

Theme: THE HISTORY OF ISRAEL, WRITTEN FOR OUR LEARNING

Introduction: The last three vss. of our text apply Israel's history to ourselves. Are we able to resist temptations? Can we stand successfully when severe trials come on us? Let us examine ourselves in the light of the history of Israel in the wilderness. Let us not repeat their mistakes and sins.

I-Israel was richly blessed. Vss. 1-4

They lived under the shadows and promises of the Old Testament. God delivered Israel from bondage in Egypt even before He gave them the Covenant of the Law on Mt. Sinai. But He richly blessed them. The word "all" occurs five times in vss. 1-4 of our text. The Lord blessed them with physical and spiritual blessings all along the way. He gave them manna for the body and spiritual food for the soul. In a miraculous way He gave them water for the body in the desert and also water for their thirsty souls. The cloud was a type of Christ. Moses was a type of Christ. The water and the manna were types of the Gospel of Christ. In fact, vs. 4 tells us that they drank of the spiritual rock which followed them and that rock was Christ. This was not a physical, rolling rock. It is symbolical of Christ's salvation.

II-But they despised all these blessings. Vss. 6-11

Paul gives us five examples of the rebellious attitude of Israel in the wilderness: 1) They lusted after evil things. Read Num. 11:4-9. The Lord fed the people in the wilderness but they desired the things which they had eaten in Egypt. These things were not sinful but the Israelites had sinful hearts. They were not content. 2) They were guilty of idolatry. Read Ex. 32. They asked Aaron to make them a golden calf which they worshipped. In itself the image was not wrong but their hearts were idolatrous. 3) They committed fornication and so 23,000 died. Read Num. 25. The Israelites fornicated with pagan women. The Lord punished them severely. 4) They tempted the Lord, the Christ, by speaking arrogantly to Him. Read Num. 21:4-6. The Lord sent fiery serpents. 5) They grumbled against the Lord and so the destroyer destroyed many of them. Read Num. 16:41-50.

III-The root cause of Israel's trouble.

Vs. 5 of our text reads: "But with the majority of them God was not pleased for they were strewn in the wilderness." Read Hebr. 3:7-19. The writer tells us that the basic problem of Israel was that they did not believe the Lord. Though He had so richly blessed them in body and soul and had delivered them from the land of Egypt, they turned against Him in unbelief. By faith in Christ the sinner stands. But by unbelief the sinner falls, now and forever. That is the story of the Bible. And it is summarized in this sentence: "He who believes and is baptized will be saved. He who does not believe will be damned." Israel became proud and self-sufficient. They thought that they did not need God. They lost their faith. And then they could no longer resist temptation.

*out* IV-The warning for us. Read vss. 12-13. Our flesh tempts us to think that we do not need God. We begin thinking that we can stand alone with the help of God. But that is dangerous. The temptations which we face daily are not more than we can stand IF WE TRUST IN THE LORD. When we lose faith, we lose all. That is why the text reminds us that God is faithful. That sentence occurs many times in the NT. He keeps His Word. He forgives our sins. And with reference to temptation He does two things: a) He will not allow us to be tempted beyond what we are able to carry; b) When temptation comes He will provide an escape for us.

Conclusion: Are you tempted to evil desire, pride, complaining and discontent? Of course you are. Confess your sins to your Lord. He is faithful and just to forgive and to help you in your temptations.