

**“And this Gospel  
shall be preached...”**

**Matthew 24:14**

**Sermon Summaries from Ministers of the Worldwide Church of God**

## **They Murmured Against God**

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The greatest escape perhaps in all of history was when the Israelites were taken out of Egypt. Yet those very people grumbled and sinned against God and consequently died in the wilderness. It says in I Corinthians 10:11 that this was *written for our admonition*. God didn't want us to be ignorant or to make the same kinds of mistakes, so He inspired the record of Israel's sins to be written as a warning and lesson for us.

Israel had seen the miracles; they had seen the destruction of a powerful nation, in which they had been living, by one miracle after another. They had slain the Passover lamb and painted the blood on the door and the windows (a type of the protection we receive by Christ's blood). They stayed indoors all night and heard the Egyptians wailing and mourning and weeping and crying out to their various gods, because there wasn't a household in all of Egypt where someone hadn't died.

Israel had seen the very captors who had been mercilessly beating them turn friend and benefactor and give them their jewelry and urgently say, "Go, ahead; leave the country. We're going to help you."

So here was a huge escape of perhaps up to three million or more people. You can read in Exodus 14 where it says that the children of Israel went out with a "high hand" (verse 8), and that that was a night to be much remembered.

But in verse 9, "the Egyptians pursued them."

All the horses and horsemen of Pharaoh and his army overtook them while they were camping by the sea.

Verses 10-11: "... the children of Israel lifted up their eyes, and, behold, the Egyptians marched after them; and they were sore afraid: and the children of Israel cried out unto the Lord. And they said unto Moses, Because there were no graves in Egypt, hast thou taken us away to die in the wilderness? Wherefore hast thou dealt thus with us, to carry us forth out of Egypt?"

Already they were grumbling, forgetting God's miraculous deliverance! They were saying, "Leave us alone—don't rescue us. It is far better to stay here—at least we are alive, at least we get a little bit of a meal, at least we have the protection of the Egyptian army, at least there is no big hassle as long as we make our daily quota of bricks, at least we get leeks in the soup and garlic with the bread—it's not all that bad!"

Exodus 14:13: "And Moses said, ... Fear ye not, stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord." Then this great huge unbelievable miracle occurred—the dividing of the Red Sea, the destruction of the Egyptian armies.

### **Fantastic Miracles**

So the Israelites are now free and on their journey to the Promised Land. They have escaped

from Egypt, and Moses is leading them along a rocky desert wilderness called Sin, following where God directs.

Even though they're going to have trials and troubles and hardships, they've got something visible to look to—they've got the assurance of God's presence in the form of a cloud by day and a flame of fire by night.

They have this great miracle to buoy up their spirits; to give them encouragement; to give them absolute, i.e. controvertible proof that God is acting; that God is alive; that He's going to feed them when they're hungry, as He did with the manna or the quail, give them water to drink when they're thirsty, as in the case of the rock at Horeb or the waters of Meribah; see to it that their shoe leather doesn't wear out; that their clothing doesn't decay, that they don't lose a single baby from some childhood disease. God totally protected them physically through that entire period of time.

#### Why History Should Be Written

Now as we look at all these records of the Israelites walking through a wilderness, that is by *analogy* like my life or your life. We are *like* the children of Israel, spiritually, as we travel the route of escape from sin's hold and influence over our lives. We've got their example and we are explicitly told to avoid the kinds of mistakes they made. The only reason one line of history should ever be put down to pen and ink, is so that future generations can avoid making the mistakes of past generations.

Let's go back to this record of history and see what we can glean out of it—of the mistakes they were making like mistakes we might make, of looking at the day-to-day little events, the discomfitures, the worries and concerns, instead of clearly having a vision about *our* "promised land"—the kingdom of God.

Right after Israel walked through the Red Sea on dry land by a miracle (Ex. 14:29), they sang a happy, exuberant song of thanksgiving and praise (Ex. 15). Look at the beauty of that poem. You read about how the depths covered the Egyptians; how they sank to the bottom as stones—and there's all the singing and dancing and so on.

But then the trials and tests began. The nar-

rative continues: "they went out into the wilderness of Shur; and they went three days in the wilderness, and found no water" (verse 22).

Three days walk after the big celebration is over, they came to Marah. Maybe the cattle and the animals began to smell water and began to hurry up a little bit—you can imagine the parched and dry lips. Some of the vessels were getting to where they sounded a little hollow and the bottles were getting kind of low. But "... they could not drink of the waters of Marah, for they were bitter: therefore the name of it was called Marah [which meant bitter]... And the people murmured against Moses..." (verse 23).

Now wait a minute—three days before this, they walked through the Red Sea; they saw thousands of soldiers drown instantly; they stood on a high hill and saw the bodies and bits and pieces and wheels of chariots bobbing around in the surging waves, and men and horses frantically surfacing and swimming and going under again; they saw this unbelievable miracle. How long would it take you to get over seeing something like that, if you'd have seen it with your own eyes?

Now, because they had run out of water, they turn into a murmuring, complaining, backbiting, grumbling crowd, and begin to blame Moses. "... What shall we drink? And he cried unto the Lord and the Lord shewed him a tree, which when he had cast into the waters, the waters were made sweet: there he made for them a statute and an ordinance, and there he proved {tested} them" (Ex. 15:24-25).

Moses said, "If thou wilt diligently hearken to the voice of the Lord thy God, and wilt do that which is right in his sight, and will give ear to his commandments, and keep all his statutes, I will put none of these diseases upon you, which I have brought upon the Egyptians: for I am the Lord that healeth thee" (verse 26).

But Israel soon forgot again, and on the fifteenth day of the second month, after coming out of the land of Egypt, "the whole congregation of the children of Israel murmured against Moses and Aaron in the wilderness. And the children of Israel said unto them, Would to God we had died by the hand of the Lord in the land of Egypt" (Exodus 16:20). Isn't that an interesting statement they make? First of all they are accusing God of want-

ing them dead; they are laying at the door of God a totally false charge that He isn't concerned about saving them alive, but is trying to kill them.

Think about this reasoning. Here is God carrying them like a mother lovingly protecting a child (see analogy in Ezekiel 16), and they turn around and say, "He's trying to kill us."

These people began to allege that God wanted them dead. "... Would to God that we had died by the hand of the Lord in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the fleshpots, and when we did eat bread to the full. . . ." It's better to die with a full belly, they reasoned. "Ye have brought us forth into this wilderness, to kill this whole assembly with hunger" (Ex. 16:3).

### Quail And Manna

Moses and Aaron said, verses 6-7, "At even, then ye shall know that the Lord hath brought you out from the land of Egypt: and in the morning, then ye shall see the glory of the Lord for that he heareth your murmurings against the Lord. . . ."

So here they witness another great miracle. Quails came into the camp, and there was a tremendous "quail roast." Then God sent manna like dew, like frost on the ground.

"And Moses said unto them, This is the bread which the Lord hath given you to eat. . . . Gather of it every man according to his eating, an omer [about three quarts] for every man. . . . Let no man leave of it till the morning. Notwithstanding they hearkened not unto Moses; but some of them left of it until the morning, and it bred worms, and stank: and Moses was wroth with them. And they gathered it every morning, every man according to his eating; and when the sun waxed hot, it melted" (Ex. 16:15, 16, 19-21).

The people always wanted to do things their way instead of the way God told them to, as in this case of gathering too much manna!

### Lesson Of The Sabbath

Now we come to the test of the Sabbath. And Moses said, "Tomorrow is the rest of the holy sabbath . . . bake that which ye will bake today, and seethe that ye will seethe; and that which remaineth over lay up for you to be kept until the morning" (v. 23).

Moses reminded them it was the Sabbath of

the Eternal. God was showing them by a miracle—not sending manna on that day—which day His Sabbath was and telling them to rest from their work and keep the Sabbath. Nevertheless, some disobedient souls went out to gather on the Sabbath and found none (v. 27). Some people just would not do what God said—just as some today neglect to keep God's commandments.

God says, "How long refuse ye to keep my commandments and my laws?" (Ex. 16:28). Those commandments had been orally and verbally preached and given to those Israelites long before they got to Sinai where God codified them in rock (Ex. 20). They were known and it was a sin to disobey them; and the death penalty resulted.

Next Israel journeyed to Rephidim and again complained and murmured. Notice beginning in Exodus 17:3, "And the people thirsted there for water; and the people murmured against Moses, and said, Wherefore is this that thou hast brought us up out of Egypt, to kill us and our children and our cattle with thirst?"

"And Moses cried unto the Lord, saying, What shall I do unto this people? they be almost ready to stone me. And the Lord said unto Moses, Go on before the people, and take with thee of the elders of Israel; and thy rod wherewith thou smotest the river, take in thine hand and go." God told him to stand on a big rock in Horeb and smite it, and that water would come out. So Moses did so.

Once again an absolute miracle occurred. Water came out and the people drank. "And he called the name of the place Massah, and Meribah, because of the chiding of the children of Israel, and because they tempted the Lord, saying, Is the Lord among us, or not?" (Ex. 17:7.)

Now God is daily adding miracles as they go through the wilderness. There are two or three daily miracles. There are other more subtle daily miracles of which they are utterly unaware just like you're unaware of subtle daily miracles in your own life. Their shoes weren't wearing out—they forgot that. Their clothing wasn't growing old—they forgot that. They didn't have diseases—they forgot that.

### Why These Examples?

The book of Hebrews tells us plainly that the journey of Israel toward the Promised Land is a type

of our preparation to enter the kingdom of God (Heb. 3-4). We are not travelling as a body of people literally through desert and wilderness. But, we have been delivered from sin (typified by Egypt) by Christ's blood. And now we must live a life of overcoming the many problems and trials that come along virtually on a day-to-day basis; little ones and big ones. This is our "wilderness."

We must be guided by the Holy Spirit of God, by God's Word and by Christ living in us—as Israel was guided by the cloud by day and pillar of fire by night. We need to depend on God to supply strength and intervene for us numerous times—even as Israel depended on Him for their very lives. We must be patient and have *faith* that God will see us safely through to victory.

Israel lacked faith and could not enter the Promised Land because of unbelief. We must not murmur against God, grumble or complain about our lot in life! We must have faith, believe God, and believe in His promises.

Israel continually disobeyed God, trampled on His commandments, made excuses to do as they pleased instead of exactly what God said. We must not be like them. Rather, we must have willing hearts and determination to live by every word of God. They had the Ten Commandments, the summary of God's law of love, written on stone. But we must have them written in our hearts.

Notice Hebrews 10 beginning in verse 16. "This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, saith the Lord, I will put my laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them; and their sins and iniquities will I remember no more. Now where remission of these is, there is no more offering for sin. Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh [walking through an entry, opening in to a new life, a new way of life]; and having a high priest over the house of God; let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; (for he is faithful that promised;) and let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works; not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching."

So let's not be weary in well-doing and impatient and think about the day-to-day little problems. Look up and set your sights up there on our "Promised Land"! We need to set our hearts and our minds on the kingdom of God and faithfully walk in God's Way till we are there!