

Sunday School Lesson

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and firm determination of the will were required of him who would truly serve Yahweh.

Israel's entrance into the Promised Land was a turning point in her history. During her wilderness wanderings she had experienced close association with Yahweh. Now she was entering upon an era in which devotion to Yahweh would be more difficult.

The promise of the land constituted the most tangible aspect of God's promise to the

patriarchs. When this tangible promise had been realized, the Israelites could easily think that the whole of God's promise had been fulfilled. They would be tempted simply to enjoy their new-found ease and neglect their spiritual growth. Yet continued spiritual development was necessary if they were to become God's agents in fulfilling the rest of his covenant promise.

Now that Israel possessed the Promised Land, she had a realm in which to live out her life before God. In this land she could establish a place of wor-

ship and observe the festivals and other services of worship that were so important in ancient society. Israel could now "do justice" as prescribed in her God-given law codes. She could become a nation through which God might bless all mankind.

What the Scripture Says to Us

A land—an arena of activity—is essential to the expression of God's will on earth; it is essential to the realization and enjoyment of God's promises. The fact that Israel came to possess the Promised Land is evidence that God is faithful to

fulfill his covenant promises.

God Chastens

Only a chastened people could fully appreciate both the privilege and the responsibility of the inheritance God had ordained for them. God chastened the ancient Israelites in their wilderness wanderings. Indeed, only second generation Israelites were permitted to enter the Promised Land.

God has also chastened the American people. Only now are we beginning truly to fulfill the intention of a movement begun in the United States in the 1840s which introduced the slo-

gan "manifest destiny." This catchy phrase summed up the faith of Americans in themselves and suggested something of how they felt concerning their destiny as a nation.

Only now are we beginning to recognize the inherent worth and equality of the peoples that were dispossessed in the push westward. Only now are we acting to bring full constitutional rights to these peoples—for example, the American Indians and the descendants of the Mexican people. Only when this process comes to full fruit-

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