

already stated in Ex. xii.45-49, that a stranger who sojourns among the Israelites can become an Israelite. In this case he is to observe the Passover in exactly the same way as if he had been born an Israelite (14). (See notes on the 'stranger' in Ex. xxii.21 and Dt.1.16). Blessing before God was never simply a matter of birth. God promises to show His mercy to thousands of generations of those who love Him, but His mercy is always available to anyone who will join His people, taking upon himself the sign of faith in God's provision for cleansing from sin, which at that time was circumcision (Rom.iv.11).

VI. THE DIVINE PROVISION FOR DIRECTION AND GUIDANCE. (ix. 15-x. 10)

a. The pillar of cloud and fire (ix. 15-23)

As the beginning of the new journey comes nearer, the divine leadership is re-emphasized. When the tabernacle was erected, a month before the events described in Nu.i.1 (cf. Ex. xl.1 with Nu.i.1), the pillar of cloud had covered it (Ex.xl.34). Our present passage adds nothing to the information given at that time, but lays increased stress upon it, since the journey is about to commence and it is vital that all the people have the divine guidance in mind. Accordingly, the information given there in five verses is repeated here in nine. The vital facts of our personal relation to God, who is the true leader of the wilderness journey of every Christian, need often to be brought into consciousness, and particularly at each turning point of our lives. If we keep our eyes fixed upon Him, many of our uncertainties and perplexities automatically disappear.

The facts stated in these two passages (Ex.xl and Nu.ix) were not new when the tabernacle was set up. God had led the people in this way ever since they left Egypt (Ex. xiii.21-22).

These passages place such great emphasis upon the divine leadership that we might almost think that Moses and the people had no use for their own intelligence, but needed only blindly to follow a divine leading which would answer all questions. Such a conclusion would be contrary to the general teaching of the Bible and to