

Sin's Consequences

Key Verse:
"...They were not able to enter because of their unbelief."

Hebrews 3:19

Extra: See if you can find some other examples in the Bible where sin brought disaster.

Level 5 lesson 25

Read: Numbers 14 and Deuteronomy 2:1-5

Last month, we left the Israelites at Kadesh Barnea, angry and upset. God had brought them miraculously from slavery in Egypt, through the Red Sea and the terrible wilderness, to the border of the Promised Land. Yet after all they'd experienced of God's deliverance and amazing provision, they chose to believe the report of the ten frightened spies, rather than listen to Caleb and Joshua. "All the people" we read, "raised their voices, and wept aloud all night."

ISRAEL'S UNBELIEF

Turning on Moses and Aaron they said, "If only we had died in Egypt or even in this desert! Why is the Lord bringing us to this land to be killed by the sword?" Their lack of faith in God meant they made no attempt to even enter the Land! They believed the ten spies, and ignored the words of Caleb and Joshua who insisted that with God's help they would certainly win the battle. Instead they cried, "We should choose a leader and go back to Egypt" (v4).

At this, Joshua and Caleb pleaded with them. "We searched the land," they said, "it is a good land; the enemy will be defenceless against the power of the Lord our God. Don't be afraid!" But the people threatened to stone them to death! God was angry with them and He spoke to Moses, "How long will these people provoke Me? How long will it be before they believe in Me after all the signs I have shown them?" What a disappointment these faithless people were to Jehovah God! In His righteous anger, the Lord said to Moses, "I will strike them down with a plague, and destroy them!"

MOSES' PRAYER

Graciously, Moses appealed to the Lord on their behalf. He didn't make excuses for them, but simply asked the Lord to protect the honour of His Name. Moses didn't want the Egyptians, or the Canaanites to be able to say, "God has killed those Israelites; He wasn't able to bring them into the Land as He promised!" Moses asked God to forgive them, and His response was, "I have forgiven them as you asked."

Instead of sending the plague on all the people as He had threatened to, God judged only the ten unbelieving spies "who made all the people grumble against God" (v36-37).

GOD'S MESSAGE

Sin always has consequences! God gave Moses a sobering message for the people. Those faithless people would never enter the Promised Land; in fact, for every day the spies had spent searching the Land, they would spend a year in the wilderness and all the people twenty years old and upward would die there. Their children, who they said would be prey to the enemy, would instead be brought into the land! Joshua and Caleb would also be spared to enter the land.

Oh how the people regretted not acting in faith as Moses, Caleb, and Joshua had pleaded with them to. "We have sinned!" they moaned. Then they made belated plans to invade the Land, but Moses warned them it was futile because God was not with them. Ignoring him, they tried to attack the Amalekites, but were ambushed and heavily defeated. So began their 40 years of wandering in the desert: what a tragedy!

A WARNING

This whole story highlights the sad lack of true faith in God by the Israelites. They were a people who had witnessed major miracles, yet these miracles had not led to a saving faith in God. They had no faith in the character of God; neither His unchanging nature, nor His love, power, and grace. Their lack of faith in Him was really an accusation that He was unable or unwilling to help them. After all He had done for them - no wonder God was angry with their sinful unbelief!

This should be a sombre warning to all of us who claim to be Christians, because true faith is most clearly seen in times of trouble and difficulty. Never become people like these Israelites who just want to see God show 'signs' or relieve their situation immediately. "The just shall live by faith," God's Word tells us, "For without faith it is impossible to please God" (Hebrews 11:6). Despite what may be happening in our lives (even with the devil's taunts that God can't or won't help us) our faith needs to be unshakeably grounded in the character of God, just like Job's so long ago. He is always good; He is always true; He is always loving; He is the Almighty God. He will never let us down!

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

1. What led to the proposal by the Israelites to return to Egypt?	.....
2. What did Joshua and Caleb say to the people?	.....
3. What did Moses do when he learned of the Lord's anger with the people?	.....
4. What were the consequences of their sin?	.....
5. What must our faith be grounded in?	.....

My Name is Age

Saved - God's Way!

Key Verse:
"Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the desert, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, that everyone who believes may have eternal life in Him."

John 3:14-15

Extra: Prepare an explanation about salvation through Jesus for someone who isn't a Christian.

Level 5 Lesson 26

Read Numbers 21 and John 3:10-16

The study today is particularly important because it concerns an incident that Jesus refers to in John 3:14, "Just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man (Jesus Himself) be lifted up." What does that all mean? What was Moses doing lifting up a snake? And what was the connection with Jesus Christ, who was born centuries later? Let's take a look.

ISRAEL'S SIN

You'll remember that the Children of Israel were still in the wilderness, after turning away from the Promised Land at Kadesh Barnea. Again we find them discouraged and sinning in the same old way, speaking against God and Moses. "Why have you brought us out of Egypt to die in the desert?" they asked. Sound familiar? They still doubted God and His purposes! Also, these ungrateful people claimed to be tired of the 'manna' God faithfully provided each day (without which they would have realistically starved)!

In judgement of their grumbling, the Lord sent poisonous snakes into Israel's camp. They bit many people, killing hundreds and leaving others dying. Once more, the people acknowledged their guilt and confessed to Moses, "We have sinned for we have spoken against the Lord and against you." They begged Moses, "Pray and ask God to take away these snakes!"

So Moses prayed for the people and God gave him these instructions, "Make a snake and put it up on a pole. Then stand it up in the middle of the camp. Everyone who looks at the snake on the pole will live." Moses obeyed the Lord and made a snake out of bronze metal, and then placed it on a pole in the Israelite camp as God instructed. Many of the sick and dying believed his message and in simple faith "looked and lived!"

THE SAVIOUR ON A CROSS

Imagine you were an Israelite back then. When you heard Moses' message from God you would have had a choice. You may have thought, as indeed some did, "What nonsense! How is looking at a snake on a pole going to save me? There's no sense in that!" Like those people, you could have remained in your tent and slowly died from the poison, rather than turn in faith to look at the solution offered by God's servant Moses. Or you could have thought, as many others did, "Well, if that is God's Word and God's way, I will do it: I want to live!"

This is what Jesus meant when He said that He Himself must also be "lifted up." He was to be 'lifted up' on Calvary's cross as the remedy for mankind's sin. Sadly, there are still some people today who scoff and say, "What nonsense! How can faith in Jesus Christ dying on Calvary's cross save me? It doesn't make sense!" It's true that no human being could possibly have thought of either scheme, and yet that was **God's** way of salvation.

Have you seen the similarities? The people of Israel were told to look in faith to God's remedy for their snake-bites. We too, are told to look in faith to God's remedy for our sin. The bronze snake lifted up on the pole was a wonderful picture of our Lord lifted up on the cross. Jesus is God's ultimate provision for us, so that we can be freed from sin's deathly grip. How foolish to stubbornly refuse God's gracious salvation, so freely offered to all!

Friend, what is your choice today? Do you sense your guilt before a Holy God? Will you look in faith to Jesus, dying for you on the Cross of Calvary? Believe and be saved. There is no other way and no other Saviour. Young people... "Look and Live!"

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

1. What was the judgement sent upon the people for their sin of speaking against God?

.....

2. What was the response of the people?

.....

3. What was Moses instructed to do?

.....

4. What is the uplifted bronze snake a picture of?

.....

5. What is another way of saying "Look and Live"?

.....

The Song of Moses

Key Verse:
“The eternal God is your refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms...”

Deuteronomy 33:27

Extra: What part of Moses’ song did you like the most?

Level 5 Lesson 27

**Read Deuteronomy 31:1-12;
 32:45-52; 33:1-3, 27-29; 34:1-12**

THE CONSEQUENCES OF UNBELIEF

Our lesson today begins after 40 years have passed and the Israelites are once again at the border of the Promised Land. How sad to think that through unbelief, a whole generation of people wasted their lives wandering around in the desert, when they could have been living in the Land of God’s promise and provision!

How sad, that so many today too, waste their lives here on earth, through unbelief. Having perhaps rejected God at an early age, many people spend their lives seeking earthly pleasures and treasures, with never a thought of God who in love sent His precious Son, Jesus Christ, to be their Saviour. How great will be their regret, when in a coming day they stand before Him and realise they have missed their opportunity of eternal salvation and face eternal damnation. “How shall we escape, if we ignore such great salvation?” (Hebrews 2:3)

THE SONG OF MOSES

As the new, younger generation of Israelites prepared to enter Canaan, God wanted them to remember the terrible lesson of their fathers. He told Moses to write a song (Deuteronomy 32) and teach it to them before they crossed the Jordan into their new land. In it, he reviewed their history and repeated and explained God’s Laws. Some of it is even prophecy of what God would do through Israel in the future.

Moses wanted everyone to hear! He began, “Listen, O heavens, and I will speak; hear, O earth, the words of my mouth.” This was important! Everyone should know how awesome, Holy and wonderful God is, and all the good things He has done. Then Moses called on the people to remember God’s goodness and blessing on them: their rescue from slavery in Egypt, and God’s marvellous guidance and provision for them through all the years in the wilderness.

They had indeed been ‘the apple of God’s eye.’ Then the song continued by reminding them of God’s patience and mercy in dealing with them despite their sinful grumbling and failure. Finally, it called for everyone, even the surrounding nations, to join in and rejoice with Israel (v43).

THE MESSAGE OF MOSES

Moses then made it clear that their existence in the new land depended on their continued obedience to God and His Law. It is great to see that his final words were words of blessing for Israel collectively (33:1-5) and for each tribe separately. There are such beautiful words concerning the Lord God in v3, “Surely it is You who love the people!” All His people are described as being safe in His hand and taught at His feet. He (Jehovah) takes His true place as their King when their leaders and tribes are gathered together.

At the conclusion of the tribal blessings, Moses gave a great description of God in verse 26 and then reminded the people of their blessed, happy position. How wonderful to have the Eternal God as their refuge and to be saved by Him! May you too, know the blessed joy of this position through faith in Jesus Christ!

THE DEATH OF MOSES

We close this lesson with the unique death of Moses. Firstly, we should note, that Moses is accorded some of the greatest compliments given to anyone in Scripture: “Since then, no prophet has risen in Israel like Moses, whom the Lord knew face to face” (34:10); and “For no-one has ever shown the mighty power or performed the awesome deeds that Moses did in the sight of all Israel” (34:12).

Moses is often referred to as a “Man of God” and the “Servant of the Lord.” Yet we find in chapter 32:49-52, that God found it necessary to chastise even a man such as Moses for his disobedience. God had instructed him to speak to the rock, so that water might flow out for the people to drink (Numbers 20:8). Yet in a momentary lapse of faith, Moses instead struck the rock twice. God was displeased with Moses’ behaviour as a leader, and told him that his actions would now prevent him from entering the Promised Land (Numbers 20:12).

However, before Moses died, God let him look out over the Promised Land from the top of Mt. Pisgah. After this, Moses was “taken by the Lord.” We read in chapter 34:7 that although he was 120 years old, “his eyes were not weak nor his strength gone.” It seems His work on earth was ended and God simply took him home to Heaven. The Bible tells us that God buried his body, which is said of no other human being!

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

1. What did Moses want everyone to know?	.....
2. How did God show His goodness to Israel?	.....
3. What did the Israelite’s existence in the new land depend on?	.....
4. Comment on the implications of God’s chastisement of Moses.	.....
5. What lessons do you see for yourself in this study?	.....

The Unique Word of God

Key Verse:
“Your word is a lamp to my feet, and a light for my path.”

Psalm 119:105

Extra: Write down how you have experienced the truth of the Key Verse.

Level 5 Lesson 28

Read Psalm 119:1-8, 33-40 and Hebrews 4:12-13

Last month here in New Zealand, many churches celebrated July as ‘Bible Month.’ So in reflection we thought it would be good to use one lesson this month having a look at this incredible book - the unique ‘Word of God.’ Our world is full of books of every kind; some are good and beneficial, uplifting, and educational, while some are fit only to be burned. Among all the myriad writings of mankind though, one book stands uniquely alone, and continues to be the world’s No.1 best seller.

Yes, we’re talking about The Bible, of course! Its 66 ‘books’ were written by 40 different writers, over a period of about 1600 years, yet all its parts form one glorious, seamless story, without contradiction or error. That’s because the authors were “guided by the Holy Spirit as they wrote” (2 Peter 1:20-21), and that makes the Bible different from any other book. The Bible is the only perfect Book. Its words reveal to us all about: God, His creation, His character, His salvation, and His purposes for yesterday, today, and tomorrow! It is truly God’s Book, known as God’s ‘Word.’

Hebrews 4:12-13 gives us an amazing insight into this wonderful ‘Word of God.’ It reminds us that it is “living and active.” It has power - God’s power! No other book has the power of God within its pages. The Bible alone can bring light and life into the darkened soul of the most desperate sinner. It is ‘sharper than any two-edged sword,’ because as we read, it pierces right through the outer ‘veneer’ of our lives to the issues of our sinful hearts, as God the Holy Spirit brings its sacred words to bear on us. This wonderful book judges the very ‘thoughts and attitudes’ of the human heart; It addresses the deepest need of man’s heart - our sinfulness - and then offers God’s amazing remedy in the person of Jesus Christ.

The Bible has two parts: The Old Testament and The New Testament. There are 39 books in the Old Testament and 27 Books in the New Testament.

Here’s an easy way to remember those figures: O-L-D has 3 letters, T-E-S-T-A-M-E-N-T has 9, and so we get 39; N-E-W has 3 letters and T-E-S-T-A-M-E-N-T has 9, so 3 x 9 equals 27. Together, they make up the complete Bible.

The Bible’s message is never out of date. In the 119th Psalm, David began writing about God’s Word and it ended up being the longest chapter in the whole Bible! Look it up and see how many pages it takes up. Altogether there are 176 verses! Interestingly, David used many different names for God’s Word: The Law of the Lord; His Testimonies; Your Precepts; Your Statutes; Your Commandments; Your Righteous Judgements; and Your WORD.” What a lot we can learn from this Psalm! It is like a lighthouse 176 storeys high, with light streaming from every window! You will have to climb up to the 105th storey to find our Key Verse, “Your Word is a lamp to my feet, and a light for my path.”

The Bible tells us how sin came into this world (which God created), spoiling it, making us unfit to be in His Holy presence, and even unable to relate to Him. Its main message is that God in His mercy has made it possible for sinners like us, to once again have a right relationship with Him. He did this by providing a sacrifice for our sin, the Lamb of God, Jesus Christ.

All who put their trust in Jesus as God’s sacrifice for sin, can have their sins forgiven! We are then made right with God and He becomes our Heavenly Father.

We encourage you to read a part of the Bible every day. Make a set time for it. First thing in the morning or last thing at night are good times, but anytime will do! A chapter a day is a good start, but you may like to read more! Make a start and keep at it. There is nothing more worthwhile! Lastly, spend time praying that God will speak to you as you read His precious Word.

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

1. (a) How many books in the Bible? (b) How many writers? (c) Who guided the writers?	.....
2. (a) Which is the longest chapter in the Bible? (b) What names did David use for God’s Word ?	.....
3. What insight does Hebrews 4 give us concerning the Bible?	.....
4. What does the Bible tell us about sin?	.....
5. What is the main message that we learn through the Bible?	.....

Please complete and return by post to

PSSM Bible Discovery, 5/399 New North Road, Kingsland, Auckland 1021 or scan & email to info@biblediscovery.org.nz