

PRESENT TRUTH

A Teaching Letter of Lifestream Teaching Ministries

For this reason I will not be negligent to remind you always of these things, though you know and are established in the present truth. (2 Peter 1:12 NKJV)

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Living in the Promised Land

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Introduction

In the Old Testament we are told about the Children of Israel's captivity in Egypt and how God delivered them and carried them through the wilderness to the Promised Land. We are told in the New Testament that these things happened to them as examples for us that they were written for our benefit.

1 Corinthians 10:11 NASB

(11) Now these things happened to them as an example, and they were written for our instruction, upon whom the ends of the ages have come.

From this we understand that the Old Testament gives us physical examples of spiritual truth. We see the application of this when we examine Jesus' sermon on the mount where He moved the requirements of God from an external observance to an internal condition of the heart. This application is also true of the promised land. What is our spiritual version of the physical promised land? It is the Kingdom of God. We have to be born again to see it [*John 3:3*] and we are told by Jesus to seek it as our number one priority. [*“but seek first His Kingdom...” (Matthew 6:3)*] This means that “finding” and “living” in the Kingdom is our primary goal. Paul defines this for us as “righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit”. [*Romans 14:17*] That is our promised land—where we dwell or live in righteousness, peace and joy.

The Journey

Reducing the Israelites' odyssey to the simplest possible terms we have four aspects of their journey—1) getting out, 2) getting through, 3) getting in, and 4) dwelling or living in the land. In thinking about this we need to remember that the goal is to live in the land. The first three steps are necessary to achieve the goal but **THEY ARE NOT THE GOAL**. We need to understand what occurs in each step and why they are necessary to prepare us to achieve the goal but we should never substitute the step for the goal.

Our modern gospel has done this—substituted the step of “getting out” as the goal. All emphasis is on “getting saved”, avoiding Hell and going to Heaven as if this is the goal. Jesus never said that He came to die so that we could go to Heaven. Jesus said that He came that we might have life and life more abundant [*John 10:10*]. That life finds its fullest expression in the Kingdom of God which is why the Scriptures emphasize it as the goal.

Believers become confused or complacent when the only emphasis is on “getting out”. Nothing is more wasteful than a “saved believer” sitting on the pew for forty years listening to sermon after sermon about “getting out” when they really need to be “getting on” with the journey to the promised land.

God delivered the children of Israel from Egypt by His own mighty hand. Getting them out of Egypt was not difficult for God; however, getting Egypt out of them was another matter. This is the purpose of the wilderness and why we must “get through” it. The Israelites were slaves in Egypt for 430 years [*Exodus 12:40-41*] and as a result their thinking processes were those of slaves. They thought and acted like slaves. They had a slave mentality and God knew this.

Exodus 13:17-18 NASB

(17) Now when Pharaoh had let the people go, God did not lead them by the way of the land of the Philistines, even though it was near; for God said, "The people might change their minds when they see war, and return to Egypt."

(18) Hence God led the people around by the way of the wilderness to the Red Sea; and the sons of Israel went up in martial array from the land of Egypt.

God did not lead them out by the direct path because they would have to pass through the land of the Philistines and would have to fight. If this happened they would change their minds and return to Egypt. Why did God think this would happen? They came out of Egypt in “martial” array. This means that they marched out like an army. While they looked like an army, in their minds they thought like slaves, which means that they would not stand and fight. Yet God knew that when they got to the promised land they would have to fight and would have to think like warriors. Therefore, God took them by way of the wilderness in order to change their thinking processes from a slave mentality to a warrior mentality.

Before entering the promised land Moses reminded them of why God had led them in the wilderness for forty years.

Deuteronomy 8:2 NASB

(2) "You shall remember all the way which the LORD your God has led you in the wilderness these forty years, that He might humble you, testing you, to know what was in your heart, whether you would keep His commandments or not.

Moses gave three reasons: 1) to humble them; 2) to test them; 3) to know what was in their heart. Of course God knew their heart by they didn't and they needed to. It was exposed by the time in the wilderness.

Later in this chapter Moses re-states the purpose of the wilderness from the Lord's perspective.

Deuteronomy 8:16 NASB

(16) "In the wilderness He fed you manna which your fathers did not know, that He might

humble you and that He might test you, to do good for you in the end.

Again, three reasons: 1) to humble them; 2) to test them; and 3) to do them good in the end. All that happened in the wilderness was designed by the Lord to accomplish these three goals. Notice that He couldn't do them good in the end until they had been humbled and tested. Remember too that these things were written for our benefit as examples.

Between Egypt and the promised land the children of Israel had to undergo a major transformation in their thinking processes. They had to learn obedience and dependency upon the Lord. Instead of refugees from Egypt they had to become the people of the Lord.

The New Testament calls this process the renewing of the mind, which transforms us. [*Romans 12:2*] Our minds have to have their thinking processes changed. Not just what we think but the very way that we think. We will never “get through” the wilderness until we yield to the renewing of the mind. We will never have the mind of Christ until this process becomes effective in us.

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