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Bible Lesson 15 (BTJ)

1. Introduction

God led the Israelites on their journey from Mount Sinai through the wilderness to the border of the land of Canaan at Kadesh Barnea. God showed the children of Israel his faithfulness to them during this time.

At Kadesh Barnea, God told Moses to send a group of spies into the land of Canaan to see the land and bring back a report to Moses and Aaron and the Israelites. God wanted them to know what kind of land they would be possessing. He also wanted them to see the inhabitants living in the land. He would dispossess of that land by his power.

The story of the spies adventure in the land of Canaan is a disappointing one. Ten of the twelve spies were overwhelmed by the physical obstacles and doubted that they would be able to successfully occupy the land. Unfortunately, they did not stand on the promise that God had made to Abraham that he and his descendants would occupy that land. Only Joshua and Caleb believed that God would go before them in the conquest of the land and enable them to defeat all of their enemies and overcome all of the obstacles they would face.

God judged the Israelites for not believing in him. Because they doubted in his ability to secure the land of Canaan for them, God said they would have to live in the wilderness an additional forty years. Only people under twenty years of age would be allowed to enter the land of Canaan after living in the wilderness for forty years. Everyone else would die in the wilderness.

After forty years of living in the wilderness, God was ready to lead the Israelites into the land of Canaan under the leadership of Joshua who replaced Moses. After Moses died, Joshua led the Israelites into the land of Canaan. As they lived in the land, they began to engage in idolatry. God judged them for their sinfulness and the Israelites suffered at the hands of their oppressors. After they repented of their sinfulness, God delivered them from their oppressors through the leadership of various judges.

As time went on, the Israelites wanted a king like the other nations. God granted them their request and Saul became the first king of Israel.

2. Review

Setting: Glenn and Joseph were discussing the Bible stories Teacher had been teaching them. They wanted to be sure they understood the meaning of those stories.

Glenn: We learned a long time ago that God is everywhere present at the same time. Since that is true, why did God want the Israelites to build a tabernacle for himself? Wasn't he already living among them?

Joseph: God wanted the tabernacle to be in the midst of the Israelites' camp so that they would come to it to offer burnt offerings upon the brazen altar. A person who admitted that he was a needy sinner went to the tabernacle and presented his animal as a sacrifice to God. He knew that he was guilty of sinning and he needed God's mercy to forgive him. The tabernacle also reminded them that God was right there among them. God did not want the Israelites to forget about him. He wanted them to worship him.

Glenn: Why did the tabernacle have to be made exactly like God told Moses?

Joseph: God told Moses how he wanted the Israelites to build the tabernacle. It had to be done the way he said or he would not have descended to live in it. People cannot come to God in their own way. God only accepts the worship of people who come to him by his way.

Glenn: I remember the story of Cain. He did not come to God by faith. He came to God by his own way and God rejected his offering and false worship. If Cain had believed in God, he would have come to God in the right way.

Joseph: God promised Abraham, Isaac and Jacob that one of their descendants would be the Deliverer to save people from their sins. God wanted the Israelites, the descendants of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob to remain faithful to him. The Deliverer would come from the Israelites so God wanted them to follow him always.

Glenn: God chose Aaron and his sons to be the priests. Aaron had an important job as the high priest and he should not have listened to the Israelites' request for an idol. He knew better than to listen to the people's demand for an idol.

Joseph: The practice of worshiping idols is senseless. It comes from Satan. He wants people to be devoted to things they make instead of worshiping God. Satan wants people to devise their own way of worship. He does not want people to worship God.

Glenn: Moses was a good man because he interceded for the Israelites. When God was very angry with the Israelites for worshiping an idol, Moses pleaded with God to be merciful to them. He reminded God of his promise to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Moses had a great concern for the Israelites. He did not want them to die in their sins.

Joseph: God wants us to admit that we are sinners and in need of his mercy. The Israelite who brought an animal to be sacrificed as a burnt offering admitted his sinfulness. And, he wanted God to accept the death of the animal in exchange for his own death. That was God's way for people to have their sins forgiven. It was not something the Israelites decided to do.

Glenn: The tabernacle had two rooms, the holy place and the most holy place. The high priest would go into the most holy place once a year. He would take the blood of an animal sacrificed for their sins and sprinkle it upon the mercy seat where God abode. If they did everything right, God forgave them of their sins of the past year. God's mercy and grace to the Israelites are clearly seen in the teaching about the tabernacle.

Joseph: After Moses broke the first stone tablets, God told him to make two new stone tablets. Then he wrote the Ten Commandments on them for the Israelites. God wanted them to know and obey his commandments. He did not want them to forget them. If they forgot them, they would also forget about him.

Glenn: After all the tabernacle work was done, God descended upon it and abode in the most holy place on the mercy seat. It must have been an awesome experience for the Israelites to see this happening. The Israelites could see his presence among them as his cloud stayed by the end of the tabernacle where the mercy seat was. God was so good to the Israelites. He is good, true and longsuffering. We must think about him all the time or we too will forget about him like the Israelites did.

Joseph: Moses was a true servant of God. He listened to God and told the Israelites what God told him. He led them as God directed him. Even though the Israelites became upset with Moses and disobeyed God, Moses faithfully followed God and obeyed him. He believed and trusted in God. Moses example is a good one for us to think about.

3. God Led the Israelites on Their Journey

Teacher: It is good to see all of you here for this meeting. You have been faithfully attending the meetings and learning important truths from the Bible stories. God sees everyone who is here and he is pleased that you want to learn about him. God sees everything that happens in this village including these meetings.

After the Israelites finished building the tabernacle, a cloud covered it and the glory of the Lord filled it. The Israelites, God's chosen people, could see the cloud and know that God's presence was there with them. This should have strengthened their belief in God. It should have motivated them to want to obey all of God's commands.

At that time, the Israelites were still on their journey to the land of Canaan, the land that God had promised to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. When God wanted them to move, the cloud lifted from the Tabernacle. The Israelites would set out on their journey and follow the cloud until it stopped. Then they set up camp again. As long as the cloud did not rise, they remained where they were camping. Later, when it lifted again, they followed it because God was leading them on their journey to the land of Canaan.

God showed the Israelites that he was always present with them. He did not abandon them at times or hide his presence from them. The Israelites could see the cloud of the LORD hovering over the Tabernacle during the day. At night they could see a fire glowing inside the cloud. All of the Israelites could see the presence of the Lord with them at the Tabernacle. The most powerful being was with them all the time and visibly made his presence known to them. This is how God led the Israelites on their journey toward Canaan.

4. Spying the Land of Canaan

God led the Israelites on their journey from Mt. Sinai through the wilderness to the border of the land of Canaan at Kadesh Barnea. Then God spoke to Moses and said, "Send out men to explore the land of Canaan." God wanted the Israelites to see the land of Canaan, the land that he had promised to Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and their descendants. God told Moses to send a leader from each of the Israelites' twelve ancestral tribes to spy and explore the land. Two of the leaders among the twelve were Caleb and Joshua.

Moses heard God's command and sent out twelve men to explore the land of Canaan. All of these men were leaders among the Israelites. Their mission was to see firsthand what kind of land it was and to see who occupied it. Was it a land capable of supporting their population, their cattle and flocks of sheep and goats? Who lived in the land? Would they be a formidable foe or not? God wanted the people to see the goodness of the land of Canaan and be content to have it as their possession.

The twelve leaders traveled throughout Canaan for forty days. After forty days, they returned to the Israelites camp at Kadesh and reported to Moses and Aaron and all the Israelites the things they had discovered about Canaan. They showed them the bountiful fruit from Canaan, including a branch with a single cluster of grapes that was so large that

it took two of the spies to carry it on a pole between them! They also brought back some of the pomegranates and figs from Canaan. As the people saw the bountiful fruit, there was no doubt in their minds that Canaan was a land of milk and honey.

Then ten of the spies began to complain about the residents of Canaan. They said, “This land of milk and honey is filled with powerful people who live in large towns which are fortified. Some of the people are giants.”

These statements terrified all the Israelites and they began to moan and cry in despair. They forgot that God, who was their leader, could not be defeated by anyone.



Show #38: Angry Israelites ready to stone Moses and Aaron

Then Caleb spoke up and said, “Let us go right away and take the land! We can certainly conquer it!” Caleb made this statement because he believed God. He trusted God to enable them to do the seemingly impossible. He knew that God’s promise to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob was real and would be fulfilled. Why did Caleb believe it would be fulfilled? Caleb believed in God and knew that God is faithful. He never changes. He always does what he says he will do. That is why Caleb wanted all of the Israelites to go take the land of Canaan from its inhabitants.

All the other Israelites despaired about the obstacles they would face in the land of Canaan. “We will be killed if we try to take the land of Canaan,” they cried. “Why did you bring us here to die?” they complained. Except for Caleb and Joshua, all the Israelites were overwhelmed by the might of the occupants of the land of Canaan. They forgot that God could as easily overthrow them as he did the Egyptians. They forgot about the mighty defeat of the Egyptian army in the middle of the Red Sea. They forgot about God’s promise that he would bring them to the land of Canaan, a land of milk and honey.

Caleb and Joshua tried their best to calm them before their rebellion against God went out of control. They did not want God to be angry with the Israelites for their disbelief of his power to take the land of Canaan for them. Moses and Aaron fell face down on the ground before the whole community of Israel. Then Caleb and Joshua took a stand against

the ten doubting spies and said, “The land we explored is a wonderful land! It is a rich land flowing with milk and honey. God has chosen this land for us and he will bring us safely into it. It will be ours! Do not rebel against God who will give us this land. Do not be afraid of the people of the land. God is with us. He is not with the inhabitants of Canaan. They will be helpless prey to us as God delivers them into our hands. Don’t be afraid of them!”

Caleb and Joshua believed in God and trusted him for everything. They wanted the Israelites to likewise trust God in every situation. Surely by now the Israelites knew that God would not mislead them. He would not fail to be triumphant in any circumstance. Surely they would remember the many miracles they had seen God do for them.

Unfortunately, that was not the case. The Israelites’ first response was fearful unbelief and complaints. They even wanted to stone Caleb and Joshua because they wanted to take the land of Canaan right away. The Israelites’ anger and unbelief, though directed toward Caleb and Joshua, were in reality against God. How foolish of them to fight against God. How would God respond to their obstinance? Would he tolerate their unbelief and rebellion against him?

Listen to God’s response to the Israelites’ rebellion. God said to Moses and Aaron, “How long must I put up with these wicked people who complain about me?” God was greatly displeased by the Israelites’ complaints. He judged them and said, “All of you will die in this wilderness!” God told Moses and Aaron that every Israelite who was twenty years and older would die in the wilderness. Caleb and Joshua, the two spies who trusted God, would be the only ones over twenty years of age to enter Canaan. God also said that the Israelites would have to live in the wilderness for an additional forty years. Instead of going right into the land of Canaan, they would have to spend a year of punishment in the wilderness for every day the spies were in the land of Canaan. That was a very heavy punishment for not believing in God who miraculously delivered them from Egypt.

What happened to the ten doubting, rebellious spies? Listen to this. God punished the ten spies who had brought back an evil report against Canaan and incited the people against God’s choice for them. God punished them with a plague and they died. The penalty for their sinful rebellion against God was death. Now it was forever too late for these leaders to follow God! They should have trusted and obeyed God. Then he would have shown them his awesome power as he would have led them into the promised land.

Does God’s judgment seem harsh to you? God’s judgment was very harsh, yet it was a right one. It was a judgment according to their wicked rebellion against him. God does not allow sin to go unpunished.

Lets think about this: Why did the Israelites continue to rebel against God? Hadn't God proven himself trustworthy many times? All of the Israelites should have trusted God to lead them safely into the land of Canaan. After all, he delivered them from Pharaoh and the Egyptian army. He provided a dry road for them in the middle of the Red Sea. He gave them food and water as they began their journey in the wilderness. He showed them mercy and grace when they worshiped the golden calf idol. He gave them the tabernacle and lived among them. They saw his cloud over the tabernacle which was visible proof of his presence among them. God provided everything for them and they should have been in awe of his wonder, glory and greatness. They should have meditated upon his mercy and grace to them. They should have worshiped him every day with thankful hearts for his abundant goodness to them. Their minds should have been focused on who he is instead of who they were.

5. Wilderness Wanderings

The Israelites listened to the slanderous reports of the ten spies and rebelled against God. Their punishment was having to live in the wilderness, which they despised, an additional forty years. For every day they had spied the land of Canaan, they were penalized a year of delay for entering the land. Every person over twenty years of age, except Caleb and Joshua, was forbidden to enter the land of Canaan and would have to die in the wilderness. That was a harsh punishment for having doubted God when they should have trusted him.

After that, the Israelites were without drinking water. Did they trust God and kindly ask him to provide water for them? Were they content to wait upon God to provide water for them? No, they rebelled and grumbled against Moses and Aaron. They blamed them for not having water to drink. They lusted for the food they had in Egypt and complained that their provisions in the wilderness were inadequate. These complaints, in reality, were against God who led them in the wilderness.

Moses and Aaron turned away from the people and went to the entrance of the Tabernacle and fell face down on the ground. Then God told Moses to speak to a rock and water would come out of it which would be enough water to satisfy everyone and their livestock.

By now, Moses and Aaron had endured many complaints from the Israelites and they were upset at their continual griping. They became angry at the people. God had told Moses to speak to the rock and water would flow from it. Moses, however, struck the rock twice, then water gushed out of it. Then all the people and their livestock drank their fill. But God was not pleased with the disobedience of Moses and Aaron. He told them

that because they disobeyed him, they would not be able to lead the Israelites into the land of Canaan. That was their punishment for disobeying God. Moses and Aaron should have trusted God and obeyed his command even in a difficult situation. Moses should have spoken to the rock as God had commanded him and abundant water would have flowed out from it.

Later, the Israelites journeyed and came to Mt. Hor. While there, Aaron died and was buried on Mt. Hor. He was forbidden by God from entering the promised land because he had disobeyed God when Moses had struck the rock. At the time of his death, his office as high priest was passed on to his son Eleazar.

The Israelites continued their journey in the wilderness. Again the people became disgruntled and impatient. They spoke out against God and Moses and said. “Why have you brought us out of Egypt to die here in the wilderness? We have no food or drink we are sick and tired of this awful manna.” This complaint was a very serious one against God. What would God do this time to punish them? He had sustained them in the wilderness with food and water, but they still showed disrespect and disdain for God by complaining this way.



Show #37: The bronze serpent

Then God judged the Israelites for their rebellion against him. He sent fiery serpents among the Israelites and they bit the people. The poison caused an inflammation which was very painful and many people died. Quickly the people came to Moses begging for God’s help. They admitted their sinfulness. They admitted that they had sinned against God and begged for mercy. Then God told Moses to make a fiery bronze serpent and set it on a pole. Whoever was bitten and looked at the bronze serpent that Moses had made was healed and lived. If they were bitten, but refused to look at it, they were not healed and they died.

Did the Israelites deserve mercy from God? No, they did not deserve God’s mercy. They deserved judgment for being evil. They had falsely accused God of misleading them in the wilderness. That was a serious sin against God. God never makes a mistake. All his ways are right. To falsely accuse God and his servants Moses and Aaron was a serious sin

against God. They deserved death for their rebellion. But God was very kind and merciful to them. He told Moses to make a bronze serpent and put it on a pole so that people could look at it. Whoever was bitten by a fiery serpent and looked at the bronze serpent on the pole was healed and lived.

Did the bronze serpent on the pole have the power to heal people? No, it did not have any healing power. The reason people were healed is because they obeyed God's command to look at it. If a bitten person did not look at it, then he was not healed and died. God wanted the Israelites to show their faith in him by looking at the serpent on the pole. He wanted them to obey him. If they obeyed him, they lived. If they disbelieved him, they died.

There are many Bible stories which teach us that we should always obey God and trust him. There is only one way for a person to be saved from sin's penalty and punishment. That is God's way. There is only one right way to respond to God. That is to believe in him and to trust him in all situations. The Israelites often made wrong choices and rebelled against God. Did they suffer for their rebellion? Yes, they suffered a lot for choosing the wrong way.

How are you responding to this teaching? Are you believing God's message for you or do you still follow old beliefs and practices? It is not possible to go two separate ways at one time. It is not possible to believe in God's truth alone yet disbelieve what the Bible stories teach us. God wants all of you to be like Caleb and Joshua. He does not want you to be like the ten spies or the complaining Israelites.

6. Joshua Became the Israelites' New Leader

The Israelites moved from place to place in the wilderness for forty years instead of entering and living in the land of Canaan. If they had rejected the bad report of the ten spies, God would have led them into the land of Canaan long ago. Many of the people who were more than twenty years old when the twelve spies went into the land of Canaan had already died. Only Joshua and Caleb from all the people more than twenty years old were allowed to enter the land of Canaan. Aaron had already died and Moses, the Israelites' leader was not allowed to enter Canaan.

Joshua had helped Moses with his work for many years. He was a good helper for Moses. He believed in God and obeyed God's commandments. Joshua trusted God. He was not doubtful concerning any of God's promises. He believed God would fulfill his promise and lead them into the land of Canaan which he promised to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

God chose Joshua to take the place of Moses and lead the Israelites into the land of Canaan. God told Moses to publicly designate Joshua to be the Israelites' new leader so that all the people would follow his leadership. Joshua did not designate himself to be the Israelites' new leader. Joshua was chosen by God to lead the Israelites into the land of Canaan and to take possession of it from its inhabitants. Moses heard God's instructions and commissioned Joshua to be the new leader of the Israelites. Now that Joshua was the new leader of the Israelites, Moses was ready to depart.

Then Moses went up to Mount Nebo and climbed to the top of Mt. Pisgah. From there God showed him the whole land of Canaan and said to him. "This is the land I promised on oath to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. I have now allowed you to see it with your own eyes, but you will not enter the land." Moses, the servant of the LORD, died there in the land of Moab and God buried him in a valley. Moses was one hundred and twenty years old when he died. At that time, his eyesight was good and he was as strong as ever. God had given him good health and physical strength for his chosen task.

When Moses died, the Israelites mourned for him for thirty days. Their God-chosen leader, who led them for many years and experienced many events with them, was no longer alive. The work that God had for him had been completed. Moses was a good man who loved God and served him faithfully.



Show # 39: The Israelites march around Jericho

Joshua was the Israelites' new leader. Since the forty years of punishment were over, he proceeded to lead them into the land of Canaan. Caleb, the other believing, faithful spy, was still alive. He too was allowed to enter the land of Canaan because he had trusted God that they would be able to possess the land. He believed God would enable them to possess the land in spite of the obstacles they would encounter. He did not rebel against God like the other ten spies. Caleb and Joshua were true believers in God and they always trusted him.

Joshua led the Israelites to fight against the inhabitants of Canaan and to defeat them. He led them as God commanded him. God did not want the Canaanites to live among the Israelites because they worshiped idols and lived wickedly. If they continued to remain in

the land, they would influence the Israelites in one way or another to follow their wicked ways. God wanted the Israelites to inhabit the land and to live for him all the time. He did not want them to turn to idolatry and worship false gods.

Finally, many years after God's promise to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the Israelites were living in the promised land. Together they had gone through many experiences including the forty years of wandering in the wilderness. Joshua, their leader, served God and reminded the Israelites that they too should serve God and worship him. He reminded them of God's faithfulness, of his mercy and grace shown to them. He exhorted them to obey God always. He warned them that God would judge them if they disobeyed him. Joshua, the faithful servant of the Lord, died when he was one hundred and ten years old.

7. Israel Turns to Idolatry

As long as Joshua was alive, the Israelites followed the Lord. His leadership and example directed their thoughts and worship to God. After Joshua and the Israelites who had witnessed and experienced God's miracles in the wilderness died, the people began to follow the evil practices and customs of the Canaanites. The new generation did not know God nor his great acts among their forefathers. They had not been taught by the succeeding generations to worship God and abhor idolatry.

Although Joshua and the Israelites had overtaken the land of Canaan, there were still some wicked Canaanite idol worshipers throughout the land. These wicked Canaanites did not believe in God. They believed in false gods called Baal and Ashtaroth and made idols of them to worship. The Canaanites believed their idols represented true deities who had power to control human affairs. These idols, however, were lifeless and couldn't do anything for anyone. They were wrongly worshiped by the Canaanites and the worshipers often engaged in wicked and immoral living.



Show #40: The Israelites worshiped idols

Satan tempted the Israelites to worship the Canaanite idols. Many of the Israelites yielded to his temptations and started to worship idols. Satan hates God and does whatever he can to deceive people. That is why he wanted the Israelites to believe in false gods and wrong beliefs. He is the enemy of God. Do you think he was happy to see the Israelites living in the land of Canaan and worshipping God? No, he was angry about that so he set out to entice the Israelites to live wickedly just like the Canaanites. Satan wanted them to die in their sin separated from God. Just as Satan wanted the Israelites to die in their sins, he wants you too to die in your sins. That is why he tempts you to sin against God.

God was grieved and angry at the Israelites who began to worship idols. He chastised the Israelites for their sinfulness so that they would repent of their wicked living. He sent other nations to war against the Israelites and enabled these enemies to defeat them. Then the Israelites had to serve the ones who conquered them and oppressed them. Life was hard for the Israelites because God chastised them for sinning against him. They had lusted after the pagan practice of worshipping idols and God punished them for it.

God's chastisement upon the Israelites was hard on them. They cried to God for mercy. They pleaded with him for deliverance from their enemies. God heard the cries of the repentant Israelites and delivered them from their oppressors. He sent judges to lead them and overcome their oppressors. Then the Israelites were free again. However, after some years of freedom, they would gradually begin to forget about God and revert to paganism. Soon most of them lived wickedly again and did not truly worship God. Then God chastised them again through oppressors. The Israelites repeated this cycle over and over again.

During this time of repeated failure, God did not abandon the Israelites. He remained faithful to them because he cannot change. He had made a promise to send the Deliverer to Adam and Eve after they sinned in the Garden of Eden. God remembered his promise to Adam and Eve. He did not forget about it. Later God made a covenant with Abraham and promised that one of his descendants would be the promised Deliverer. God confirmed his promise to Abraham to Isaac and Jacob saying that one of their descendants would be the Deliverer. The Israelites were the descendants of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. The promised Deliverer would be an Israelite sent by God at the right time in history.

Satan, the hater and enemy of God, did not want the Deliverer to be born. He wanted all the people to die in their sins because he hates God. Satan worked hard at getting the Israelites to sin against God. He enjoyed seeing the Israelites worship idols because he knew that it grieved God. However, Satan could not stop God's work in history to send the Deliverer. God would send him at the right time.

8. Samuel Appoints Israel's First King

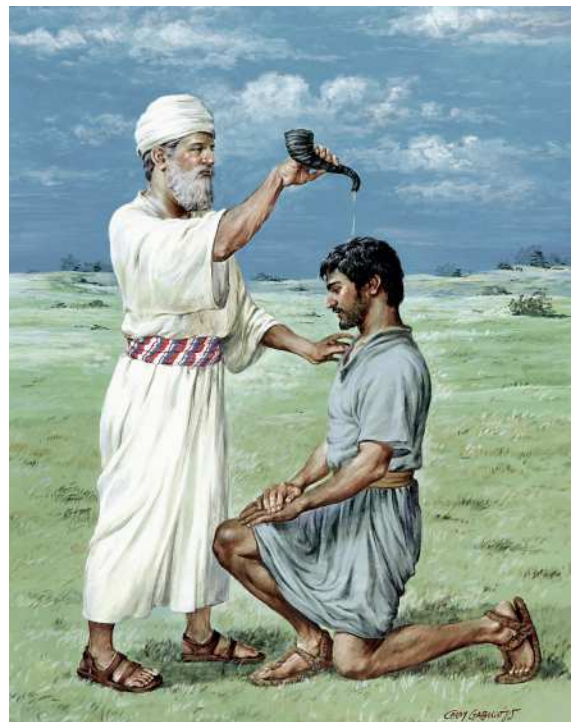
Samuel was the last judge for the Israelites. He served as judge for the Israelites for many years until he was an old man. The Israelites did not want any of his sons to succeed him as their judge because they were not upright and honest men. Some of the leaders of Israel came to Samuel and requested a king. They wanted to be like the surrounding nations and have a king. They wanted a king to be their leader and rule over them.

Samuel heard their request and was greatly displeased. He did not want the Israelites to have a king. He believed God was the one in whom they should trust for leadership. He believed that the Israelites should be content to have God lead them. Samuel spoke to the Lord about the Israelites' request for a king and the Lord replied, "Do everything they say to you." God granted them permission to have a king like the other nations.

Samuel heard God's reply and relayed it to the Israelites so that they would know that God had given them permission to have a king. Samuel warned them, however, that having a king meant that the people would have to pay taxes and provide manpower for the army and other government offices and jobs. He wanted the Israelites to know that having a king would be burdensome for them. The Israelites heard Samuel's advice but they still wanted a king to rule over them. Then he began his search for the right man to be the first King of Israel.

As Samuel searched for the first king of Israel, God showed him the man that he had chosen to be Israel's first king. Samuel relied upon the Lord's direction for choosing Israel's first king. He did not follow his own ideas. When Samuel saw a young man named Saul, the Lord directed him to choose Saul to be the first king of Israel. He anointed Saul with oil which was a sign of having been chosen to be king over the Israelites.

Now Israel had a king like the other nations, a visible leader for the people. Although they had a king, God did not forsake them. He continued to work among them in various ways. Some men were his chosen prophets who wrote parts of the Bible. God continued to work in history through Israel so that he could send the promised Deliverer at the right



Show #41: Samuel anointed Saul to be king of Israel

time. God is faithful and he cannot deny himself.

Saul became the king of Israel and ruled over the Israelites. The Israelites accepted him as their king and followed his leadership. At first, King Saul followed God. He received counsel from Samuel, the prophet, about the issues he faced as he ruled over the Israelites. Samuel was a faithful prophet of the Lord and he gave good advice which he received from God to King Saul.

Later, King Saul acted independently of Samuel's advice and of God. He became proud that he was king of Israel and followed his own ways and ideas. This displeased God very much because he disobeyed God. King Saul made wrong choices as he acted independently of God. He should have submitted to God's direction for him all the time but he didn't.

One day, when Saul and the Israelite army were in battle against an enemy of Israel, he was severely injured and he died. This was the end of the reign of first king of Israel. In the next meeting you will hear more about other kings who ruled over Israel.

9. After the Meeting

Setting: John and Annette were discussing the Bible stories Teacher had been teaching them.

John: We have learned a lot about God and his chosen people, the Israelites. These stories teach us that God is longsuffering, merciful, and that he shows favor to people. But, if they keep on rebelling against God, he judges them and punishes them.

Annette: The Israelites saw God's awesome power as he delivered them from the Egyptians. They saw how God spared them from the plagues that he sent upon the Egyptians which caused them so much suffering and hardship. God made a distinction between his people and the Egyptians. How could they forget God's mercy to them?

John: The Israelites forgot about God's mercy because they thought only about themselves. God knows everything. If the Israelites had thought about how God knows everything, their immediate problems would not have been so huge to them.

Annette: The miracles that the Israelites saw God perform were unparalleled. No person or deity can do what they saw God do. Just think about it. The most powerful people we know cannot divide a body of water into two sides with a dry road in the middle. But God did it in the Red Sea and they walked through that sea with walls of water on each side.

How could they forget God's unequalled power?

John: I think the Israelites were like us. Sometimes someone helps us with something and we are very happy about that. A short time later, we forget about it. We don't think about the help we received or the person who helped us. We just go on living and thinking about ourselves. The Israelites forgot about God, however, they should have been thinking a lot about God and his incredible goodness to them. We too need to think about God and how merciful he is to us by sending Teacher to teach us the Bible stories.

Annette: The ten spies who brought back a bad report were foolish and they sinned against God. They doubted that he could help them overcome the obstacles they would face while possessing the land. Only Caleb and Joshua truly believed in God and desired to trust God step by step as he would lead them into the land of Canaan.

John: When the Israelites heard the ten spies' report, they should have rejected it. Just think about this. On the day they believed the ten spies' evil report, they had already eaten manna which God freely gave to them. They ate food which was evidence that God was faithful and capable of providing for their needs. With their stomachs filled, they railed against God by only seeing the obstacles before them.

Annette: Moses and Aaron had to endure a lot of criticism that they did not deserve. God was leading the Israelites. He told Moses and Aaron what to do and they followed him. All the complaining and accusations against Moses and Aaron were in reality against God. How foolish. No one can fight against God and win.

John: I think the Israelites gave in to Satan's temptations to forget about God. Satan hates God so he worked hard to distract the Israelites so they would only think about themselves and be agitated against God. Satan tempts us too but we cannot allow ourselves to doubt God's message for us.

Annette: Why did God not allow Moses and Aaron to enter the promised land? They only disobeyed him once. All the other times they obeyed God. Was it fair to Moses and Aaron to not allow them to enter the land of Canaan?

John: Let's think about it this way. How many times did Adam and Eve sin for them to be become separated from God? Only one time. God wants people to obey him always. If God would let one sin go, he would not be holy and righteous. God sees everything and knows everything. He is holy and he never makes a mistake or ignores sin.

Annette: That is true. I felt sorry for Moses and Aaron. But I understand that God could

not ignore their disobedience. God is holy and he cannot deny himself or compromise who he is.

John: Joshua and Caleb were faithful to God so he allowed them to enter the promised land at the end of the forty years of living in the wilderness. God saw their faith in him and they were judged accordingly. That shows us God sees each one of us and rightly judges each person.

Annette: Joshua led the Israelites after Moses died. He followed God's leading and direction and he was a good leader for the Israelites. The story about Joshua shows us how we need to follow God even if others turn away from him.

John: After the Israelites occupied the land of Canaan, they lusted for the idols of the Canaanites. They started to worship Baal and Ashtaroath. These false gods were not living deities nor were they alive. They could not help or harm anyone. They had to be moved and carried around. How foolish of them to honor those idols of Baal and Ashtaroath and to worship them.

Annette: God punished the Israelites for worshiping idols. They suffered when other nations warred against them and ruled them. Where was the power of their idols to deliver them at that time? Surely, they should have remembered that there is only one true and living God.

Annette: Whenever the Israelites suffered at the hands of their enemies, they cried to God for help. After he delivered them from their troubles, soon they forgot about him and repeated their former mistake of living for themselves again. Then they would turn to idol worship again.

John: We need to be careful that we do not repeat the mistakes of the Israelites. God sent his message to us so that we will know him and believe in him. We must trust him all the time and not go back to beliefs and practices which we now know to be false.

Annette: The Israelites wanted a king to lead them like the kings of the nations around them. Why did they want a king instead of God leading them?

John: The Israelites lusted to be like the pagan nations. They wanted someone who they could see and follow. God wanted them to continue to have faith in him and follow him. Samuel, the prophet, warned them about the pitfalls of having a king. Nevertheless, they still wanted one so God gave them Saul, their first king.

Annette: King Saul acted just like the whole nation of Israel. At first he followed God,

then he became proud and acted independently of God. Saul should have humbled himself and followed God all the time.

John: We need to think about all that we have learned from the history of Israel. If we are not careful, we too can soon forget about God and live for ourselves. We must keep on believing God and learning from the Bible stories. Teacher said the story about the Deliverer is still to come and I want to hear it. I want to know how my sins can be forgiven.

10. **Review of the Lesson's Themes**

God is faithful, he does not change: God did not abandon the Israelites in the forty years of living in the wilderness. He continued to work through them for the purpose of sending the Deliverer at the right time.

God communicates with man: In history, God revealed himself and his plans to people so that they would know him and what he wanted them to do. God expects obedience from people. He expects them to obey him.

Man must have faith in God in order to please him: God expects people to trust him and respond to him accordingly. Doubt and disbelief are not right or reasonable responses to God.

God forbids people to worship false gods and practice idolatry: It is emphatically wrong to lust after false gods and to be enticed by idolatry. The practice of worshipping false gods and idols carries with it severe consequences.

Satan hates God and he wars against people to get them to sin: Temptation and the enticement to practice worshipping false gods and idols comes from Satan. He is the enemy of God and ceaselessly works against the purposes of God.

God is supreme and sovereign in history: No historical event happens outside of God's sovereignty. God's purpose in history was realized even though the Israelites often disobeyed God. God's sovereignty cannot be usurped by any power.

11. Students Practice Telling the Stories

At the end of this lesson, practice telling the story you have just heard to each other. Everyone needs to practice teaching Bible lessons by telling the stories. By now you should have a feel for how to make the stories interesting according to your cultural ways of storytelling. Be sure to maintain the right focus in each story. Focus on God being the primary one who worked in history in these stories.

Practice telling the stories of this lesson in pairs. One pair should teach one of the stories in the lesson following this lesson's Table of Contents for divisions in the lessons.

The Table of Contents at the beginning of the lesson lists the stories for each lesson. Some of the stories or sections of a story are short so they should be combined with another section to make the exercise of practicing to teach by using stories a profitable exercise.

When you are teaching this lesson use culturally appropriate questions and illustrations to keep the story interesting and to help the people think about the lesson's meanings. Each story should be told in a manner that exudes belief in the story being told. A culturally "lifeless" story will not cause people to think seriously about the points of the story.

Use visual aids or objects used in the lesson when you teach a story. Show the pictures at the right time in the story. When illustrations are used, be sure to bring them to a right and logical conclusion. If you do not make the right conclusions through telling the story, people will likely guess what it means and they could easily come to a wrong conclusion.

After you have practiced telling stories to each other, talk about ways to improve your story-telling ability. Be open to critique and be kind to each other as you work together to help each other become master story-tellers. The goal of teaching God's Word via telling Bible stories is not to merely impress your peers; it is the salvation of spiritually lost people.

Self-evaluation: As you tell the stories, how well do you present the stories and the themes? Does your teaching tend to highlight people? Or does it rightfully focus on God working in history? Do you tell the story so that God is highlighted throughout the story? Or is man, in a subtle way, the main actor in the story? You need to make sure that the role of God in these stories is the main focus. People are the instruments through whom God achieves his purposes.

12. Teaching Tips for Teachers

A General Note:

Some of the content of this lesson needs to be taught to tie together historical events. While this content may not seem to be as important or needful as other lesson points to bring people to salvation. However, teaching it helps the whole story flow as one continuous story and emphasizes the faithfulness of God as he worked in history to ensure the coming of the Deliverer.

Faith in God is required, not optional. This needs to be brought out over and over throughout these lessons.

Lesson Point #3:

Stress that it was God who led the Israelites from place to place. They knew this as they saw the cloud by the tabernacle lead them. Therefore, emphasize that they should have been very willing to submit to their circumstances and trust God in all situations.

Note this: If the starting point in people's thinking is to challenge God, it is likely that the importance and truth of the exclusive Gospel of Christ will also be challenged.

Lesson Point #4:

Emphasize this point: All of the twelve spies saw the land; the same evidence of what it is like. All of the spies had experienced God's awesome work on their behalf as they were delivered from Egypt. The starting point in the thinking of Joshua and Caleb was to believe God and trust him to conquer the land of Canaan for them. The ten evil spies, seeing the same evidence, were overwhelmed by the obstacles because they doubted God. They did not have faith in God. Stress this: God requires people to have faith in him. This is not optional.

Lesson Point #6:

Stress that Joshua was a good leader because he believed in God. He trusted him in all things. Emphasize again: Faith in God is required, not optional or negotiable.

Lesson Point #7-8:

Note the fickleness of the Israelites: When they had good leaders, they followed the Lord. Otherwise, they wrongly lusted for the idols of false gods and the model of pagan government around them. This shows the innate sinfulness of man and man's inability to save himself from this sinful state. Stress again: There is nothing people can do to save themselves from the guilt and penalty of their sins. All people need God's mercy, grace, and forgiveness of sins.

13. To the Honorable Teacher

If any part of this lesson is misunderstood, go over that part again. Play that part of the lesson again. Summarize that part briefly for the students then play that part a second time. Then ask questions to ascertain whether or not this part of the lesson is now understood correctly.

Be prepared to use proper illustrations to clarify a given lesson point. Sometimes it is helpful to use a picture and talk about what is portrayed in the picture as you teach.

Stress to the students that the important themes of this lesson must be understood before proceeding to the next lesson. By interacting with people and discussing the teaching it is possible to ascertain how people are understanding the lessons and whether or not they are believing the teaching.

Simple drama can be useful to make a point clearer in the people's minds. Before using drama, be sure that it is culturally appropriate to do so. If people are not accustomed to understanding simple drama, it may be best to not use it.