

Second Baptist Church of Doylestown
Bible Study Notes
3-16-22
Numbers 33

Stages In Israel's Journey - Verses 1-2

33 Here are the stages in the journey of the Israelites when they came out of Egypt by divisions under the leadership of Moses and Aaron. ² At the LORD's command Moses recorded the stages in their journey. This is their journey by stages: ³ The Israelites set out from Rameses on the fifteenth day of the first month, the day after the Passover. They marched out defiantly in full view of all the Egyptians, ⁴ who were burying all their firstborn, whom the LORD had struck down among them; for the LORD had brought judgment on their gods.

33:2 Moses recorded the Israelites' journeys as God instructed him, providing a record of their spiritual as well as geographic progress. Have you made spiritual progress lately? Recording your thoughts about God and lessons you have learned over a period of time can be a valuable aid to spiritual growth. A record of your spiritual pilgrimage will let you check up on your progress and avoid repeating past mistakes.

33:3 The children of Israel went out with boldness in the sight of all the Egyptians: Though they were slaves, they did not have to shrink out of Egypt; God gave them the boldness to leave as conquerors, not as escaping slaves.

33:4 On their gods the LORD had executed judgments: The plagues the LORD brought upon Egypt were not randomly chosen; they were specifically intended to humble the people and rebuke their belief in the bizarre and demonic Egyptian deities.

From Egypt To Mount Sinai – Verses 5-15

⁵ The Israelites left Rameses and camped at Sukkoth. ⁶ They left Sukkoth and camped at Etham, on the edge of the desert. ⁷ They left Etham, turned back to Pi Hahiroth, to the east of Baal Zephon, and camped near Migdol. ⁸ They left Pi Hahiroth and passed through the sea into the desert, and when they had traveled for three days in the Desert of Etham, they camped at Marah. ⁹ They left Marah and went to Elim, where there were twelve springs and seventy palm trees, and they camped there. ¹⁰ They left Elim and camped by the Red Sea. ¹¹ They left the Red Sea and camped in the Desert of Sin. ¹² They left the Desert of Sin and camped at Dophkah. ¹³ They left Dophkah and camped at Alush. ¹⁴ They left Alush and camped at Rephidim, where there was no water for the people to drink. ¹⁵ They left Rephidim and camped in the Desert of Sinai.

33:5-15 Then the children of Israel moved from Rameses ... and camped in the Wilderness of Sinai: This portion of the journey took them more than a year, but most of the time was not spent traveling, but in receiving the law at Mount Sinai.

From Mount Sinai To The Shores Of The Jordan River – Verses 16-49

¹⁶ They left the Desert of Sinai and camped at Kibroth Hattaavah. ¹⁷ They left Kibroth Hattaavah and camped at Hazeroth. ¹⁸ They left Hazeroth and camped at Rithmah. ¹⁹ They left Rithmah and camped at Rimmon Perez. ²⁰ They left Rimmon Perez and camped at Libnah. ²¹ They left Libnah and camped at Rissah. ²² They left Rissah and camped at Kehelathah. ²³ They left Kehelathah

and camped at Mount Shepher. ²⁴ They left Mount Shepher and camped at Haradah. ²⁵ They left Haradah and camped at Makheloth. ²⁶ They left Makheloth and camped at Tahath. ²⁷ They left Tahath and camped at Terah. ²⁸ They left Terah and camped at Mithkah. ²⁹ They left Mithkah and camped at Hashmonah. ³⁰ They left Hashmonah and camped at Moseroth. ³¹ They left Moseroth and camped at Bene Jaakan. ³² They left Bene Jaakan and camped at Hor Haggidgad. ³³ They left Hor Haggidgad and camped at Jotbathah. ³⁴ They left Jotbathah and camped at Abronah. ³⁵ They left Abronah and camped at Ezion Geber. ³⁶ They left Ezion Geber and camped at Kadesh, in the Desert of Zin. ³⁷ They left Kadesh and camped at Mount Hor, on the border of Edom. ³⁸ At the LORD's command Aaron the priest went up Mount Hor, where he died on the first day of the fifth month of the fortieth year after the Israelites came out of Egypt. ³⁹ Aaron was a hundred and twenty-three years old when he died on Mount Hor. ⁴⁰ The Canaanite king of Arad, who lived in the Negev of Canaan, heard that the Israelites were coming. ⁴¹ They left Mount Hor and camped at Zalmonah. ⁴² They left Zalmonah and camped at Punon. ⁴³ They left Punon and camped at Oboth. ⁴⁴ They left Oboth and camped at Iye Abarim, on the border of Moab. ⁴⁵ They left Iye Abarim and camped at Dibon Gad. ⁴⁶ They left Dibon Gad and camped at Almon Diblathaim. ⁴⁷ They left Almon Diblathaim and camped in the mountains of Abarim, near Nebo. ⁴⁸ They left the mountains of Abarim and camped on the plains of Moab by the Jordan across from Jericho. ⁴⁹ There on the plains of Moab they camped along the Jordan from Beth Jeshimoth to Abel Shittim.

33:16-38 They moved from the Wilderness of Sinai: This portion of the journey took them some 38 years; not because the distance was so long, but because God led them in wanderings because the generation of unbelief had to die in the wilderness before a generation of faith could be raised up to take possession of the Promised Land.

33:39-49 Kibroth Hattaavah ... Hazeroth ... Rithmah ...: The listing of Israel's encampments comes rapidly; more than 30 place-names are given in quick succession. During this time, there was a lot of activity for the people of Israel - but no progress. They weren't coming any closer to the Promised Land, and would not come closer until the generation of unbelief had passed away.

The Command To Conquer The Inhabitants Of Canaan – Verses 50-53

⁵⁰ On the plains of Moab by the Jordan across from Jericho the LORD said to Moses, ⁵¹ “Speak to the Israelites and say to them: ‘When you cross the Jordan into Canaan, ⁵² drive out all the inhabitants of the land before you. Destroy all their carved images and their cast idols, and demolish all their high places. ⁵³ Take possession of the land and settle in it, for I have given you the land to possess.

33:50-53 God told Moses that before the Israelites settled in the Promised Land they should drive out the wicked inhabitants and destroy their idols. In Colossians 3, Paul encourages us to live as Christians in the same manner: throwing away our old way of living and moving ahead into our new life of obedience to God and faith in Jesus Christ. Like the Israelites moving into the Promised Land, we can destroy the wickedness in our lives, or we can settle down and live with it. To move in and possess the new life, we must drive out the sinful thoughts and practices to make room for the new.

33:50-56 Why were the Israelites told to destroy the people living in Canaan? God had several compelling reasons for giving this command: (1) God was stamping out the wickedness of an extremely sinful group of nations. The Canaanites brought on their own punishment. Idol worship expressed their deepest evil desires. It ultimately led to the worship of Satan and the total rejection of God. (2) God was using Moses and Israel to judge Canaan for its sins in fulfillment of the prophecy in Genesis 9:25. (3) God wanted to remove all trace of pagan beliefs and practices from the land. He did not want his people to mix or compromise with idolatry in any way. The Israelites did not fully understand God's reasons,

and they did not carry out his command. This eventually led them to compromise and corruption. In all areas of life, we should obey God's Word without question because we know he is just, even if we cannot fully understand his overall purposes.

The Command To Possess The Land Of Canaan – Verses 54-56

⁵⁴ Distribute the land by lot, according to your clans. To a larger group give a larger inheritance, and to a smaller group a smaller one. Whatever falls to them by lot will be theirs. Distribute it according to your ancestral tribes. ⁵⁵ “But if you do not drive out the inhabitants of the land, those you allow to remain will become barbs in your eyes and thorns in your sides. They will give you trouble in the land where you will live. ⁵⁶ And then I will do to you what I plan to do to them.”

33:55 If you don't do the job right the first time, it often becomes much more difficult to accomplish. God warned that if the Israelites did not drive the wicked inhabitants out of the Promised Land, later these people would become a source of great irritation. That is exactly what happened. Just as the Israelites were hesitant to clear out all the wicked people, we are sometimes hesitant to clear out all the sin in our lives, either because we are afraid of it (as the Israelites feared the giants), or because it seems harmless and attractive (as sexual sin seemed). But Hebrews 12:1 tells us to “throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles.” We all have “idols” we don't want to let go of (a bad habit, an unhealthy relationship, a certain lifestyle). If we allow these idols to dominate us, they will cause serious problems later.

33:55-56 God never goes back on his word, and this is one warning the Israelites should not have taken lightly. God made it perfectly clear: “If you do not drive out the inhabitants of the land, . . . I will do to you what I plan to do to them.” Yet for some reason the people did not obey. The Israelites did not drive all the wicked nations out, and soon they began to assimilate their evil religious beliefs and practices. After a while, an Israelite was no different from a Canaanite. God fulfilled his warning in these verses during the period of the judges, and in a fuller sense during the time of the kings when he sent the Assyrians (2 Kings 17) and the Babylonians (2 Kings 25) to destroy Israel and carry the people away captive. The Israelites learned that God's words should be taken seriously.