

## March Answers

- 1) [March 1] The law of jealousy and the Nazirite vow. The law of jealousy was designed to deal with a husband's accusation of **adultery** against his wife. At that time, a husband's **authority** over his wife was absolute, and he could ruin her life if he grew tired of her or disliked her. God's command for **oversight** by a priest showed His kindness and justice. If the woman was guilty she would be stricken with a wasting disease, but if she was innocent she would be vindicated and able to bear children. This teaches us how much God cares about those who are vulnerable to mistreatment and **abuse**. God wants us to treat them with kindness, respect and **impartiality**. The Nazirite vow (*nazir*: 'to **separate**') was unique, for it was made by a person who wanted to give **themselves** to God, rather than the normal offerings (Num 6:2). During the period of the vow, the individual was to abstain from grapes and grape by-products (including seeds and skins). They were to refrain from cutting their hair which was the symbol of their separation. They also could not go near a dead body (even father or mother). At the end of the vow, they were to offer the prescribed sacrifices, and then they were to shave their head and place their hair into the fire of the peace offering (Num 6:18–19). The Nazirite vow teaches us that we can show our love and dedication to God through **self-denial**. God is **pleased** when His people want to consecrate themselves to Him and are willing to **refrain** from normal activities and pleasures in order to show their love for Him. The Nazirite vow could be taken by a **woman**, showing that gender makes no difference when it comes to dedication and holiness. In this way it foreshadowed the unity men and women have in Christ, for all believers are part of a spiritual **priesthood** (Gal 3:28; 1 Pet 2:5).
  
- 2) [March 2] From Sinai to Kadesh-barnea. God led Israel by the **cloud** which stayed over the Tabernacle. When it lifted, the Israelites would set out, and when it stopped, the Israelites would camp. Sometimes it remained for **one** night, while at other times it would remain for **months**. Whatever the case, the Israelites moved only on God's command. This teaches us that God leads us one **step** at a time. He wants us to learn to move only at His command. The people had been at Mount Sinai for almost a **year**, but it only took **three** days on the road to Canaan before they started complaining. They were so caught up in what they didn't have that they forgot what God had given them: freedom from **slavery**, His sacred **covenant**, His **presence** in their midst, etc. This teaches us that when we're feeling discontent, we should **remember** all God has done for us and **trust** Him to meet our needs. The spirit of discontent in the camp wasn't limited to the people. Miriam and Aaron, feeling jealous of Moses due to an incident with Moses' wife, spoke against him. When they did this, they actually spoke against **God**, for Moses was His faithful servant (Heb 3:2, 5). God punished Miriam, the instigator, by striking her with a skin disease, and even though God healed her at Moses' request, she was put outside the camp for a **week**. She had to publicly endure the humiliation that went along with being rebuked for disrespect. Once again, God was merciful while exercising effective **discipline**.
  
- 3) [March 3] Rebellion at the Border. Israel came to the border of the land God had promised them, only to turn away in **fear** and despair. How could they have experienced the mighty miracles in Egypt, the crossing of the Red Sea, the fire and thunder of Mount Sinai, the glorious cloud of God's presence, and yet still be so afraid that they threatened to **stone** Moses and Aaron? The answer is found in **Hebrews**: "Take care, brothers, lest there be in any of you an evil, **unbelieving** heart, leading you to fall away from the living God" (Heb 3:12). People can be surrounded by God's presence and yet still doubt His word and question His commands. What can we do to avoid such a heart? "**Exhort** one another every day, as long as it is called 'today,' that none of you may be **hardened** by the deceitfulness of sin" (Heb 3:13). Mutual **admonition** and **accountability** is the key to guarding our hearts against unbelief. We need to be warning and encouraging our fellow

believers every day.

- 4) [March 4] Korah coveted the **priesthood** and incited a rebellion to take it from Aaron. Korah was able to convince **all** the congregation to join him in defiance of Moses (Num 16:19). How right God was when He called them a “wicked congregation” (Num 14:27)! Even after the earth split open and swallowed Korah’s assembly alive, they were back the very next day grumbling and accusing Moses of having killed “the people of the Lord” (Num 16:41). From the beginning, God identified this as an assault, not on Moses’ authority, but on **God** and His **leadership** (Num 16:11). This means that when we reject the one God has placed in **authority** over us, we are really rejecting God. How ironic that Aaron, the object of Korah’s jealousy, was the one who ran into the midst of that wicked assembly and “stood between the dead and the living, and the plague was stopped” (Num 16:47–48). Those in spiritual authority over us have been put there by God to **watch** for our souls. This means that we should **obey** them and **submit** to their authority (Heb 13:17).
  
- 5) [March 5] The Israelites were **terrified** of God in the aftermath of Korah’s rebellion. They were convinced that they would be killed if they came near the Tabernacle (Num 17:12–13). God responded with **mercy** and kindness, and He decreed that if the Tabernacle was violated in the future, His wrath would break out only against the Levites and the violators themselves while the rest of the community would be spared (Num 18:1–7). This meant that the priests and Levites shouldered a great **responsibility**. God knew this and graciously provided for their needs: they received a **tithe** of the best the people had to offer (Num 18:8–32). This symbiotic relationship in which the Levites **cared** for the people and the people **provided** for the Levites is a model for the church today (cf. 1 Cor 9:11–14; 1 Tim 5:17–18).
  
- 6) [March 6] Almost **38** years had passed since the rebellion at Kadesh-Barnea, and Israel was back where it started. Most of the **exodus** generation had passed away, and their children now formed the majority of the congregation. God deliberately withheld **water** from them to see if they would trust Him, but they assembled themselves against Moses and Aaron just like their parents before them (cf. Exod 17:2–6). How important it is to set a godly **example** for our children! God instructed Moses and Aaron to **speak** to the rock, but they did not obey. Moses **struck** it with his rod instead. Their sin against God was great, for the rock that followed them was **Christ** (1 Cor 10:4). That single instance of not treating God as holy in the sight of Israel cost them what they longed for the most—entry into Canaan. This teaches us that even the greatest leaders are held **accountable** for their sins, and none of us are exempt from God’s judgment (Rom 2:11). God also tested Israel by forcing them to march south around Edom’s territory, which was in the opposite direction from Canaan. Instead of patiently following God’s leadership, they grew irritable and rebellious: “There is no food and no water, and we **loathe** this worthless food [manna]” (Num 21:5). God sent fiery **serpents** among them, and many died before they repented and looked to the bronze serpent for salvation (John 3:14–16).
  
- 7) [March 7] Balak, the king of **Moab**, asked Balaam, a famous **seer**, to curse the Israelites. Balak sent a delegation of leaders to convey the seriousness of his request, and Balaam invited them to stay until he learned your will. You told him plainly, “You shall not go with them. You shall not curse the people, for they are blessed” (Num 22:12). Balaam refused to go with them, but Balak didn’t take Balaam’s ‘No’ for an answer. He sent back more important nobles and offered him a blank check for services rendered. At first, it seemed as though Balaam was loyal and obedient to God, but there was **greed** in his heart: “So you, too, please stay here tonight, that I may know what **more** the LORD will say to me” (Num 22:19). Balaam wanted Balak’s **money**, and he was hoping God would change His mind! God permitted Balaam to go in order to **test** him, but when Balaam went, God was angry, for Balaam knew God hadn’t changed His mind (Num 22:20). Balaam’s desire for money was greater

than his desire to obey God. God could have killed Balaam, but instead had mercy on him and allowed his female donkey to save his life. Even then, Balaam still wanted to go (Num 22:34b)! God let him continue, but used him to bless Israel and teach Balak about the one, true God.

- 8) [March 8] The second census of Israel was taken after the plague at Peor. Thirty-eight years had passed since the first census recorded in Numbers. Just like the first, this census was taken to record all men aged twenty and over who were fit for military service (Num 26:2). Since God had just announced a campaign against Midian (Num 25:16–18), and the conquest of Canaan was imminent, a military census was appropriate. However, there was another reason for the census: to determine the relative sizes of the tribes so they could receive a territorial allotment which was proportional to their population. The total was almost the same as it was at Sinai (601,730 as opposed to 603,550), but there was not a single man left alive from the **first** census. All of them except **Caleb** and **Joshua** died in the wilderness just as God said they would (Num 26:63–65). This shows us the terrible cost of **rebellion** against God. It also teaches us that although God’s promises may be delayed by sin, they will ultimately be **fulfilled**. Moses was now **120** years old, and God told him that his death was approaching quickly. Concerned for the people, Moses asked God to appoint Israel a new leader. God personally chose **Joshua** as Moses’ successor, and Moses commissioned him before all the congregation. This shows us the importance of **succession** planning. Leaders would do well to follow Moses’ example: **pray**, select, commission, and **train** (Joshua was **co-leader** with Moses during a transition period that ended with Moses’ death).
- 9) [March 9] Another step in preparing to enter Canaan involved documenting all the **sacrifices** God required the priests to offer for the nation during the year. Each year the priests would sacrifice 113 bulls, 32 rams, 31 goats and 1,086 lambs. They also offered more than a ton of flour and a thousand bottles of oil and wine. Clearly Israel was destined to be a prosperous agricultural community! The daily burnt offerings represented daily fellowship between God and the people, while the weekly and monthly offerings provided times of richer fellowship. God’s purpose in requiring these sacrifices was to remind the people that the key to the successful **conquest** of Canaan and prosperous **living** within the promised land was continual **fellowship** with Him. This teaches us that **worship** and **prayer** and **Bible** reading need to be our top priorities, for they facilitate our daily fellowship with God. God also gave Israel laws concerning vows. A vow was a solemn **promise** to God in which a person committed themselves to perform some action in the future. God took vows seriously, and once made, they could not be undone without **consequence**. Only unmarried daughters and married women could have their vows annulled by their fathers or husbands. This teaches us that promises to God are not to be made **lightly**, and that we should be careful to **keep** our word. Jesus later rebuked the Jews for breaking their word and then excusing themselves because of the **wording** of their vow (Matt 5:33–37). The final verdict: “Let your ‘yes’ be yes and your ‘no’ be no” (James 5:12).
- 10) [March 10] God’s war of vengeance against the Midianites of Moab. This was *not* an **ethnic** cleansing. It was a **holy** war commissioned by **God** in order to “**avenge** the people of Israel on the Midianites” (Num 31:2). The Midianites, along with the Moabites, had led Israel into sin through a strategy of sexual seduction (cf. Num 25:1–18). God’s judgment had begun with Israel itself, and a plague killed some **24,000** people. This affirms that God’s judgment begins with His own **house** (cf. 1 Pet 4:17; Rom 2:9). Now it was time for retribution on Midian for their part in the rebellion at Peor. This teaches us that those who lead God’s people astray will be held **accountable** for their actions (cf. Luke 17:1–2). Moses ordered the Israelites to kill every **male**, including children, and every female who was not a **virgin**. Moses correctly pointed out that the Midianite women were especially to blame in the seduction, and so only the virgins should be spared. This teaches us that all life belongs to God, and He has the **right** as Creator to give and take life as He sees fit (cf. Gen 19). When

God delegates the task of taking human life to us, we must **obey** (cf. Gen 9:6), but apart from His divine command, we are told to **leave** vengeance in His hands (Rom 12:19).

- 11) [March 11] Occupying Canaan and Israel's border. The boundaries of Israel's inheritance showed that God's gift of land was specific and defined. Israel was not free to **expand** into other nations' territories at their whim (cf. Deut 2:5). This is an important reminder that all **land** belongs to God, and He **gives** it to whomever He wishes (Lev 25:23). God commanded Israel to drive out all the inhabitants of Canaan, to destroy their idols and worship sites, and to "possess" the land (Num 33:52–53). God knew that if they allowed any of the people to remain, Israel would be corrupted by their wickedness, for sin is like a **cancer**, and it will **spread** if it is not totally removed. The religious practices of the Canaanites were not to be preserved—they were to be **destroyed**. This principle should guide us today, and we should avoid becoming involved in any of the false religions of the world.
- 12) [March 12] Moses' First Sermon (Deut 1–2: Remember the past). Israel is camped in the plains of Moab at the end of the 40-year wilderness period. Moses began by telling the story of how Israel rebelled against God at Kadesh-barnea. He did this because the new generation needed to be **reminded** of their fathers' sin. They needed to remember that **unbelief** had caused frustration, death and decades of wandering in the desert. This teaches us that we need to honestly recall our past sins and tell our **children** how disobedience led to heartache and pain. The consequences of sin should **motivate** us to obey in the future! Moses then made a point of telling the new generation that God had blessed them during their wanderings: "You have lacked **nothing**" (Deut 2:7). It was important for the people to hear God's **perspective** of their journey for they had grumbled over the lack of water (Num 20:2) and complained about the manna (Num 21:5). They needed to realize that when you have the Provider, you have all you need! Moses also recounted how God had led the people safely past Edom and Moab, and how He had given them victory over the **Amorites**. God prohibited Israel from taking any land from Ammon, Moab and Edom, showing that a nation's claim to the land is grounded in His **gift**, not in power or possession (cf. Deut 2:12, 21–22). The defeat of King Sihon of Heshbon was *not* due to Israel's military **might**. It was because God delivered him into Israel's hand (Deut 2:31). The people needed to understand that their ability to conquer their enemies came only through God's power. There was no need for **fear** and no place for **pride**: "The LORD our God delivered all over to us" (Deut 2:36).
- 13) [March 13] Moses' First Sermon (Deut 3–4: Remember the past). Moses finished his review of Israel's recent history, emphasizing how God had delivered Og of Bashan into their hand. This teaches us that the key to facing the future without fear is to **remember** what God has done in the past (Deut 3:21–22). Moses then urged the people to obey God's commands and follow His leadership. He warned the people not to **forget**: "Take care...lest you forget the things that your eyes have seen" (Deut 4:9). He also commanded them to tell their **children** and **grandchildren** what they had experienced. This teaches us the importance of **documenting** God's grace in our lives and **sharing** the lessons we've learned with our family. Moses then warned Israel that they would be **exiled** from the land if they forsook Yahweh and worshipped other gods. This teaches us that we can expect to be **disciplined** for sin. God's discipline is designed to motivate us to repent and return to Him. Moses then challenged the people to **meditate** on what God had done: "Has anything so great as this ever happened, or has anything like it ever been heard of?" (Deut 4:32 NIV). He wanted them to think about the **implications** of God's mighty deeds, namely, that there is no other god but Yahweh (Deut 4:39). This knowledge would produce the only proper **response**: obedience to His commands (Deut 4:40).

- 14) [March 14] Moses' Second Sermon — Part 1a (Deut 5–6: General covenant obligations). This sermon focused on the **covenant** God made with Israel at Mount Sinai, and it called the people to covenant **loyalty** and obedience. Moses emphasized that the covenant had been made with the **nation** of Israel, and thus it applied to **all** Israelites for generations to come (Deut 5:3). Moses repeated the Ten Commandments which God had spoken audibly from the mountain, and he recalled how pleased God was when the people **feared** Him and wanted to obey. Moses then gave them the greatest commandment: “You shall **love** the LORD your God with all your **heart** and with all your **soul** and with all your **might**” (Deut 6:5; Matt 22:37–38). Moses continued by pointing out that loving God meant **teaching** His words to their children and being diligent to **explain** why His laws were the foundation of their lives. As Christians, we too have entered into a covenant relationship with God. This covenant is the **New** Covenant spoken of by Jeremiah and mediated through the blood of God's Son, Jesus Christ (cf. Jer 31:31–34; Heb 8). This covenant also has **rules** and guidelines for our behavior, namely, loving God and loving others (cf. Matt 22:34–40). Jesus echoed Moses' call to covenant loyalty and obedience when He instituted the New Covenant (cf. John 14:15), and He made it clear that we would fulfill all the Mosaic Covenant required if we put His law of love into daily practice (Matt 7:12; Rom 13:9–10; Gal 5:14).
- 15) [March 15] Moses' Second Sermon — Part 1b (Deut 7–8: General covenant obligations). Moses had urged Israel to be completely loyal to God, and now he warned them about several **threats** to this loyalty. First, the **nations** living in Canaan. Moses warned the people that the Canaanites would lead them into idolatry, and he commanded Israel to **devote** those nations to complete **destruction** (Deut 7:2). This teaches us that we should be **ruthless** when it comes to removing anything that can lead us into sin (e.g., relationships, entertainment, food, etc.). We can't avoid living in a sinful world, but we can keep the world from gaining a foothold in our lives. Second, their **prideful** hearts. Moses told Israel that God's decision to lead them through the desert had been deliberate, for He wanted to **humble** them and **test** them and **reveal** what was in their hearts. This teaches us that our primary concern should be complete **obedience** to God's Word (Deut 8:3). God knows our physical needs, and He will provide for us in His own time (Deut 8:16). Our job is to patiently follow Him. Third, their future **abundance**. Moses warned the people that prosperity would cause them to forget God if they didn't remember where their blessings came from: “You shall **remember** the LORD your God, for it is he who is giving you power to make wealth” (Deut 8:18). This shows us how important it is to remind ourselves each day that everything we have is a **gift** from God. God has given us the ability to work and make money, and we should use our wealth to bring glory to Him.
- 16) [March 16] Moses' Second Sermon — Part 1c (Deut 9–11: General covenant obligations). Moses warned the people not to interpret their victory in the coming conquest as a sign of their own **righteousness**: “God is not giving you this good land to possess because of your righteousness, for you are a **stubborn** people” (Deut 9:6). Moses then reminded them of several incidents in which they had been disobedient and rebellious (Deut 9:7–29). This teaches us the danger of **self-righteousness**. Rather than viewing success as proof of our own goodness and virtue, we need to recognize it as the unmerited **gift** of God's mercy and grace. Anytime we become smug or puffed up over our achievements, we need to remind ourselves of the many times we've **rebelled** against God. This will keep us where we need to be—on our knees in **humility** with heartfelt **gratitude** for God's blessings. Moses finished this part of his sermon by urging the people to love God and **imitate** His love for others. He told them that their personal **experience** of God's great deeds should motivate them to fear and obey Him. Knowing their tendency to **stray**, Moses revealed that God intended to use Canaan's **climate** to discipline them for sin—idolatry would lead to **drought** and **famine**. The choice was theirs: blessing for obedience or cursing for disobedience. This same choice is before us as well. If we value our health and well-being, we will be careful to obey God!

- 17) [March 17] Moses' Second Sermon — Part 2a (Deut 12–14: Specific covenant obligations). In the first part of his sermon, Moses reviewed the Ten Commandments and exhorted the people to obedience and covenant faithfulness (Deut 5–11). Today's reading begins part two of Moses' sermon (Deut 12–26), where God's laws are explained in **detail** so Israel would know how to live a **holy** life that was pleasing to Him. These laws showed the people how to love **God** and love **others**, and the **principles** behind these laws still apply today (cf. Matt 7:12; Rom 13:9–10). Moses told Israel, "Suppose there are prophets among you...and they promise you signs or miracles, and the predicted signs or miracles occur. If they then say, 'Come, let us worship other gods'...do not listen to them. The LORD your God is **testing** you to see if you truly **love** him with all your heart and soul. Serve only the LORD your God and fear him alone. Obey his commands, listen to his voice, and cling to him" (Deut 13:1–4 NLT). This teaches us that loving God means being faithful to Him alone. This may involve personal **sacrifice**, for God said, "Suppose someone secretly entices you—even your brother, your son or daughter, your beloved **wife**, or your closest **friend**—and says, 'Let us go worship other gods'...Do not give in or listen. Have no pity, and do not spare or protect them. You must put them to **death!** Strike the first blow **yourself**, and then all the people must join in" (Deut 13:6–9 NLT). This shows how seriously God takes our faithfulness to Him!
- 18) [March 18] Moses' Second Sermon — Part 2b (Deut 15–18: Specific covenant obligations). Moses continued to explain God's covenant laws in detail so the people would know how to live a holy life that was pleasing to Him. The law of the **Sabbatical** year commanded all creditors to grant a **release** of whatever they had **loaned** to a fellow Israelite (Deut 15:1–2; cf. Exod 23:10ff). God urged the people to be **generous** and give their neighbor whatever they might need. This teaches us that it's our responsibility to **care** for the poor and needy in our community. Moses pointed out that there *didn't need to be* any poor among the Israelites, for if they would love and obey God, He would bless and prosper them (Deut 15:4–6). However, God knew this **ideal** would not be realized; inevitably the **sin** of some would affect the lives of all, and thus the poor would never cease from the land (Deut 15:11). This law was *not* telling the people to give aid to the **wicked** who had incurred God's wrath (cf. 2 Chr 19:2; Amos 4:7). Rather, it was encouraging Israel to care for those who had been adversely affected by the results of the fall and the sin of others. If we aid those who are poor as a result of their own sin without confronting them about their need for repentance, we become an **enabler** of their sin. Our obligation is to **open** our hand to the poor, while at the same time exercising **discernment** toward the root cause of that poverty.
- 19) [March 19] Moses' Second Sermon — Part 2c (Deut 19–22: Specific covenant obligations). Moses continued to explain God's covenant laws in detail so the people would know how to live a holy life that was pleasing to Him. God set apart certain cities in Israel as a **refuge** for those who had killed someone by **accident** (Deut 19:5). Yet God also commanded that **murderers** be put to death: "You shall not pity him" (Deut 19:13). This shows us that God wants the wicked **punished** and the innocent **protected**. A just society will be careful to do both. God's laws were designed to teach the people how to **love** their neighbor. For example, the law related to caring for a neighbor's lost animal (Deut 22:1–4) teaches us that loving our neighbor means: (a) not **ignoring** the potential loss or destruction of their private property, (b) **caring** for their lost property until it is returned, and (c) not ignoring them when they're **struggling** with their vehicle (donkey) or their tractor (ox). The law requiring a railing on the roof of a house (Deut 22:8) teaches us that loving our neighbor means: (a) being concerned about their **safety**, (b) going out of our way to **protect** them when they are on or near our property, and (c) ensuring our property is **designed** with the safety of others in mind. There are so many practical principles in God's laws if we will just take the time to look for them!
- 20) [March 20] Moses' Second Sermon — Part 2d (Deut 23–26: Specific covenant obligations). Moses completed his overview of God's covenant laws, and he urged the people: "You shall therefore be

careful to **do** them with all your heart and with all your soul” (Deut 26:16; cf. Deut 6:5). The case law concerning divorce and remarriage teaches us that loving our spouse means: (1) upholding God’s intention for a man and woman to be **permanently** united in marriage, (2) recognizing how **serious** divorce is, for it **tears** apart what God has joined together, and (3) pursuing **reconciliation** unless the other party remarries (cf. Matt 5:31–32; 19:3–9; Mark 10:2–9). The laws concerning security for loans teach us that loving our neighbor means: (a) never depriving them of the things they need for their **livelihood**, (b) respecting their privacy and **dignity** as a fellow human being, (c) going out of our way to return their **pledge** if it is needed to provide warmth or shelter. The law requiring capital punishment for kidnapping someone and selling them into slavery shows how serious God is about respecting the **freedom** of others (Deut 24:7). God kept reminding the Israelites that they had been **enslaved** in Egypt, and He wanted this memory to **motivate** them to be kind and loving to those less fortunate than themselves.

- 21) [March 21] Conclusion of Moses’ Second Sermon. Moses gave the people instructions for a covenant **renewal** ceremony that was to take place in Canaan. Moses told them to set up large **stones** on Mount Ebal and write on them **all** the words of the law. These stones would serve as a constant reminder of God’s covenant with Israel. This shows us how important it is to keep God’s word at the **center** of our lives. Moses also told the people about the covenantal **blessings** and **curses** (cf. Rom 11:22; Heb 10:28–29). First, he described all the blessings God promised to give them if they kept His covenant and obeyed His commands. God longed for a people who would **separate** themselves from the world and **walk** in His ways. God wanted more than anything to be able to bless and prosper Israel. How tragic to think of what could have been if only they had followed Him. Moses then described in graphic detail all the curses God promised to bring on Israel if they broke the covenant. God was especially angered by the thought of their **ungratefulness**: “Because you did not serve the LORD your God **joyfully** and **gladly** in the time of prosperity, therefore in hunger and thirst, in nakedness and dire poverty, you will serve the enemies the LORD sends against you” (Deut 28:47–48 NIV). This teaches us that God cares about our **attitude**. We are called to serve Him with joy and gladness!
- 22) [March 22] Moses’ third and final sermon. Moses began by reminding the people of what they had seen and heard: “The great trials that your eyes saw, the signs, and those great wonders” (Deut 29:3). Then Moses said, “But to this day the LORD has not given you a heart to **understand** or eyes to **see** or ears to **hear**” (Deut 29:4; cf. Isa 6:9–10; Matt 13:14–15). The eyes that witnessed the exodus had not become eyes of faith. The ears that heard God’s voice at Sinai had not become ears of obedience. The hearts that experienced God’s care and provision had not become hearts of loyalty. How could this be? Was it somehow God’s fault? Had He prevented them from being able to obey? Certainly not! The reason God had not given them ears to hear and eyes to see and hearts to understand was because such gifts can only be given to those who come to God in sincere **repentance** and **faith**. God can give anyone water from a rock and manna from heaven. God can give anyone clothes that don’t wear out and sandals that don’t wear off. But inner, **spiritual** change can only come to those who respond to God in faith! But surely God’s Law was too **distant** for them to know and too **hard** for them to keep? No! God told the people clearly that His Law was *not* too hard and it was *not* too far away. “It is in your mouth and in your heart, so that you **can** do it” (Deut 30:14). They couldn’t lay their failure at God’s feet, for they had everything they needed to be successful. If they perished, it was because they had scorned His offer of grace. Moses then told the people that he would not be going with them into Canaan: “The LORD your God himself will go over before you. He will destroy these nations before you, so that you shall dispossess them, and Joshua will go over at your head, as the LORD has spoken” (Deut 31:3). This teaches us that while **human** leadership may change, God’s guiding and protecting presence remains the same. We can be strong and courageous because God is with us. He will never fail or forsake us, and although the challenge

ahead may be great, we have no need to fear!

- 23) [March 23] Yahweh's Song and the Death of Moses. God's song contrasted His faithfulness and purity with the **unfaithfulness** and **perversity** of the people. God gave it to Israel as a **prophecy** of what would happen in the years to come (Deut 31:16–19). They would prosper from God's blessings, and when they were rich and successful, they would turn away from Him and serve other gods. When many evils and troubles came upon them for their sin, this song would **confront** them. It would bear **witness** to God's loyalty and their treachery. This teaches us the importance of songs as an aid to **memory**. Songs have a tendency to stay with us over the years, and we should use them to **instill** God's truth in our hearts and minds (cf. Col 3:16; Eph 5:18–19). The same day Moses gave God's song to the Israelites, God told him to prepare for death. Moses pronounced a prophetic blessing on Israel before he died, and he encouraged them to thank God for all He had done: "Blessed are you, O Israel! Who is like you, a people saved by the LORD? He is your shield and helper and your glorious sword. Your enemies will cower before you, and you will trample down their high places" (Deut 33:29 NIV). God led Moses up into the mountains of Moab and showed him the promised land. He died there in God's arms, and since then, "No prophet has risen in Israel like Moses, whom the LORD knew **face to face**" (Deut 34:10 NIV).
- 24) [March 24] Joshua had served God with distinction during Moses' leadership, but now the weight of **responsibility** was fully on his shoulders. It was one thing to be courageous when Moses was at the helm; it was quite another when everyone was looking to him for **leadership**. God broke through Joshua's fear and doubt with words of encouragement: "Have I not **commanded** you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be **frightened**, and do not be **dismayed**, for the LORD your God is with you wherever you go" (Josh 1:9). This teaches us: (1) God never commands us to do something His **grace** will not help us to perform, (2) God never gives us a task without granting us His **authority**, and (3) God never send us into danger **alone**, for He are always right there with us. If we're surprised at how afraid Joshua was at the prospect of entering Canaan, we need to remind ourselves that he was about to face an enemy he had no chance of **defeating**. How many times have we faced much smaller challenges and yet been filled with fear and doubt? Rahab **testified** to the spies of her faith in God (Josh 2:10–11), and then **proved** it by her works (James 2:25). Imagine—a Canaanite woman who believed in Yahweh as the one true God! (cf. Matt 15:21–28). To the very end, God was reaching out to those who would turn to Him in **faith**. Hallelujah for a God whose mighty works evangelize the lost!
- 25) [March 25] The conquest of Jericho, the sin of Achan and the destruction of Ai. Joshua was near Jericho, probably wondering how to **besiege** the city, when he looked up and there **Jesus** was standing in front of him! (cf. Josh 5:15). How often have we been **worrying** about what to do when all the time God was right there, ready for battle? When Joshua realized who the man was, he did what we should do when confronted by a Jericho—he **worshiped**. God is more interested in our **praise** than in our battle plan, and we're better off **holding** His hand than running around trying to figure things out on our own. When God told Joshua how to conquer Jericho, he must have felt both relieved and confused. Relieved to have God's direction and confused by a command that made no **military** sense at all! This teaches us that it's more important to **obey** than it is to understand. Victory does not come from our strength or abilities. It comes from walking hand-in-hand with God! Joshua was convinced, but what about the people? To their credit, they obeyed God's command and "by **faith** the walls of Jericho fell down after they had been encircled for seven days" (Heb 11:30). Achan took some of the things under the ban, but God said, "**Israel** has sinned...they have both stolen and deceived" (Josh 7:1, 11). When we sin, we affect everyone around us: our family, our friends, our church, our co-workers and our country. "No man is an island, Entire of itself..."



- 26) [March 26] The Gibeonite deception, Joshua's military campaigns in southern and northern Canaan, and the final conquest of the promised land. The Gibeonites (**Hivites** of Gibeon) lived about **seven** miles southwest of Ai, and word of the destruction of Jericho and Ai reached them quickly. Instead of marching out to battle, they decided that **deception** was the better part of valor. They came to Joshua and asked to make a covenant with Israel. Their tactic has much to teach us about how to avoid being deceived: (1) We should beware of those who **flatter** us or appeal to our sense of vanity (Josh 9:8); (2) We should not **assume** that everyone who sounds spiritual or professes godliness is genuine (Josh 9:9); (3) We should guard against our tendency to trust what we can **see** and touch (Josh 9:12–13). Joshua and the other leaders **examined** their provisions, "but did not ask **counsel** from the LORD" (Josh 9:14). Joshua and the other leaders didn't feel the need or think to ask for God's direction! This teaches us that we will face decisions where we can examine the facts, carefully consider our options, consult godly friends, search the Scriptures (cf. Deut 20:10–15), and yet make a tragic mistake unless we **specifically** ask God for guidance. Such decisions are intended to **test** our commitment to put God first in all things. Joshua waged war for **years** against the kings of the land, and God **hardened** the Canaanites' hearts so they would fight Joshua rather than surrender (Josh 11:20). This was in keeping with God's decision to wipe them out, for they had not repented and their sin was now **complete** (cf. Gen 15:16). This also suggests that the Hivites of Gibeon, one of the ethnic groups chosen for destruction (Deut 20:16–17), were *not* hardened, leaving them free to seek peace, even if through deception (Josh 11:19). This shows that God is **merciful**, often sparing sinners until there is no hope of repentance.
- 27) [March 27] The division of Canaan at **Gilgal**. Joshua's military campaigns had broken the backbone of the enemy, and the land was now firmly under Israel's control. But Joshua did not conquer **every** city. God deliberately left pockets of resistance in order to test the **commitment** and **resolve** of the people. Caleb rose to this challenge and asked Joshua for the hill country of the **Anakim**, the giants who had frightened the people so many years ago. This teaches us that God is able to **preserve** those who are faithful to Him, and although there may be **delays**, His plans for us cannot be thwarted. God had commanded that the land be divided into sections that corresponded to the **size** of each tribe (Num 33:54). **Judah** was the largest single tribe (Num 26:22), and so it was the first to receive its allotted territory. Joseph, the combination of **Ephraim** and the half-tribe of **Manasseh**, received its land next. They were upset when they were given only one lot for their inheritance, and they complained to Joshua. Joshua, however, wisely discerned the real issue: the sons of Joseph were **lazy** and **fearful**. Their territory included a large **forest** in the hill country, but they didn't want to clear it and defeat the fearsome **Rephaites** who lived there. Their territory also included the valley land, but they feared the iron **chariots** of the Canaanites. Joshua challenged them to clear the forest and drive out the Canaanites. This teaches us that God's will for our lives will contain **obstacles**. They are intended to **refine** our character and force us to **trust** God. We need to roll up our sleeves and get to work!
- 28) [March 28] The division of Canaan at **Shiloh**. Shiloh was in **Ephraimite** territory, about 20 miles northwest of Gilgal, and God had chosen it as the place to put His name and dwelling (cf. Deut 12:5). Shiloh was located in the center of Canaan. It was a convenient location where the Tabernacle would remind the people that the key to prosperity and blessing was **worshipping** and **servicing** God. The entire congregation of Israel assembled at Shiloh, and Joshua rebuked the **seven** tribes who had not taken steps to possess their territory: "How **long** will you put off entering to take possession of the land which the LORD, the God of your fathers, has given you?" (Josh 18:3). Each passing day was a day **lost** in obeying God's command, a day their **enemies** could use to strengthen their defenses. Their delay was probably due to several reasons: (1) They were **tired** from the years they had just spent defeating the Canaanites; (2) They were used to following Joshua and reluctant to take the **initiative**; (3) They realized that possessing the land meant **separating** from the group and fighting

on their **own**, and (4) They felt there was plenty of **time** to obey God—a little delay wouldn't hurt. This teaches us the importance of not growing **weary** in doing good, “for in due season we will reap, if we do not give up” (Gal 6:9). It also shows us that character cannot be fully developed in a **group** setting. Each individual must stand on their own and prove that they will obey God in spite of hardship and adversity.

- 29) [March 29] After the land was divided, God told Joshua to designate by name the cities of **refuge** which He had spoken of to Moses (Exod 21:13; Num 35:6–34; Deut 19:1–13). These **six** cities gave asylum to those who had **accidentally** killed someone, and their location in the north, center and south on both sides of the Jordan made them easily **accessible** to those who needed their protection. This legal provision for cases of manslaughter gives us insight into the character of God: (1) He cares about people's **motives**, and He made sure that a man without hatred in his heart would not be put to death as a murderer (Josh 20:5); (2) His justice is available to **all** no matter their background or class (Josh 20:9); and (3) He regards human life as **precious**, and it should only be taken according to His stipulations (Deut 19:10). Last but not least of the tribes, the **Levites** were given cities and pasture land just as God commanded through Moses (Num 35:2–8). God did this intentionally so the Levites, whose responsibilities included the **teaching** and **administration** of the law, would not be far from anyone in Israel. In this way they provided a positive spiritual **influence** on the entire nation. This shows how important it is for us to be **salt** and **light** in our homes, our churches, our communities, and our nation. Like the Levites, we need to be encouraging and challenging those around us to be holy and dedicated to God.
- 30) [March 30] The crisis began when Reuben, Gad and the half-tribe of Manasseh returned to their own territory with Joshua's blessing. Before they crossed the Jordan, they built a large **altar** by the side of the river (cf. Deut 12:1–13). When the other tribes heard about it, they believed the **worst** of their brothers, and sent a delegation to confront them. The Transjordan tribes protested their innocence, for the altar was only meant to be a **witness** of the common faith shared by Israelites on both sides of the Jordan. This incident teaches us how important it is: (1) to **investigate** an alleged wrong before leaping to judgment, (2) to consider how our actions may be **perceived** by others and go out of our way to avoid the **appearance** of evil, and (3) to respond in **humility** and a desire for reconciliation when others misunderstand our actions. The years passed, and Joshua reached the age of **110**. Knowing that his death was near, he called all the tribes together and challenged them to remain **faithful** and obedient to God. He warned them that just as all God's good words had come true, so also His threats would come true if they disobeyed. He then gathered Israel together at Shechem and admonished them to **renew** their loyalty to the covenant. He deliberately **questioned** their expressions of faithfulness and commanded them to “put away the foreign **gods** which are in your midst” (Josh 24:23). His exhortations came from a heart of love for God, and Israel served God all the days of Joshua's life. This shows us the power and **influence** of a dedicated leader!
- 31) [March 31] If the main theme of the book of Joshua is “Victory through **Faith**,” the main theme of Judges is “Failure through **Compromise**.” After Joshua's **death**, **Judah** launched a campaign to take possession of their territory. Joined by Simeon, they conquered the uplands and lowlands, and **Caleb** was victorious at Hebron. This successful start, however, was soon marred by disobedience, for they did not drive out **all** the Canaanites from the land. The other tribes also failed to obey God's command, and God finally **confronted** them at Bochim: “You have not obeyed my voice” (Judges 2:2). Israel's failure bore all the hallmarks of a compromising heart: (1) They were more afraid of **people** than they were of God (Judges 1:19); (2) They **justified** their actions instead of owning up to their mistakes (Judges 1:19); (3) They gave up when they encountered **resistance** (Judges 1:34); and (4) They preferred to **cohabit** rather than conquer (Judges 1:21, 28, 30). This teaches us that when we refuse to be ruthless with sin, it will come back to be a **thorn** in our side and a **snare** to our feet

(Judges 2:3). The people wept at Bochim, but like Esau, they were only sorry for the consequences of their sin. Their repentance wasn't genuine, for they soon abandoned God and worshiped idols (cf. Judges 17:5). First a family, then a Levite, and finally a tribe left the path of righteousness and did what was right in their own eyes (Judges 17:6). This led them into a quagmire of religious syncretism and moral relativism, and it teaches us the danger of compromising with sin.