

Learning to Follow

(Numbers 9:15-23)

Yearly Theme: “Kindness is... Action”

Series Title: “Kindness in the Wilderness”

February 5th, 2023

Something to think about:

One cannot lead unless they first learn to follow.

Today we begin a new series entitled “Kindness in the Wilderness,” and we will be exploring GOD’s kindness toward the Israelites during their 40-years of wilderness wanderings, as described in the Old Testament books of Numbers and Deuteronomy. Though the punishment was given by GOD, the 40-years of wilderness wandering was a result of the people’s rebellion against GOD and all He was offering them in the Promised Land.

We pick up the ongoing narrative today in Numbers 9, where Moses describes how GOD led them throughout those 40 years. Let’s take a look...

Numbers 9:15-23 (NLT),

¹⁵ *On the day the Tabernacle was set up, the cloud covered it. But from evening until morning the cloud over the Tabernacle looked like a pillar of fire.* ¹⁶ *This was the regular pattern—at night the cloud that covered the Tabernacle had the appearance of fire.* ¹⁷ *Whenever the cloud lifted from over the sacred tent, the people of Israel would break camp and follow it. And wherever the cloud settled, the people of Israel would set up camp.* ¹⁸ *In this way, they traveled and camped at the LORD’s command wherever he told them to go. Then they remained in their camp as long as the cloud stayed over the Tabernacle.* ¹⁹ *If the cloud remained over the Tabernacle for a long time, the Israelites stayed and performed their duty to the LORD.* ²⁰ *Sometimes the cloud would stay over the Tabernacle for only a few days, so the people would stay for only a few days, as the LORD commanded. Then at the LORD’s command they would break camp and move on.* ²¹ *Sometimes the cloud stayed only overnight and lifted the next morning. But day or night, when the cloud lifted, the people broke camp and moved on.* ²² *Whether the cloud stayed above the Tabernacle for two days, a month, or a year, the people of Israel stayed in camp and did not move on. But as soon as it lifted, they broke camp and moved on.* ²³ *So they camped or traveled at the LORD’s command, and they did whatever the LORD told them through Moses.*

Here’s the takeaway:

Key Point: “Following GOD in obedience is the first step in understanding His loving-kindness.”

What did the cloud and fire represent in this passage, and how were the Israelites to respond to them?

- **The cloud/fire reminded them of GOD’s constant presence.**

Numbers 9:15-16 (NLT), ¹⁵ On the day the Tabernacle was set up, the cloud covered it. But from evening until morning the cloud over the Tabernacle looked like a pillar of fire. ¹⁶ This was the regular pattern—at night the cloud that covered the Tabernacle had the appearance of fire.

- **The cloud/fire tested their continued dependence on GOD.**

Numbers 9:17-22 (NLT), ¹⁷ Whenever the cloud lifted from over the sacred tent, the people of Israel would break camp and follow it. And wherever the cloud settled, the people of Israel would set up camp. ¹⁸ In this way, they traveled and camped at the LORD’s command wherever he told them to go. Then they remained in their camp as long as the cloud stayed over the Tabernacle. ¹⁹ If the cloud remained over the Tabernacle for a long time, the Israelites stayed and performed their duty to the LORD. ²⁰ Sometimes the cloud would stay over the Tabernacle for only a few days, so the people would stay for only a few days, as the LORD commanded. Then at the LORD’s command they would break camp and move on. ²¹ Sometimes the cloud stayed only overnight and lifted the next morning. But day or night, when the cloud lifted, the people broke camp and moved on. ²² Whether the cloud stayed above the Tabernacle for two days, a month, or a year, the people of Israel stayed in camp and did not move on. But as soon as it lifted, they broke camp and moved on.

- **The cloud/fire required their obedience to GOD.**

Numbers 9:23 (NLT), So they camped or traveled at the LORD’s command, and they did whatever the LORD told them through Moses.

Something to take home:

So, who is it that you’re following today? Are you following your own desires and whims without any care for anyone or anything else? Are you following someone who is using you for their own benefit? Or are you following the One who created you out of a love to see you become all you were created to be? We’re all following something or someone, and it’s so vitally important to know where that something or someone is leading. If the one you’re following isn’t leading you into everlasting life, then you’re following the wrong person. Following Christ who was willing to humbly die so that we might have everlasting life is the only one worth following.