

Numbers 16:41–40

A Mediator for the Hopelessly Lost

Friday, July 12, 2024 • Read Numbers 16:41–50

Questions from the Scripture text: When does v41 take place? Who complain? Against whom? Of what do they accuse them? To where do they turn (v42)? What covered it? What appeared? Who come before it (v43)? Who speaks to whom in v44? What does He command Moses and Aaron (v45)? So that He can do what? But how do Moses and Aaron respond? Who speaks to whom in v46? What does he tell him to take? And put what in it? And take it where? To do what? Why—what has gone out? From Whom? What has begun? What does Aaron do (v47)? How quickly? To where does he run? What had begun? What did Aaron do? Where did he stand (v48)? With what result? How many had died (v49)? Besides whom? To whom did Aaron return (v50)? Where? Why?

What can be done for our hardening, blinding sin, and the wrath that it deserves? Numbers 16:41–50 prepares us for the evening sermon on the Lord's Day. In these ten verses of Holy Scripture, the Holy Spirit teaches us that **Christ humbled Himself and suffered the wrath due to our sin to deliver us from it and glorify Himself**

The astonishing hardness of sin. After all that had occurred (v1–40), the people rise up against Moses and Aaron on the very next day (v41)! Sinners are hard to their danger; they know that they deserve death for it (cf. Rom 1:32), but keep on doing it as if somehow God will not repay. Do you not recognize this about your own sin?

The astonishing blindness of sin. The accusation is rich, considering “the people of YHWH” would have all perished apart from Moses's and Aaron's intercession (cf. v21–22), and they are not only going to intercede again (v44), but even atone at the risk of their own death (v48).

The glory and goodness that are always there. The glory cloud appears and descends upon the tabernacle (v42). Moses and Aaron see and answer the summons (v43). The standing arrangement is still operating. God's faithfulness is steady; He never changes. When we sin, we not only forget the goodness of the glorious God, but offend His glory to His face! His glory becomes fury against us; what can be done?

Humble intercession. YHWH's command in v45 is identical to v21, except the verb that NKJ translates “Get away” is actually an imperative of the verb from the accusation at the end of v3. “Exalt yourselves above this congregation” would be a literal translation!

They had the right, by this instruction, to exalt themselves. But as in Ex 32:10–14, N14:11–20, and N16:21–23, Moses intercedes for the people. With the right to exalt themselves, they humble themselves instead, because they had been called to mediatorial office as go-betweens and intercessors for Israel. Even when Aaron finishes his heroic mission, he returns humbly to his post in v50.

We, too, have a Mediator Who had the right even to equality with God, but added a human nature to Himself in order to humble Himself to intercede for us (cf. Php 2:6–7)! Moses and Aaron, here, are types of Christ to us.

Sacrificial intercession. Differently than the three times mentioned above, the Lord does not heed the prayers for the people. Knowing that the prayers are heard on account of the atonement that the Lord has provided in His mercy, Moses urges Aaron to take his role as high priest, and present the completed sacrifice before the Lord. “a censer” in v46 is actually “the censer” in the Hebrew—significantly the remaining and true censer from the previous day's contest (the other 250 having been reserved for overlaying the altar). It is a reminder that his high-priesthood is not only valid, but is a sacred calling from God.

Aaron is to take burning coals from the altar, which would be burning the fat from the sacrifices. He offers incense not before the curtain of the holy of holies but before YHWH Himself, Who is slaying the people with plague. They have done to themselves what they had accused Moses and Aaron of doing!

Now Aaron places himself directly in the path of the wrath of God, passing through and by the almost fifteen thousand who are dead and/or dying. Undoubtedly, the people are also fleeing the dying, giving Aaron the opportunity to stand between (v48). For the sake of the priesthood and the sacrifice that the Lord had provided for atonement, the plague stops. But, truly, it is for the sake of Christ. Christ put Himself in the way of God's wrath (cf. Php 2:8), and it did not stop but spent itself upon Him until it was finished (cf. Jn 19:30).

What sin have you felt the consequences of, but still find yourself committing? Who has served you, but you might have accused in your heart? Whom have you served, but they accused you? Who has humbled Himself to intercede for you? What happened, when He put Himself in the way of God's wrath?

Sample prayer: Lord, have mercy upon us, for our sin is so hardening and blinding. Forgive us, and deliver us from it. Thank You for giving to us Your own Son as our Great High Priest. And thank You that He has humbled Himself in order to fulfill His calling as our Priest. Thank You that He put Himself in the way of the wrath that we had incurred and has saved us from death. Give us to trust in Him, and glorify His Name above all names for this, in which Name we ask it, AMEN!

Suggested songs: ARP51B “From My Sins, O Hide Your Face” or TPH274 “Jesus, My Great High Priest”

(The following is a machine-generated transcription. PLEASE BE AWARE of—and patient with—transcribing errors. If there is something confusing or obviously erroneous, you are invited to listen to the audio recording via hopewellarp.org)

Number 16, verses 41-50. These are God's words. On the next day, all the congregation of the children of Israel. Complained against Moses and Aaron saying, You have killed the people of Yahweh. Now, it happened when the congregation had gathered against Moses and Aaron. That they turned toward the Tabernacle of meeting and suddenly the cloud covered it and the glory of Yahweh appeared And then Moses and Aaron came before the Tabernacle of meeting.

And Yahweh spoke to Moses saying, get away from among this congregation. That I may consume them in a moment. And they fell on their faces. So Moses said to Aaron take a sensor. And put fire in it, from the altar, put incense on it. And take it quickly to the congregation and make atonement for them.

For Roth has gone out from Yahweh. The plague has begun. Then Aaron took it as Moses commanded and ran into the midst of the assembly and already, the plague had begun among the people So he put in the incense and made atonement for the people and he stood between the dad and the living So, the plague was stopped.

Now those who died in the plague were 14 7, Besides those who had died. In the Korra incident. So Aaron returned to Moses at the door of the Tabernacle meeting. For the plague had stopped.

So, for the reading of gods, inspired and an errandwort.

Unbelievers are not rational.

Is irrational. Apart from resurrecting Grace. A sinner cannot be persuaded. To stop his. This is the beginning of verse 41, says happens. On the very next day. On the very next day after Nathan and abira. And Cora. And all their households and everything that belonged to them were swallowed up by the Earth.

On the very next day. After the fire had gone out from Yahweh. And consumed. The 2. From among the leadership. Of the rest of the nation of Israel. On the very next

day, all the congregation of the children of Israel, complain. Against Moses and Aaron.

Refused to take. The warning.

And indeed. Romans 1 tells us that everyone who sins. Knows within themselves. Sinning against God's law. Deserves death.

And so we must not think. That we can be, merely persuaded. Out of sin and especially that the world. May be merely persuaded it requires. The almighty. Electing redeeming mercy of God. To give. You must remember that in all of our apologetics and we must remember that even when we make good, use of God's word and meditate upon the truths.

By which he convinces us. As you fight against this sin, in your own heart. In your own life. That it requires the work of the grace of God and so do so. Looking to him. To work in you. Asking him to bless it to you.

Well, the next day, all the children, All the congregation of the children of Israel. Complained against Moses and Aaron saying you have killed the people of Yahweh. This is exactly opposite what was done, actually? Yahweh was going to kill all of the quote unquote, people of Yahweh. apart from Has having appointed Moses and Aaron to their offices.

And giving them to, disprove the complaints. Remember they complained that Moses and Aaron? Had exalted themselves and lifted themselves up but it was in the midst of God's response to these complaints that Moses and Aaron were proven to be God's appointed. Intercessors. Because when they fell on their face, Faces in verse 22.

The Lord actually spared the congregation. And so we must expect that Sinners. Because of the blinding effect of their sin. You may serve them. And you may, Do so, at Great risk, or cost to yourself and be accused of exactly the opposite. Money, a parent has experienced this with a child.

Who has responded? Hatefully for In the face of Wisdom and mercy, and care and self-sacrifice. From their dad. And from their mom,

And, May expect the same. From Sinners. You have killed the people of Yahweh. They say, when it was Actually, they who Had interceded. And the reason that it was only Cora dathan abirum. Households on the 250.

Now, Moses and Aaron are not the ones who respond in this case. Again, now it happened when the congregation Had gathered against Moses and Aaron. That they turned toward the Tabernacle meeting and suddenly, The cloud covered it and the glory of Yahweh appeared Okay, so wherever the glory Cloud goes Moses and Aaron must go.

So verse 43, Moses and Aaron come before the Tabernacle of meeting And Yahweh spoke to Moses saying, get away from among this congregation. That I may consume them in a moment. Now, it's very similar to verse 21. When he says separate yourselves from among this congregation, That I may consume them in a moment.

The only difference is that the verb is this verb? That is translated here. Get away. but this command is on the verb root. from the end of verse 3, When the congregation says, why do you exalt yourselves above? The Assembly of Yahweh. And so, what's translated here?

Get away is actually. Exalt yourselves from among this congregation raise yourself up from This congregation the implication being that God is about to destroy them in like manner. And they are to get away. lest they be consumed? Just as Command on the day before had been get away from the tents of Dayton and ebirim.

And so forth. But Moses and Aaron have been appointed. not merely as individuals. But as Intercessors. Mediators for the people. And so God says, raise yourselves up from this congregation. But their response is to fall on their faces.

One big difference between this and the last. three times. Four times. That we have seen the Lord give an instruction like this.

That the Lord does not wait for Moses's response. On the previous occasions. The Lord says something like this. Moses responds and prays. The Lord relents. And spares the people. Here. Moses and Aaron are on their faces. And, even this has not been enough. Because the plague starts to go out, And even at this point.

When Moses speaks to Aaron, he doesn't say. I think we had better get away, like he said, because the plague has started Moses and Aaron reflecting. Not only the office that God has given them. Knowing the place that they have been given. But also, Reflecting or hear, maybe it's better to say foreshadowing.

What Christ would be like, does not say They are getting as they deserve. They should have known. They are. after the mind and heart of Christ, it says, father forgive them On the cross. Or do not hold them again, hold it against them. As Steven says about those, who are stoning him?

There is a. Lesson here. The forgiving love of God. That is not. At odds with his Justice, it agrees with his Justice. So verse 47 atonement has to be made. But there is something here about the forgiving love of God and how we should love our enemies. And, Because Mercy is always opposite what the people deserve.

That we must watch against this impulse this reflex and a reflex in our hearts.

To think of the lost or react to their plight. Without love and without Mercy. Coldly or hardly. All right. Saying they're just getting what they deserve. But if we learn, From Moses and Aaron and the Lord, sustaining them in their office here. If we learn from Christ Christ, If we learn from, Joseph and Stephen and Paul.

What the Lord would have us? We ought to. Love those who are getting as they deserve. Who are perishing? We live in a world that is perishing. Much of the. Sin to which God has given our own nation and the people of our own Nation over Is not merely that which is going to incur the wrath of God, it's that which broadened his word has said, is a display.

That they are under wrath to have been given up to such sin. And what Moses tells Aaron to do is his duty, his office. There's a definite article, the word, the is missing in verse 46. Moses says to Aaron take the sensor Is at the sensor. Because it's the only one left after you had the the one sensor against the 250.

in on the previous day the 250. are being beaten or have been beaten down. To make an overlay for the altar. And so it's a reminder Aaron. You have been appointed to be the high priest. You have been appointed to make atoning sacrifice. You have been appointed To offer incense.

Yours is the sensor and your calling is the high priest. And the people of whom you who you have been, Appointed, as high priest. Ordained by God as high priest. They are perishing. So Moses sister and take the sensor and put fire on it from the altar and put incense on it.

And take it quickly to the congregation. And make atonement for them. And so, Moses recognizes that. Prayer for intercession. Is not itself. Virtuous or atoning. It doesn't have in it.

Value or power, that is necessary for the Forgiveness of sin. It is. The acceptance of the sacrifice. And so the fire comes from the altar. And that going up to God. And so, God has also given them sacramentally the incense. For communicating that and these things of course all look forward to the Lord Jesus Christ.

And so Aaron is pre-figuring Christ as priest. He's foreshadowing Christ, and taking that which is offered Unto God, taking the atonement and he's even in this case. he's he doesn't have time to offer a bull or a goat. running. Verse 47, he ran into the midst of the assembly, and he runs to the place.

Where the plague itself is going. And so there's almost a picture here of Aaron himself as the sacrifice. It's bad enough. He's running into this. Congregation of people who, you know, woke up that morning hostile after the events of the previous day. But much more dangerous than the people is God.

Who you can? You can imagine the scene. As the plague is moving. And it's about two percent of the way, through the people. And the people are all crying out and dying, as it moves. And of course as you can imagine as these people are crying out and dying.

The rest of the congregation is starting to run in the other direction and that gives the space in between. As as Aaron runs to stand between. The ones who are not yet dead and the ones who have cried out and died. And he offers the atonement a very vivid, very Stark.

Picture. And here again. They had just accused them of killing the people of Yahweh. But if the Lord had not appointed, Intercessors mediator. Indeed, they would have died. Sin is so irrational. People know what it deserves, they do it anyway. And they think that they can, they could just commit this in and somehow Dodge God's judgment.

There's utter Insanity. It even blinds people to accuse Those whom God is using. As instruments to bring them his own Mercy, his own forgiveness, his own salvation. To proclaim the word of God to them and lead them and Shepherd them. To help them in their walk with him and they accuse them.

Of harming them. Because not because they're not doing what God says but because they're not doing what the congregation wants. Exalting yourself above them, And yet. Even in this case, when God said, Exalt yourself from among this congregation lift yourselves up from Among this congregation that I may consume them in a moment.

God's servants. Especially here, as Pictures of Christ. One to us, although this is Genuine historical incidents. Genuinely happened. They run and they intercede. In verse 48 and he stood between the dad and the living So, the plague was stopped. Now those who died in the plague were Fourteen thousand seven hundred besides those who died in the core incident.

So, that brings the total up to About 15 000 in the last two days. So Aaron returned to Moses. At the door of the Tabernacle of meeting for the plague had stopped. After such a Heroic. Service and action. What does he do? He resumes his post. He goes back to the place that the Lord has assigned him.

And, Is there something wonderful here in the picture that there is of Christ? Humbly serving. Even those who have been against you. Not taking the bait. to have a contest of Envy. Considering others better than ourselves. Preferring them to ourselves. Jesus. Did not consider equality with God. Something to be grasped.

And so here, when because of the office to which the Lord had appointed them, Moses and Aaron did not exalt themselves. But continued to be humble before God and Aaron actually runs and offers himself as it were risks, death risks, the Wrath and curse of God as he stands in the place, where the wrath and curse to which the Wrath and curse have proceeded.

picture to us of Christ. Who Philippians 2 tells us Not consider equality with God. Something to be grasped. He, in order to Humble himself had to add to himself a nature, that could be humbled. Because, of course, the divine nature cannot be humbled. And so, he takes the form of the bond slave and he's found in shape as a man.

And he humbles himself even to the point of death and that on a cross. Suffering, the wrath of God in our place. And that's why. Aaron's intercession. Was accepted. Because the plague did not stop when it got to Jesus. The wrath of God fell upon him. And he consumed it.

That's why we can pray for forgiveness and be forgiven. That's why we could pray for those who are lost and the Lord saves them. That's why we can pray for believers who are sinning and like we heard yesterday at first John 5, that that sin would not even be unto death.

Our Rebellion against the Lord, Jesus has been great. And, Much worse because it's against, he even. Then this Rebellion against Moses and Aaron. Although all Rebellion against those whom God has set over us as Rebellion against God himself. Isn't that why Sophia Disobedience to your parents. And dishonoring, your parents is so bad, not just Because of who your parents are, but because of who put them over, you

But the Lord Jesus. And answer in response. To our Rebellion. Has offered himself has borne the Wrath. Has taken away. Our sin has atone for us. And we, If we are going to be christ-like, When we see irrational rebellious sin, Consuming a lost world. And the wrath of God, having already gone out against them.

Let us upon the sacrifice of Christ and imitation of the mind of Christ. Pray for them. And seek their salvation. Let's pray.

Keep us from the Rebellion. To which our remaining fleshliness. Prone to which we are so prone because of that remaining fleshliness. And thank you for giving Christ to be our great high priest. Who put himself in the path of your wrath? And has consumed it So that it would not consume.

And help us to have minds and hearts that are like us. Unto others who sin. Before we asking his name, amen.