



may have to change their lifestyle. How easy it is for us to say, “**Let us appoint a leader and return to Egypt!**”

I would suggest to you that, just as Israel’s desire to return to Egypt meant certain things, our own desire to return to sin means certain things as well. *First, returning to sin means rejecting God’s leadership.* When we no longer like the direction in which God is leading, we turn our backs on His authority and lordship. *Second, returning to sin means rejecting God’s promise.* God has promised all those who follow Him eternal life. Returning to sin shows God that we think we can attain more pleasure here and now than he could ever offer us in eternity. *Finally, returning to sin means rejecting the freedom that God has given us.* Like Egypt, sin may look appealing from the outside, but in reality sin will control us if we let it. That is why sin is fittingly described as slavery and bondage. Brethren, regardless of where God leads us, may we never come to say, “**Let us... return to Egypt.**”



(Romans 6:6). We look in Scripture and see the powerful death of God’s firstborn son by which we have received freedom from the oppression of sin. Yet, how often do we see Christians fall away when things get hard? Maybe they’ve gone in to “spy out the land” and they realize that, if they follow Christ, their friends and family might hate them, they might lose their job, or they

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ISSUE

16.37

BULLETIN OF
THE OLSEN
PARK CHURCH
OF CHRIST

Faithful Sayings

September 14,
2014

Services

Sunday: 9:30 AM
10:20 AM
6:00 PM
Wednesday: 7:00 PM

Elders:

Pat Ledbetter
Jeff Nunn
Kyle Pope

Deacons:

Eddie Cook
Steve Dixon
Jack Langley
Neil Ledbetter
Brady McAlister
Walker McAnear
Lance Purcell
Rusty Scott

Evangelists:

Kyle Pope
Andrew Dow



“Let Us Appoint a Leader and Return to Egypt” By Andrew Dow

I have never met anyone who claims the book of Numbers is their favorite book of the Bible. Perhaps there are people out there who enjoy its contents, but I imagine they are few and far between. Sandwiched between Leviticus and Deuteronomy, I imagine many people tend to think Numbers is just another book full of tedious laws for the Israelites. The truth is, the book of Numbers is the story of Israel’s journey from Mt. Sinai to the border of the Promised Land. It is full of stories concerning the people’s successes and failures, an exciting espionage mission, and even a few battles. For the Christian, there are more than a few worthwhile studies to be found in the Book of Numbers.

Before we look at one particular text found in Numbers chapter fourteen, we should briefly remind ourselves of the events leading up to this point. The book of Exodus tells us about how God powerfully removed the Israelites from the stronghold of the Egyptian Pharaoh. The people of Israel saw God’s mighty power on display as they passed through the Red Sea and followed the pillar of cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night through the wilderness. While standing at the foot of Mt. Sinai, the Israelites made a covenant with God. They became God’s people, and He became their God.

Finally, standing before the Promised Land, they waited as Moses sent in spies to view the land. The majority of spies reported that the land was unconquerable. As you may recall, this sent the children of Israel into an uproar against Moses and God.

It is at this point in Israel's history that we read:

Then all the congregation lifted up their voices and cried, and the people wept that night. All the sons of Israel grumbled against Moses and Aaron; and the whole congregation said to



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them, "Would that we had died in the land of Egypt! Or would that we had died in the wilderness! Why is the Lord bringing us into this land, to fall by the sword? Our wives and our little ones will become plunder; would it not be better for us to return to Egypt?" So they said to one another, "Let us appoint a leader and return to Egypt" (Numbers 14:1-4).

This was not the first time the Israelites had become agitated and suggested such drastic measures. However, a convincing argument could be made that this was the most unreasonable time to consider turning around. The Lord responded, **"How long will this people spurn Me? And how long will they not believe in Me, despite all the signs which I have performed in their midst?"** (Numbers 14:11). After their deliverance from Egypt, their covenant with God, and the miraculous care they received in the wilderness, how could Israel suggest turning around and heading back to Egypt? With the remainder of this article, I want to quickly point out a few things that it would have meant if Israel had returned to Egypt.

First, returning to Egypt would have meant rejecting God's leadership. We should never fail to recognize that, without the leadership of God, Israel would never have left Egyptian bondage. Israel owed its freedom to God's leadership. After receiving the law at Mt. Sinai these same people willingly affirmed, **"All that the Lord has spoken we will do, and we will be obedient!"** (Exodus 24:7). These people agreed to follow the leadership and authority of God, but when they found out where He was leading them they wanted out of deal! In fact, they were in such a hurry to reject God's leadership that they said, **"Let us appoint a leader and return to Egypt"** (Numbers

14:4). They had a leader. God was their leader. They just didn't like where He was taking them.

Second, returning to Egypt would have meant rejecting God's promise. Here were the people of Israel, standing before the land that God had been promising them since He brought them out of Egypt with His mighty hand. When they said, **"Let us... return to Egypt,"** they were essentially saying, *"We don't care what God promised us. We don't believe He can give it to us."* As a result of this lack of faith God declared, **"Surely all the men who have seen My glory and My signs which I performed in Egypt and in the wilderness, yet have put Me to the test these ten times and have not listened to My voice, shall by no means see the land which I swore to their fathers"** (Numbers 14:22-23). Because they lacked faith in God's promise, God refused to give it to them. Instead, God said, **"Your children, however, whom you said would become a prey—I will bring them in, and they will know the land which you have rejected"** (Numbers 14:31). They heard the promise of God and saw His power to fulfill it, but they willingly rejected any hope of receiving that promise.

Finally, returning to Egypt would have meant rejecting freedom. Think back to the early chapters of the book of Exodus. The children of Israel had grown to such an extent that Pharaoh enslaved them and forced them into manual labor. They made bricks and built cities at Pharaoh's command. There was nothing pleasant about their time in Egyptian bondage. In fact, their experience in Egypt was so horrible that the Bible consistently refers to "Egypt" as a picture of

oppression, slavery, and captivity. Now, consider the implications of the Israelites saying, **"Let us... return to Egypt."** Had the Israelites walked back into Egypt I seriously doubt the Egyptians would have pretended like nothing happened. By suggesting they return to Egypt, the Israelites were saying that ANYTHING would be better than facing the Canaanite armies. They considered it better to give up their God-given freedom than to follow Jehovah into battle. What a sad description of an entire generation of God's people.

Before I conclude this article, I'd like to think about some application we can take from this account. Whereas Israel was once God's people, He now looks upon the church as His people. Certainly we ought to look back into the Old Testament in order to avoid the mistakes God's people made then. Christians, like the Israelites, are **"no longer... slaves to sin"**