

Basic Training: The Soldier's Manual

Lesson Four: Wandering In The Wilderness, Invasion & Conquest, Judges

Introduction: (1 Corinthians 10:1-12)

1. **Too many times we approach our study** of the Bible like choosing food at a buffet... just picking and choosing pieces of the narrative out as we want or need. This isn't completely bad, but it can cause to lose the sense of the big picture. It is easy to miss the way the stories are intertwined into one big story. It is easy to miss the way each story relates to the theme of the Bible as a whole. The Bible really is one big narrative with one big theme running throughout it... the redemption of man through Jesus
2. **This year our theme is BASIC TRAINING.** For years, our military has issued our soldiers manuals. These manuals instruct soldiers on how to be a soldier, how to survive various circumstances, how to use weapons, how to perform their various roles, and more. Those field manuals are crucial not only to their success as soldiers, but to their being able to survive in battle! The Bible describes Christians as soldiers. While our war is not physical, it is very real and the consequences are eternal! God does not just turn us loose in life and simply wish us well, God has given us a manual. Our manual gives us the information we need to know how to be a soldier of the cross, how to fight our wars, how to rescue fallen soldiers, how to please our commanding officer, and ultimately how to arrive safely at home! Our manual is the Bible.
3. **This manual gives us all we need to function as soldiers** (2 Tim. 3:16-17). Yet it does us little good if it is not written our hearts and held in our hands. We must know the Bible! The last Sunday of each month we are dedicating to working through the Bible time periods. By doing so, I hope to help familiarize ourselves with the scriptures, learn some timeless lessons from the narrative, and see the theme of Jesus woven throughout it. Don't just know the narrative, but know how it changes me!

A. The Biblical Narrative:

1. **Wandering In The Wilderness**

a. When we left off, Moses had led the children of Israel out of the bondage of Egypt, across the Red Sea and into the wilderness. The plan was to worship in the wilderness and move on to the Land of Canaan, the land of promise. Sadly, because of their unbelief what should have been a journey through the wilderness turned into wandering in the wilderness. The books of Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, & Deuteronomy record the events of this period.

b. **From Goshen to Mt Sinai** →

1) **As God's people traveled**, they came to a place called Marah and had no water. The water was bitter (Marah). The people complained. God had Moses cut down a tree into the water and it became sweet

- 2) **They traveled on and became hungry.** They complained again & actually said they wished they had died in Egypt. This time God fed them manna, which was bread, and quail from heaven each morning
- 3) They traveled more and became thirsty and complained again. This time God told Moses to strike a rock, Moses did, and water came out of the rock
- 4) **Finally, they arrive at Sinai.** Here, Israel set up camp at the mountain. Here, God would make a covenant with His people represented by 10 commandments written on tablets of stone. The earth shook and thunder, lightning, and a thick cloud enveloped the mountain. Moses climbed the mountain where he received the law from God. Moses did not just receive the 10 commandments, but many laws dealing with social & religious life as well as instructions for building the tabernacle... a portable tent that served as a house of worship, a place to keep the ark of the covenant, as well as God's dwelling place among men
- 5) Moses actually went up and down the mountain several times. But on one occasion, when his return delayed, the Israelites built a golden calf and began worshipping it. God sent Moses down and upon seeing it Moses threw down the two stone tablets breaking them. Moses ground up the golden calf into powder, poured it into water, and forced the Israelites to drink it! He went back up the mountain where God gave him a new set of stones. The first set God carved out, this set Moses had to carve.
- 6) **Having received all of the law,** Moses and God's people construct the ark of the covenant and the tabernacle, and began to follow God's glory through the wilderness. Organized & worshipping (**Exodus 40:34-38**)

c. **From Mt Sinai to Kadesh Barnea** → Its been 1 year, 1 month, and 1 week since leaving Egypt. It took another 11 months to reach Kadesh Barnea.

- 1) **God was feeding the people manna but they complained (Num 11:4-6).**
- 2) God had Moses send spies to check out Canaan, one spy per tribe. They brought back an excellent report, but 10 of the spies said the people were too great and strong. Only Joshua and Caleb returned saying that they could conquer the land with God's help. Sadly, the people rejected Joshua and Caleb's trust in God and believed the other 10. Due to their unfaithfulness God had that generation wander in the wilderness until everyone 20 yrs old & up, except Joshua and Caleb died out. **God would keep His promise,** but with a more faithful generation (**Num 14:7-10**)
- 3) Israel tried to take matters into their own hands and go conquer Canaan, but they were completely routed. This generation lost their chance!
- 4) **Israel became thirsty again.** This time God told Moses to speak to the rock. Moses was frustrated and he struck the rock. God still gave them water, but his disobedience robbed God of glory. Cost them! (**Num 20:12-13**)

d. **Moses was now old.** Because Moses disobeyed God when he struck the rock, Moses was not allowed to enter the land of Canaan. His whole life was about leading Israel there, but now Joshua would take over (**Deut. 31:7-8**). God had Moses go

up on Mount Nebo where he could see the land of Canaan. After looking over the land, **Moses died and God buried Moses there (Deut. 34:1, 5-7)**

2. Invasion And Conquest

- a. **When Moses led Israel out of Egypt**, they crossed the Red Sea when God parted the waters and they walked across on dry land. Under Joshua's leadership they came to the Jordan River and God parted that water and they once again crossed on dry dry ground into the land of Canaan. It was an incredible display of God's power and providence. A reminder that God was leading them and giving them this land. As they crossed, Joshua commanded them to take up twelve stones, one for each tribe of Israel, and build a memorial in Gilgal on the other side of the River. It was to be a memorial to their descendants forever of what God had done for them **(Joshua 3:14-17)**
- b. **The first city Israel conquered was Jericho**. Before crossing into Canaan, Joshua had sent spies into Jericho. There a woman, Rahab, who was a harlot, protected the spies and helped them escape. She recognized the power of the God of Israel and asked the spies to rescue her when they conquered the city. Upon arrival God had a strange battle plan. March around the city one time a day for six days. On the seventh day march around seven times. Then they were to blow their trumpets and shout and the walls would come crashing down. When Israel conquered Canaan they were sure to rescue Rahab first. God said that all else was to be destroyed. No one was to personally loot anything **(Josh 6:24-25)**
- c. After Jericho they came to a much smaller city named Ai. It was so small they only sent about 3000 men, yet they were defeated. God revealed why. A man named Achan had taken some loot from Ai and hidden it under his tent. He was put to death **(Joshua 7:25)**. They fought Ai again but this time they won
- d. From here, the battles continued until Canaan was conquered and the land was settled. Each victory emphasized that God was giving them this land, that the battle belonged to the Lord **(John 10:11-14)**. After their conquest Joshua divides the land up among the tribes. Before his death, Joshua gives a compelling challenge to Israel... Choose who you will serve! **(Joshua 24:14-18)**
- e. When God told Israel to conquer Canaan, God commanded them wipe out all the nations that occupied the land. God specifically said not to leave any behind or it would be their undoing **(Num. 33:51-56)**. Sadly, God's people didn't follow through with this. First, they made a treaty with the Gibeonites after the Gibeonites deceived them, pretending to be a helpless & worn out. Later, the Israelites left even more groups to be their works **(Joshua 9; Judges 1:28)**

3. Judges

- a. The group of people who conquered Canaan were very faithful. Joshua had led them well. The parents had taught their children well. They trusted in God and were committed to doing what was right. But two generations later things changed. A generation arose who did not know God or His mighty works **(Judges 2:7, 10)**
- b. Moses had warned them if they were unfaithful & disobeyed God, they would find themselves being oppressed by other nations. God allowed them to conquer

Canaan due to the wickedness of those people. What should've happened when they became wicked? Things went south because they did not drive all the inhabitants of Canaan like God commanded (**Passage; Judges 1:28**)

- c. God used the nations around them to punish their wickedness and cause them to repent (**Judges 2:11-15**). A cycle sets up. The Israelites would turn their backs on God, God would allow a foreign nation to oppress them, the people would cry out to God for deliverance, God would send a judge (or deliverer) to rescue the Israelites, the Israelites repented and returned to serving God, after some years of peace & prosperity they again became unfaithful. (**vs. 16-19**)
- d. The judges: Othniel, Ehud, Shamgar, Deborah & Barak, Gideon, Abimelech, Tola, Jair, Jephthah, Ibzan, Elon, Abdon, Samson, Eli, Samuel. For +/-350 years, these men ruled over Israel instead of kings like their neighboring nations had.
- e. In the middle of this is the story of Ruth... A woman, Naomi, leaves home with her family due to a severe famine. She settles in Moab. Her two sons marry Moabites. In time Naomi's husband and her two sons die. This leaves her as a widow as well as her two daughter-in-laws. One was named Ruth. Ruth moves back to Israel with Naomi where she meets a man named Boaz who marries her. He becomes her kinsman redeemer... buying her back from widowhood and making her part of God's people. She becomes the grandmother of David and a direct ancestor of Jesus. Shows God's desire to save all people, not just Jews!
- f. The end of this time period is marked by the nation of Israel calling upon Samuel to appoint a king for them like the nations around them. Samuel, who had been leading them well, took this personally. God let Samuel know this request was not a rejection of Samuel's leadership, but a rejection of God's leadership. They did not need a king, God was the king. They were His chosen people, they weren't like the nations around them. They forgot their identity (**I Sam. 8:4-7**)

B. Lessons From The Biblical Narrative:

1. After having been set free from sin, be aware of the temptation to look back. Israel had left the cruel bondage of Egypt, but anytime things became a little difficult as they marched toward Canaan they either felt like they were better off before or they blamed God. As time moves forward, sometimes its easy to forget how great the bondage of sin was. We forget how bright the light of salvation is as we grow more and more accustomed to it. We think everything is supposed to come easy, but we forget that trials are part of our growth and learning to trust God more. Don't look back! (**Hebrews 10:32-36**)
2. God is holy and His people will also be holy. Look at Mount Sinai, look at the plethora of laws God gave Israel, look at priesthood, look at the tabernacle... God was teaching His people something. They weren't like the nations around them. They were different. Why? Because they served Jehovah! God wasn't like the false idols the other nations worshipped. God is real, powerful, righteous, just, and so much more! Their identity and their life was a reflection of God's holiness. The same is true for us! (**I Pet 1:12-16**)
3. God's authority must be respected. God gave laws and instructions which regulated their worship and work as servants of God. All those laws, rules, and ordinances mattered.

- God gave a pattern and expected it to be followed. While we are under the NC, respect for authority & adherence to God's pattern stands (**Josh 1:6-9; Num 10:1-2; 2 John 9**)
4. Thinking about God's providence and promises, God deserves to be trusted. Don't be like the 10 spies who heard God's promise but had a defeated spirit. God doesn't lead where He won't provide the victory! His word is faithful and true! We can follow God completely and with full surrender knowing His way works and will be best! (**1 Peter 1:8-9**)
 5. God's people must take seriously the evil influences that surround them. When Israel left some of the nations around them, those nations corrupted their devotion to God and morality. When we choose to surround ourselves with people of worldly values and people who live in sin, we cannot expect to escape unscathed (**2 Cor. 6:14-18**)
 6. Finally, in the judges we gain one last look at the struggle of humanity. When things are going good, we tend to lose sight of our spirituality and commitment. When things are going bad, we tend to cry out to God for help. How do we capture our desire for God's presence and sense of dependency upon Him all the time? (**Romans 8:5-6**)

C. The Scarlet Thread Running Through The Biblical Narrative:

1. There is a scarlet thread woven throughout the tapestry of the Bible. From the Garden of Eden to the Cross of Calvary, to the promise of Paradise in Revelation, the Bible is **HISTORY**
 - a. Quote: "Theologians and Bible students sometimes refer to "the scarlet thread running through the Bible." By this they mean that the Bible's theme is Jesus Christ and His sacrifice for the redemption of mankind. The [blood of Christ](#) runs throughout the entire Bible, symbolically. It is seen in the animals killed in Eden to provide garments for Adam and Eve, the ram that took Isaac's place on the altar of Moriah, the Passover lamb, the institution of the sacrificial system, the scarlet rope of Rahab, and the thousands of years of sacrifices performed at the tabernacle and temple. The scarlet thread runs all the way up to John the Baptist's declaration, "Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!" ([John 1:29](#)) and to the foot of the cross, where Jesus finally says, "It is finished" ([John 19:30](#)). "Without the [shedding of blood](#) there is no forgiveness" ([Hebrews 9:22](#)), and that's why the symbolism of the scarlet thread in the Bible is significant. The scarlet thread is the theme of atonement found throughout the pages of Scripture."
 - b. If you cut the Bible open at any point, it will bleed Christ. Jesus is the Word!
 - c. Jesus understood the importance of seeing this thread. After His resurrection, Jesus caught up with two men who were walking away from Jerusalem toward their home in Emmaus. They were despondent. They had given up. Jesus spoke and unraveled the tapestry of scripture and showed them the scarlet thread. Jesus took them from despair to hope by God's plan of salvation (**Luke 24:13-27**)
2. In the wilderness, the Israelites began to grumble, again, and God sent fiery serpents into the land. If they bit the Israelites, they died. God had Moses create a bronze serpent and put it on a staff. Moses was to hold it up. If the Israelites looked upon this serpent, they would be given life. If they didn't they would die. It was a lesson in trusting God for salvation. Jesus referenced this event & applied it to his death (**John 3:14-15**)
3. All of those experiences, all of those blessings, and all of those struggles are types of what we have in Jesus Christ. He is the ultimate reality of them. Will we learn? (**1 Cor. 10:1-12**)
4. Standing at Mt Sinai with Jews watching Moses climb up we may be stricken with awe. But that was a shadow of something greater that was coming. We have come to Mt Zion

through Jesus. We are invited up on that mountain, not kept afar. What we have is so much greater... Don't turn away from what Jesus offers you! **(Hebrews 12:18-24)**

5. Just as the Israelites followed Moses to a promised rest, we are following Jesus to our promised rest. The land of Canaan was a temporary promised land. It was a shadow of the reality that Jesus leads us to! Don't let unbelief keep you out! **(Hebrews 3)**