

THE GREAT MARCH TO THE PROMISED LAND: A PICTURE OF THE BELIEVER FINALLY BEGINNING HIS MARCH TO THE PROMISED LAND OF HEAVEN NUMBERS 10:11–36

Introduction: The Destiny of Man

What is the destiny of man? More technological and scientific and medical advances? No doubt, this will be true and will come to pass. Will there be pure air and pure water to drink? Will there be plenty of food for all the people of the earth? Some authorities say this is questionable. Pollution could contaminate the water we drink and the air we breathe. Greed and selfishness and war could, as they always have, affect the amount of food we have and whether or not everyone in the world will have enough to eat. Will there be peace and security in the world? Will lawlessness and violence continue to increase throughout the world? Will terrorist acts increase or decrease?

What is the destiny of man, of the world, out in the future? Is man's destiny bleak and dismal or hopeful? Or is it both? No person has the answer about the future, not totally. Even the most intelligent among us can only speculate and guess at what will happen. This is particularly true when the long-range future is evaluated. However, there is one destiny that awaits every human being, one terrible event that will happen to every one of us: death. It is the destiny of every man to die and then to face the judgment of God. But this is not the final word, thankfully. God declares a wonderful truth: there is the promised land of heaven lying out in the future. Moreover, every human being can enter the promised land and live eternally in God's presence. God declares that He is going to destroy the present heavens and earth, that all the elements are going to melt with fervent heat (2 Pet 3:10-13). Moreover, God declares that He is going to make a new heavens and earth and that every genuine believer is going to be a citizen of that new world. This is the great hope and expectation of the promised land of heaven. When God speaks of heaven, He is talking about a new heavens and earth — a new world.

The point is this: God longs for every human being to live with Him in the promised land of heaven. But to do this a person has to approach God through the sacrifice of His Son, to approach Him for the atonement (reconciliation with God) and for forgiveness. God longs for every human being to join believers in their march to the promised land of heaven. God wants to guide and help every human being as he marches through this life. God wants to give triumph and victory over all the pitfalls and enemies of this life. But He can help only those who will let Him help, only those who will come to Him through Christ, and join in the great march to the promised land of heaven. This is the subject of this great passage of Scripture: *The Great March to the Promised Land Finally Begins: A Picture of the Believer Finally Beginning His March to the Promised Land of Heaven, Numbers 10:11-36.*

- I. The great day to begin the march arrived: a picture of great hope for the promised land (vv. 11-12).
- II. The great army of God's people marched forth division by division — as commanded: a picture of obeying God as one marches to the promised land (vv. 13-28).
- III. The appeal of Moses to his brother-in-law to join the march to the promised land: a picture of reaching out to family members to follow after the promised land of God, the promise of heaven (vv. 29-32).
- IV. The faithfulness of God in leading His people (vv. 33-34).
- V. The battle cry — the great expectation and cry of Moses: victory and rest (vv. 35-36).

I. *Numbers 10:11–12 The Great Day to Begin the March to the Promised Land*

The great day to begin the march to the promised land finally arrived. At last, God's people were to move out and begin their triumphant journey to the promised land. This was a day for which the Israelites had longed with great expectation and hope, a day that would be inscribed on their minds forever. For believers of every generation, this is a picture of great expectation and hope for the promised land, the great expectation and hope of living forever with God.

1. Note the date of departure for the promised land: the cloud lifted on the 20th day of the 2nd month. This means that they had spent about 11 months at Mt. Sinai. This was a day that would never be forgotten by God's people, the day when the cloud of His presence indicated that their march to the promised land was now to begin.
2. Note the first part of the journey: they travelled from place to place until they reached the Desert of Paran (v. 12). The Israelites made at least three stops on this leg of their journey: Taberah (11:3), Kibroth Hattaavah (11:35), and Hazeroth (11:35).

Thought 1. The Israelites had a great hope for the promised land, a great expectation of reaching the promised land of God. This is a great lesson for believers of all generations. We are to hold a great expectation and hope for the promised land of heaven, for living forever in the presence of God. With great expectation and hope, we are to look for the return of our Lord Jesus Christ.

John 14:2-3 *“In my Father's house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am.”*

Acts 7:55-56 *But Stephen, full of the Holy Spirit, looked up to heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God. “Look,” he said, “I see heaven open and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God.”*

2 Cor 5:1 *Now we know that if the earthly tent we live in is destroyed, we have a building from God, an eternal house in heaven, not built by human hands.*

Phil 3:20-21 *But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Saviour from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body.*

Titus 2:12-13 *It teaches us to say “No” to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age, while we wait for the blessed hope — the glorious appearing of our great God and Saviour, Jesus Christ.*

Heb 11:8-10 *By faith Abraham, when called to go to a place he would later receive as his inheritance, obeyed and went, even though he did not know where he was going. By faith he made his home in the promised land like a stranger in a foreign country; he lived in tents, as did Isaac and Jacob, who were heirs with him of the same promise. For he was looking forward to the city with foundations, whose architect and builder is God.*

Heb 11:13-14 *All these people were still living by faith when they died. They did not receive the things promised; they only saw them and welcomed them from a distance. And they admitted that they were aliens and strangers on earth. People who say such things show that they are looking for a country of their own. If they had been thinking of the country they had left, they would have had opportunity to return. Instead, they were longing for a better country — a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared a city for them.*

1 Pet 1:3-4 *Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. And into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade — kept in heaven for you.*

2 Pet 3:13-14 *But in keeping with his promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, where righteousness dwells. So then, dear friends, since you are looking forward to this, make every effort to be found spotless, blameless and at peace with him.*

II. Numbers 10:13–28 The Great Army of God’s People Marched Forth: A Picture of Obeying God

The great army of God’s people marched forth division by division — as commanded by God. The cloud hovering above the Tabernacle that symbolized God’s presence had moved. He was now ready to guide His people to the promised land. The servant of God, Moses, had issued orders. The trumpets had sounded. The people had broken camp and taken their positions in their various divisions, tribe by tribe. Then, all of a sudden, the trumpets blasted forth the long-awaited sound for the march to begin. And the people set out. The journey had at long last begun. (See note, *Picture of the Marching Order of the Tribes*, Num 2:2-33.) The outline and Scripture show the marching order of the movement — division by division, tribe by tribe.

Thought 1. The lesson in this note is obedience to God. Verse 13 makes this clear. When God commanded the people to break camp and set out for the promised land, they immediately obeyed. So it must be with us. As we march to the promised land of God, we must obey God. The only way we can conquer the pitfalls and enemies of this life is to obey God, to do exactly as He says. He alone knows the way to bypass the pitfalls and the high ground that must be taken to conquer the enemies of this life. God must be obeyed.

Mat 7:21 “Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven.”

John 15:10 “If you obey my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have obeyed my Father’s commands and remain in his love.”

John 15:14 “You are my friends, if you do what I command.”

James 1:25 But the man who looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom, and continues to do this, not forgetting what he has heard, but doing it — he will be blessed in what he does.

Rev 22:14 Blessed are those who wash their robes, that they may have the right to the tree of life and may go through the gates into the city.

Exo 19:5 Now if you obey me fully and keep my covenant, then out of all nations you will be my treasured possession. Although the whole earth is mine.

Deut 5:29 Oh, that their hearts would be inclined to fear me and keep all my commands always, so that it might go well with them and their children forever!

Deut 26:16 The Lord your God commands you this day to follow these decrees and laws; carefully observe them with all your heart and with all your soul.

Josh 1:8 Do not let this Book of the Law depart from your mouth; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful.

III. Numbers 10:29–32 Invitation to Family Members to Join the March

Note that Moses appealed to his brother-in-law to join the march to the promised land.

This is a picture of reaching out to family members to seek the promised land of God, the promise of heaven. The name of the brother-in-law was Hobab, the son of Reuel or Jethro the Midianite, Moses’ father-in-law (v. 29). Moses had married Reuel’s or Jethro’s daughter. No doubt, Moses did just what any of us would do: used his personal relationship to appeal to Hobab. But notice the other appeal he used: the promised land of God itself. Moses promised his brother-in-law an inheritance in the land and the blessings of God if he would join them in the march to the promised land (v. 29).

1. The brother-in-law rejected the appeal (v. 30). His old life appealed to him too much. Joining the march to the promised land meant leaving the pleasures, provisions, joy

and bright lights of the world he had known. He would need to undergo a radical change of life. He would need to leave behind his old family and become a part of a new family. He would have to turn away from his religion and follow the Lord God Almighty who claimed to be the only living and true God (Jehovah, Yahweh). To his mind, this was just too much to give up.

2. Note the second appeal of Moses (vv. 31-32). He challenged his brother-in-law to serve as a guide to the people of God. With strong urging, Moses challenged him to be the “eyes” for the people of God. Hobab was a Midianite from a tribe of people who lived out in the desert or wilderness. His knowledge and ability as a guide would make a significant contribution to the people of God as they marched in the wilderness. To some degree, he would know where to find water and other supplies and provisions. He might also be able to give some insight about the places to which God would be leading them and the others places they would pass through on their journey.

Note also that Moses repeated his promise to share the good things of the Lord with him: an inheritance in the promised land as well as the blessings of God (v. 32). Although it is not mentioned here, Hobab did accept the appeal of Moses. He did accept the challenge to follow God and to serve as a guide for the people of God (Jud 1:16).

Thought 1. The lesson is clear: we must reach out to our family members. We must challenge them to join the march to the promised land of God, the promise of heaven. We must do all we can to bear strong witness and testimony to the saving grace of the Lord Jesus Christ. We must challenge them to approach God through the sacrifice of Christ, asking God for the atonement (reconciliation) and for forgiveness of sin. We must reach our family members for Christ. They are doomed to die in this world and be separated forever from God if we fail to reach them. This lays a heavy burden upon us, the burden to do everything we can to reach them, a burden that Moses himself must have felt for his brother-in-law. Note that Moses made two appeals, two direct attempts back-to-back to reach his brother-in-law. We, too, must make concentrated, focused efforts to reach our family for Christ.

Mark 5:19 *Jesus did not let him, but said, “Go home to your family and tell them how much the Lord has done for you, and how he has had mercy on you.”*

Acts 1:8 *“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”*

Acts 4:20 *For we cannot help speaking about what we have seen and heard.*

Eph 6:4 *Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord.*

2 Tim 1:5 *I have been reminded of your sincere faith, which first lived in your grandmother Lois and in your mother Eunice and, I am persuaded, now lives in you also.*

2 Tim 3:15 *And how from infancy you have known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.*

Titus 2:4 *Then they can train the younger women to love their husbands and children, to be self-controlled and pure.*

1 Pet 3:15 *But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect.*

Deut 6:6-9 *These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. Write them on the door-frames of your houses and on your gates.*

Psa 66:16 *Come and listen, all you who fear God; let me tell you what he has done for me.*

Prov 22:6 *Train a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not turn from it.*

IV. Numbers 10:33–34 The Faithfulness of God

The faithfulness of God in leading His people is striking.

1. The first part of the journey lasted three days (v. 33). This was the first organized march of God's people. When they first fled from the slavery of Egypt to Mt. Sinai, they were just a misplaced group of people who had been living as slaves for four hundred years. Then, all of a sudden, they were freed; but they were disorganized, disorderly, and fleeing for their lives from the pursuing Egyptian army. Now they were organized into a great army of military divisions, and they had been marching for three days. However, keep in mind that this was the first organized march, their very first experience in marching in military divisions.
2. The Ark of the Covenant was carried out front, ahead of all the tribes. Note that the Tabernacle and the holy furnishings within the Tabernacle were carried in the midst of the tribes as they marched, not out front (vv. 17, 21). However, it is stated that the Ark of the Covenant "went before them." This is interpreted differently by various commentators. Some commentators feel that the words "before them" mean "in their presence." For example, there are passages where God instructs Joshua or Moses to "go before" the people, but the meaning is clearly for them to operate from the midst of the people. They only "go before" in the sense of being visible and leading the people from "the midst of the people." Whatever the case, the Ark of the Covenant — the symbol of God's very presence, the very throne of God itself — went before the people, giving them great assurance and courage to march forward triumphantly.

3. However, the assurance and courage of the people did not come just from the Ark of the Covenant. The fiery cloud of God's holy presence led the people. The cloud of God's Shekinah Glory hovered above the people throughout the day as they marched to the promised land. God was faithful in leading His people step by step, day by day.

Thought 1. God is faithful in leading and guiding us step by step and day by day. Moreover, God promises to be faithful through the whole journey until we reach that glorious destination, the promised land of heaven itself.

(1) God is faithful. He keeps His Word and promises.

Luke 21:33 "Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away."

John 16:13 "But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come."

1 Cor 1:9 God, who has called you into fellowship with his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, is faithful.

Heb 6:17-20 Because God wanted to make the unchanging nature of his purpose very clear to the heirs of what was promised, he confirmed it with an oath. God did this so that, by two unchangeable things in which it is impossible for God to lie, we who have fled to take hold of the hope offered to us may be greatly encouraged.

Heb 6:19-20 We have this hope as an anchor for the soul, firm and secure. It enters the inner sanctuary behind the curtain, where Jesus, who went before us, has entered on our behalf. He has become a high priest forever, in the order of Melchizedek.

Deut 7:9 Know therefore that the Lord your God is God; he is the faithful God, keeping his covenant of love to a thousand generations of those who love him and keep his commands.

1 Kng 8:56 Praise be to the Lord, who has given rest to his people Israel just as he promised. Not one word has failed of all the good promises he gave through his servant Moses.

Psa 36:5 "Your love, Lord, reaches to the heavens, your faithfulness to the skies."

Psa 89:1 "I will sing of the Lord's great love forever: with my mouth I will make your faithfulness known through all generations."

Isa 30:21 Whether you turn to the right or to the left, your ears will hear a voice behind you, saying, "This is the way; walk in it."

Isa 42:16 I will lead the blind by ways they have not known, along unfamiliar paths I will guide them; I will turn the darkness into light before them and make the rough places smooth. These are the things I will do; I will not forsake them.

Ezek 12:25 But I the Lord will speak what I will, and it shall be fulfilled without delay.

(2) God guides us step by step until we reach the promised land of heaven.

Luke 1:79 “To shine on those living in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the path of peace.”

John 16:13 “But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come.”

Psa 48:14 For this God is our God for ever and ever; he will be our guide even to the end.

Psa 73:24 You guide me with your counsel, and afterward you will take me into glory.

Isa 30:21 Whether you turn to the right or to the left, your ears will hear a voice behind you, saying, “This is the way; walk in it.”

Isa 42:16 I will lead the blind by ways they have not known, along unfamiliar paths I will guide them; I will turn the darkness into light before them and make the rough places smooth. These are the things I will do; I will not forsake them.

V. *Numbers 10:35–36 The Battle Cry of Moses — Assurance of Victory and Rest*

The battle cry — the great expectation and cry of Moses — was for victory and rest.

1. This must have been a dramatic scene: there was Moses standing before the Ark of God’s throne with all the tribes surrounding the Tabernacle. They were all ready to begin their march. Then it happened: Moses shouted out the great battle cry, “Rise up O Lord! Scatter your enemies! Make your foes flee before you!” (a paraphrased translation). The great battle cry was a direct appeal to God: a cry for the protection and the security of God Himself. It was declaring that God’s people were totally dependent upon the strength and power of God to deliver them, to give them the triumphant victory over their enemies. They were marching in unknown terrain, a wilderness and a desert they knew absolutely nothing about. Enemies could be lurking any place, ready to launch a surprise attack at any time. They desperately needed the presence, guidance and protection of God. Therefore, before Moses dared lead the people forward, he shouted out the great battle cry. God must give His people a triumphant victory as they confronted the enemies on their way to the promised land.
2. When the Ark was set down for the evening or during the day for the people to rest, Moses again shouted out: “Return, O Lord, to the many thousands, the countless thousands of Israel.” He was crying for God to come among His people and give them rest throughout the night, both physical and spiritual rest. They needed to be refreshed. Their strength needed to be renewed so they could face tomorrow as they continued their march to the promised land of God.

Thought 1. God promises His people both victory and rest.

(1) God promises His people victory as they march to the promised land. He assures us: we will be triumphant, victorious over all the pitfalls and enemies of this life.

Rom 8:35, 37-39 *Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

1 Cor 10:13 *No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it.*

2 Cor 2:14 *But thanks be to God, who always leads us in triumphal procession in Christ and through us spreads everywhere the fragrance of the knowledge of him.*

2 Cor 10:3-4 *For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds.*

Eph 6:13 *Therefore put on the full armour of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand.*

2 Pet 2:9 *If this is so, then the Lord knows how to rescue godly men from trials and to hold the unrighteous for the day of judgment, while continuing their punishment.*

1 John 5:4-5 *For everyone born of God overcomes the world. This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith. Who is it that overcomes the world? Only he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God.*

Exo 14:14 *“The Lord will fight for you; you need only to be still.”*

Exo 23:27 *“I will send my terror ahead of you and throw into confusion every nation you encounter. I will make all your enemies turn their backs and run.*

Psa 44:5 *Through you we push back our enemies; through your name we trample our foes.*

(2) God promises His people rest, both physical and spiritual rest. God promises a peaceful rest and a restful peace for the souls of His dear people as they march to the promised land.

Mat 11:28-29 *“Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.”*

John 14:27 *“Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.”*

John 16:33 *“I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.”*

Rom 8:6 *The mind of sinful man is death, but the mind controlled by the Spirit is life and peace.*

Phil 4:6-7 *Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.*

Phil 4:9 *Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me — put it into practice. And the God of peace will be with you.*

Heb 4:3 *Now we who have believed enter that rest, just as God has said, “So I declared on oath in my anger, ‘They shall never enter my rest.’” And yet his work has been finished since the creation of the world.*

Exo 33:14 *The Lord replied, “My presence will go with you, and I will give you rest.”*

Psa 116:7 *Be at rest once more, O my soul, for the Lord has been good to you.*

Psa 4:8 *In peace I will lie down and sleep, for you alone, Lord, make me dwell in safety.*

Psa 29:11 *The Lord gives strength to his people; the Lord blesses his people with peace.*

Psa 23:1-6 *The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not be in want. He makes me lie down in green pastures, he leads me beside quiet waters, he restores my soul. He guides me in paths of righteousness for his name’s sake. Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me. You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies. You anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows. Surely goodness and love will follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever.*

Isa 14:3 *On the day the Lord gives you relief from suffering and turmoil and from the harsh labour forced on you.*

Isa 26:3 *You will keep in perfect peace him whose mind is steadfast, because he trusts in you.*

Isa 30:15 *This is what the Sovereign Lord, the Holy One of Israel, says: “In repentance and rest is your salvation, in quietness and trust is your strength, but you would have none of it.” ■*