

this word means families or divisions of the tribes, instead of literal thousands. However, this is obviously not applicable to the census, with its total of 603,550 (see i.46n.).

VIII. REBELLION AND DISAFFECTION. xi. 1-xii.16

a. Disaffection in the outskirts of the camp (xi.1-3)

After the ideal picture in previous chapters of the divine arrangements for the care and progress of Israel, and the beautiful narrative of the beginning of the journey in chapter x, it is a shock to find rebellion and disaffection in the camp itself. The Israelites have been rescued from Egypt and constantly see the pillar of cloud and fire, visible proof of God's presence with them; yet we find disaffection and rebellion breaking out, first in the outskirts of the camp, next in its midst, and finally among the top leaders themselves.

Every Christian leader needs to be warned not to let his judgment be affected by the praise of those over whom God has placed him. Human nature is fickle, and a man's strongest supporters can suddenly become his worst enemies. Even the best of human beings may fall into rebellion against the Lord. The Christian leader should learn to place his trust in God alone; then he will not be too disappointed if those who should support him prove unfaithful. The two chapters are also of great interest for the man of lesser prominence. He should realize the burdens and responsibilities which weigh upon those whom God has placed in positions of leadership. He should not rebel against, them, but should support them faithfully, unless, of course, they themselves rebel against the Lord.

b. Trouble in the midst of the camp (xi.4-15)

It is easy to understand what happened when the people began to take their eyes away from God. In the journey through the wilderness, memory of deliverance from the harsh oppression of Egypt tended to become dim, while realization of the loss of the satisfaction of fleshly appetites enjoyed in Egypt became more vivid. The