

## An Example for Us

People sometimes ask me why we read about and speak so much about ancient Israel. I will answer the question from the Bible.

In First Corinthians 10 the apostle Paul is recounting some events in Israel's history. Then he lets us know why he is reviewing the history. In verse 11 he says,

1 Corinthians 10:11 Now all these things happened to them as examples, and they were written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the ages have come.

These events were written down for us who are living at the end of time. The exact events are not repeated in history always but the nature of those events has repetition throughout history. Why? Because mankind is the same. Mankind's selfish nature has not changed. Our enemy, Satan, has not changed. History, in this respect, is repeated again and again. The clothes may be different. The method of communication may be different. The language may be different. But mankind has not changed.

Ecclesiastes 1:9 That which has been *is* what will be, That which *is* done is what will be done, And *there is* nothing new under the sun.

Last time we saw from the scriptures that ancient Israel was given a task to prepare the world for the first coming of Christ. But they failed in that task. Christ then gave the kingdom of God to a new group who should prepare the world for the second coming of Christ. This new group is not a physical nation with a territory and a king or president. It is not a political movement. This new group is the people who have been born again. This group has received Christ's Spirit into their hearts and they share the love of Christ for a lost world. This group does not have a single language or ethnicity. It does not have a specific skin color. The New Testament refers to this group in several ways. I will list but a few.

- 1 John 3:1 Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God!
- 1 Peter 2:9-10 But you *are* a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; <sup>10</sup> who once *were* not a people but *are* now the people of God, who had not obtained mercy but now have obtained mercy.
- Galatians 3:28-29 There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. <sup>29</sup> And if you *are* Christ's, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.

In this last verse, Paul wrote that if you belong to Christ then you are Abraham's child. You are not his physical descendent but his spiritual offspring. When you receive Christ into your heart,

you are spiritually joined to Christ and by adoption you are made a spiritual child of Abraham. You become heirs to all that was promised Abraham.

We refer to the people who have been adopted into Christ by the new birth as Spiritual Israel. The Bible speaks about it this way as well:

Romans 2:28-29 For he is not a Jew who *is one* outwardly, nor *is* circumcision that which *is* outward in the flesh; <sup>29</sup> but *he is* a Jew who *is one* inwardly; and circumcision *is that* of the heart, in the Spirit, not in the letter; whose praise *is* not from men but from God.

So spiritual Israel carries the same name as the nation in the Middle East today but it has no physical, religious or political tie to it. Spiritual Israel has been around since the days of Christ but modern Israel came in 1948.

The New Testament relates events that happened to ancient, physical Israel and makes a spiritual application of it to God's people today.

1 Corinthians 10:1-4 Moreover, brethren, I do not want you to be unaware that all our fathers were under the cloud, all passed through the sea, <sup>2</sup> all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea, <sup>3</sup> all ate the same spiritual food, <sup>4</sup> and all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them, and that Rock was Christ.

Notice that Paul compares the Israelites' coming out of Egypt and passing under the cloud and going through the Red Sea as a baptism. When you are baptized, what are you leaving behind? You are leaving behind slavery to sin and Satan to follow God. And where are you following God to? Just as God was taking the Israelites to the promised land through the desert, you are following God to the promised land which is heaven. So the desert represents this world. What happened in the desert that we should take as examples?

1 Corinthians 10:5 But with most of them God was not well pleased, for *their bodies* were scattered in the wilderness.

Most of the Israelites never made it to the promised land. They were following the correct God. They had the correct prophet. They had the right laws. But God was not pleased with them. Why? What examples are left for us? The first example is in verse 6. We will look at the others next week.

1 Corinthians 10:6 Now these things became our examples, to the intent that we should not lust after evil things as they also lusted.

What did the Israelites lust after?

Exodus 16:1-3 And they journeyed from Elim, and all the congregation of the children of Israel came to the Wilderness of Sin, which is between Elim and Sinai, on the fifteenth day of the second month after they departed from the land of Egypt. Then the whole congregation of the children of Israel complained against Moses and Aaron in the wilderness. <sup>3</sup> And the children of Israel said to them, "Oh, that we had died by the hand of the LORD in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the pots of meat *and* when we ate bread to the full! For you have brought us out into this wilderness to kill this whole assembly with hunger."

The Israelites had not gone hungry. They had been gone from Egypt for a month and were now making their first camp in the wilderness. There were not many plants for the animals to eat in the wilderness. How would they find food to eat? They did not know so they began to be afraid for something that had not happened yet. Their food supplies had not run out yet. The Israelites then wanted to go back to Egypt and be slaves to Pharaoh so they could be sure that their food would not run out. What does Egypt represent? It represents the old life of sin. What does Pharaoh represent? Satan.

Do we worry about things that have not happened yet? Are we afraid that God will not supply our needs? Do we complain and wish we could do what unbelievers are doing because we think that Satan will take better care of us than God? Did the Israelites forget that God parted the Red Sea to save them? Did they forget that God saved Israel from the plagues that fell on the Egyptians? Have you forgotten what God has done for you in your life? Why are you so worried?

What else did the Israelites lust after?

Numbers 11:4-6 Now the mixed multitude who were among them yielded to intense craving; so the children of Israel also wept again and said: "Who will give us meat to eat? <sup>5</sup> "We remember the fish which we ate freely in Egypt, the cucumbers, the melons, the leeks, the onions, and the garlic; <sup>6</sup> "but now our whole being *is* dried up; *there is* nothing at all except this manna *before* our eyes!"

In response to the Israelites fear about hunger God had given the Israelites manna. This was provided by a miracle every day of the week except Sabbath. Twice as much manna fell on Friday so that manna would not be gathered on the Sabbath.

Did the people appreciate the manna? No! They wanted to eat the meat that they ate in Egypt. So they didn't care for the diet that God gave them. They wanted to go back to their old way of life.

The Israelites were not guided by principle but by emotion and passion and appetite.

What are the guiding principles in your life? Are you willing to trade your way of life for the way that God has told you to live? Or do you continually look with longing to the way the

unbelievers live and wish to live like them? Are you lusting to go back to Egypt? Do you feel restricted with the knowledge that God has given you on how to eat?

Are you making trouble for yourself by worrying about things that have not happened yet? Are you afraid that God will not take care of you? Or are you afraid that God will not take care of you in the way that you want Him to? What does this say about your relationship with God? Do you simply respond to life with emotion and passion and appetite? Or is your faith founded on a firm belief that God loves you and is working things the best for you?

I am not saying that there will be no troubles in your life if you follow God's way. But if you do follow God's way you will not worry so much. You will not be a slave to your passions and emotions.

I want to encourage you to have faith not simply that God exists, but that He is interested in the details of your life. The Israelites didn't really trust God. Will you as spiritual Israel do the same?