

Egypt—Wilderness—Canaan

Sermon #0827

Study given by W. D. Frazee—November 8, 1957

Doubtless if the host of Israel had any idea it was so far they would have been utterly discouraged. It was in the mercy of God that they did not see all that lay ahead of them. Doubtless Moses himself was ignorant of this. All of it was in the wisdom of God.

Over a hundred years ago this movement was launched by God as the great exodus, the great coming out of Babylon as Israel came out of Egypt. Those who were in the movement at that time had little thought of these long years of delay.

In either case it was not God's original plan. There are reasons in each case. I would like to have you notice some parallels between the exodus movement and our work today, especially as it relates to our personal experience.

"Moreover, brethren, I would not that ye should be ignorant, how that all our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea; And were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea; And did all eat the same spiritual meat; And did all drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ. But with many of them God was not well pleased: for they were overthrown in the wilderness. Now these things were our examples, to the intent we should not lust after evil things, as they also lusted. Neither be ye idolaters, as were some of them; as it is written, The people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play. Neither let us commit fornication, as some of them committed, and fell in one day three and twenty thousand. Neither let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed of serpents. Neither murmur ye, as some of them also murmured, and were destroyed of the destroyer. Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come. Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall"

1 Corinthians 10:1-12.

Of the great multitude how many finally crossed Jordan into Canaan? Just two. Think of it. Two out of six hundred thousand. Not a good percentage, was it? And Paul says there are lessons in this experience for us to study today. We must remember that in God's plan the purpose of the exodus movement was the settlement of His people in Canaan. He wanted to deliver them from slavery, of

course, but that was preparatory to His purpose of establishing them in Canaan, a prosperous, successful people.

"And when thy son asketh thee in time to come, saying, What mean the testimonies, and the statutes, and the judgments, which the LORD our God hath commanded you? Then thou shalt say unto thy son, We were Pharaoh's bondmen in Egypt; and the LORD brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand: And the LORD shewed signs and wonders, great and sore, upon Egypt, upon Pharaoh, and upon all his household, before our eyes: And He brought us out from thence, that He might bring us in, to give us the land which He sware unto our fathers" Deuteronomy 6:20-23.

The purpose of bringing them out was to bring them in. Moses says God brought them out from Egypt that He might bring them in. So today God's purpose in bringing us out of Babylon is that He may establish us in the heavenly Canaan.

Obviously it was impossible to bring Israel into Canaan as long as they stayed in Egypt. It is impossible for God to bring us into the heavenly Canaan as long as we stay in Babylon. So today the message is, "Come out of her, My people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues" Revelation 18:4.

Were there plagues poured out upon Egypt? Will there be plagues poured out upon Babylon? Yes, they are beginning. The judgments of God are in the land. And God wants to save His people from these destructive judgments just as He saved His people back there. But the goal is to have His people arrive in the heavenly Canaan, fully reflecting the divine image, and demonstrating that God can do what He said He will do.

After Israel left Egypt, what kind of country did they go through? The wilderness. Would you say it was an inviting place? No. The Bible speaks of it as a waste, howling wilderness. It was not inviting. Did God take care of them through that experience? Yes, and finally brought them to the promised land.

After they had been in that desert experience for about two years they came to the borders of the promised land, and some of them came up with what they thought was a wise suggestion. They suggested to send in some spies to spy out the land to see what kind of land it was and what the defenses were.

God knew what kind of land it was. He had told them what kind of land it was. He said it was good land flowing with milk and honey. There were cities they didn't built, olive trees they didn't plant, wells they didn't dig. It was all there waiting for them. He said He was going to give it to them. But in their human wisdom they said they were going to send in some spies and look it over.

That led to some other experiences. When the spies came back they all agreed it was a good land. They had evidence of it. They had all kinds of fruit—figs and a big bunch of grapes it took two men to carry. Think of a vineyard that would

grow grapes like that. So the people were enthusiastic. They were ready to go right then. But ten of the twelve spies reported that while it was a good land it was impossible to take. That was the report. The cities were walled up to heaven. The men were giants. Great big fellows. They had chariots of iron. So while it is a lovely country like they had been told, and it would be nice if they had it, nevertheless they said it was impossible.

Did the people believe those ten, or the other two? They believed the ten. Just a few minutes before they had been enthusiastic about going right in. Now they all wept and stormed and fussed, and before the day was over they were ready to stone Caleb and Joshua for suggesting that they were ready to go in and take the land.

What was the difference between Caleb and Joshua and the other ten? Faith. What did the others have instead of faith? Doubt. The Bible calls it unbelief. They could not enter in because of unbelief [Hebrews 3:18]. That is why the whole congregation could not enter in. They made it impossible. But thirty-eight years later Caleb and Joshua, believing God, came to the same land with the same giants, the same difficulties, and saw the fulfillment of God's promise. The things that had been thought impossible forty years before now were found possible to those who believed God.

Is there anything like that for us today? Yes, there is. We are told that the experiences of the children of Israel are recorded for us to study so we will not fall after the same example of unbelief. We are exhorted not to. That is clear in Hebrews 3, and the Spirit of Prophecy echoes it again and again.

Thirty-eight years later the children of Israel finally drew near the promised land. They came to the land of Edom, and the Lord said, You are almost to Canaan. I am going to arrange for you to go through the land of Edom, and you are going to buy your food and water there. Since they were going to get water from the Edomites, what happened to this water that had been flowing from the rocks along the way? It stopped.

I wonder how you would have felt when this water stopped, and Moses said, You are going into the land of Edom and start buying water. Would you have been happy or sad? In that experience the children of Israel began to murmur. They had done that before. They got back into the same rut. I want you to notice a statement that is a key thought for our study:

"The cessation of the miraculous flow of water should therefore have been a cause of rejoicing, a token that the wilderness wandering was ended. Had they not been blinded by their unbelief, they would have understood this. But that which should have been an evidence of the fulfillment of God's promise was made the occasion of doubt and murmuring. The people seemed to have given up all hope that God would bring them into possession of Canaan, and they clamored for the blessings of the wilderness" *Patriarchs and Prophets*, page 414.

Think of it. Many of those people had never know anything but getting water out of a rock and bread out of the skies. We look back at it and think it was a wonderful miracle. Every day go out and pick up bread off the ground and see water gushing out of rocks. You would think that people would never murmur who had evidence of God's miraculous care like that. But they got used to it the same as we get used to the miracles that surround us.

Thousands of those people had lived all their lives with that sort of thing. They had gotten used to living in the wilderness, and they clamored for those blessings.

The thought that has been impressing my mind of late is do we really want to go to Canaan, or have we settled for a fairly comfortable setup in the wilderness? That is the question I want to raise. We sing about Canaan:

"On Jordan's stormy banks I stand,
And cast a wishful eye
To Canaan's fair and happy land
Where my possessions lie."

But I am afraid a lot of people are looking for that after they die. They know they can't get anything here after they die, so they hope they will get to Canaan's land after they die.

There are people in the world who believe the popular theory that it is the way they are going to get to Canaan. We believe that those who die trusting in Jesus will be raised when He comes, and enter into their eternal reward that way. But has the hope of this people from 1844 to the present hour been the hope of going over alive into Canaan? Is it still the hope? Do we believe it? Do we want it?

I wonder if there will be some trials and difficulties before we get to that time? According to what I have read the children of Israel ran into some special difficulties and trials shortly before they got to Jordan. If we understand the road map today, do we understand that the experiences just before the coming of Jesus are times of special stress and trial and affliction and persecution, and difficulties of all kinds? Do we? Then as those troubles increase, if we really believe those are signs that we are almost to Canaan, what will be our attitude?

Jesus said to His disciples, When you see these things begin to come to pass, lift up your heads for your redemption draws nigh. But He said the people of the world would have trouble with heart failure, because they would be looking after those things that are coming on the earth (Luke 21). That is being literally fulfilled today. Millions of this world are all stirred up because they are looking at what is going on around them. And it is amazing the money they are spending to see more of the trouble that is going on all the time. It is having its effect. It is giving ulcers of the stomach, heart failure, worried minds, and all the rest.

Jesus says to His people to look up, lift up your heads. And as you see these trials come, remember that they are evidence that you are almost home.

I ask again, do we want to go home? Let's make it practical. In a little while from now we are told that we are going to have to leave our homes and flee to the rocks and the mountains. When we come to the time when we have to flee, will that be evidence to us that we are almost ready to go over? Well, how are you going to feel about it? Will you sing as you leave, or will you have a long face?

That is far enough up the road in our thinking that we can be quite philosophical about it. But there are some smaller trials that must come before that in order to get us ready for that one? Are any of us having that kind of trials now?

We are. If any of you aren't, let me know, and I will be glad to let you in on some that others are having so you can share, because we wouldn't want anyone to miss the experience. We want everyone to get the blessing that comes in sharing trials. Not manufactured ones. God gave these trials. And if we are following the path that leads over the desert to the promised land we will run into some trials and difficulties and problems.

What will we do? Will we murmur as the children of Israel did? Or will we learn the lesson that every new trial means we are almost home?

I ask again, do we really want to go over into Canaan, or are we content to stay in the wilderness? We sat out over a hundred years ago to tell everybody that Jesus was coming and tell them the things to do to get ready to meet Him. Through the years we have stressed the fact that we are pilgrims and strangers.

Friends, are we living in tents, or have we settled down to palaces of stone and marble? Have we decided that after all the days are prolonged, and every vision has failed? Have we decided that the thing to do is to make everything as comfortable as possible in the wilderness?

As our fathers and grandfathers have died in this wilderness, maybe we will too. So we had just as well settle down. Is there that danger? Do you ever feel that temptation? Do you ever feel that spirit coming in?

A young man was thinking about getting into this self-supporting work. He was in his early twenties. He wanted to carry on a program for God. A friend said to him, "Think of it. If you go into a work like that what will happen to you when you get old? Where will your security be? You won't have any social security. What will you do?"

What kind of thinking is that? It is wilderness thinking. It is planning as if we were going to stay on and on in the wilderness. Is God leading us to the wilderness or through the wilderness? What do you say? Is this home, or just a stopping place on the way through?

Where are you from? Egypt. Where are you going? Canaan. What are you doing here? Just passing through. This world is not mine.

There were some people back there in that movement that every now and then were raising a cry to go back to Egypt. It started just a few days out. When they were afraid the bread would run out they said, Moses, you have brought this whole congregation out here, and we are all going to die of hunger. It would have been better if we had stayed in Egypt. They had a similar cry about the water.

When they got to Sinai, Moses was up there in the mountain receiving the law. As he was up there day by day there finally came a restlessness, and they decided to make a golden calf. Their thought was that they would go back to Egypt.

They came to the borders of the promised land in this experience we have just been studying. When the spies came back and brought this report, they accepted it, and despaired of all hope of going into the promised land. They said, Let us make a captain and return to Egypt. They actually did make a captain. They actually organized a retreat party to go clear back to Egypt.

Are there influences today which would take us clear back to Egypt? There are. But I don't want to spend too much time on that. I tell you, our greatest danger is not the retreat toward Egypt, awful and perilous as it is. Our greatest danger is the danger of settling down in the wilderness.

This is to be a pilgrim's people. We are on the march. We are on the move. We are going to Canaan.

It is true that usually when we think of Canaan we think of the heavenly Canaan, Eden restored. We think of that beautiful land where everything is lovely and peaceful. But I would like to have you apply it to another stage of our experience just before that.

Look back to the time when the children of Israel passed over Jordan. Were their problems all passed? Did they have problems and conflicts after they got over? Yes. In fact, they had more conflicts after they passed over than they did before. Their first job was to take Jericho. Then another city and another one. They spent some time in the conquest of Canaan.

I would like to have you apply that to the loud cry of this people just ahead. I am perfectly willing to apply it to the heavenly Canaan. It belongs there. But it has a meaningful series of lessons as we think of applying it to the time of the loud cry.

For years and decades God's people have been looking forward to the time of the loud cry as Israel looked forward to the conquest of Canaan. God has made wonderful promises as to what He will do for this people during that time. He has said that all God's people are going to be filled with the Spirit. He has said there will be thousands converted in a day. He has said that miracles will be wrought and the sick healed, and signs and wonders will follow the believers. He has said that at that time many of the great men of the earth will step out and take their stand with the remnant people of God. He has told us that at that time the remnant of God's people in every nation, kindred, tongue, and people will be gathered into one fold and receive the seal of the living God.

I want to say to you that the fulfillment of that will be a greater miracle than the conquest of Canaan was back in the days of Joshua. It will be the mighty work of the Spirit of God. But I wonder if our faith grasps the reality of that? Do we say, Can it be? Yes, it would be a wonderful thing if it could happen. But I wonder if it will ever happen or not.

I want to bring it down closer to our personal experience. I trust this will be the greatest lesson we learn tonight. To leave Egypt represents leaving the world of sin. Going through the Red Sea represents baptism. Paul says so. But we are on the way to an experience like the passing over Jordan into the promised land. That is the experience that must come to us before we can enter into the loud cry. That is the experience of complete victory over sin.

In *Early Writings*, pages 269 to 271, it is set before us. We are given a view of God's people agonizing and praying. What for? Victory. Do they get it? Yes, the ones who persevere in prayer. And it says they had obtained the victory, and it called forth the deepest gratitude and holy, sacred joy. What did they do? They gave the loud cry. As a result what happened? People came in by the thousands.

Mark this point: Do you see that getting the victory over sin completely in the life is just as great an impossibility in the eyes of human beings as taking those cities from those great giants was back there?

We are not in Egypt tonight. We have left Egypt, haven't we? Yes we have. We are not carrying whiskey bottles around in our hip pockets. We left them down in Egypt, didn't we? Yes. We are not carrying packages of cigarettes in our pockets. We left those in Egypt. There are a lot of other things that we left down there. But that doesn't mean we have gotten all the blessings that God wants to give us. We are in the wilderness. We are on our way.

The question is, and mark it, Is God able to take us clear through from Egypt to Canaan? Is He able to bring us to the place in this world where we quit sinning?

"I saw that none could share the `refreshing' unless they obtain the victory over every besetment, over pride, selfishness, love of the world, and over every wrong word and action" *Early Writings*, page 71.

Will it happen? Well, that depends upon whether we are the Caleb and Joshua group, or whether we are the ten spies. The ten spies said it would be wonderful if it could happen, but it was impossible. There are thousands of good people who think that as long as we are in this world we will be in the wilderness. The only way they know of getting into an experience where they don't keep sinning and repenting, sinning and repenting, is to die and go to heaven immediately or when Jesus comes.

Isn't that too bad? Nearly all the Israelites were in that group. Only a few during those wilderness wanderings grasped the divine possibilities, the divine potential. Caleb and Joshua did. They said, We are well able to do it. Let's go up at once and possess it.

Oh, for hearts of faith. I pray that God will give you and me a faith like Caleb and Joshua that we may say, Look here, I don't want to go back to Egypt. I am not interested in that crowd who wants to appoint a captain and go back to the land of bondage, the house of slavery. I don't want the whiskey. I don't want the tobacco. I don't want all those other things. I want to leave that.

While I am thankful that God has led me through the wilderness, I am on my way to Canaan. I certainly don't want to stay here. Oh, no. I am on my way to Canaan. What does Canaan mean? As I see it, it not only means that heavenly land where the river of life flows. It means an experience of complete victory right here in this world where the Spirit of God is poured out in its fullness, the latter rain is given, the loud cry is proclaimed, and under the inspiration of God we gather in the last souls before probation closes.

That is the experience that we must cross over Jordan, as it were, to enter into. Have we come again and again to that point? Yes. It doesn't make any difference how many times we come. Until we get the faith that Israel finally had, we will never have that experience.

"The people were brought to the same test beneath which their fathers had so signally failed. But the trial was now far more severe than when God had commanded Israel to go forward. The difficulties in their way had greatly increased since they refused to advance when bidden to do so in the name of the Lord. It is thus that God still tests His people. And if they fail to endure the trial, He brings them again to the same point, and the second time the trial will come closer, and be more severe than the preceding. This is continued until they bear the test, or, if they are still rebellious, God withdraws His light from them and leaves them in darkness" *Patriarchs and Prophets*, page 437.

Do you see that we have got to succeed where past generations failed? Do you see that God is going to lead His remnant people to the place where the fullness of the Spirit of God will be poured upon them, and they will do the impossible. They will conquer Canaan. They will see the walls of Jericho fall down. They will conquer the land through the power of God. That is the loud cry experience.

I want to have it, don't you? While I realize we must journey through the wilderness, my soul says, Is it far to Canaan's land? Is it far, friends? No, it isn't far. Not in distance. The amount of time is up to you and me. We can go like snails or turtles, or we can run like rabbits.

What do you say? Shall we go, or shall we poke along? Shall we believe that God is able not only to take us out, but bring us in? Shall we believe that God is able to not only deliver us from liquor and tobacco and gross vices, but is able to deliver us from evil temper and criticism, covetousness, love of the world, pride, and all the rest?

We which have believed do enter in. Thank the Lord. Oh, for the spirit of Caleb and Joshua to say, We are well able to go in and possess the land. We are well able to get the victory over our own sins, and able to go out and reach the honest in heart and bring them into this glorious movement, and triumph with them at the close of this wonderful work.

Our Father, we thank Thee with all our hearts that the experiences of Israel have been written down as types and examples for us. We thank Thee that we can choose, and that we do not need to be like the doubting and unfaithful spies. Rather, we can be like Caleb and Joshua. We can have the spirit to believe this work will succeed, the medical missionary program will cover the earth as the waters cover the sea, that Thy standards will be upheld, and that a remnant will be developed in whom Thy law is written and in whose forehead Thy seal is perfectly impressed. We choose to believe it in the faith of Jesus who died upon the cross to make it possible. We thank Thee in Jesus' name. Amen.

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