

Pilgrim exercises

Part 1

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Note: This text is a computer generated transcript of the sermon. In some cases it may contain errors.

[00:00:00] I wonder whether we could have a look at a few more verses from Numbers 21 and just a few thoughts that are laid on my heart from Numbers 21 verse 10. We had a look at them yesterday and verses proceeding. It's going to be wonderful when we see the Lord Jesus face to face and we'll be able to see how wonderful how great he is and also to learn how he has sustained us in the pathway until that point when we are with him forever. And I thought we could look at just a couple of the details. Numbers 10, 21 verse 10. The children of Israel set [00:01:04] forward and pitched in Oboth. And they journeyed from Oboth and pitched in Ijiabarim, in the wilderness which is before Moab, toward the sun rising. From thence they removed and pitched in the valley of Zared. And from thence they removed and pitched on the other side of Arnon, which is in the wilderness that cometh out of the coast of the Amorites. For Arnon is the border of Moab, between Moab and the Amorites. Wherefore it is said in the book of the wars of the Lord what he did in the Red Sea and in the brooks of Arnon. And at the stream of the brooks that goeth down to the dwelling of Ar, which lies upon the border of Moab. And from thence they went to Bir, that is the well where whereof the Lord spake unto Moses, gather the people together and I will give them water. [00:02:01] That'll do, I think, just for the moment.

I suppose one of the considerations that is underlying all our studies in this conference is that we are nearing the end of the journey. It won't be long before the Lord comes to take us home and things will unfold in a terrible fashion. There's awful consequences for a Christ-rejecting world. But for us, in our present circumstance, we are still traversing towards our objective. We see here in verse 10 that children of Israel set forward. This causes me to recollect their earliest activities as coming out of the land of Egypt. [00:03:01] They're hemmed in by the sea and their steps are hindered from going into their freedom.

Exodus 14, I think, they're told in their fear and anxiety to stand still and see the salvation of the Lord. That's a difficult thing when there's a problem to stand still because we always want to run away or make some device to help us get out of a problem. But they were given that sound divine word, stand still and see the salvation of the Lord. But it wasn't very long, a couple of verses, I think, a couple of verses later, they're told to go forward. And although their progress has been marked by failure and grumbling and murmuring and a very long journey, took a long time to reach the point that we are now at in Numbers 21. [00:04:07] And serpents have been active, bitten the people and they needed deliverance. They were hindered from making progress. And we learned something yesterday in our gospel meeting of the significance and the precious significance of the serpent lifted up. But now they could make steady progress. The matter of salvation from the dreadful sting of the serpent had been dealt with. They'd got life and now they could go forward. That's an important thing. And we might like

to ask ourselves a question. Are we content with our salvation? We say, well I'm saved, my sins are forgiven, I can just sit and just be happy I'm on my way to heaven. [00:05:01] But I don't think God wants us to be complacent in that way. He wants us to make steady progress and to press towards an objective. And he does give us an objective in these verses. It suggests one to us. They set forward. That's a good thing. And then the verse 11 tells us it was toward the sun rising. Doesn't say towards the sun setting, towards the West. If you're a Londoner, you know something about the West, at least the West End. It's the part of the city that's marked by depravity and by evil and corruption and everything that's bad and dark. The West, the setting of the sun. But God doesn't want us to be going in such a direction but to go towards where the sun is rising. He wants [00:06:02] us to press really towards a day which is going to start with a wonderful day break. A morning without clouds. And that's the sort of objective we want to have before us. The hope of the Lord's soon return. Have we got that before us? Of course, something ought to characterize people who have such a hope. And I noticed in these verses that what characterized these people is that they're tent dwellers. They pitch an oval and they pitch in the giabarín. Everything around them might be marked by ruins and the dwelling places of men around them. But we notice that they're starting to make steady progress. Verse 12, thence they removed and pitched in the valley. Verse 13, thence they removed and pitched on the other side. They're making rapid progress. It's increasing. The pace is quickening as they are drawing near their objective, near their [00:07:03] home. I wonder if that is characteristic of us. Not only do we have an objective before us, the Lord's coming, but also that pilgrim character is still maintained amongst us. We're not building our hopes in a region like this. A place, a world which is, as we've been saying in our studies, ripening for judgment. What is important to us? Success? Are we trying to build up some dynasty in this world? Build up houses and amass fortunes? What's our objective in life? What are we doing? Have we got our eye on that coming moment when we're going to see the Lord? Or are we settling down here as if the Lord is going to delay his coming? Well, we didn't study that section, but we're familiar with it nevertheless. The evil [00:08:03] servant says, my Lord delays his coming. That ought not to characterize us. Are we like Abraham in Hebrews 11, and others also, who plainly declared that they seek a country? Or are we saying we're quite happy with what we got, and we're settling in this world? We've got no objective beyond what is tangible, what is temporal. All the lovely things of time and sense means a lot to us. We can touch it. We can taste it. We can enjoy many things in this world, but what really is our goal in life? Sometimes young people joke, do we eat to live or live to eat? But what is our objective in this world? Have we got our eye fixed on something higher, something brighter, a sun rising? Well, I think that's quite a [00:09:07] challenge, but that's what characterized the children of Israel long ago. They were in the wilderness, but they were pressing towards a sun rising, and their pace quickened. I suppose we might, in the words of an Israelite, as they're traversing the last few steps of the wilderness. Well, if you look at the wilderness, or if you look at the beach, you see a lovely sand, you make sand castles. But if you go in the wilderness, you can't do that. The wilderness is rock solid, and it's barren. And the sand, you can't make sand castles out of it. It's very tough, very barren indeed. Don't imagine that the desert of Egypt is something like the beautiful beaches of some holiday resort. It's rock solid, [00:10:05] barren, dry material. Not a place for a holiday. And in such an environment, you can be discouraged. You say, there's nothing refreshing here. But that's what the world is like. It's a barren wilderness. But the Lord gives the children of Israel every stimulus and encouragement in view of what they're going to enter into shortly. And I didn't read all the passage, but there's plenty of references in the verses that I did read of brooks, and sea, and a well, and so forth, and water. It's the prospect of what they will enter into, into the land of promise. And God gives them already, in the present circumstances, indications of what it's going to be like. And already we have these indications, we might say, in the scriptures. The wonderful spiritual [00:11:06] blessings that we are assured of in his word. In Ephesians, for example. Well, it won't be long before we enter into

those spiritual blessings in the fullest manner possible, when we're with the Lord. But already now, we are enjoying what those things are. Bestowed upon us according to the riches of his grace, forgiveness of sins, and so forth. All those things. Well, what will it be when we're in his presence? Enjoying those things in perfection and fullness. Of course, there are going to be, we didn't read this section, but just at the end of the chapter, we know that there's going to be difficulties and opposers, enemies, antagonists. There's going to be conflict. There's going to be the work of [00:12:01] Zion to hinder you from entering into the promised blessings that God has for you. And that puts me in mind of what we read in every letter in Revelation 2 and 3. That there's a need for an overcomer. And here we see Israel, victorious in their battle. They've been refreshed. They had the right character. They were pilgrims. They were seeking something better. They had their eye on what God had for them. They weren't settling down and building their hopes in the wrong place. Their hope was to enter into the land of promise. They might have been weary, but now they were refreshed and they were able, because of the refreshment they drew from God's dreams, we might say, they were able to be [00:13:01] overcomers. And that's what God wants us to be in this day, to be overcomers. And our faith, in his Word, gives us the capacity to be an overcomer. That's a very wonderful thing. The Lord says that we should be of good cheer because he has overcome the world. And he wants us to be partners with him, to be sharers in that victory which he has secured. And our faith rests in him that he'll take us safely home. So with these simple thoughts just come to my mind, I desire and I'm sure it's the prayer of each one of us, that the Lord might keep us steady, pressing on, going on with pilgrim character, having before us the Lord's coming, not simply as a doctrine but as a grand reality in our own souls which [00:14:03] affects our life and our conduct, our whole outlook as to everything we do, we say, everything we possess, everything held in the light of that moment when we'll enter our own promised land. May the Lord help us to keep our eye on him, have the sun rising before us, and that we might be in these last days refreshed in our faith and having blessed victory overcoming all the opposition and hindrances that are found in the pathway.

I am waiting for thee, Lord, I have come to see thee, Lord. I am waiting for thee, for thy coming again.

[00:15:27] Thou art God, thou art our Lord, our best to bring, our Lord. Thine own I shall share, Thine own I shall share, thine own I shall share, Thine own I shall share.

In danger and fear, Lord, I'm offering thee, Lord, [00:16:08] The day must be near of thy coming again.

There is one such a girl, Lord, as I in old care, Lord, But God is so fair at thy coming again.

Whilst out the window, I stumble and strain, Lord, [00:17:03] To hasten the day of thy coming again.

This is not my rest, Lord, a pilgrim contest, Lord, I wait to be blest at thy coming again.

If thou let my way, Lord, be bright with thy praise, Lord, So brief are the days till thy coming again.

[00:18:11] I am waiting for thee, Lord, my beauty to see, Lord, The full triumph for me at thy coming again.