

Exegetical Notes, Numbers 9:15-23
“God Leads Us Along”

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Numbers 9:15-23

Verses 15-17

¹⁵ On the day the tabernacle, the tent of the covenant law, was set up, the cloud covered it. From evening till morning the cloud above the tabernacle looked like fire. ¹⁶ That is how it continued to be; the cloud covered it, and at night it looked like fire. ¹⁷ Whenever the cloud lifted from above the tent, the Israelites set out; wherever the cloud settled, the Israelites encamped.

- On the day when the tabernacle was first set up, a "cloud" spontaneously covered it. At night the cloud glowed as if it was on fire so that it could be seen even in darkness. This cloud was the visible symbol of God's presence with his people.
- The Israelites understood that when the cloud moved from over the tabernacle, God was instructing the people to relocate. When the cloud stop moving forward, the people knew it was time to stop.

Verses 18-23

¹⁸ At the LORD's command the Israelites set out, and at his command they encamped. As long as the cloud stayed over the tabernacle, they remained in camp. ¹⁹ When the cloud remained over the tabernacle a long time, the Israelites obeyed the LORD's order and did not set out. ²⁰ Sometimes the cloud was over the tabernacle only a few days; at the LORD's command they would encamp, and then at his command they would set out.

²¹ Sometimes the cloud stayed only from evening till morning, and when it lifted in the morning, they set out. Whether by day or by night, whenever the cloud lifted, they set out. ²² Whether the cloud stayed over the tabernacle for two days or a month or a year, the Israelites would remain

in camp and not set out; but when it lifted, they would set out. ²³ ***At the LORD's command they encamped, and at the LORD's command they set out. They obeyed the LORD's order, in accordance with his command through Moses.***

- The Israelites obeyed the will of God as demonstrated by the cloud at all times. If it stayed over the tabernacle, they remained in camp no matter how long or how brief. Day or night, they moved as directed by the cloud. In addition, they obeyed God's commands as they came to them from Moses, God's prophet.

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