

VOICES IN THE WILDERNESS

Numbers 13-14
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- A. **CONTEXTUAL SETTING:** Israel has been freed from Egyptian bondage. During the process, God made a mockery of the so-called gods of the Egyptians via mighty, majestic, miracles. The newly freed nation is at the threshold of the land promised to Abraham and his seed (Gen.15). Numbers 12:16 reveals that they pitched their tents in the wilderness of Paran. Jehovah instructed twelve leaders from their respective tribes to go survey the land. Upon their return, because they lacked the necessary faith, the majority of the surveyors voiced opposition to the new challenge. The effect of their evil assessment was disastrous.
- B. **FOCAL POINT #1:** For a span of 13 months during 1976-1977 the city of New York was gripped with fear. Reason: There was a serial killer on the loose who identified himself as the “Son of Sam.” Tragically, six people lost their lives and other gunshot and stabbing victims were permanently scarred for life as a direct result of David Berkowitz’s madness. On May 8, 1978 Berkowitz confessed his crimes and received a 365-year prison sentence. Initially Berkowitz claimed that he had received his orders from near neighbor Sam Carr who had supposedly got his orders from his “demon possessed” black Labrador retriever Harvey. Yes, Harvey the “demon dog” was the leader of this murderous rampage. After his conviction, Berkowitz admitted that the “demon dog” references were a hoax. Today, there are countless individuals when caught for committing heinous crimes who claim “**demonic or strange voices**” ordered their ill behavior. A small number of these individuals may be legitimate cases of mental instability; however, the majority is attempting to avoid justice. **Likewise, today there are many who are either in jail or in the grave or have ruined their lives because they were influenced by voices of evil.**
- C. **FACTS TO CONSIDER#1:** (A) God knew us before we knew ourselves (Jer.1:4-5); (B) God knows everything about us (Psm.139); (C) God knows our capabilities and shortcomings (1 Cor.10:13). **KEY: He would never ask us to do anything beyond our abilities.**
- D. **FACTS TO CONSIDER #2:** (1) We humans are endowed with the power of choice (Josh.24:15). (2) When we make decisions, we are responsible for our decisions (2 Cor.5:10). **VITAL:** Sometimes the counsel or voices of others, according to Psalm 1 and Proverbs 1, influences our decisions. The counsel or advice we receive may or may not help us.
- E. **FACTS TO CONSIDER #3:** The Bible reveals different levels or types of faith: (1) Great (Matt. 8:10); (2) little (Matt.8:26); (3) “wavering” (Jms.1:5-8); (4) dead (Jms.2:14-26). **KEY: Our level of faith will either help or hurt us when it comes to making decisions.**
- F. The intent of this lesson is to reveal that there is the voice that must always be heeded, the voices that are helpful, and, the voices that are harmful.

BODY:

I. THE VOICE THAT MUST ALWAYS BE HEEDED

- A. The voice of Divine authority (vv.1-2); “And the LORD spoke” should remind us to give our undivided attention to God’s Word.
- B. The voice of Divine anger (14:11-12, 26-27); God gets irritated with our frequent complaining about how “unfair” we have it in life (1 Cor.10:9-11).
- C. The voice of Divine pardon (14:20); when we comply with His statutes, God mercifully pardons us (Heb.8:12; 1 John 1:8-10).
- D. The voice of Divine punishment and justice (14:28-37); we must never forget that there are consequences to our words and actions.

II. THE VOICES THAT ARE HELPFUL

- A. The voice of obedience (vv.3, 17-20); Moses gave the spies the exact instructions he received from Jehovah. Faithful teachers of the Book will always follow the Pattern of God (Rom.6:17-18).
- B. The voice of exhortation (v.20); “And be ye of good courage” was the message of edification.
- C. The voice of victory (v.30); “Let us go up at once” is inspiring when we engage in the Lord’s work.
- D. The voice of reassurance (14:6-8); “If the LORD delight in us” reminds us of God’s providential care in our behalf.
- E. The voice of reason or rebuke (14:9); “Only rebel not ye against the LORD” should encourage the guilty or doubter to rethink his ways. Those who sincerely love us will correct us (Gal.6:1-2).
- F. The voice of intercession (14:13-19); when a brother or sister prays to God in our behalf, we may, and on many occasions do, experience additional blessings (1Tim.2:1).

III. THE VOICES THAT ARE HARMFUL

- A. The voice of doubt (vv.28-29); some only see the proverbial giants and fortified walls when confronted with a challenge.
- B. The voice of defeat (v.31, 33); “We be not able to go up against the people; for they are stronger than we” and “We were in our own sight as grasshoppers” excludes the help of God.
- C. The voice of doom and gloom (14:1); sometimes, tears streaming down one’s cheeks are for the wrong reason. “All is lost” was the first verse of the “blues song” they sang that night.
- D. The voice of destructive criticism (14:2); “Moses and Aaron are to be blamed” was the second verse.
- E. The voice of dishonest accusations (14:3); “God is not our protector” was the third verse of this catastrophic hymn.
- F. The voice of digression (14:4); digression was the final stanza these unfaithful souls sang.
- G. The voice of disapproved timing (14:39-45); verse 40 reveals one of the greatest failures of man—willfully ignoring God’s timetable for the work He has ordained. “We will follow the Lord according to our schedule,” some say by their actions.
- H. **FOCAL POINT#2:** A reputable stockbroker will inform a potential investor about the risks associated with the stock market. Prospective investors are strongly encouraged to invest for an extended period of time. Reason: The stock market is as turbulent a ride one possibly can experience. Because of the volatile nature of the market, many investors worry frequently over losing their investment. A great deal of movement throughout the investment community is based on **speculation and/or rumors**. Financial prognosticators, analysts, and advisors often attempt to predict the future sales and earnings of varied companies. What **they say** can result in frenzied activity among shareholders. Countless fortunes or potential earnings have been either forfeited or lost because shareholders listened to the **wrong voices**. **VITAL:** What happens to the soul of the man who follows the wrong voices (Matt.7:13-23)?
- I. **FOCAL POINT #3:** Some years past, I received a call from a young preacher about a very heated argument that occurred during one of his Bible classes. A sister from Miami, Florida, who was visiting the former Plant Street congregation vowed never to visit congregation ever again. Reason: She strongly disagreed with the young preacher’s remarks, which were accurate concerning which day was the first day of the week. He taught that Sunday is the first day of the week. She argued that Monday is the first day of week. I attempted to show her from the Bible the truth about the matter; sadly, she rejected all the evidence presented. We two preachers were called false teachers. Her steadfast argument was: “**My mother**—who was by no means a Bible scholar, nor a Christian--said that Monday was the first day of the week and that settles it.”

CONCLUSION

1. What happened to David when he ignored the voice of discretion or warning concerning Bathsheba (2 Sam.11:3)?
2. What could have been the avoided if Rehoboam had heeded the wise voices he encountered (1 Kng.12:1-15)?
3. What would have happened to Naaman had he ignored the voices of prudence (2 Kng.5)?
4. What was the tragic outcome of the “man of God” or the young prophet when listened to a voice other than the Lord’s (1 Kng.13)?
5. Concerning our souls’ destiny: “Wherefore as the Holy Ghost saith, Today if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts, as in the provocation, in the day of temptation in the wilderness...” (Heb.3:7-12). See also Exodus 17:1-7 and Psalm 95:7-11.

PERSONAL APPLICATION

As we journey toward our promised home, Heaven, we must continue to give our undivided attention and unswerving loyalty to God’s Word. Along this journey we are going to experience many challenges. With some of these challenges we will have need of counsel. If we give heed to the wrong type of counsel, conjoined with an insufficient level of faith, doom and defeat will surely be our end.

PERSONAL INVITATION

Jesus is the voice of compassion, concern, and calm: “Come unto to m, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light” (Matt.11:28-30). His voice is an inviting voice. His voice is a voice of promise; His voice is the voice of truth. Have you accepted His invitation?