to the border line that it is hard to tell him from those on the other side (the land of slavery and death).

One professes faith in Jesus Christ at the point of his or her salvation, but that is not the end of the story. One is a veteran because he served in the army forty years earlier, but he is not still in the army. One is a Democrat or a Republican because that is how they registered at some time in the past. You do not "make a profession of faith one time when you were baptized and then file your baptismal certificate in a desk drawer for someone to find after the funeral. We profess our faith in Jesus Christ by the life we live, by worshiping Him faithfully, and by living the Christ-life every day in an effort to lead lost people to the Lord. Sadly - or tragically, many people who claim to have invited Jesus into their heart when they were young have never lived in the heart of His

kingdom. Some people who have been redeemed from sin and its eternal consequences, refuse to follow the Lord on to the spiritual Land of Promised, which is the spirit-filled life.

Many genuine Christians, people who have been redeemed from spiritual death, refuse to live in the heart of the kingdom. They want to be saved, they do not want to live in Egypt, but they do not want to pay the price to live in the heart of the Lord's kingdom, for one reason or another. They do not want to appear to be "holier than thou." They want to live like those around them. They will go to church when it is convenient, for special occasions, or when they don't have anything that seems more important to them to do. They may go to church where the life of spiritual slavery and death are condemned, but they don't want to be fed so that they might grow in the Lord, or be a witness for Him.

The carnal believer has spent so much time on the borderline of the kingdom of God that they look like those on the other side. They think like lost people, they behave like lost people, some even smell like those on the other side. You may find it hard to tell the carnal Christian from the lost person. They go to the same places. Bars become a way of life, as does drinking, watching R rated