

IT IS SETTLED!

"Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man" (Ecclesiastes 12:13b)

By Howell Lasseter

Departures: Moses

We've been considering departures from God's plan for the New Testament church. Perhaps there are readers who question the importance of such a study. Does it really make any difference if man chooses to change God's plan? Beginning this week, we'll be looking at Biblical evidence that, to God, it does make a difference.

Moses was a great servant of God, and he led 600,000 men, beside children, out of Egypt (Exodus 12:21-37). A short time later, *"the people thirsted there for water; and the people murmured against Moses, and said, Wherefore is this that thou hast brought us up out of Egypt, to kill us and our children and our cattle with thirst? And Moses cried unto the Lord, saying, What shall I do unto this people? they be almost ready to stone me. And the Lord said to Moses, Go on before the people, and take with thee of the elders of Israel; and thy rod,...take in thine hand, and go. Behold, I will stand before thee there upon the rock in Horeb; and thou shalt smite the rock in Horeb; and there shall come water out of it, that the people may drink. And Moses did so in the sight of the elders of Israel"* (Exodus 17:3-6). After the 12 spies returned from viewing Canaan, and the Israelites accepted the evil report of 10 of the spies, the people began their 40-year wandering (Numbers 13 & 14). *"Then came the children of Israel, even the whole congregation, into the desert of Zin...And there was no water for the congregation: and they gathered themselves together against Moses and Aaron. And the people strove with Moses, and spake, saying,...why have ye brought up the congregation of the Lord into this wilderness, that we and our cattle should die there? And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, Take the rod, and gather thou the assembly together...and speak ye unto the rock before their eyes; and it shall give forth his water, and thou shalt bring forth to them water out of the rock:...And Moses took the rod from before the Lord, as he commanded him. And Moses and Aaron gathered the congregation together before the rock, and he said unto them, Hear now, ye rebels; must we fetch you water out of this rock? And Moses lifted up his hand, and with his rod he smote the rock twice: and the water came out abundantly, and the congregation drank, and their beasts also"* (Numbers 20:1,2,4,7-11). Note carefully that God's instructions to Moses had changed from the first time He supplied water for the people. The first time, God instructed Moses to take the elders of the people with him, and to smite the rock. The second time, God instructed Moses to gather the congregation before the rock, and to speak to the rock; God said He would then supply water. The Bible record tells us Moses made two changes: he spoke to the people (*"Hear now, ye rebels..."*), and he struck the rock twice. God graciously supplied water, but hear what He said to Moses: *"And the Lord spoke to Moses and Aaron, Because ye believed me not, to sanctify me in the eyes of the children of Israel, therefore ye shall not bring this congregation into the land which I have given them"* (Numbers 20:12). Bible students know that both Aaron and Moses died before Canaan was entered (Numbers 27:12-14). Note that

God equated Moses' changes with unbelief. These examples show clearly God doesn't accept changes, and that He considers departures from His Word as unbelief! But, there's more! Keep reading.