

Friday, July 19, 2024 ▫ Read Numbers 17

Questions from the Scripture text: Who spoke to whom in v1? To whom was he to speak (v2)? What was he to collect from them? How many, therefore? And write what upon them? And what name on the rod of Levi (v3)? Where would Moses put them (v4)? Before what? What does the Lord do there? Whose rod will blossom (v5)? Of what does the Lord say He will thus rid Himself? Against whom do they make their complaints? To whom does Moses speak in v6? What do the leaders do? What does Moses do with the rods (v7)? When does Moses go back in (v8)? What does he find? What has happened to Aaron's rod? What does Moses do with the rods (v9)? What does each man do? What does YHWH tell Moses to do with Aaron's rod (v10)? What would be put away by doing this? And what would this keep from happening? What does Moses do (v11)? Who speak to Moses in v12? What do they say? Why do they think they will all die (v13)?

Who can come near the Lord? Numbers 17 prepares us for the evening sermon on the Lord's Day. In these thirteen verses of Holy Scripture, the Holy Spirit teaches us that **the Lord alone chooses who may come near Him.**

Great mercy. Though Israel draws a different conclusion (v12-13), the reader of Numbers can see how amazing the mercy of this episode is. The Lord has showed them several times that Aaron is the one He has chosen to come near. They are not deserving of another chance, let alone of God performing such a miracle for them. And yet the Lord shows the greatness of His mercy and patience in doing this for them.

Even the sign that He uses shows not only His patience toward them but His power. He is the God Who brings life to the dead. And this life was even great enough to produce ripe fruit overnight. The spiritual fruit in His people does not ordinarily come this way (until death!). But even His ability reminds us that if fruit comes more slowly, it is according to His wisdom and mercy. It is not for lack of power!

The Lord causes Aaron's rod to be put back in the tabernacle, as a sign "for the rebels" (v10, NKJ "against"). It is a witness in front of the Lord. He does not need reminding, but He gives for them to know and remember that His purposes and promises concerning them are always before Him. This is the only thing that stands between them and death (v10).

Great misery. Sadly, however, this is not what Israel sees. The Lord has said "lest they die" (v10), but their conclusion is that dying, they die, and perishing they perish (v12-13). Worst of all, whereas they had been rebelling against Aaron's house alone being permitted to enter the tabernacle, they are now unwilling even to draw near to the tabernacle (v13).

God had made a way for them to draw near, but their rejection of His worship in His way has now made it appear closed to their own wicked minds and hearts. If they would just realize and remember the atonement that He has made! But here, too, they exalt their own wisdom even in their despair.

What (Who!) is the great way by which God has given to you to draw near to Himself? How has He been patient with your own coming in the wrong way or with the wrong attitude? Why has He been patient? What is He able to do in you?

Sample prayer: Lord, thank You for atoning for us by Christ, and for choosing Him to be the Great High Priest who brings us near to You. And thank You for giving us the proper worship actions on earth by which He fulfills this ministry from heaven. Please forgive us for the rebellion and wickedness of trying to come in some other way. But please also apply His atoning sacrifice to our conscience that we may draw near to You in Him with clean consciences and bold hearts. Even this, we ask in His Name, 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 17, verses 1 through 13. These are God's words. And you always spoke to Moses saying, speak to the children of Israel. And get from them a rod from each father's house. All their leaders. According to their fathers, has his 12 rods. Write each man's name on his Rod and you shall write Aaron's name.

Rod of Levi. For there shall be one rod for the head of each father's house. Then you shall place them in the Tabernacle of meeting before the testimony where I meet with you and it shall be That the rod of the man whom I choose will Blossom, Thus, I will rid myself of the complaints of the children of Israel.

Which they make against you. So, Moses spoke to the children of Israel and each of their leaders gave him a rod of peace. For each leader according to their father's houses, 12 rods. And the rod of Aaron was among their rods. And Moses placed the rods before Yahweh in the Tabernacle of witness.

Now it came to pass and the next day that Moses went into the Tabernacle of witness and behold. The rod of Aaron of the House of Levi had sprouted and put forth buds. Had produced blossoms and yielded ripe almonds. Then Moses brought out all the rods from before Yahweh to all the children of Israel.

And they looked and each man took his Rod. And Yahweh said to Moses, bring Aaron's Rod back before the testimony to be kept as a sign against the rebels that you may put their complaints away from me. Lest they die? Thus did Moses just as Yahweh had commanded him.

So, he did. So, the children of Israel spoke to Moses saying, surely we die, we perish. We all perish, whoever even comes near. The Tabernacle of Yahweh Must Die. Shall we all utterly die? So far the reading of gods inspired and And,

Going back to the beginning of chapter 16. We've had several incidents in which there was a rebellion. Against Moses and Aaron. And then there would be a response from the Lord. In this case, there's not a precipitating incident. It's the Lord who initiates. And, As we see him do so.

We see great Mercy for he is not here, initiating in judgment, the responses so far have been judgment because they were in response to particular instances of rebellion. Now, the Lord recognizes their rebelliousness. Not that he didn't perceive it before. but in response to their rebelliousness, not a rebellious incident.

He provides something. To put away their rebellion from before him and it's gonna work in two ways. One, As he takes something that reminds him of the mediator. he takes something that is going to be sacramental or symbolic. Of Aaron himself, and he's going to have that added.

To the holy of holies. There of course once a year the blood of the atonement would be splattered on the lid and the incense of the intercession would be brought in and burned and Aaron himself would have to be atoned for by Blood and hidden by the cloud of incense just to be safe and he could only come once a year.

But here the Lord is reminding himself. Or giving us a testimony to which he also responds as he does with his sacraments. That it is not airing so much that is the mediator but Christ. The, the The reason Aaron is chosen from among Israel. Exodus Leviticus Numbers. Is because Jesus is going to be Chosen from among men.

God the son is going to become a man and so Hebrews is going to make this point. About the Lord Jesus is that he was selected from among men to be our mediator, except for his way better than Aaron, because he doesn't have to atone for himself. And so he comes with his own blood, not that of bulls and goats to atone for his people.

Once for all and he has risen from the dead and he is never going to die. And so he has not hindered. From continuing in his priesthood and being effectual in his priesthood. Like Aaron was Aaron's priesthood was of course imperfect consecrated by God forgiven on account of Christ imperfect during his life.

but then his Priestly Effectiveness went to zero because he died. Jesus, however, always lives to intercede for us. By the power of His indestructible life and that's why he's able to save us. To the uttermost. And so it is especially in setting before himself. His chosen priesthood at this point.

Redemptive history. It is a center from among men who is going to need Christ to be his chosen priest. But it points forward to Christ. This is why for instance, we'll have the number six benediction. You know, say to Aaron and his children, this is how you shall put My name on the children of Israel.

And he gives the benediction, he says, thus they shall put my name on the children of Israel and I will bless them. The blessing. Is in a very provisional and limited way. Belonging to Aaron's priesthood. It is in a permanent and perfectly effectual way. Belonging to Christ's priesthood.

That Aaron's priesthood foreshadowed. So, it's not like, dispensational cheating. You take a blessing from the air in time and you use it in churches. The reason I say that is because I when I was younger and didn't understand things so, well, I foolishly thought things like that. Like why are they pronouncing a number six blessing on us?

We should just use second Corinthians, 13 or whatever. Which is absolute nonsense. There has never been a lifting up of God's countenance upon us and smiling upon us and giving us peace as there is in the Lord Jesus. That's his He let them borrow it in a small way, but that really belongs to his church, Similarly, we sing with joy And in Psalm 133, About the oil coming down on Aaron's beard.

reminding that God has selected for his people, the appropriate right high priest at the appropriate time. And now we have Jesus himself to be our high priest and never is it more glorifying to a high priest is the unity of the Brethren more glorifying to a high priest than the unity of the church?

Now that is in Jesus Christ. For it is not just oil upon his beard but it is proof that he is God, the son. The Beloved one. With whom God is, well pleased. And that it is in his pleasure in which he has anointed his son. That he produces unity in the church.

Which this is a little bit of a side track from our text, but important application of what we have just said. So one of the reasons why divisiveness in the church is so offensive. And why even last night's sermon text in Romans? said. Note to evaluate. Where the divisiveness comes from.

And to evade it to avoid it. But the Lord has a rebellious people. In fact, they're so rebellious. That the I'm looking for the word Rebels. it says

Say, verse 10. Yes, a sign against the rebels. Hebrew and which is a little bit confusing because the numbering's different because chapter 17 in the Hebrew actually begins. 36 or 37 verse 36 is. In the English. But in the, in the Hebrew of what is verse 17:10 in the English, it says the sons of rebellion Both indicating that this is their character.

This has been our character since Adam. And, That this isn't just a sign for the sake of those who are Rebels at the time. This is also a sign for the sake of those who are going to descend from them because they too will continue to be rebellious. And it's kind of like when God makes the promises.

As. Noah and his sons are getting ready to get off the ark. Any promises never to destroy the world again and then he gives his reasoning. Because, The thoughts of man's heart are evil from his youth. And this is the way the grace of God because he is determined to save those upon whom he has set is electing and Redeeming love.

This is the way the grace of God. Responds to the rebelliousness of man. He intercedes with with promises he intercedes with signs. He intercedes with the means of his grace. That are going to both restrain our sin to some measure and be a testimony between us and him. That the reason he is not destroying is because he is merciful and gracious to forgive Sinners.

And that Christ is coming into the world. And he is not only going to be the perfect sacrifice, but he's also going to be the perfect priest. And so he says to the children of Israel to get a rod from each father's house. Literally the house of the father.

Again. Reminding us. That our parentage goes back to Adam. That this isn't just a new thing. in which they are rebellious. it's also an indication here that this is not just a walking staff. there have been other places. Where we have seen someone. A ceremonial or a staff that was a sign of the person or of Or of their house.

We saw that at least once in Genesis And these rods are short enough that Hebrews tells us that at one point the rod of Aaron wasn't put in front of the Arc of testimony but Aaron's Rod that had butted was in the ark itself. So it was short enough that might not have been a sufficient walking stick.

It's the ceremonial Rod that's being described. And there are 12 rods which are for the people and a 13th Rod, which is for God, it's not as obvious in the English that that's the way they're being counted and it's implied in the Hebrew, although not necessarily for sure. in the Hebrew.

But the way that the Hebrew, Implies that Aaron's Rod is in addition to the 12, not one of the 12 corresponds to how we've already seen. The people numbered with 12, secular tribes. The tribe of Joseph being divided into two Ephraim and Manasseh to compensate for the tribe of Levi being taken out.

But here there is an implication. Then that as God provides a priest, he is providing a priest that is His representative on his behalf and that this is the one that he's choosing to be the go-between for the people. The Who ministers? In their behalf. they take the The house of the father, he says, you Write their leaders names on.

On their Rod. This Something new in part because 250 of the leaders of Israel have just been executed. and each tribe needs to have a new leader. And it would remind the one who Has just unseasonably. Come into the leadership of a tribe of how his predecessor lost his leadership.

And so it would be helpful to him. And so it would be helpful to him as he was inscribing, his name and thinking about this. To understand what the Lord is saying. And maybe it's helpful to us when Aaron's Rod blossoms, And they all suddenly start running around. going crazy about how they're all gonna perish.

they just had new leaders rod, new leaders names, written into these rods. And God chose Aaron. Well, we'll come back to that. But you can understand how serious this. ceremony would be. it gets real. Yeah, it's it's all good and well when everybody says you're our new leader.

Yay. But it gets real. When you have to write your name on a rod that is being commanded to be taken to the Tabernacle Now, God tells Moses that it shall be the rod of the man whom I choose will Blossom. Thus, I will rid myself of the complaints of the children of Israel which they make against you.

But then they don't just Blossom. The way verse 8 is described. It's not just that you end up with ripe almonds The implication. Is that every stage? Of the leafing and the blossoming and the fruiting fruiting. And the ripening of the fruit is represented all the way to the ripe.

Almond at the end. So, this isn't just a miraculously produced fruit. These things would not be on the same Rod at the same time. Except in this way. And so what they see is really impossible. All right, it's a bigger Miracle than we would ordinarily think? But praise God, it's a miracle for Mercy.

we see, I will rid myself of the complaints of the children of Israel, which they make against you, verse 5 and that sounds Condemning and punishing. But notice what he says in verse 10, when he says to be kept as a sign against the sons of rebellion that you may put their complaints away from me.

Last, they die. So, it's actually not condemning, is it? The Rebellion is condemned. But the sign for putting away the complaints, is actually to save their lives. Because there are Points in the turning away of a church. Or the turning away of a Nation. Or the turning away of a man from God.

And the repetition of rebellion. There are points at which God says no more. And he destroys the nation. Or he removes the lamp stand from the church. Or he hardens the individual to the gospel. And what God is doing here.

He is preventing that from happening. Until Christ comes into the world. It comes. A great and Dreadful. At the Exile. When Ezekiel is made to see the glory departing from the temple for instance. Very different. In the previous chapter, where the people were rebelling in God's glory appeared at the Tabernacle didn't depart, he was staying with his people.

But if you look at verse 5 and you take it together with verse 10, you see the mercy. In restraining, the people and giving a sign, Why God's Wrath is restrained? And so they do this. And Moses brings it out. And, God has been merciful. Sadly, however, even before a merciful god, An unrepentant, man can be miserable.

They don't see. Look how God has come near us in the Tabernacle. Look how God has attained for us in the sacrifice. Look how God has even chosen a man that would be acceptable in his sight. In his choosing. To be the one by whom we can. Come to the Tabernacle and he will go in and he will do the things.

They freak out and say. If anyone even comes near the Tabernacle of Yahweh, he must die. They're miserable because they don't see. The grace of God in the sacrifice, the grace of God in the priesthood that has been provided. And so, Rather than embracing what God has appointed for them, they invent.

As it were not that we have evidence that they ever followed it, but And the implication in vers. 13 is oh we better not even come near the Tabernacle. No, Do you think God is not present in the rest of the camp? Did you not learn? All of the, from all of the things about the Holiness that must be maintained in the camp, because God is in the midst of it.

But those who do not receive the To the gospel, the good news. Of the grace of God to us and the sacrifice, he's provided. And the priest that he's provided. They can think, oh. Well if he's that holy, if he's that dangerous, I better. I better draw all of these.

extra boundaries, not to cross. Like the Israelites as they stopped using the name of Yahweh, his Memorial name and they started saying Adonai, which is how we got the vowel pointings for Adonai. The word Yahweh instead of having vowel pointings for Yahweh, the vowel pointings are Hundreds of years, more recent than the Lord Jesus.

And they had long since in their superstitions. Stopped, using the name of the Lord, in which he And communicated his grace and his Covenant bond. two of them. And there are many for instance, who say, oh well, it's so dangerous to take the Lord's Supper wrongly. We should wait until people are really old.

We should wait until they have a lot of knowledge. We should wait until they're really spiritual. Not just give evidence of having been converted to being in the Lord. And that's how things grow up like knowing enough or being spiritual or sincere enough. And then some extreme cases you have.

Not just infrequent supper not just late admission to the table. but in some denominations, hundreds of people in a congregation and just like three elderly Saints, partaking of the supper, while everyone else watches But here they are miserable in the presence of God. Because rather than seeing the greatness of his provision for their great sin.

The only thing that they're able to see is the greatness of their sin, And so also, you will be miserable. You could be miserable in a couple of different ways, one. You can be in a miserable condition and not know it. Just not care about sin. Keep sinning against God and provoking him.

But another, you can see your sin. And failed to turn your eyes, your heart, your mind to what God has done for you. Give himself for you. To pay for your sins. With his own blood and suffering his own wrath in your place. And rising from the dead. Not just Rising, but ascending and sitting and being our high priest and interceding for you.

And so, as we are shown, by the spirit or sin from scripture, we should be grieved and wounded. But we must not stay there. Lest we be like these scrambling. People running around. Surely we die. We perish. We all perish. Whoever even comes near the Tabernacle of Yahweh must die.

So, we all utterly die. How much rather ought they have? Responded. Surely. The holy God before whom we all would have perished. Has brought us near in his chosen one. And has atoned for us by his accepted sacrifices. And that is what we May do all the more now.

That we know Christ as priest and Christ is sacrifice. So, the Lord help you. Take your sins, seriously. But to take his grace in Christ, towards your sin. Even more seriously. Let's pray.

We thank you, Father for your Mercy from before the world began for covenanting with the To give him a people. For whom he would atone and intercede. And we thank you that you have recorded the whole history of How you did this in the world? That we might see.

And identify with the sons of rebellion. That we might see your grace towards them, even in anticipation of Christ. That we might see the Fulfillment. Of what Christ has done. Help us Lord to hate our sin. Help us to remember. The Perfection of your Holiness and Justice. And how it expresses itself in Roth against sin.

That give us to Rejoice that you have. Chosen for yourself your own son. From among men to become our high priest. You and he were willing. That he would humble himself to become a man for our sex. And that he would die on the cross. For our sakes. Make us to Rejoice.

Over your provision over your bringing us near now. Not just having forgiven us. Our sin, not just having consecrated us. But even In Christ himself, bringing us near to you. Making. Even our own Hearts, a Dwelling place for your spirit. And so Grant that

We would take your Holiness and sin seriously but oh, Lord. Comfort and gladness, and Thrill us with. The reality. Of your gospel. We ask in Jesus name. Amen.