

## Complaints (Chapter 11)

### Complaints that Draw Fire from the Lord (11:1-3)

Hopes were high when the Israelites left Mt. Sinai, but it didn't take them long before they started complaining about their situation. In as little as three days time, they were already angry at God. The Lord took the opportunity to remind them how serious their sins of complaining were. He sent fire that burned the outskirts of the camp. We have no indication that anyone died because of this fire, but it was to send a message to them that they needed to show respect to the Lord their God.

- ! Notice how the mood of the people changes. In chapter ten they were doing everything the Lord told them to do. Now all of a sudden that is all gone. Does it remind you of how quickly we turn against God, especially when things don't go our way?
- ! The Israelites asked Moses to stop the fire, he went to the Lord on their behalf. This is another example of how Moses acted as a *mediator* between God and the people. He was a picture of Jesus Christ, the great Mediator who was to come.
- ! Sometimes God finds it necessary to discipline His children as He did when He sent fire to the Israelite camp. What is the difference between *punishment* and *discipline*? See Pr 3:11-12; Heb 12:5-12.

### Complaints About Food (11:4-9)

God had blessed the Israelites with manna from heaven each day. They always had enough to eat. The “rabble” started this complaint– that is, those who were non-Jews but traveling with the group. Israel, however, joined in the complaints too. Notice how they actually imply that they would rather be back in slavery in Egypt because they got better food.

- ! Why do you think complaining makes God so angry? Why is complaining and discontent so dangerous to our spiritual health? See Lk 3:14; Heb 13:5.
- ! What is the “secret” to being content? See Phil 4:11-12.

## Moses Complains (11:10-15)

Finally Moses has had enough. He too begins to complain to God because he doesn't want to lead these useless people anymore. 'Did I conceive all these people? . . . Why do you tell me to carry them in my arms, as a nurse carries an infant . . .' He complains that the burden is too heavy for him even though the Lord has already promised to be with him and to be his God while he leads these people.

- ! At the end of Moses' prayer he says, 'If I have found favor in your eyes . . .' What does this suggest about Moses' prayer? On what basis is he laying his troubles before God?

## God Responds to the Complaints (11:16-29)

'You want meat? I'll give you meat!' God says. 'I'll give you so much that you'll end up disliking that too.' Moses is a little struck by the Lord's response. He wonders if God will use the flocks and herds that the Israelites brought out of Egypt. God tells him that He doesn't need to use that meat, He is powerful enough to provide for the people from another source.

At this point, God also realized that Moses would need some more help among these people. He told Moses to choose seventy elders in Israel and have them come before the Tent of Meeting. These elders would be filled with the Spirit and help Moses carry out his tasks. This was God's response to Moses' complaint that he could not bear the burdens that had been given to him with regard to leading the people.

- ! 'Is the Lord's arm too short?' God says is response to the people's complaints. They thought it was too short to reach out and help them. The Lord proves that their thoughts were foolish. He could do anything. He could take care of them in any way that was necessary. Does God sometimes have to remind us that His arm is not too short?

- ! Notice how God answered the concerns of Moses and the concerns of the people.

## Quail (11:31-35)

Here comes the meat! Read v31 and just think about how much quail God provided. Unfortunately, the people immediately abused the blessing they had been given. There was so much that *greed* took over in their hearts. No one gathered less than 60 bushels of quail. Their greed resulted in a plague that God sent throughout the camp.

- ! This chapter ends on a sad note. The people get what they want and then they abuse it. What a common problem within our human natures.
- ! But there is some comfort to be found in this chapter. Consider the *mercy* of God! The Israelites were *so* disrespectful to the Lord, yet He provided for their needs anyway. Think of how often we have shown disrespect to our God– and yet He sent His Son Jesus to take away our sins.