

spiritually strengthened (1 Corinthians 10:3). This was the manna and quail supplied by the Lord (Exodus 16:11-15). Christians have the “true bread from heaven” (John 6:32), Jesus Christ (John 6:35), His Word (John 6:63), which enables us to survive spiritually.

These Hebrews obtained the exalted privilege of drinking water from the very spiritual Rock, Christ, Who journeyed with them in the wilderness (1 Corinthians 10:4). Although the life-giving stream flowed forth from a physical stone at Rephidim (Exodus 17:6-7), yet Christ enabled Moses to work the miracle. Jesus supplies His disciples with “a fountain of water springing up into everlasting (John 4:13-14) in His Word.

But if most of those ancients, among all of whom Christ dwelt and all of whom He blessed, perished, how can we suppose we are safe from the same dreadful fate?

Despite the rich blessings bestowed upon all the Lord’s people of old, “with most of them God was not well pleased, for their bodies were scattered in the wilderness” (1 Corinthians 10:5). Of a host of 603,550 fighting men who left Egypt (Numbers 1:46), only two, Joshua and Caleb, were allowed by the Lord to rest in the beautiful land of promise (Numbers 26:63-65). Uncounted wilderness graves bear silent testimony to the danger of falling from grace.

As Paul five times repeated the fact that all Israel was blessed of God, he also enumerated five sins by which the people fell. These are examples to us (1 Corinthians 10:6). They fell by lusting “after evil things” (verse 6; Numbers 11:4-6). As the result of their complaints, “the anger of the Lord was greatly aroused”(verse 10), “and the Lord struck the people with a very great plague” (verses 33-34). We also must beware lest we turn our desires back to the sin of the world we left behind (Philippians 3:13-14). Israel also apostatized by idolatry and the lewd revelry which accompanied it (verse 7; Exodus chapter 32). Christians must not be guilty of covetousness, the greedy desire for wealth, lest we, as the Hebrews, be idolaters (Colossians 3:5). Twenty-three thousand Jews were slain in a single day because of sexual immorality with “the women of Moab.” (verse 8; Numbers 25:1-5) The Master warned His disciples, not only of the danger of sexual immorality itself, but even of the look of lust, which is adultery of the heart (Matthew 5:27-28). Israel also fell by tempting the Lord (i.e., acting in such a way as to see how long he would bear with human stubbornness), when they “spoke against God and against Moses” (verse 9; Numbers 21:4-6) because of the hardships of the

wilderness. As the result, “the Lord sent fiery serpents among the people, and they bit the people; and many of the people of Israel died.” Christians can likewise tempt Christ by a stubborn heart of unbelief (Hebrews 3:7-13). Finally, the Jews stumbled by complaining (verse 10). When the ten spies brought an evil report concerning Canaan, the people believed them, rather than the faithful scouts, Joshua and Caleb. They complained against God and threatened to stone Moses. As the result, God sent a plague among them and further decreed that all those adults who left Egypt, except Joshua and Caleb, would die in the wilderness (Numbers 14). Grumbling, complaining, and bickering are sinful manifestations of ungrateful dissatisfaction with the guiding hand of God (Philippians 2:14-16). We must carefully avoid the sin of complaining by maintaining a joyful attitude of thankfulness for God’s blessings (Philippians 4:4-7).

Paul recounted these facts of ancient times because those events are examples for us and are recorded to instruct us (verse 11). What is the lesson? “Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall.” (verse 12) Israel could not have fallen from grace, had they never been in grace. Their tragic history in the wilderness is an unanswerable argument, based not simply on the theoretical possibility of falling from grace, but on its actual occurrence, and that by the overwhelming majority of God’s people of that time. Their frailty despite great blessings should warn us against complacency. We, though Christians, are in danger of falling, even as they were. But, lest we despair, the apostle comforted us in the fact that God will faithfully guard us against a temptation greater than we can withstand, if we trust Him for help (verse 13).

Wherefore, heed the warning. We must remain “steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord” (1 Corinthians 15:58), until we cross the dark water of Jordan to the shore of eternity. For those who do so, a beautiful and glorious land of promise is waiting (Hebrews 11:16). But, woe to those who turn back!

Questions for Review

I. True/False

1. _____ The history of Israel in the wilderness proves a child of God cannot lose his salvation.
2. _____ Only a few Israelites were blessed of God.
3. _____ All Israel was baptized unto Moses.

Bible Correspondence Course
Lesson Eighteen
Take Heed Lest You Fall

4. ____ Moses typifies Christ.
5. ____ We were slaves to the most vicious task master of all, sin.
6. ____ Christians have the “true bread from heaven,” Jesus Christ.
7. ____ Only two Israelites fell in the wilderness.
8. ____ Jesus supplies His disciples with a fountain of water springing up into everlasting life in His Word.
9. ____ There is no danger we will turn our desires back to the sin of the world we left behind .
10. ____ Israel fell by lusting after evil things.
11. ____ It is good to try to be rich.
12. ____ We must not be guilty of the look of lust.
13. ____ The story of Israel in the wilderness has no application to us.
14. ____ We, though Christians, are in danger of falling, even as they.
15. ____ There is no hope for us.
16. ____ We must remain faithful until death.

II. Matching

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| 1. ____ spiritual meat | A. Christ |
| 2. ____ spiritual Rock | B. acting in such a way as to see how long God would bear with human stubbornness |
| 3. ____ covetousness | C. miraculously supplied, caused them to realize God’s care for them and to be spiritually strengthened |
| 4. ____ tempt | D. greedy desire for wealth |

It is so easy for God’s people, trusting in past blessings and attainments, to feel they “have it made” (cf. Matthew 3:9). But the failures of ancient Israel in their wandering in the wilderness are grim warnings to us of the danger of falling (1 Corinthians 10:11-12). The Lord wants us to be aware of the significance of their plight (verse 1). How is the Jewish desert journey an example for us?

In 1 Corinthians 10:1-4 the inspired writer reminds us five times that “all” the Hebrews received the blessings of God, even as all Christians receive “every spiritual blessings in the heavenly places in Christ...” (Ephesians 1:3). Israel’s deliverance from Egypt and flight into the wilderness typifies our salvation by and walk with Christ in several ways. They were in bondage to a cruel master in Egypt (Exodus 2:23), even as we were slaves to the most vicious task master of all, sin (Romans 6:16). But God selected a great leader and deliverer, Moses, to lead His people out of Egypt (Exodus 3:10), as Jesus Christ, “a Prophet like” Moses, was raised up to deliver us from sin and to lead us to freedom (Deuteronomy 18:18-19; Acts 3:19-23). The Israelites underwent a baptism “into Moses in the cloud and in the sea” that is parallel to our baptism (1 Corinthians 10:1-2). In their baptism, Israel was delivered from Egyptian captivity (Exodus 14:29-30), as we were delivered from bondage to sin in baptism (Romans 6:17-18,3-4). The Hebrews’ baptism “into Moses” was the final seal of their following Moses, after which all attachment to Egypt and Pharaoh was finally broken and all allegiance to Moses was unchallenged, thus placing Israel in a new relationship to him (1 Corinthians 10:2; Exodus 14:31). Our baptism was the culminating step which placed us into Christ (Romans 6:3). The baptism of the Jewish nation was their beginning of a great journey initiated by divine call with the goal of a land of promise awaiting them (Exodus 3:7-10). When we were baptized, we began a journey initiated by the Gospel call with eternal glory as its destination (2 Thessalonians 2:13-14).

Having begun their journey, all Israel received marvelous blessings from God to enable them to survive the wilderness. They were given food which was “spiritual” in that, being miraculously supplied, it caused them to realize God’s care for them and to be thus