

# OLD TESTAMENT GOSPEL DOCTRINE CLASS

Green Mountain 1st Ward, Lakewood, Colorado

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## Lesson 15: "Look to God and Live," Numbers 11-14; 21:1-9

### Introduction



Pillar of Light by William West—1845

Despite the blessings the Israelites received from the Lord, their fear and lack of faith often caused them to wish they had not left Egypt. Their yearning for Egypt delayed and complicated their journey to the promised land.

### The Lord answers the Israelites' desire for meat by sending them quail and smiting them with a plague. (Numbers 11)

**Numbers 11:4-6** – Even though manna was a great blessing from the Lord, the Israelites began to think about the meat and other foods they had enjoyed while in Egypt, so they began to complain about the manna. Wanting more than we already have can be dangerous to our temporal and spiritual welfare.

In their whining over the lack of meat and what they missed about Egypt, they lost sight of their goal to obtain the promised land and they began to regret leaving Egypt. In our times,

we can observe people giving up great blessings and opportunities in order to satisfy their immediate lusts and desires. While this may be expected among some, we need to think seriously sometimes about how we can avoid such mistakes and misguided priorities.

Studying the scriptures and understanding the lessons taught therein, we should focus ourselves on the plan of salvation and eternal goals that are worthy of our attention.

**Numbers 11:18-20; 31-33** details how the Lord answered their desire for meat and the consequences that accompanied their lustful consumption of the quail.

**Numbers 11:14-17** shows that Moses became so burdened by the sins of his people, he asked the Lord to take his life. The Lord gave him some relief as seventy men were called to assist Moses.

**Numbers 11:24-29.** The seventy elders of Israel were given the spirit of the Lord and the gift of prophecy.

### Lesson Highlights

- The Lord answers the Israelites' desire for meat by sending them quail and smiting them with a plague.
- The Lord chastens Miriam and Aaron for speaking against Moses.
- Moses instructs 12 men to search the land of Canaan.
- Moses makes a serpent of brass and tells the people that if they look at it, they will be healed.

A study of this lesson will encourage us to overcome worldly desires and fears and look to the Savior and his prophets for guidance.

### Next Week

#16 "I Cannot Go Beyond the Word of the Lord" (Numbers 22-24; 31:1-16)

## The Lord chastens Miriam and Aaron for speaking against Moses. (Numbers 12)

**Numbers 12:2** - Miriam and Aaron criticized Moses, their presiding authority, for taking an Ethiopian woman as a wife. They pointed out that they too had received revelation.

**Numbers 12:5-10** contains the Lord's reply to Aaron and Miriam's complaints. His anger was kindled against them as is shown by Miriam's immediate punishment of leprosy.

Speaking about the limits of our rights to receive revelation, **Elder James E. Faust** said: "The prophets, seers, and revelators have had and still have the responsibility and privilege of receiving and de-

claring the word of God for the world. Individual members, parents, and leaders have the right to receive revelation for their own responsibility but have no duty nor right to declare the word of God beyond the limits of their own responsibility" (Ensign, Nov. 1989, 8).

**Numbers 12:3** says that "Moses was very meek". **President Gordon B. Hinckley** said: "Meekness implies a spirit of gratitude as opposed to an attitude of self-sufficiency, an acknowledgment of a greater power beyond oneself, a recognition of God, and an acceptance of his commandments" (Ensign, Aug.

1988, 3-4).

**Numbers 12:13-15** shows Moses' meekness when he saw Miriam's punishment for rebelling against him. Rather than being pleased with his authority to preside over his sister, he pleaded with the Lord to heal her. He even had their journey halted until she was healed. As we consider his example, we should cultivate the attribute of meekness so that we may demonstrate it when others criticize or turn against us. Responding in meekness is consistent with the later teachings of Jesus to turn the other cheek.

"The book of Numbers recounts a great national tragedy. Within just a few months of their deliverance from Egypt, the children of Israel had an opportunity to inherit the promised land. But this inheritance was delayed for forty years because of their contentions, divisions, and lack of faith. By the time Israel finally showed enough faith to be able to enter the promised land, most of this faltering generation had died."

(1989 Old Testament Gospel Doctrine Teacher's Manual, p13)

## Moses instructs 12 men to search the land of Canaan. (Numbers 13-14)

**Numbers 13:17-20** records Moses' actions when they reached the border of Canaan.

**Numbers 13:23-27** tells us that the spies reported the land was flowing with milk and honey!

**Numbers 13:28-33** - ten of the men had returned in fear and caused the people to murmur against Moses. As **President Gordon B. Hinckley** said: "Ten of the spies were victims of their own doubts and fears. They gave a negative report of the numbers and stature of the Canaanites...They compared themselves as grasshoppers to the giants they had seen in the land...We see some around us who are indifferent concerning the future of this work, who are apathetic, who speak of limitations, who express fears, who spend their time digging out and writing about what they regard to be weaknesses which really are of no consequence. With doubt concerning its past, they have no vision concerning its future" (Ensign, Nov. 1995, 71).

Obviously, we need to be extremely careful that we do not fall into such a faithless pattern of behavior.

**Numbers 13:30; 14:6-9** - The report from Caleb and Joshua differed from their 10 companions. They were unafraid because they knew the Lord was with Israel.

Referring to such situations as this where faith needs to overcome any doubts, **President Gordon B. Hinckley** said: "There is no place in this work for those who believe only in the gospel of doom and gloom. The gospel is good news. It is a message of triumph. It is a cause to be embraced with enthusiasm. The Lord never said that there would not be troubles. Our people have known afflictions of every sort as those who have opposed this work have come upon them. But faith has shown through all their sorrows. This work has consistently moved forward and has never taken a backward step since its inception... This is an age of pessimism. Ours is a mission of faith. To my brothers and sisters everywhere, I call upon you to reaffirm your

faith, to move this work forward across the world. You can make it stronger by the manner in which you live" (Ensign, Nov. 1995, 71-72).

**Numbers 4:10** demonstrates just how faithless the people were as they desired to stone Caleb and Joshua after those brethren testified to them and tried to motivate and encourage them.

\***Numbers 14:22-23, 26-37** (portions cited above) says the Lord banished the unbelieving men from the promised land because they provoked him repeatedly. The "evil congregation" was to die in the wilderness. The other ten spies died "by the plague", yet Caleb and Joshua lived on in faithfulness.



Moses and the Messengers from Canaan  
Giovanni Lanfranco—1621-1624

## Moses makes a serpent of brass and tells the people that if they look at it, they will be healed. (Numbers 21:1-9)

**Numbers 21:6-7** records that the Lord sent fiery serpents among them when the Israelites continued to murmur even after the Canaanites had been defeated because of the protection of the Lord. To their credit, the murmuring people got the message and responded with repentance.

**Numbers 21:8-9** – To overcome the danger of the serpents, Moses was instructed to mount a brass serpent on a pole and inform the people to look to it when they were bitten and they would be healed.

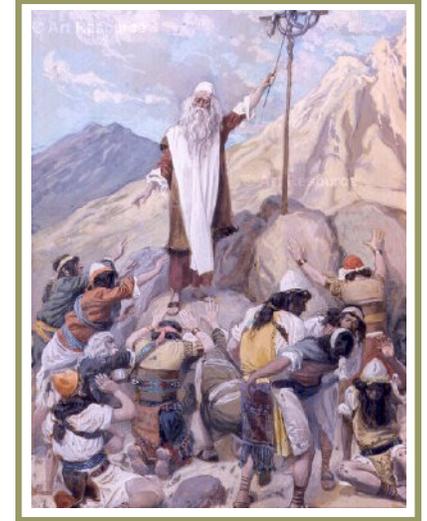
In the Book of Mormon, Nephi and Alma taught that many Israelites died rather than look upon the brass serpent. **1 Nephi 17:41** and **Alma 33:18-20** tell us why they refused to look—because they had hardened their hearts and besides that, looking at a brass serpent was just too simple and easy.

### Conclusion

Look past the things of the world and be unafraid of the “giants” that distract us from the things that are most important. If we will “look upon the Son of God with faith” (Helaman 8:15) and follow his prophets, we will be blessed in this life and in the life to come.

**John 3:14-16, Helaman 8:13-14** tell us that the raised serpent was a type of Christ being raised up on the cross. Just as the children of Israel needed to look to the brass serpent to live, we need to look to the Savior to receive eternal life. Looking to Christ means that we must look to him for guidance, for his example, his teachings and commandments, and his counsel through his prophets on how we are to live righteously. Speaking of our need to look to Christ, **Elder Carlos E. Asay** said: *“We, like Israel of old, must rivet our eyes and minds upon... Christ if we hope to gain eternal life... Our looks must not be allowed to wander across the way or to become fixed upon the perishable things of the world. The eye... must be trained to look upward. We must look to God and live!”* (Ensign, Nov. 1978, 54).

Alma taught that just as the way to be healed from the fiery serpents was easy, the way to eternal life is easy (**Alma 37:46**). In the sense that the saving principles of the gospel of Jesus Christ are simple, clear, and can be followed by all, the way is easy. The complications usually attributed to trying to live the gospel are frequently the result of people trying to live only parts of the gospel while still retaining some worldly ways and unholy attitudes. The gospel way is truly easy if we have faith in Christ, repent and chose righteousness, accept baptism of water and of the spirit, pray for guidance and strength daily, and obey the commandments faithfully. The key is to focus our lives on the Savior.



The Brazen Serpent  
James Jacques Joseph Tissot—1896-1902

*“And thus they have been called to this holy calling on account of their faith, while others would reject the Spirit of God on account of the hardness of their hearts and blindness of their minds, while, if it had not been for this they might have had as great privilege as their brethren.”*  
(Alma 13:4)

### Gospel Doctrine Notebook

Record your thoughts on the teachings discussed in this lesson.

- Record your thoughts on these ancient Israelites. How does it make you feel when you consider their lack of faith? What can you do to avoid falling into the same traps?