

Lesson 25

The Cloud and Fire and the Lord Sends Quail

Numbers 11:4-14, 31-34; 13:1-14:9



Teacher, please remember that the commentary below is intended to help you in your study, not to be read to your students. Make your own list of applications, using the help from the commentary, but don't necessarily try to cover everything! Think of the students in your class, then be prayerfully selective.

Contents:

1. Preparation
2. Memory verses
3. Theme
4. Lesson introduction
5. Verse by verse commentary (suggested location of activities included)
6. Suggested prayer to close
7. Attention grabbers to choose from
8. Possible Activities to choose from
9. Bible Text (in full, without commentary)

1. Preparation

- 1) Choose memory verse
- 2) Select attention grabber to start off lesson / break the ice - optional, recommended for younger classes. See point 7.
- 3) Select suggested activities- optional, recommended for younger children. See point 8.

2. Choose memory verse

NUMBERS 9:23, "At the command of the LORD they remained encamped, and at the command of the LORD they journeyed; they kept the charge of the LORD, at the command of the LORD by the hand of Moses."

PROVERBS 23:21, "For the drunkard and the glutton will come to poverty, and drowsiness will clothe a man with rags."

3. Themes

We should be grateful for what the Lord provides for us as He directs our steps each day.

4. Lesson introduction

To the teacher: This is a **combined lesson** on how God led the Israelites by the pillar of cloud and fire, and on how He fed them with quail when they complained about a lack of meat. You may find it difficult to cover all the material in depth. Choose what you believe will be most helpful to your class and emphasize that.

Have you ever played a game of "Red Light, Green Light"? Everyone lines up at the wall and then someone calls out "green light!" and everyone moves as fast as they can towards the person who is calling out. Then they call out "red light!" and everyone must freeze. Finally, the first person to reach the finish line (where the person calling out is standing) wins.

It was kind of like that for the nation of Israel. God would lead and direct them. When He said move, they moved; and when God said stop, they stopped. The Holy Spirit, who dwells inside of each believer in Jesus, directs our paths today through His Word. He also dwells in all of His people together, which we call the church. It's important that we learn to follow God's leading through His Word and through godly people He has put around us for our growth (like Christian parents, friends, pastors, etc.). **God directs our steps.**

5. Verse by Verse Commentary

NUMBERS 9:15-23

Can you imagine wandering in a big desert without a map or someone to direct you? Although Moses was their leader,

the children of Israel looked to God for their guidance. There was no detailed plan to follow; they simply had to trust in the Lord, and He led them in the cloud and the fire. The pillar of cloud and fire were one and the same (Exodus 14:24, 14:19; Numbers 9:21). This pillar that contained the very presence of the Lord would appear as a cloud during the day and as fire by night. The cloud during the day would shield them from the scorching sun (Isaiah 49:10). The fire by night would light their way in case they had to travel at night.

God not only leads us, He protects us. As David said of the Lord, the Great Shepherd, in Psalm 23: "I will fear no evil; for You are with me." When the cloud would move, the people would journey. When the cloud would stop and descend upon the Tabernacle, the dwelling place of God among His people, the people would stop and remain encamped until the cloud moved again. It did not matter if it was in the afternoon or in the middle of the night, they followed God; and it did not matter how long—it could be weeks or months or just hours—but, wherever the cloud and fire went, they went. Could it have been the same cloud that descended upon Mt. Sinai (Exodus 19:16-18)? Could the pillar of fire have been the same fire that spoke to Moses in the burning bush?

When we place our trust in Jesus to rescue us from our sins, He comes to live in us. He makes our hearts His home. It is awesome to realize that each Christian is His tabernacle, His temple (1 Corinthians 6:19), and that Christ dwells also in the church (1 Corinthians 3:16-17); we have His very presence living inside of us, guiding us, and directing us, keeping us from danger! [God directs our steps.](#)

Today, we do not see God's presence in the form of a cloud or a pillar of fire lighting our way. We follow the direction of His Word to receive the guidance we need for everything. The Holy Spirit who lives in believers will guide us in accordance with what He has written in the Bible. We also find guidance through the help of more mature Christian people whom God has placed around us, like Christian parents, Christian friends, church leaders, Sunday school and youth leaders, etc.

How do we learn to trust in the Lord with all our heart—to trust Him so completely that we like the children of Israel will be ready and willing to move whenever He calls us to? Our faith and trust will grow as we spend time in the Word, learning more about Him, becoming acquainted with His nature and character. Our trust will also grow as we experience His leading day by day, as we can look back and remember His faithfulness each step of the way. The more we follow Him, the more we trust Him.

NUMBERS 11:4-6

The children of Israel were not happy with what they had. They were a bit like us, sometimes, when we begin to complain about everything that we do not have, instead of being thankful for the blessings that we do have. They looked back at their old lives and remembered the delicious food in Egypt. They forgot what it was really like in Egypt. Remember--they had been in bondage to the Pharaoh and had wanted nothing more than to be freed. Forgetting all they should be thankful for, they began to complain against God.

Whenever we complain, we are complaining against God because He is the One who provides for us. It is really important for us to be thankful and remember all that God has done for us. God has delivered us from the slavery of the world and the bondage of sin. [We should be content with what the Lord provides for us.](#)

NUMBERS 11:7-9

Manna was an amazing gift of God. God even made the manna a sweet taste for the people to enjoy. God loves us and provides for us in amazing ways! Like manna, the things that God provides for us will be good for us. Let's remember that everything we have is a gift from God. "Every good and perfect gift is from above." James 1:17.

NUMBER 11:10-14

These people were being disobedient to God as they pouted over a lack of meat. Moses did not know what to do and was very troubled. However, Moses knew whom to turn to when he was in an impossible situation. Moses took this great burden to the Lord because he knew that God was totally in control of every situation.

We cannot do anything on our own. It is so important for us to cast all our cares whether small or great on the Lord. God loves us so much and wants to work all things out for good in our lives. We need to call on Him and let Him rule our lives just as Moses did.

NUMBERS 11:31-32

God graciously sent quail to these complaining people. He sent them a miraculous work. The children of Israel were so obsessed with their sin that they greedily gathered a tremendous amount of meat. Yet these people would never have

the capacity to enjoy it, because they had broken fellowship with God. [We should be happy with what the Lord provides for us.](#)

Without fellowship with God, life is futile and worthless. God gives us the capacity to enjoy life as we walk with Him and in the fullness of who He is. God is good and always wants what is best for us. We need to follow His way and not complain against Him, because He always blesses His children with the better way of life.

NUMBERS 11:33-34

These disobedient people were punished by God. These people had cried out against God and had complained against His provision for them. God hates sin and must punish sin because He is so righteous. The people suffered the consequences of their wickedness. The Bible tells us that while the greedy people were still chewing their food, a great plague broke out among them. Many must have gotten sick, and maybe many also died.

God loves us so much and is always faithful to do what is best for us. He knew quail was not best for the children of Israel, and He knows what is not best for us. We need to listen to God and follow His Word in order to be protected from evil. We need to be thankful for what God has given us because He loves us and always provides for His children. [We should be happy with what the Lord provides for us.](#)

6. Prayer:

Lead the children in a prayer of thanksgiving for God's provision for them and of commitment to follow the Lord's leading in our lives as He directs our steps by His Word and by His people. If there are any children who have not yet responded to the Gospel, give them opportunity.

7. Attention Grabbers

Follow the Cloud

Let the children make a "cloud map." You will need a few blue or black stamp pads, pencils with erasers and paper. Allow the children to make several thumbprints onto the paper to represent clouds. They could then stamp dotted lines between the clouds by using pencil erasers to stamp on the stamp pad and then onto the paper. Make an imaginary path the people followed while following the cloud. If you would like, you could also allow the children to decorate the picture with markers so that it would look like a desert scene.

Explain that God does not give us a map ahead of time just like the children of Israel did not have a map. We are led by God's Word and by the Holy Spirit. If He mapped everything out, we would often rush to the finish when He would rather teach us along the way. Though we do not know where God will lead us in advance, we can be sure God has it all mapped out in advance.

8. Activities:

My Own Story

Just like the children of Israel have a story of where they went and how long they stayed and what happened there, each of us has a story of where we have been. Sometimes, it is much easier to see the Lord's hand in our lives if we will put down in paper where He has taken us. Help your kids to begin this project, and they can complete it at home with their parents. Give each child a fairly large portion of a brown paper grocery bag, torn around the edges instead of cut. Show them how to crumple it up and gently open and crumple it again a few times. The more they do this, the more it will look like parchment or a piece of leather.

Let them start with their birth, drawing pictures to represent different times in their lives. Things that they may want to record could be moving to a new town or house, the birth of a sibling, a trip to the beach, a special Christmas, asking Jesus to save them, meeting a special friend, the day they broke an arm, etc. You could provide rubber stamps appropriate to the activity, or stickers or just markers. Ask them to look at their histories and think about how the Lord has worked in their lives.

ACTIVITY FOR YOUNGER CHILDREN

Match Game

Help the children trace their feet two or three times on different colors of construction paper. Then cut them out. Put all of them in a basket and mix them up. Then help the children take turns to match up the pairs of feet and colors. Explain to the children that [God directs our steps.](#)

Princess Prima Donna's Party

Princess Prima Donna is having a birthday and everyone in the class has been invited to her birthday party! Let kids write or draw a picture of a gift, anything they want, inside the fold-over presents to give to the princess. You may want to invite a guest to dress up as Princess Prima Donna and even have birthday cake or cupcakes. Otherwise, use a puppet or doll to represent the princess. Of course, she is a most ungrateful girl and throws away or tosses aside all the gifts, saying that she has seven of these and ten of those and did not want that thing anyway. This should remind us all that everything we have is a gift from God, and when we are unthankful and ungrateful, it is displeasing to God.

Thank You God!!!

During circle time, give each child several happy face stickers and ask each one to share in turn some things for which they are thankful. Direct them to put stickers on some of these things (clothes, shoes, hair, hands, teacher, parents, friends, etc.) If they take any stickers home, tell them to be sure to ask their parents before they apply any stickers.

9. Bible text (NIV):

Numbers 11:4 The rabble with them began to crave other food, and again the Israelites started wailing and said, "If only we had meat to eat! ⁵We remember the fish we ate in Egypt at no cost—also the cucumbers, melons, leeks, onions and garlic. ⁶But now we have lost our appetite; we never see anything but this manna!"

⁷The manna was like coriander seed and looked like resin. ⁸The people went around gathering it, and then ground it in a hand mill or crushed it in a mortar. They cooked it in a pot or made it into loaves. And it tasted like something made with olive oil. ⁹When the dew settled on the camp at night, the manna also came down.

¹⁰Moses heard the people of every family wailing at the entrance to their tents. The LORD became exceedingly angry, and Moses was troubled. ¹¹He asked the LORD, "Why have you brought this trouble on your servant? What have I done to displease you that you put the burden of all these people on me? ¹²Did I conceive all these people? Did I give them birth? Why do you tell me to carry them in my arms, as a nurse carries an infant, to the land you promised on oath to their ancestors? ¹³Where can I get meat for all these people? They keep wailing to me, 'Give us meat to eat!' ¹⁴I cannot carry all these people by myself; the burden is too heavy for me.

. . .

³¹Now a wind went out from the LORD and drove quail in from the sea. It scattered them up to two cubits^[a] deep all around the camp, as far as a day's walk in any direction. ³²All that day and night and all the next day the people went out and gathered quail. No one gathered less than ten homers.^[b] Then they spread them out all around the camp. ³³But while the meat was still between their teeth and before it could be consumed, the anger of the LORD burned against the people, and he struck them with a severe plague. ³⁴Therefore the place was named Kibroth Hattaavah,^[c] because there they buried the people who had craved other food.

Numbers 13:1-14:9

13:1 The LORD said to Moses, ²"Send some men to explore the land of Canaan, which I am giving to the Israelites. From each ancestral tribe send one of its leaders."The LORD said to Moses, ²"Send some men to explore the land of Canaan, which I am giving to the Israelites. From each ancestral tribe send one of its leaders."

³So at the LORD's command Moses sent them out from the Desert of Paran. All of them were leaders of the Israelites.

⁴These are their names:

from the tribe of Reuben, Shammua son of Zakkur;

⁵from the tribe of Simeon, Shaphat son of Hori;

⁶from the tribe of Judah, Caleb son of Jephunneh;

⁷from the tribe of Issachar, Igal son of Joseph;

⁸ from the tribe of Ephraim, Hoshea son of Nun;

⁹ from the tribe of Benjamin, Palti son of Raphu;

¹⁰ from the tribe of Zebulun, Gaddiel son of Sodi;

¹¹ from the tribe of Manasseh (a tribe of Joseph), Gaddi son of Susi;

¹² from the tribe of Dan, Ammiel son of Gemalli;

¹³ from the tribe of Asher, Sethur son of Michael;

¹⁴ from the tribe of Naphtali, Nahbi son of Vophsi;

¹⁵ from the tribe of Gad, Geuel son of Maki.

¹⁶ These are the names of the men Moses sent to explore the land. (Moses gave Hoshea son of Nun the name Joshua.)

¹⁷ When Moses sent them to explore Canaan, he said, "Go up through the Negev and on into the hill country. ¹⁸ See what the land is like and whether the people who live there are strong or weak, few or many. ¹⁹ What kind of land do they live in? Is it good or bad? What kind of towns do they live in? Are they unwalled or fortified? ²⁰ How is the soil? Is it fertile or poor? Are there trees in it or not? Do your best to bring back some of the fruit of the land." (It was the season for the first ripe grapes.)

²¹ So they went up and explored the land from the Desert of Zin as far as Rehob, toward Lebo Hamath. ²² They went up through the Negev and came to Hebron, where Ahiman, Sheshai and Talmai, the descendants of Anak, lived. (Hebron had been built seven years before Zoan in Egypt.) ²³ When they reached the Valley of Eshkol,^[a] they cut off a branch bearing a single cluster of grapes. Two of them carried it on a pole between them, along with some pomegranates and figs. ²⁴ That place was called the Valley of Eshkol because of the cluster of grapes the Israelites cut off there. ²⁵ At the end of forty days they returned from exploring the land.

Report on the Exploration

²⁶ They came back to Moses and Aaron and the whole Israelite community at Kadesh in the Desert of Paran. There they reported to them and to the whole assembly and showed them the fruit of the land. ²⁷ They gave Moses this account: "We went into the land to which you sent us, and it does flow with milk and honey! Here is its fruit. ²⁸ But the people who live there are powerful, and the cities are fortified and very large. We even saw descendants of Anak there. ²⁹ The Amalekites live in the Negev; the Hittites, Jebusites and Amorites live in the hill country; and the Canaanites live near the sea and along the Jordan."

³⁰ Then Caleb silenced the people before Moses and said, "We should go up and take possession of the land, for we can certainly do it."

³¹ But the men who had gone up with him said, "We can't attack those people; they are stronger than we are." ³² And they spread among the Israelites a bad report about the land they had explored. They said, "The land we explored devours those living in it. All the people we saw there are of great size. ³³ We saw the Nephilim there (the descendants of Anak come from the Nephilim). We seemed like grasshoppers in our own eyes, and we looked the same to them."

The People Rebel

¹⁴ That night all the members of the community raised their voices and wept aloud. ² All the Israelites grumbled against Moses and Aaron, and the whole assembly said to them, "If only we had died in Egypt! Or in this wilderness! ³ Why is the LORD bringing us to this land only to let us fall by the sword? Our wives and children will be taken as plunder. Wouldn't it be better for us to go back to Egypt?" ⁴ And they said to each other, "We should choose a leader and go back to Egypt."

⁵Then Moses and Aaron fell facedown in front of the whole Israelite assembly gathered there. ⁶Joshua son of Nun and Caleb son of Jephunneh, who were among those who had explored the land, tore their clothes ⁷and said to the entire Israelite assembly, “The land we passed through and explored is exceedingly good. ⁸If the LORD is pleased with us, he will lead us into that land, a land flowing with milk and honey, and will give it to us. ⁹Only do not rebel against the LORD. And do not be afraid of the people of the land, because we will devour them. Their protection is gone, but the LORD is with us. Do not be afraid of them.”