

## They Did Not Believe

There is a very disappointing series of events described in the books of Numbers and Deuteronomy. The time is a few days after The Angel of the Lord led Israel away from Mount Sinai to the Promised Land. They have arrived at the border of The Promised Land. The land God promised to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. The same promise, repeated to Israel from Sinai, included comfort, and emphasis on the security of the land. *"For I will cast out the nations before you and enlarge your borders; neither will any man covet your land when you go up to appear before the LORD your God three times in the year"* (Exodus 34:24). But when the time came to enter, the majority of Israel refused to go into the land.

God also gave a specific warning about the angel He sent before them. The angel would lead them, protect them, and force out the nations in the land so that Israel could inhabit the land. The warning defines what would happen if they were disobedient. *"Beware of Him and obey His voice; do not provoke Him, for He will not pardon your transgressions; for My name is in Him"* (Exodus 23:21). The acts of disobedience and the punishments are recorded, mostly, in Numbers and Deuteronomy. Israel weighed the abilities of the angel that led them against the potential threat of the Canaanites. They came to the wrong conclusion.

In the most flagrant challenge to the truthfulness of God's word, all of Israel except Levi wanted to send spies to check things out. *"Every one of you came near to me and said, 'Let us send men before us, and let them search out the land for us, and bring back word to us of the way by which we should go up, and of the cities into which we shall come'"* (Deuteronomy 1:22). Israel rejected the guidance of the Angel of the Lord and the power of God to drive out the inhabitants of the land. They want to make their plan! Moses said, *"Nevertheless you would not go up, but rebelled against the command of the LORD your God"* (Deuteronomy 1:26). Moses also said, *"You did not believe the LORD your God,"* (Deuteronomy 1:32). The Psalmist said of them, *"Then they despised the pleasant land; They did not believe His word, But complained in their tents, And did not heed the voice of the LORD"* (Psalms 106:24-25).

How many have turned away from the Lord because they want proof that He is? They search for scientific evidence that He has performed all that the Bible says about Him. Is there physical proof that He is the creator, healer, protector, and the cause of the ten plagues. How was the Red Sea parted, and where is the evidence of Israel's passing? All the miraculous events described in the Old Testament are being questioned and investigated with modern scientific methods. Cable network channels like Discovery, Science, National Geographic, and broadcast channel PBS all try to demonstrate that Bible things could not happen except by natural causes. They say the sea did not part for Israel, and Jesus did not walk on water. They conclude, if people saw it, it must have been an illusion.

The Hebrew writer warns, *"Beware, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God"* (Hebrews 3:12). The writer quotes Numbers 14, 32, and Deuteronomy 1. In Hebrews 3, as he uses Israel's unbelief as an example of those that saw the wonders of God yet turned away from God. The apostle John states that his writings are evidence of Jesus' miracles. *"Truly Jesus did many other signs in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name"* (John 20:30-31). None of us has seen the miracles of healing, control of nature,

and remanufacture of substances like turning water into wine. But we have the testimony of witnesses that did see it. What we can demonstrate "scientifically" is the validity of our Bible to the ancient texts. If the Holy Spirit can Keep the word accurate through the centuries, it must be by miraculous power. The fact that the Bible exists is evidence that it contains the truth God wants people to know.

There are many examples in the Bible of people turning away from God and His promises. People like Esau, who gave up the birthright and blessing because he was hungry, Genesis 25:29-34. Others are like the ungodly described by Job in Job 21:14-15, *"They say to God, 'Depart from us, For we do not desire the knowledge of Your ways. Who is the Almighty, that we should serve Him? And what profit do we have if we pray to Him?"*

May we ever be strengthened in our belief by the continual study of the Word of God and through prayer.