

# GOD'S DEFENSE OF HIS SERVANT: ISRAEL'S LEADER

**BIBLE TEXT** : Numbers 17:1-13

LESSON 106 **Junior Course**

**MEMORY VERSE:** "The Judgments of the LORD are true and righteous altogether" (Psalm 19:9).

## **BIBLE TEXT in King James Version**

### **Numbers 17:1-13 (KJV)**

<sup>1</sup> And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying,

<sup>2</sup> Speak unto the children of Israel, and take of every one of them a rod according to the house of *their* fathers, of all their princes according to the house of their fathers twelve rods: write thou every man's name upon his rod.

<sup>3</sup> And thou shalt write Aaron's name upon the rod of Levi: for one rod *shall be* for the head of the house of their fathers.

<sup>4</sup> And thou shalt lay them up in the tabernacle of the congregation before the testimony, where I will meet with you.

<sup>5</sup> And it shall come to pass, *that* the man's rod, whom I shall choose, shall blossom: and I will make to cease from me the murmurings of the children of Israel, whereby they murmur against you.

<sup>6</sup> And Moses spake unto the children of Israel, and every one of their princes gave him a rod apiece, for each prince one, according to their fathers' houses, *even* twelve rods: and the rod of Aaron *was* among their rods.

<sup>7</sup> And Moses laid up the rods before the LORD in the tabernacle of witness.

<sup>8</sup> And it came to pass, that on the morrow Moses went into the tabernacle of witness; and, behold, the rod of Aaron for the house of Levi was budded, and brought forth buds, and bloomed blossoms, and yielded almonds.

<sup>9</sup> And Moses brought out all the rods from before the LORD unto all the children of Israel: and they

## **BIBLE REFERENCES:**

### **NOTES:**

#### **Proof for the Honest Doubter**

God has ever been willing to prove Himself and His will to an honest doubter. In our past lesson we read that He had caused the earth to open and swallow up Korah, Dathan, and Abiram; and fire from God had destroyed the 250 princes who had not honored the authority of Moses and Aaron. A plague, too, had destroyed thousands of people who murmured against Israel's leaders. Still, God was ready to give another sign to prove the leadership of Moses and the authority of Aaron — a perpetual sign, a constant reminder.

God told Moses to have the head of each of the twelve tribes of Israel bring a rod, or leafless branch, to him; and Moses should flake the twelve rods into the Holy of Holies and put them before the Ark where the Ten Commandments were kept. It seems that Moses was allowed often to enter the Holy of Holies — although the high priest could go in only once a year — and here it was that God talked with Moses "from between the two cherubims" (Exodus 25:22; 30:6; Numbers 7:89).

Each rod was to have the name of the representative of the tribe upon it, so there would be no doubt about which rod belonged to whom. Upon the rod of the tribe of Levi would be Aaron's name.

#### **Blossoms in One Night**

Something unusual was going to happen to one of these rods. The bare branches all looked alike as Moses took them into the Tabernacle, but God had said that one rod would blossom that night. The people could look at the rod and see for themselves the name upon it. In that way they would know whom God honored as the high priest of Israel.

Willow switches grow more rapidly than shoots from almost any other tree, but even they never bud overnight, nor do they bear fruit at all. The rods used in this test were from almond trees, and God promised they would not only bud but would also bear blossoms.

#### **Big Trouble from Little Criticism**

One would think that surely the people of Israel would stop murmuring against their leaders if the people were firmly convinced of the leaders' authority. It was for Israel's own good that God wanted them to be content, because it always led to serious trouble when they murmured.

Just a little criticism about the way the work of the Lord is carried on, or just a little faultfinding with his neighbor, can bring a person into deep trouble. The little things grow. The little unjust criticism may grow into a lack of confidence in his leader; and when confidence is gone, there *is* nothing to hold one to the truth. That person will soon find that the love of God is gone from his heart; and as he looks about him it will seem that he can trust no one. The trouble is in his own heart, just as *Jesus* described it by the beam and the mote. "And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye?" (Matthew

looked, and took every man his rod.

<sup>10</sup> And the LORD said unto Moses, Bring Aaron's rod again before the testimony, to be kept for a token against the rebels; and thou shalt quite take away their murmurings from me, that they die not.

<sup>11</sup> And Moses did so: as the LORD commanded him, so did he.

<sup>12</sup> And the children of Israel spake unto Moses, saying, Behold, we die, we perish, we all perish.

<sup>13</sup> Whosoever cometh any thing near unto the tabernacle of the LORD shall die: shall we be consumed with dying?

7:3). The mote was a tiny little thing in the other person's eye, but the beam in his own eye was so great that it was a wonder he could *see* anything. When we pray through something that we think is wrong in the other person, it is surprising how good he looks to us; and contrariwise, when we let ourselves get to a low spiritual ebb we will find that we are thinking there is something wrong with almost everyone else.

### **Fruit**

**When Moses went into the Holiest of All the next morning to get the rods, all the sticks were dry and bare except the one with the name of Aaron upon it.** It had not only become green and had budded, **but had** actually borne almonds. In one night!

When all Israel came to see what had happened to the rods, there were the eleven dry branches with the names of the representatives of the tribes of Reuben, Simeon, Judah, **Issachar**, Zebulun, Joseph, Benjamin, Dan, Asher, Gad, and Naphtali written upon them. They looked just the same as when Moses had taken them into the Tabernacle. But how beautiful was Aaron's rod! It had green buds and leaves, pale pink blossoms, and the almonds with their soft fuzzy coverings. They had come in the night, and were glowing in their beauty as a message from God that Aaron was His special servant. Aarons' rod was a fruit-bearing branch.

### **Known by Fruit**

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus explained how a true Christian may be recognized. He said, "Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them" (Matthew 7:20). What do you suppose their fruits would be? The Apostle Paul tells us: "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance" (Galatians 5:22, 23). Think what that means in a person's life. The child of God who **is** bearing fruit has the love of God in his heart that makes him love his neighbor as much as himself. Jesus said he would even love his enemies. There is joy in his heart even in trial. He is not quarrelsome, with a desire to have his own way; he has long patience when things go wrong; he is gentle and will not hurt anyone, not even one's feelings, if he can help it; he is humble and does not try to put himself forward to show people how well he can do things. That is the person who is bearing the fruit of Christian living. That person is beautiful in the sight of the Lord and in the sight of His people, too, just as Aaron's rod was beautiful.

The love of God in our lives is more important than the works we may do, even though we think we are doing work for the Lord. Paul tells us that our faith might be great enough to move mountains, but if the love of God in our heart has grown cold, it will profit us nothing. We might deny ourselves to help the poor; but if we do not have that born-again experience of justification, we do not please Jesus (I Corinthians 13). When we are truly saved, and have that love in our hearts, the works we do will show the beauties of His holiness.

### **More Fruit**

When we are first saved we may not bear much fruit of the Spirit, but there will be some. Then, as we continue to seek the Lord and consecrate our heart and life to Him, He will give us more fruit. When Paul wrote to the Philippians, he said, "And this I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment; that ye may approve things that are excellent; that ye may be sincere and without offence till the day of Christ; being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which

are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of **God"** (**Philippians 1:9-11**). As our love for God grows, so do the fruits of righteousness, until we shall be filled.

### **Aaron's Righteousness Proved**

Aaron was God's faithful servant, and the fruit on his rod proved it. Aaron's rod was placed in the Ark with the Ten Commandments as "a token against the rebels." God said, "Thou shalt quite take away their murmurings from me, that they die not."

The people were frightened because they were guilty of murmuring against God and His anointed. Because of the sin in their hearts they wanted to get away from the Tabernacle where God was. God does want His people to fear lest they displease Him, but that is not a fear that will cause them to run from Him. It will just make us very careful to do the things that please Him so we can draw closer to Him. For such people God has a great reward: "Oh how great is thy goodness, which thou hast laid up for them that fear thee; which thou hast wrought for them that trust in thee before the sons of men!" (Psalm 31:19).

### **QUESTIONS**

- 1 What was the point in question in this lesson that God needed to settle?
- 2 How did God tell Moses to settle it?
- 3 How many rods were there? And to whom did they belong?
- 4 Upon which rod was Aaron's name?
- 5 How did the rods differ the next morning?
- 6 What did Aaron's rod prove?
- 7 What are the fruits of the Spirit?