

Peace be with you, listening friends. We greet you in the name of God, the Lord of peace, who wants everyone to understand and submit to the way of righteousness that He has established, and have true peace with Him forever. We are happy to be able to return today to present your program *The Way of Righteousness*.

We continue to explore the Torah. As you know, the Torah is the first part of the Writings of the Prophets and contains five sections or books. In the first book, called **Genesis**, we learned how sin entered the world, bringing with it suffering, death and condemnation. However, we also saw how God designed a plan to save Adam and his descendants from the penalty of sin, the eternal fire of hell. We learned how God promised to send a Redeemer to die for sinners so that God could forgive them of their sins without compromising His own righteousness. The book of Genesis also taught us how God chose Abraham and promised to make of him a great nation, the nation from which the prophets would come and, at last, the Redeemer of the world.

In the second book of the Torah, that is, **Exodus**, we saw how God delivered Abraham's descendants, the Israelites, from their chains of slavery in the land of Egypt, through the hands of Moses, His prophet. God led the tribes of Israel out of Egypt and into the wilderness, bringing them to Mount Sinai where He gave them His commandments and taught them about the way of blood sacrifice by which He could forgive their sins.

In the last lesson, we saw how God commanded Moses and the Israelites to build for Him the beautiful and amazing **Tent of Meeting** so that He might dwell in their midst. Once everything was ready *"the cloud covered the Tent of Meeting, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle."* (Exod. 40:34) God was showing the Israelites how He wanted to have a wonderful relationship with them, but that no one could approach Him except by means of the blood of a sacrifice offered on the altar of the Tent of Meeting.

The Tent of Meeting with its animal sacrifices were mere **shadows and illustrations of the Redeemer** who was to come from heaven, dwell on earth, and shed His blood as a sacrifice to take away sin.

In the **third section of the Torah**, called *Leviticus* which means *The laws of the tribe of Levi*, God inspired Moses to write the laws that explain in detail how the Israelites were to present to God sacrifices which cover sin. This book is very profound, and we do not have time to look at all it contains. If you study it for yourself, you should note two words which appear some two hundred times. These two words summarize the message of the whole book. The two prominent words are "**Holy**" and "**Blood**." Why do these two words appear repeatedly in this book? Because one of the most important messages a person can ever grasp is that **God is holy**, and that "*without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sin!*" (Heb. 9:22) The value of the third book of the Torah was to teach the Israelites how an impure sinner stained with sin could approach God who is pure and holy. God showed clearly that no one could approach Him, except by the blood of a sacrifice, a sacrifice which foreshadowed the holy Redeemer who would come into the world and die for sinners, to pay their debt of sin.

With the time remaining today, let us cross over now into **the fourth section** of the Torah of Moses, the book of **Numbers**. In this book, we read how the Israelites lived at the base of Mount Sinai for about one year. During that year, God taught them many things, and inspired Moses to write much of the holy Torah from which we are reading today.

However, God did not intend for the Israelites to live in the wilderness forever. That is why, one day, God directed them to get up and move out, and continue onward to the abundant land He had promised them, the land of Canaan. The Scriptures tell us that, on the day they were to depart from Sinai, the cloud of the glory of God, which covered

the Tent of Meeting, arose and began to move out in front of them. **The Lord Himself** was leading them, in a **cloud** during the day to show them the way, and in a **pillar of fire** every night.

Thus, the Israelites followed the cloud during the day and the pillar of fire at night until they arrived at the border of Canaan, the land God had promised to Abraham and his descendants a long, long time before. God did not forget His promises. **Because of God's faithfulness and power, the Israelites had arrived at the border of the land of Canaan**, which we call today Palestine or Israel.

However, Canaan was filled with inhabitants. The people of Canaan were many and mighty. How then could the Israelites possess it? There was only one way: **God would give them the land**. Nothing is too hard for God! God promised Abraham: *"This land of Canaan I will give to your descendants!"* God planned to destroy the people of Canaan and turn the land over to the descendants of Abraham, the Israelites. It is important to understand that the sins of the people of Canaan were very great. They were guilty of gross immoralities, even sacrificing their children to their false gods. God had been very patient with the people of Canaan, but they continued in their shameful desires and their sinful ways. Therefore, God planned to give their land to the tribes of Israel.

Now then, let us read in the fourth section of the Torah to see what happened when the Israelites arrived at the border of the land of Canaan. In chapter thirteen, the Scripture says:

(Num. 13) ¹*The Lord said to Moses, ²"Send some men to explore the land of Canaan, which I am giving to the Israelites. From each ancestral tribe send one of its leaders." ³*So at the Lord's command Moses sent [twelve men] out from the Desert of Paran...²¹ So they went up and explored the land...**

²⁵At the end of forty days they returned from exploring the land. ²⁶They came back to Moses and Aaron and the whole Israelite community at Kadesh in the Desert of Paran. There they reported to them and to the whole assembly and showed them the fruit of the land. ²⁷They gave Moses this account: "We went into the land to which you sent us, and **it does flow with milk and honey!** Here is its fruit. ²⁸**But the people who live there are powerful,** and the cities are fortified and very large. We even saw descendants of giants called Anak there!

³⁰Then **Caleb** (one of the men who explored the land) silenced the people before Moses and said, "We should go up and take possession of the land, for we can certainly do it!" ³¹**But the men** who had gone up with him said, "We can't attack those people; they are stronger than we are!" ³²And they spread among the Israelites a bad report about the land they had explored. They said, "The land we explored devours those living in it. All the people we saw there are of great size. ³³We saw the Nephilim (giants) there... We seemed like grasshoppers in our own eyes, and we looked the same to them."

(Num. 14) ¹That night all the people of the community raised their voices and **wept aloud**. ²All the Israelites **grumbled** against Moses and Aaron, and the whole assembly said to them, "If only we had died in Egypt! Or in this desert!" ³Why is the Lord bringing us to this land only to let us fall by the sword? Our wives and children will be taken as plunder. Wouldn't it be better for us to go back to Egypt?" ⁴And they said to each other, "We should choose a leader and go back to Egypt!" ⁵Then Moses and Aaron fell face down in front of the whole Israelite assembly gathered there. ⁶**Joshua** son of Nun and **Caleb** son of Jephunneh, who were among those who had explored the land, tore their clothes ⁷and said to the entire Israelite assembly, "The land we passed through and explored is exceedingly good. ⁸If the Lord is pleased with us, he will lead us into that land, a land flowing with milk and honey, and will give it to us. ⁹Only do not rebel

*against the Lord. And do not be afraid of the people of the land, because we will swallow them up. Their protection is gone, **but the Lord is with us.** Do not be afraid of them."*

*¹⁰**But the whole assembly talked about stoning them.** Then the glory of the Lord appeared at the Tent of Meeting to all the Israelites. ¹¹The Lord said to Moses, "**How long will these people treat me with contempt? How long will they refuse to believe in me, in spite of all the miraculous signs I have performed among them?**"*

Let us pause here. Do you hear how Israel transgressed and offended God? Do you see their unbelief? Do you notice how they accused God of going back on His word? Yes, on that day, the Israelites sinned greatly because they did not believe God's promise to give them the land of Canaan. **They did not believe** what God had promised Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, and Moses. They were like so many today who say, "We believe in God and the prophets!" yet they do not really believe God and they do not believe the prophets, because they do not believe what God has promised through His prophets in the Holy Scriptures! Unbelief is a terrible sin before God.

Enough said. Let us continue the story.

*(Num. 14) ²⁶The Lord said to Moses and Aaron: ²⁷"How long will this wicked community grumble against me? I have heard the complaints of these grumbling Israelites. ²⁸So tell them, 'As surely as I live, declares the Lord, I will do to you the very things I heard you say: ²⁹**In this desert your bodies will fall**, every one of you twenty years old or more who was counted in the census and who has grumbled against me. ³⁰Not one of you will enter the land I swore with uplifted hand to make your home, except **Caleb** son of Jephunneh and **Joshua** son of Nun. ³¹**As for your children** that you said would be taken as plunder, I will bring them in to enjoy the land you have rejected. ³²But you, your bodies will fall in this desert... ³⁵I, the Lord, have spoken, and I will surely do these*

*things to this whole wicked community, which has **banded together against me**. They will meet their end in this desert; here they will die."*

³⁶So the men Moses had sent to explore the land, who returned and made the whole community grumble against him by spreading a bad report about it, ³⁷these men responsible for spreading the bad report about the land were struck down and died of a plague before the Lord. ³⁸Of the men who went to explore the land, only Joshua...and Caleb...survived (because they believed the word of the Lord).

Thus we see how the Israelites refused to believe the Lord even though He had redeemed them from the hand of Pharaoh and brought them to the border of the land of Canaan. What did God do with those who did not believe His Word? He condemned them to die in the wilderness! Why did this generation of Israelites not enter the land of Canaan? **Because they would not believe the Word of God!**

Friends, to refuse to believe the Word of God is a terrible tragedy. God must punish everyone who refuses to believe Him! Whoever despises and treats with indifference what God says in His holy Word is calling God a liar and can have no part in His eternal kingdom! It is not God's will that anyone perish in unbelief. God wants all **to believe** the Good News about the way of salvation which He has established. But each person must decide for himself. All who refuse to believe God's Word will perish. Listen to this warning from the Holy Spirit of God through the prophets:

*"Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts as you did in the rebellion, during the time of testing in the desert. ...See to it, brothers, that none of you has a **sinful, unbelieving heart that turns away from the living God!**" (Heb. 3:7,8,12; Psa. 95:7-11)*

Fellow listeners, thank you for listening. Next time, God willing, we will see how all those who refused to believe God perished in the wilderness, just as God pledged...God bless you as you heed this warning from the Holy Scriptures:

"See to it, brothers, that none of you has a sinful, unbelieving heart that turns away from the living God." (Heb. 3:12)

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